

# SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC PARK DEVELOPMENT AS A CATALYST FOR CULTURAL TOURISM IN BANGKOK\*

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## Abstract

This research aims to: 1) analyze the context and potential of public parks in Thailand conducive to sustainable public park development; 2) synthesize processes for sustainable public park development that support cultural tourism promotion; and 3) create a model for sustainable public park development in Thai cities enhancing cultural tourism. This qualitative study employs thematic analysis to examine sustainable development models for public parks, focusing on physical design and cultural activities. The unit of analysis includes Lumpini and Benjakitti Parks in Bangkok. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with experts and park users, participant and non-participant observations, and document research including park statistics and official reports. Key indicators used to assess sustainability and cultural tourism promotion include green area ratio, number of cultural events per year,

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community participation levels, accessibility metrics (e.g., proximity to public transit, universal design compliance), and maintenance status of park facilities.

The findings demonstrate that both parks maintain substantial green spaces and diverse activity zones, with Lumpini Park emphasizing historical preservation and multifunctional spaces, and Benjakitti Park focusing on environmental conservation and cultural programming. These indicators provide measurable evidence of sustainable development supporting cultural tourism. The research findings indicate that both parks possess high physical readiness, with facilities and equipment maintained to support various activities. Although some infrastructure shows aging, it remains functional within budget constraints. Environmental management practices include regular green space maintenance supported by volunteer groups, contributing to park upkeep without additional budgetary burden. Both parks have implemented measures to reduce private vehicle parking and promote public transportation access, supported by nearby electric train stations and improved pedestrian infrastructure. The parks allocate spaces for cultural activities, with Lumpini Park redesigning performance areas to accommodate large audiences and Benjakitti Park dedicating 17% of its area to cultural uses. Future considerations include developing continuous and sustainable cultural tourism programming, informed by community participation and expert input.

**Keywords:** public park, sustainability, promotion of cultural tourism

## Introduction

Urban parks play a vital role in enhancing community well-being by offering a multitude of benefits that support physical activity, social interaction, and cultural engagement. These green spaces contribute significantly to urban residents' physical and mental health by providing environments that encourage exercise, relaxation, and socialization.

Physical activity is notably promoted by urban parks through various landscape features such as semiopen spaces with dense vegetation and diverse recreational facilities, which have been shown to increase physical activity levels, especially among children (Bao et al., 2023). The presence of play facilities and perceptions of safety within these parks are key factors influencing the intensity and frequency of children's active engagement. Beyond children, parks also support physical health improvements for older adults and people with disabilities by offering accessible environments that encourage movement and outdoor activity (Perry et al., 2021; Wojnowska-Heciak et al., 2022).

Social interaction is another critical dimension of urban parks' contribution to community well-being. Parks function as important venues for fostering social cohesion and interaction, particularly among older adults, where personal, social, and physical factors within the park environment enhance social connections (Cui et al., 2024). The social activities and cultural events hosted in parks also motivate visits and strengthen bonds among diverse community members, improving overall social inclusivity and cohesion (Giedych & Maksymiuk, 2017; Wojnowska-Heciak et al., 2022). Such sociability is linked to stronger community attachment and better mental health by providing restorative experiences that reduce stress and foster a sense of identity and belonging (Jang et al., 2024).

Furthermore, urban parks serve as vital cultural spaces, especially within minority and Latino communities where parks not only offer environmental and health benefits but also support cultural identity and engagement. However, challenges such as access inequalities, safety concerns, and maintenance issues can limit these benefits in underserved neighborhoods (Stodolska et al., 2011). Efforts to address such barriers and increase inclusiveness can maximize the cultural ecosystem services parks provide and ensure all community members benefit (Giedych & Maksymiuk, 2017).

Large-scale analyses reveal that the quantity and quality of urban parks are strongly associated with improvements in multiple aspects of well-being, such as physical health and community connectedness, highlighting the importance of park accessibility and extensive green space networks in enhancing overall urban quality of life (Larson et al., 2016). These findings suggest that policymakers and urban planners should prioritize equitable access and enhancement of park quality to promote sustainable community well-being and social equity (Zhang et al., 2024). The urban parks provide essential green spaces that promote physical activity, facilitate social interactions, and support cultural engagement, all of which are foundational to enhancing the well-being and quality of life of urban residents across different ages, abilities, and cultural backgrounds (Cui et al., 2024; Jang et al., 2024; Stodolska et al., 2011; Wojnowska-Heciak et al., 2022).

Sustainable public park development in Bangkok can be effectively integrated with cultural tourism promotion by adopting comprehensive models that align with the four pillars of sustainable development—economic, cultural, environmental, and social sustainability. Sustainable cultural tourism emphasizes protecting and valuing cultural heritage while respecting environmental limits and local cultural integrity, which is essential in a city like Bangkok with its rich heritage and rapid urbanization (Sihombing et al., 2024).

Further, urban tourism development frameworks within Thailand highlight the importance of integrating sustainable tourism policies with urban planning that includes strong stakeholder participation. Research from Thai cities such as Chiang Mai and Phuket suggests that sustainable urban tourism development requires coordination between multiple sectors and actors, focusing on integrating policy, culture, environment, and economic benefits holistically. A similar approach can be adapted to Bangkok's public park system, fostering parks as vibrant cultural and recreational hubs that serve both residents and tourists (Koodsela et al., 2019).

Comparative studies of sustainable urban tourism also note the necessity of balancing different sustainability dimensions and engaging local communities and businesses. For example, Ljubljana's urban tourism model integrates social, economic, and environmental considerations and prioritizes cultural and green tourism, demonstrating that multi-dimensional stakeholder coordination can enhance the value of urban green spaces as cultural and recreational sites (Grah et al., 2020).

Key models and processes for Bangkok should include strategic communication to promote cultural heritage conservation and sustainable tourism. This involves educating visitors about cultural values and building mutually beneficial relationships among cultural sites, destination management organisations, local communities, and other stakeholders. Effective communication can enhance visitor perceptions and support the sustainable use of park spaces as cultural centres (Radjabov & Terruel Serrano, 2024). Incorporating traditional cultural values and local arts into public park development can help sustain both culture and tourism. Examples from other Asian countries show that protecting cultural expressions within tourism frameworks produces economic and community benefits. Applying these ideas to Bangkok's urban parks can add unique cultural elements to green spaces, attracting tourists and locals while maintaining identity and encouraging socio-economic development (Novita et al., 2024). Overall, sustainable public park development in Bangkok that promotes cultural tourism should rely on participatory, community-driven planning that incorporates the pillars of sustainability, stakeholder interests, strategic communication, and cultural preservation. This comprehensive approach can transform parks into vibrant cultural and recreational spaces aligned with Thailand's socio-cultural and environmental contexts.

Research on sustainable park management and cultural tourism often consider these areas separately, overlooking their vital connection, especially in Bangkok. Studies on sustainable cultural heritage tourism highlight that collaborative strategies with local community involvement are crucial for success. For instance, at Sukhothai Historical Park, sustainable management boosts the local economy and preserves culture, yet heritage tourism advantages are constrained because it is primarily managed by the government with limited community participation and poor coordination across sectors (Esichaikul & Chansawang, 2022). The link between cultural heritage preservation and tourism promotion is also evident outside Bangkok, illustrating that community involvement enhances sustainable tourism through greater ownership and collaboration among multiple stakeholders (Thananusak & Suriyankietkaew, 2023). Additionally, sustainable cultural heritage tourism must strike a balance between conservation and development, employing modern non-invasive technologies to showcase cultural experiences without damaging sites. For example, Mérida's UNESCO World Heritage designation demonstrates how technological integration can support Bangkok's heritage parks (Rueda Márquez De La Plata et al., 2022).

Other studies emphasise that sustainable tourism requires comprehensive quality indicators that assess tourists' experiences along with the physical and cultural integrity of heritage sites. This ensures management strategies focus on both visitor satisfaction and preservation (Alazaizeh et al., 2018). Likewise, integrated cultural heritage tourism marketing frameworks based on sustainable principles aim to preserve authenticity while promoting tourism. These frameworks can help develop holistic approaches that combine park management with cultural tourism promotion (Chhabra, 2010).

Research on Thailand's tourism initiatives highlights that successful models of sustainable tourism depend on strong leadership and active local community involvement to preserve cultural heritage and enhance tourism

benefits. These factors are especially vital for Bangkok, where they have been managed separately (Thananusak & Suriyankietkaew, 2023). The literature emphasises the need to combine sustainable park management with cultural tourism promotion through community engagement, leadership, technological innovation, and collaboration among multiple stakeholders. However, in Bangkok, this integration remains underdeveloped, revealing a significant gap in both research and practice in recognising and harnessing the interdependence of these areas for comprehensive sustainable urban and tourism growth.

Sustainable park practices play a critical role in reinforcing local cultural identity and act as catalysts for tourism development, which current models often overlook. Sustainable cultural tourism, a key aspect of these practices, emphasizes the preservation and valorization of cultural heritage while ensuring environmental respect and community involvement. This approach aligns tourism with broader sustainable development goals, fostering economic resilience, social cohesion, and environmental conservation. By integrating cultural heritage protection and sustainable tourism strategies, urban parks can serve multifunctional purposes—conserving cultural identity and stimulating local economies through tourism (Sihombing et al., 2024).

Community participation is essential in sustainable heritage tourism, as seen in cases like Sukhothai Historical Park, where local involvement in park management supports cultural and economic benefits. However, there is often untapped potential in fully leveraging archaeological and cultural heritage for broader tourism development, suggesting a need for more inclusive and collaborative governance models that enhance community voice and multi-sector engagement (Esichaikul & Chansawang, 2022). Effective sustainable park practices must overcome barriers such as limited community participation and ensure cultural heritage is integrated as a pillar in urban planning for equitable

access to cultural and recreational resources, thereby promoting social cohesion and resilience in urban environments (Moser et al., 2024).

Furthermore, sustainable tourism development that respects and preserves local identity improves the authenticity of cultural experiences, which is attractive to tourists and benefits local communities economically. Cases like Bali illustrate how tourism can both preserve and transform cultural identity, balancing economic advantages with cultural integrity through stakeholder collaboration (Mahendra, 2024). Similarly, the development of place identity through culturally significant products, such as local gastronomy, demonstrates how embedding cultural heritage into tourism appeals can enhance rural and urban tourism alike, fostering a deeper connection between visitors and local culture (Vujko et al., 2025).

Integrating culture in sustainable urban park management supports multifunctional urban spaces that offer recreational, educational, and cultural benefits. This integration helps to promote equitable access to cultural resources while enhancing tourism that is sensitive to local identities and sustainability principles. Policymaking and strategic planning should focus on inclusive community involvement, protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and innovative tourism products to generate broader socio-economic and environmental benefits (Moser et al., 2024; Wani et al., 2025).

Addressing the gap in current models by embedding sustainable park practices that reinforce local cultural identity can maximise the multifunctional benefits of urban parks. It fosters sustainable cultural tourism as a driver of local economic development while ensuring equitable access to cultural and recreational resources. This approach enhances social cohesion, preserves authenticity, and supports resilient, inclusive urban environments (Esichaikul & Chansawang, 2022; Mahendra, 2024; Moser et al., 2024; Sihombing et al., 2024; Wani et al., 2025).

To address these issues, this study adopts a conceptual framework centered on the three dimensions of sustainable development—social, economic, and environmental—and their intersection with cultural ecosystem services. This framework provides a holistic lens to analyze how urban parks contribute to community well-being, economic vitality through tourism, and environmental health, while simultaneously fostering cultural identity. International precedents such as New York’s High Line, Singapore’s Bishan Park, and Seoul’s Cheonggyecheon Park illustrate innovative transformations of urban infrastructure into vibrant public spaces that integrate ecological restoration, community engagement, and cultural programming, enhancing urban livability and attracting tourism. Similarly, Taiwan’s Creative Parks demonstrate how cultural policy can leverage public spaces to foster creativity and showcase local arts.

In Bangkok, large parks such as Lumpini and Benjakitti serve as critical green spaces with high visitation and diverse activities. However, their development must evolve to better integrate sustainable practices with cultural tourism promotion, addressing infrastructure, accessibility, and programming gaps. This study thus aims to analyze the context and potential of public parks in Bangkok conducive to sustainable development, synthesize processes supporting cultural tourism, and develop a model tailored to the city’s unique cultural and urban environment.

By focusing on this nexus, the research seeks to contribute actionable insights for policymakers, urban planners, and park managers to enhance the multifunctional value of Bangkok’s public parks, ensuring they serve as inclusive, sustainable, and culturally vibrant spaces for residents and visitors alike.

## Objectives

1. To analyze the context and potential of public parks in Bangkok that are conducive to sustainable park development.
2. To synthesize the processes of sustainable public park development in Bangkok that support the promotion of cultural tourism.
3. To study models of sustainable public park development in Bangkok that facilitate the promotion of cultural tourism.

## Literature Review

### 1. Planning and development of urban parks under the concept of sustainable development

Satterthwaite (1999) identified that parks can contribute to sustainable development when they consist of: 1) responding to the needs and preferences of people; 2) conserving the natural environment at local, regional, and national levels; and 3) promoting valuable cultural traditions. The principles of sustainable development should be considered and applied in the planning and development process of urban parks to support quality of life and mental well-being for city residents who live and work near parks (M. Suhardi, 2016). Urban green parks contribute to the sustainability of ecosystems, and play an important role in providing environmental services such as air and water filtration, wind and noise filtering, and stabilization of climatic conditions. In addition, they provide social and psychological services that are essential for the well-being of the public. The use of parks and green spaces can reduce stress, bring a sense of peace and relaxation, enhance good mental health, and promote the development of social relationships. Therefore, maintaining accessible and usable urban parks is vital for sustaining urban community ecosystems (G. Cranz, M, 2004).

Sustainable urban area development should be based on a balanced relationship between human needs and the intrinsic value of the environment that is connected to biodiversity (D. Maguelonne, 2006). To achieve this balance, the design and development of parks must adhere to the three dimensions of sustainable development: social, economic, and environmental—simultaneously (L. Luis, S. Raúl, P. Thomas, 2007).

## **2. The benefits of sustainable urban park development**

Well-designed, well-maintained public parks that are adapted to users' needs and to the natural environment provide usable green spaces that positively impact both humans and the natural environment. Urban parks also contribute to the improvement of physical and mental health by serving as areas that purify the air and preserve biodiversity (L. Luis, S. Raúl, P. Thomas, 2007). Moreover, improving the quality of urban parks to meet users' needs and balance with the natural environment generates economic benefits, particularly by promoting tourism due to the increased number of visitors. This can create opportunities, generate jobs, and increase the value of land and assets for the area and surrounding communities (D. Nigel, S. Carys, W. Helen, 2002).

Furthermore, urban parks may have educational benefits, as they can be used as outdoor classrooms for schools and universities for environmental studies or research projects. The aim of such educational experiences is to connect young people with the natural world so they understand the value and importance of a sustainable environment. Thus, city parks can be seen as open laboratories for biologists, geographers, environmental scientists, as well as social scientists.

## **3. The Situation of Public Parks in Thailand**

Public parks in Bangkok have a significantly lower ratio of park space to population than the standard requirement. In some districts, residents do not

have even a single park for relaxation and recreation. Existing parks also do not follow a hierarchical system, making it impossible to provide services for every demographic and age group. Therefore, it is critically necessary to increase the number and distribution of public parks (Amornrat Kritayanawat, 1983).

However, large parks in Bangkok can accommodate more activities and cater to more people, such as Rommaninat Park, commonly known as the “Old Prison.” This newly established park covers about 30 rai (approximately 12 acres), and the original prison buildings have been preserved as a museum. A skateboard area was added after analysis showed that children and youth in the area prefer active pursuits. There’s also a basketball court, which was not present in the past—previously, there were only running tracks. The park now features fitness stations and a health garden, with various activities being incorporated. As a result, public parks are no longer just for decorative purposes; they now incorporate educational aspects via the museum, and more sports facilities are being introduced. Other areas are designated for relaxation with trees, fountains, and benches.

Lumpini Park, on the other hand, was originally designed for relaxation, with winding paths to mimic a natural landscape. However, as it has been gradually improved, more public activities have been added, such as running tracks, bike paths, sports fields, gyms, meeting halls, a public library, event pavilions, a ballroom (which was later removed), an outdoor concert stage, and ponds offering rental bikes and boats. This shows that there is now a greater variety of activities to meet the growing needs of the public today. In recent years, new parks have been established by maximizing the use of existing resources while trying to minimize expenditures, since public parks are limited by government budgets. Design is gradually enhanced to add facilities that were previously lacking, such as sports areas, volleyball courts, basketball courts, and football fields, by adapting land for maximum benefit. For example, Suan Rot Fai

(Railway Park) was converted from a golf course with minimal alterations to the original landscape, and there was no demolition to rebuild anything new.

Public parks in Bangkok have high potential for accommodating recreational activities for visitors. Overall, visits to public parks such as Lumpini Park reveal that the most common use is walking or jogging for exercise, followed by sitting and chatting for relaxation (Thidarat Saenphim, 2016). In addition, visitors participate in various club activities organized within the parks, and there is also a social need for people to interact and converse with other park users (Parinya Manprasert, 2009).

The main mission of large public parks is to maintain infrastructure to ensure readiness for use, which is a key plan for park development. This ensures that parks are ready, suitable, beneficial to the public, and have the capacity to accommodate the maximum number of users in all groups. This process starts by upgrading essential infrastructure systems, including underground drainage, drain covers, walkways, underground electrical systems, and embankments to maintain order and safety for park users. During such upgrades, work areas are sectioned off and securely fenced for public safety. Additionally, ramps along walkways and into buildings are improved to better accommodate wheelchair users, following Universal Design principles (Newswit, 2019).

With limited budgets, the primary focus is often only on maintaining the readiness of park facilities (Office of the Education Council, 2005), to simply enable public access, which in turn limits the creativity and responsiveness of parks to the needs of modern society. As a result, activities may lack diversity and do not fully align with the needs of the general public. Under such budgetary constraints, public parks mostly serve as venues for various organizations to conduct their desired activities, catering mainly to specific groups rather than reaching a wide range of users. For example, parks may be opened for the

Community Development Department to hold vocational training activities, for private companies to organize walk rallies for their employees, for businesses to hold corporate social responsibility (CSR) events, or for government agencies to conduct fitness tests for personnel (Office of the Education Council, 2005).

However, some public parks, such as Lumpini Park, which can be seen as a miniature urban society, serve as social centers for people of all ages, genders, occupations, positions, and income levels. It can be said that Lumpini Park is an ideal venue for a wide variety of activities, whether they are educational, recreational, exercise or sports related. In addition, many special events are held there on various occasions, such as exhibitions or educational displays in different fields, fitness activities, music in the park, the Thailand Tourism Festival, the Bangkok Street Show, religious events, and political activities. However, the issue is that there are relatively few activities compared to the number and needs of Lumpini Park users, who seek greater variety. Most people also do not interact or communicate much with other park visitors. (Phongsathorn Netvichian, 2009)

#### **4. The Transmission of Culture for Tourism**

Thailand possesses a rich wealth of arts and culture, akin to valuable assets that have been accumulated over generations and have gained substantial value. The preservation and transmission of Thai arts and culture are therefore of utmost importance in maintaining the unique Thai identity. This identity is expressed through Thai customs, traditions, beliefs, and local wisdom that are passed down from one generation to the next. Moreover, the value of arts and culture holds immense economic significance, serving as assets that can generate income, improve societal well-being, and promote stability. Culture thus acts as a mechanism for bringing revenue into the country and distributing wealth to local communities.

Thailand has implemented policies to promote community-based tourism as a service industry that generates significant national income. By leveraging cultural capital to enhance community tourism, added value is

created through cultural tourism, utilizing local resources such as natural attractions, cultural heritage, community history, handicrafts, and local customs and traditions as starting points for tourism development. This is done within the framework of sustainable management, directly benefiting local economies. Thailand is blessed with abundant resources, both natural and cultural attractions, awaiting development as creative assets, and further advancement into the "Creative Industry." This refers to groups of production activities that rely primarily on creativity (Department of Cultural Promotion, 2019).

The value and beauty of culture inspire appreciation, understanding, and appropriate behaviour when people have the opportunity to experience various cultural spaces. This is made possible through effective and engaging cultural communication processes. Cultural communication is an integral part of managing cultural heritage, functioning as a process of interpreting and conveying "messages" or "information" to the audience. Storytelling, through interpretation, helps explain and communicate understanding within society.

Therefore, cultural interpretation is an activity that serves as an intermediary for communication between senders and receivers, ensuring mutual understanding and raising awareness of cultural values. To achieve effective cultural interpretation, mutual understanding between the communicator and the audience is essential. This depends on factors related to specific skills and methods that enable viewers and listeners to reach a common understanding. Such management of culture, aimed at conserving cultural heritage, can thus proceed smoothly (Phonlapas Unaprom, 2013).

At present, communication technology can elevate cultural interpretation in innovative and engaging ways, leading to high effectiveness in imparting knowledge to audiences. Additionally, visitors to cultural products—such as archaeological sites, permanent cultural exhibitions, or educational venues like

schools, libraries, and museums—can benefit from a variety of media used as channels for cultural interpretation. This includes audiovisual media, educational activities, captivating presentations, and the use of light, color, and sound to create immersive cultural experiences, both tangible and intangible. These are delivered by experts skilled in cultural transmission, through diverse activities and cultural exhibitions. Currently, the organization of exhibitions considers the design of displays to ensure that visitors and audiences achieve understanding and excitement.

## Methodology

This research is qualitative research, which consists of documentary research. It is a research process that aims to synthesize, analyze, and develop models of public parks that effectively address the needs of people in both the present and the future equally, while also creating value in cultural tourism. Public parks and people in modern society should be developed in a balanced way that harmonizes people, nature, and the environment. The researcher aims to explore information regarding the development of public parks in terms of their physical design as well as creative cultural activities, including models for the development of public parks both domestically and internationally, with a focus on sustainable development issues. The content also covers the design of public parks in modern society that are open and attractive in order to encourage regular public use. In addition, the study delves deeply into the problems of public park management in order to find approaches to elevate the quality of service provision using information from statistics, research works, theses, newspaper articles, and various data distributed through electronic media on the Internet, such as the websites of various public parks.

The researcher selected case studies of two city parks: Lumpini Park and Benjakitti Park, using the criteria that they are public parks located in the inner

districts of Bangkok, as these areas are easily accessible to urban users who are diverse in both their characteristics and activities. These parks show a tendency to be further developed into sustainable public parks and are considered open parks (general public parks under the management of the Public Parks Office, Department of Environment), as opposed to closed parks. They are parks with high visitation statistics, diverse usage of space, and a variety of physical features.

This study primarily utilizes qualitative research methods, including both participant and non-participant observation, interviews with landscape architects conducted individually and through focus group discussions, brainstorming sessions with experts in sustainable park design and cultural management, as well as document study. Both document-based and field-based data collection methods are employed as follows: (1) Four experts in sustainable public park design; (2) Four experts in cultural management, with field data collected via interviews and brainstorming sessions; (3) Twenty general public park users.

## Results

### **1. The context and potential of public parks in Thailand that support sustainable public park development**

Both public parks possess high physical readiness, with spaces that can adequately accommodate the number of people who come to use the facilities for various activities. The two parks share the same objective: to maintain a clean, pleasant, and beautiful environment, emphasizing the creation of as much green space as possible. However, they also open their areas for organizing group activities that attract large gatherings of people. In addition, they have continually prepared spaces to carry out a variety of ongoing activities, including regular activities such as running, walking, relaxing, cycling for exercise, as well as special

activities such as art and cultural events, volunteer projects, and social service activities, which are organized on various occasions.

## **2. The Process of Sustainable Development of Public Parks in Thailand to Promote Cultural Tourism**

The majority of public park users in Thailand are aged between 21 and 40. Among the parks studied, Benjakitti Park saw the highest proportion of students and university attendees, while at Lumpini Park, the largest user group consisted of merchants or business professionals. Most users have an income ranging from 20,001 to 40,000 baht and typically use the park 1–2 times per week. The predominant modes of transportation are private cars for Lumpini Park and walking for Benjakitti Park. Most users travel less than 10 minutes or, at most, 30 minutes to reach the parks. The peak hours at Lumpini Park are from 5:00 to 8:00 a.m., while Benjakitti Park is most popular between 5:01 and 8:00 p.m. Visitors usually spend one to two hours per visit.

The key reasons people visit Lumpini Park are its pleasant atmosphere and convenient accessibility. Walking and running trails around the main fields or gardens are the most popular areas, frequented for exercise, relaxation, picnics, reading, socializing, or simply enjoying the view. Most visitors engage in physical activities like exercise, relaxation, sitting, picnicking, or reading—these are the primary activities for regular users. Simultaneously, this group also participates in events held in the parks, such as cultural or traditional ceremonies, merit-making and alms-giving, significant commemorative events, and special activities related to arts, culture, environmental conservation, or community service.

Therefore, for public parks to remain sustainable, it is vital to maintain them in a state ready for use, manage water sources to keep them clean, preserve cleanliness and safety, and ensure an attractive, shaded environment. These factors are crucial in supporting and promoting cultural tourism. Cultural tourism activities are often organized as festivals or special events hosted by

various agencies, especially the Ministry of Tourism and Sports and the Ministry of Culture.

Lumphini Park, located in the country's main business district at the city center, is designed to offer urban residents a tranquil refuge amid greenery. This iconic park is a regular spot for activities such as walking, running, club gatherings, and occasional special events. The number of visitors has increased as transportation has become more convenient, especially with the arrival of the BTS Skytrain and MRT subway, leading to the introduction of restrictions on access by private vehicles.

Lumphini Park is open to all forms of public activities, including political rallies and demonstrations on various issues. In terms of environmental changes, Lumphini Park has undergone continuous development, with the most significant being the planting of 6,105 trees, providing ample shade throughout the park. However, the pace of upgrading buildings and facilities has been somewhat slow due to limited government budgets.

For the ongoing development of Lumphini Park to serve urban dwellers, the master plan and historical foundations are respected. Any changes take into account the surrounding environment and the evolving needs of users. There is a focus on introducing new activities catering to the young, such as knowledge-based, arts, and cultural initiatives, or activities mindful of the city's environmental context. Furthermore, adjustments and improvements should be informed by public feedback, ensuring Lumphini Park remains a sustainable space for Bangkok residents for the next 100 years.

In the case of Benjakitti Park, development to meet community needs began with its design as an ecological park under the Wetland Park concept. Over 7,000 trees have been preserved and planted, providing a new green space that connects Bangkok residents through collaborative efforts of individuals and

organizations specializing in park design. The guiding principle is to root the park in Bangkok's heritage, combining traditional wisdom in its development and renovation, with a special emphasis on solving urban water management issues such as flooding and wastewater. This sustainable approach reduces maintenance costs by prioritizing plants suited to the park's environment and taking the natural ecosystem into account, enabling harmonious coexistence of people and nature. The park's spatial design supports convenience and comfort, expanding capacity for more visitors with features like the Skywalk, allowing guests to take in wide views of the entire park.

Benjakitti Park's development process emphasizes two key aspects:

1) Conservation: Benjakitti Park is developed as an urban forest, comprising various forest types such as mangrove, dry evergreen, agroforestry, home gardens, lowland, and freshwater swamp forests. It features four ponds that serve as urban water retention basins and reservoirs for use during the dry season, as well as wastewater treatment. The third pond, raised on a mound and dotted with small tree islands, helps retain moisture in the soil. The abundant greenery, with its broad plant diversity, functions as a "sponge garden" to absorb rainwater and purify it through phytoremediation. From plant selection to landscaping for water retention, these measures help reduce long-term forest maintenance costs. Thus, Benjakitti Forest Park prioritizes its ecosystem, as a sustainable and ready-to-use space can host various activities, including those promoting tourism. If the area is not well maintained—lacking shade, with trash, inadequate facilities, or poor safety—it cannot effectively attract public participation in such activities.

2) Creativity: Both the park's infrastructure and creative activities serve to connect people with their environment, with nature in the park acting as a medium. Environmental awareness and conservation knowledge are imparted through engaging recreational activities in different formats, with opportunities for

public and organizational participation to ensure sustainability through community involvement.

Benjakitti Park is ready to host cultural and artistic events that both create and promote tourism, such as music in the park, open-air movie screenings, and art exhibits, all of which bring cultural vibrancy and interest. However, designing such cultural events to optimally promote tourism may require experienced cultural activity designers to create even more engaging initiatives in the future.

### **3. Sustainable public park development models in Thailand that promote cultural tourism**

The sustainable development model of Lumpini Park that fosters cultural tourism begins by expanding spaces to allow for a variety of enjoyable activities for visitors. Multi-purpose areas include recreation centers, clubs, and associations, all surrounded by expansive green spaces—with ancient trees, a wide array of flowers, forest gardens, and ponds seamlessly integrated with elements of art and culture. This transformation is aimed at making better use of Lumpini Park, as some areas were previously left neglected and unused. The current development also introduces new zones for paddle boarding, kayaking, and surf skating to meet the needs of a younger generation seeking diverse exercise activities, beyond the traditional options.

#### **The improvement plan begins with five key areas:**

1. Revamping spaces for cultural activities in the city, transforming them into art performance areas and learning centers around the plaza near the entertainment building. The performance stage will be redesigned with circular seating that can accommodate over 25,000 people. Along the urban agriculture plaza, flower species will be planted throughout, with added relaxation areas for visitors to rest.

2. Sustainable green space development focuses on enhancing the forest garden for nature-based learning, featuring various types of forest areas and a simulated eco-system waterfall. This also helps address urban environmental issues, such as dust.

3. Creating diverse activity zones, including sports centers, grass fields, pet-friendly areas, art plazas, and multiple recreation zones. Improvements will also be made to walking paths, running tracks, and bike lanes. There will be a special pavilion for running with friends, where visually impaired people can enjoy exercise together with their companions.

4. Upgrading park infrastructure and utility systems: Roads and walkways from the Gate at Rama VI to Witthayu Road will be renovated, overhead cables will be buried, medians will be removed, and water circulation and lighting systems in the ponds and park will be enhanced.

5. Establishing connections to neighboring green spaces, such as the Green Bridge and Benjakitti Park, improving the convenience of walking and cycling routes between these parks.

For the sustainable development model of Benjakitti Forest Park aimed at promoting cultural tourism, emphasis remains on preserving the forest and natural ecosystems. Spaces are designed to meet user requirements with integrated pathways for both cycling and walking/running, available in widths of 3, 6, and 8 meters to allow for varied use. Features include bird islands, a greenhouse, a natural history library, a cultural arts building, and sports fields nestled within the forest park. There are ample facilities, such as restrooms every 200 meters and wheelchair-accessible ramps, making it a truly inclusive forest park for everyone in Bangkok.

The space is allocated as follows: 73% is dedicated green space, comprising wetland forest, regular forest, tropical lowland forest, lawns, ponds; 17% for cultural activities, including the Royal Honor Garden, exhibition zones, music clubs, and cultural centers; 7% for sports activities, with various sports

fields such as soccer, basketball, tennis, petanque, takraw, multipurpose areas; and 2% for art-related activities, with art plazas, art centers, and sculpture islands.

## Discussion

The discussion of the research findings focuses on the context and potential of public parks in Thailand to support sustainable park development. The results found that both parks possess high physical readiness, with facilities and equipment generally well-prepared. Although some equipment and materials are somewhat old, they remain in usable condition; this issue is related to the allocated budget. In terms of environmental management and green space maintenance, both parks are well cared for. This is largely because they open their spaces to volunteer groups from various organizations to regularly participate in activities such as tree planting, tree maintenance, and continuous cleaning of park areas. This provides an advantage and benefits the park management as they do not need to allocate a budget for tree care, thanks to the regular presence of environmental volunteer groups.

The consistent upkeep of green areas ensures that both parks maintain cleanliness, shade, and beauty, which is considered a primary importance for parks. This aligns with the research of Rujanamporn Kasakesemsuk, who stated that communities with good environments must have a variety of recreational spaces and appropriate density, with a balance between green areas and other types of developed spaces. Additionally, the concept of sustainable design is being applied to park design as well.

The research also found that both parks are attempting to limit the spaces allocated for private car parking, encouraging users to transition to comprehensive public transportation options such as the skytrain, subway, and buses.

This corresponds with the research by Wathanya Namburi, who studied the suitability of developing a public transportation system in Khao Yai National Park. Tourists tend to prefer using their own private vehicles to travel here, resulting in traffic congestion, particularly during festival periods when the problem intensifies, leading to pollution and various environmental issues. These problems indicate that it is appropriate to change the mode of transportation for tourists by designing a public transportation system to replace private vehicles. The public transportation system that is designed must be able to accommodate and respond to the needs of tourists as well.

Research findings reveal that convenient and rapid access to public parks is a crucial factor in the decision to visit them. At present, both parks have nearby electric train stations, which provide convenience and allow for quick access, effectively meeting the needs of urban residents, especially the younger generation. This is consistent with the research of Thanakorn Jutasri, which indicates that the urgency of daily life is linked to the characteristics and diversity of land use and activities. To foster a vibrant atmosphere, it is therefore necessary to develop public transportation systems to increase accessibility, as well as to improve sidewalks or road surfaces for user convenience and to meet modern preferences.

In terms of the process of sustainable development of public parks in Thailand that support the promotion of cultural tourism, research findings show that parks give priority to the maintenance of green spaces above all else, as green spaces are the identity and charm of public parks. Although promoting tourism is not within the primary scope of park management authorities, both parks still allow space for various networks to continuously host art and cultural activities, especially during tourism promotion festivals by the Tourism Authority of Thailand, which selects Lumpini Park as the venue for annual New Year events. These frequent activities serve to highlight the charm of green spaces and the vibrancy of the events through regionally themed cultural festivals.

It is gratifying that research on sustainable development of public parks in ways that support cultural tourism shows both parks have opened spaces to present culture. Lumpini Park, for example, has transformed areas for urban cultural activities, art performances, and learning centers near the entertainment building's plaza, and redesigned the stage area with circular seating that can accommodate more than 25,000 people. Meanwhile, Benjakitti Park has reserved 17% of its total area for cultural activities. This means both parks have fully opened up space for the promotion of cultural tourism. What must be further considered is how to organize continuous and sustainable cultural tourism activities in the future.

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