Information Practices of the Buddhist Temple

Mahamewnawa Asapuwa

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Certificate of Original Authorship

I, PETHIGAMAGE KURUWITAGE LAMITH LAKNUWAN PEREREA declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Arts and Social Science at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Table of Contents

List of images and tables

Abstract

This study used an ethnographic approach to explore the information practices of members of a religious organisation, the globalised Mahamevnawa Buddhist Temple. It was informed by an information practices theoretical perspective, complementing theoretical and practical work from Schatzki, Bourdieu, Lloyd and Olsson, and Gherardi, with work from a variety of disciplines, including Castells' work on networked society, Sassen's work on globalised organisations and Sack's work on space and place. The study's concern is with three aspects of this approach: what are the practices of monks and devotees of the Temple, what are the outcomes of these practices and how do monks and devotees understand the notion of the Temple. In this insider study, data was gathered from participant observation, interviews with both monks and devotees and email follow-ups, and analysis of the online presence of the temple through its website and other social media sites. The findings show that participants' information practices lead to a range of outcomes, expressed in terms of the Bourdieusian notion of capital, with karmic capital emerging as a very important outcome of these practices. They also show how participants think the Temple exists not just in space but also in time, through temporary place. A key contribution of this study, situated in the context of the non-Western context of the Sri Lankan Buddhist diaspora, is its challenges to Western assumptions about information practices and their outcomes.

Chapter 1 Introduction

This study aims to investigate the information practices of monks and devotees of a temple called Mahamevnawa Asapuwa. The temple is physically located on the outskirts of Sydney, serving the Sri Lankan Buddhist diasporic community, but it exists as part of a global organisation, with its headquarters in Sri Lanka. The researcher is a member of this diasporic community and has been a devotee of the temple. This gives him a unique position to explore and understand the interactions through which the information practices are evident.

Research problem and questions

The study draws on a practice theoretical approach and is informed by practice theorists inside and outside of information studies. Practices emerge from a complex web of interactions and relationships between information, people and place, that Gherardi (2001 p.137) described as "a bricolage of material, mental, social and cultural resources". Savolainen (2008, p. 3) identified information practices as "invisible".

The study broadly adopts Lloyd's definition of (2011, p 285), information practices as:

> *"An array of information-related activities and skills, constituted, justified and organised through the arrangements of a social site, and mediated socially and materially with the aim of producing shared understanding and mutual agreement about ways of knowing and recognising how performance is enacted, enabled and constrained in collective situated action".*

It seeks to go beyond this definition by re-positioning the outputs of information-related practices in terms of Bourdieu's work. Bourdieu asserted that some form of capital was

the output of people's actions, and that is important to the conceptualisation of information practices in this study as information practices research to this point has been largely limited to sense-making, embodiments and so on. This study opens new avenues for information practices research with its focus on the development of capitals.

Capital represents the outcomes of practices of people associated with the temple. Bourdieu's (1986), emphasis on the uses and effects of capitals must be understood in the peculiar space of fields as every action has its own value. The temple practices are varied, including those that lead to economic capital and cultural capital. Bourdieu's theory is important to understand the social practices of the temple. Bourdieu (1986) states that sociological work needs words to specify the nature and peculiarities of the infinite varieties and local combination of capitals and social worlds. A challenge in this study is to find appropriate words to specify the particular outcomes or capitals emerging from the practices observed.

The study brings a range of conceptual approaches to bear on the understanding of the arrangements of the social site. These include Castells' networked society; Sassen's model of the globalised organisation; and Robert Sack's notion that place is socially constructed. In bringing these together, the study will explore how these potentially contradictory or at least competing concepts can be used together to better understand the information practices within the temple community.

To understand the complex interrelationships of a practice approach, the researcher begins by asking the main research questions:

1. What are the information practices of the globalised Mahamevnawa Temple?
2. How do these practices manifest in the temple as a social site?
3. What are the outcomes of these practices?

The description of the temple

The research centred on the information practices of monks and devotees of the Buddhist temple called “Mahamevnawa Asapuwa”, established in Sri Lanka in 1999 and now operating with branches in several countries, including Australia. This temple makes extensive use of a variety of mechanisms for spreading information and communicating with devotees across the divides of a diasporic community.

The Mahamevnawa Asapuwa monastery is now one of the most popular temples in Sri Lanka. Buddhist Temples have been in Sri Lanka more than 2000 years and there are temples for each village. Some of them are famous as they are ancient and considered very sacred. But within a short period of time, Mahamevnawa Asapuwa temple has overtaken the popularity of others and claims millions of devotees. Currently, this monastery has more than forty branches in Sri Lanka and overseas. This expansion has happened in a noticeably short time. There are 33 branches for monks and 6 for nuns in Sri Lanka itself, and other branches in India, Canada, UK, Germany, Italy, Dubai, Korea, US, and Australia among other places. The temple is now operating in Cherrybrook, in the northern suburbs of Sydney and there are many pop-up temples throughout NSW. They vary from regular meeting places to community halls, house gatherings, and even hired reception halls for weekly, monthly, annual celebrations and activities. Hereafter I will use “MA” to abbreviate Mahamevnawa Asapuwa (http://english.mahamevnawa.lk/branches/).

The MA Temple was founded by Ven. Kiribathgoda Gnanananda Thero and the order counts its history from the laying of the foundation stone in Polgahawela, Sri Lanka on 14 August 1999. The founder was revered for his capacity to interpret the Buddha’s dharma in a way that was comprehensible to Sri Lankan Sinhalese Buddhist followers

and, through this process, he attracted many adherents within the country and overseas. He was able to expand the number of followers through the development of meditation classes, which appealed to a wide cross section of the Buddhist community. He attracted more than one hundred thousand people to a celebration of Wesak (held in the month of May), commonly known as the day that Lord Buddha was born, enlightened and passed away. In 2008, it was claimed that more than 1.1 million people attended a ceremony at the Swarnamali Stupa and worshipped throughout the night.

MA Temple as an organisation uses conventional methods such as face to face communications, distributing magazines, papers and books to spread dharma news across the world. It also uses information and communications technologies such as multi language websites, media networks, online TV, Radio, email, Facebook, Live web casts, YouTube videos, online forums, Skype, digital magazines and so on.

The importance of the temple as a "site" for information practices

Temples (and other places of worship) have been geographically dispersed for millennia and they have been the centre of gatherings of people even before the advent of industrial, post-industrial, and service societies. The operations of temples and religious organisations today are geographically dispersed and technologically enabled. These communication technologies have allowed the MA Temple studied here to adopt a technologically based network structure that is new, facilitating different kinds of information practices. Contemporary religious organisations, especially those from non-Western cultures, and their information practices have not been a significant focus in previous information practices research.

The Sydney MA Temple is a Buddhist temple as noted above. It is a one branch of a complex networked organisation. The study focuses on its information practices,

including its cultural production, consumption, experiences and the capitals that emerge from these practices, that is the products and outcome of the information practices. The participants are Theravada Buddhists of the local and diasporic community.

The MA Temple is local as well and global. Even though the temple occupies clearly demarcated spatial sites (some permanent, some temporary), the field that I am going to study depends on cultural networks spreading across various parts of the city and overseas, extending beyond the spatial limits and transcending physical boundaries. MA Temple devotees may be regular participants in the programs held in the temple premises as well as being linked into the temple through different online communication methods such as listening and watching online programs through media and the Internet, online forums, Skype, YouTube, TV and so forth.

Thus, information practices take place in physical space as well as virtual space. These spaces are not in conflict with each other, but rather, the information practices observed in these place work side by side, hand in hand, complementing one another towards the advancement of the temple. The exploration of the information practices of the temple cannot be successful without a conceptual foundation that facilitates micro and macro levels of analysis as the study attempts to untangle the complexity of the information practices by looking at these practices through different conceptual lenses.

In applying these different conceptual lenses, however, it is important to keep in mind that the practices of the temple are also intersubjective – the Temple is not only a space or place or site, it is also the monks and devotees who were participants in this study. The activities, programs, events, celebrations and so on are all occasions where devotees and monks interact. The temple as a place creates relationships between the socio-material and immaterial (symbolic) elements of practices in its own unique way

as the practices are those of a particular group of people, the Theravada Buddhist diasporic community.

The significance of this study lies within the different dimensions and settings of information practices identified in this study: local and global, formal and informal, face to face and digital, secular and non-secular, economic, informational, cultural symbolic and so on. Understanding these information practices will raise the profile of information practices research and emphasise its complex web of relations.

Information practices as the guiding theoretical framework

In the context of this study, an emphasis on information practices will provide an over-arching conceptual approach; with its focus on social sites, information practices allow a broader approach than the earlier user-centred individualistic approaches to information behaviour which narrowly focussed on the active searching of individual information and provided with only a limited view of the complex relationship people have with information (Olsson, 2016). However, Lloyd and Olsson's practice-based approach is more relevant for this study. For them, practices are an object/field of study in their own right. Olsson and Lloyd noted, (2017) "Practices are prefigured over time "and "therefore reflect the various knowledge and ways of knowing in a social setting". This builds on Lloyd's position (2007) that understanding the relationship between people and information is important. She (2010b) stated language, tools, symbols, values, perceptions, roles, regulations, or rules of thumb are significant in terms of information practices. In a paper written with Moring, Lloyd (2013) also argues that social practices, produced within a specific setting, create different meanings over time through means of social interaction (Moring and Lloyd 2010, p. 285).

Emphasising the importance of the information practice approach, Savolainen, (2007, p. 120) suggested that this approach "shifts the focus away from the information behaviour, action, motives and monological individuals". Information practices also focuses holistically on the interaction between people, information and knowledge in different settings, with an emphasis on how information activities are socially constituted, conditioned and negotiated in practices. Talja (2005, 2006) also states the notion of information practices is a more "sociologically and contextually oriented line of research".

Lloyd's (2007) emphasis on the understanding of the relationship between people and information is important. Information and knowledge cannot always be effectively expressed in written form (Lloyd 2010a), so that embodied information practices are rich sites of knowledge. However, these practices are not easy to observe. Gherardi (2012) advised that practice theory applied in the context of organisations and workplaces was concerned with the "fine details of how people use the resources available to them to accomplish intelligent actions, and how they give those actions sense and meaning"; in this context, she asserted (2008, p. 517) that

> *"Knowledge is not what resides in a person's head or in books to know is to be capable of participating with the requisite competence in the complex people material artefacts and activities".*

Maintaining practices requires activity and skill development and a shared understanding of what a practice involves (Schatzki, 2002). Echoing Savolainen, Olsson & Lloyd (2017) stated that "Observation provided access to tacit and contingent forms of knowledge, which were often hidden in everyday activities".

Information related practices can take many forms. The activities of the temple are the core of people's relationships and interactions. According to Schatzki (2012), intersubjective "knowing" is anchored in the activities of multiple people. People

> *"enact and recognize different identities . . . give the material world certain meanings, distribute social goods in a certain way, make certain sorts of meaningful connections in our experience, and privilege certain symbols systems and ways of knowing over others"* (Gee, 2011, p. 13).

Information practices are interdisciplinary (Jamali, 2013) and there are many conceptual frameworks and approaches to data collection and analysis within the broad practice theoretical approach. (Gherardi, 2000; Nicolini, 2013).

Taking on this interdisciplinary approach, this study draws on a range of concepts from scholars who are not practice theorists in order to inform and extend its understanding of these practices and their outcomes as well as of site. These include the work of the social geographer, Sack (2003), and his findings related to the places that creates in people's minds, Sassen's conceptual framework of globalised organisations, and Castells' focus on networks as a process.

Castells: network settings

Castells is not a practice theorist, however his work is important to this study as it deals with globalised practices of information sharing. In Castells' terms, the Temple is a place for information flows. Contemporary technologies "open up unlimited horizons of creativity and communication inviting us to the exploration of new domains of experience" (Castells 2010, p1), an approach which encourages the exploration of the information practices of the MA Temple, which is a networked organisation, that has broken away from a local place-centeredness, and from traditional modes of

communication. He explained “the network society is global society because networks have no boundaries” (2010, p. 2737). These branches of the Temple, and the monks and devotees are interconnected with purposeful, repetitive, programmable sequences of exchange and interaction between physically disjointed positions held by social actors. (Castells 2010).

However, Castells also stated a network is a “process” not a place. At the same time, he emphasised the importance of contribution to the network. As this study will demonstrate, MA Temple as a network is flexible; it is powered by microelectronics and software-based information and communication technologies such as Skype, Facebook, and email. In this way, it facilitates the interactions among and between people, contributing to the sense of collective and to some extent to the creation of capitals.

This concept of the network society and the related concepts of space of flows and space of places are relevant to this study. These devotees and monks who participated in this study are part of a Sri Lankan diaspora but using the information disseminated through information and communication technologies (ICTs), they can experience devotions as though they were in Sri Lanka, they can take part in educational and social activities with others in Australia and elsewhere in the world. Even though, on the one hand, people attending the temple are devotees and experience a range of social relationships in the physical world, on the other hand, many interactions form part of a shared process online.

Castells’ concepts of network society and networked organisation, as well as information capitalism, have direct links with people’s everyday practices and are therefore relevant to this study.

Sassen: global organisations

Sassen is also not a practice theorist. However, her concern is with globalised organisations where information is created and shared, and the strength of these organisations is in the local hubs, which are important in terms of the information practices. She argues that a global organisation is sustained by local hubs, where one finds the expertise and talent that produces higher order information and that cannot be replicated fully in an electronic space (Sassen, 2009, p. 56). This conceptual approach is relevant to a study of the MA Temple, because the monks bring their professional know how and experiences from different fields together in various ways in the local community where they are based, but at the same time are linked globally to others. The depth of expertise, talent and skills is very significant for each branch. Sassen's work is also important to this study because of her notion (2006, p. 45) that globalisation "constitutes new geographies of centrality and marginality", a concept that applies to the Temple, which is both a local and at the same time a global organisation.

Sack: places as social constructions

Sack is not an information practices researcher. But his work is of relevance to the study in the consideration of "site" and thus to the broader conceptualisation of information practices. His ideas allow one to extend existing information practices research in terms of the concept of site as he encourages researchers to think about what place is, how it is created and its effects on people's relationships. The temple grounds are places of social activities such as blood donations, working bee programs, youth programs and many others. It is a social place where people gather for a particular reason and, in this context, the relationships between monks and devotees are socially close. This is what Sack refers to as a "thick" place (2003, p. 249). On the other hand, the Temple is also global as well as virtual and the relationships between monks and devotees are socially distant and, in

that regard, the temple is a "thin" place, with people engaging in these activities are being only loosely interconnected at the same time spatially fragmented.

Sack (1980) emphasised that space is a fundamental component of people's social lives, and it is construed in different ways depending on the way people think about it. These thoughts both determine and explain people's behaviour in the place. As he explained (1980, p 312):

> *"A circle from one perspective may look like a circle, but from another may look like an ellipse, a line, and so on. Or a blind person will not see a circle at all, nor will a sighted one if there is no light. But even such matters as seeing or perceiving involve ideas, expectations, preconceptions…".*

Sack's conceptualisation of place and its use as an analytical tool will be useful in shedding light on the information practices of the temple and on the notion of site.

Conclusion

This chapter describes the context of the study: the information practices of Mahamevnawa Asapuwa temple community. It describes how the study is informed by an information practices approach and is informed by practice theorists from both inside and outside information studies. It addresses the main aims of the study and its research question/s. It introduces the background and theoretical foundations for the research. It introduces key concepts and theorists from outside information practices/practice theory that have seen significant influences on the research including Castells' space of flows and networks; Sassen's global information practices in terms of the global organisations; and Sack's concept of thick and thin places.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction

The main research question of this study is, what are the information practices of the globalised Mahamevnawa Temple? Such a study, involving a non-commercial, non-secular organisation originating from a non-Western cultural context, has rarely been undertaken before. It will require a conceptual foundation which facilitates micro and macro level analysis. This chapter will explore the conceptual foundation for this study. It will begin from the concept of information practice.

In the context of this study, an emphasis on information practices will provide an over-arching concept, encompassing casual inter-personal interactions, formalised information flows, networking at the organisational level and membership of a globalised community through three different conceptual frameworks: Manuel Castells on the space of flows and the space of places; Saskia Sassen on the globalised organisation and Robert Sack on place. Each of these will be discussed in detail below.

It will then present relevant work from the theoretical perspectives of three scholars. Manuel Castells, especially related to networking and to flow, place and spaces. Saskia Sassen's research on globalised organisations will give a base for consideration of globalisation and global connectivity in organisations. Sack's significant work on place will provide the foundation for a consideration of how people create a sense of place, and will be complemented by Karen Fisher's work on information grounds (in collaboration with others) which forms a basis for understanding some local information-based interactions.

Information practices

Before discussing information practice, it is important to dig into the deep roots of the concept of practice. Social science is at its simplest about researching what people do to help our understanding of social and organisational phenomena. Practice is understood as something that people do in 'real' or everyday life. These working life studies which have deep roots which can be traced back to some of the most important figures in the history of western thought, including Aristotle (praxis) and Marx (practice as activities, in favour of materialism and activity theory).

There has been a rapid growth in investigation of practice theories from a social science perspective. Its development has been influenced by many scholars recently in many distinct ways such as Anthony Giddens (1984), Pierre Bourdieu (1977), Bruno Latour (2005) among many others. As a result, many theoretical backgrounds have emerged, which both support and critique one another. It has also been influenced by phenomenological movements within philosophy as it developed during the late 20th century (Sandberg & Dall'Alba 2009).

*"*There is no unified practice-based approach" according to Schatzki (2001, p. 2). It is diverse and could be defined by common themes, socio-material 'assemblages' (Suchman, 2007) or 'entanglements' (Orlikowski, 2007), for example. It is connected by a complex web of similarities and covers vast areas that are interrelated and intertwining within socio- material accomplishments: the focus of the practice theoretical approach is "social accomplishment, constituted and reconstituted in every day practice" (Orlikowski, 2002, p. 252). Schatzki (2001. p. 2) emphasises that practice theory is a broadly based approach which focuses attention across vast areas of the social world such as "science, power, language, social institutions, knowledge"

phenomena and it is social/material. Other theorists define it more specifically. According to Ortner (1984, p. 159), practices occur between an actor and a system, whereas for Nicolini they are concerned with "human action and interaction". What is common to these diverse approaches is that practices are socially, rather than individually, constituted (Sandberg & Dall'Alba, 2009). Practices are a form of knowledge (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 254), emerging from repetitive and recurrent types of conduct As Nicolini, Gherardi & Yanow wrote, "It is in practice … that knowledge comes to life, stays alive and fades away" (Nicolini et al., 2003, p.26). The knowledge embedded in these practices can give people the power to do things and to think of themselves in certain ways (Nicolini, 2013), and can also be seen in Foucault's knowledge/power (Foucault, 1980).

From this brief consideration of a small number of approaches, it is possible to understand how diverse the use of the concept is. Schatzki, (2001, p. 2) does however provide a good working definition for practices as "embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organised around shared practical understandings"; further, Reckwitz (2002) emphasised its existence necessarily depends on specific interconnectedness. Nicolini (2013, p2) also emphasised that as well as differences, there are many things common in practices, including the focus on actors' activities, interactions, and performances. He stated,

> *"from this perspective the social world appears as vast array or assemblage of performances made durable by being inscribed in human bodies and minds, objects and texts, and knotted together in such a way that the results of one performance become the resource for another".*

However, practice theories do more than just describe what people do, they also extend the investigation into meaning-making, identity-forming, and order-producing activities (Chia and Holt, 2008).

Practice can also be seen as learning and know how. Sense-making constitutes an intangible mental process, or even an abstract process of coordination based on communicative processes (Weick, 1979; Hutchins, 1995; Dervin, 1999). Gherardi (2009a, p. 118) claimed "To know is to be capable of participating with the requisite competence in the complex web of relationships among people, material artefacts and activities. Acting as a competent practitioner is synonymous with knowing how to connect successfully with the field of practice".

Practices can take many different forms, varying from cooking a meal (Schatzki, 2005), scientific experiments (Pickering 1995), trading on the stock market (Schatzki, 2002), to making phone calls (Schegloff, 1986). According to Nicolini (2013, p 10), explaining practices is theorising them. But here in this study, we focus on information practices, that is how the information is generated, how it flows between people and the organisation and the site where they occur.

The notion of information practices has been emerging over the last couple of decades and has drawn attention from researchers in different fields. This has led Savolainen (2007) to describe it as an 'umbrella concept'. Cox (2013) suggested using the phrase "information in social practice", arguing that most social practices include information activities that can be seen as involving information creating, seeking, sharing or management activities in personal photography, and therefore there is no need for a new concept. Although the idea that information practices and social interactions are closely interlinked, in this study, aspects of the practice theory on which information practices

are based are particularly important as these practices focus holistically on the interaction between people, information and knowledge practices in different settings, with an emphasis on how information activities are socially constituted, conditioned and negotiated in practices (Moring & Lloyd, 2013). A useful way of drawing some boundaries around this 'umbrella concept' is to be found in Lloyd's definition identified earlier (Lloyd 2011, p. 285). These boundaries include "the arrangements of a social site", "social mediation", materiality, a purpose of "shared understanding and mutual agreement" related to ways of knowing, as well as the cultural understanding of how to behave or not to behave in a given interaction with others.

Lloyd's (2007) emphasis on understanding the relationship between people and information is important, as noted above. In addition, Gherardi (2009a, p 118) states that "…this is a complex web of relationships among people, material artefacts and activities…". Rosenbaum, (1993, p.239) also puts emphasis on social practices as, "the concrete and situated activities of interacting people, reproduced in routine social context across time and space".

With its focus on social sites, information practices allow a broader approach than the earlier user-centred approaches, which narrowly focussed on the active searching of individual information users and provided us with only a very limited view of the complex relationship people have with information (Olsson, 2016). Savolainen, (2007, p. 120) also suggests that this approach

> *"shifts the focus away from the behaviour, action, motives and monological individuals. Instead, the main attention is directed to them as members of groups and communities that constitute the context of their mundane activities".*

The Temple is a primarily a place for people to gather based on shared cultural practices across a range of subjects and interests. According to Schatzki (2012), the intersubjective "knowing" is anchored in the activities of multiple people, rather than individuals. He further claims information practices belong to a collective or a community and they persist over time. As Lloyd and Olsson note, (2017)

> *"Practices are prefigured over time (e.g., they are formed and reformed in relation to embodied knowledge)" and therefore reflect the various knowledge and ways of knowing in a social setting"* (para. 8).

Wenger (1999, p. 47) states practice connotes doing, but "[…] in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do". Fairclough (2005) places his emphasis on discourses, explaining that "people's concepts of the world they live and act within contribute to its reproduction and transformation".

Thus, socio-cultural approaches are important in any investigation of information practices (McKenzie, 2003; Savolainen, 2008). For Gherardi (2012, p. 2), a practice approach gives researchers the opportunity to focus on "the fine details" and from this to understand how people give meaning to their actions. This focus on the "fine details" enables decisions to be made on how to interpret these actions. As an example, the emphasis in the life of the Temple on online practices means that it is important not to create the idea of two separate worlds, online and offline (Rheingold 2000), a position that "makes little theoretical sense" (Walker, 2010, p. 114). This study adopts the approach advised by Bakardjieva (2009, p. 114), where "online and offline [practices] … [can be seen as] complementary records of events unfolding within the same social world and not as specimens from two different planets".

It is important to acknowledge that an information practices approach is not the only conceptual approach that could have been used. Information behaviour is one that could have been used, including studies that focus on place, such as that undertaken by Karen Fisher, Sanda Erdelez, and Lynne McKechnie (2005). Mostly these studies are limited to active seeking and making connections in related to specific information rich places (Fisher aka Pettigrew et al., 2001). This conceptual framework is more suitable for investigating how people seek, manage, distribute, and use information in everyday information seeking searching and using behaviours; these concerns are often found in work on the users of libraries (Wilson, 2016). Not only are these behaviours limited in ways of extracting information (McKenzie, 2003), but they also place limitations on accidental discoveries.

Information behaviour research only focusses on an individualistic approach which also does not consider the variety of information that individuals describe they interact with and use in their day today activities and lives, but which are not actively sought. Wilson (2006), an influential scholar in studies of information behaviour, defined information behaviour merely "in relation to sources and channels of information", ignoring that people frequently discover information in their everyday life while monitoring the world in the social context. Erdelez (1999, p.25) observed information seeking as simply information "gathering" rather than "hunting" and emphasised the importance of the "discovery of useful information that has not been sought" (1996, p. 102). In addition, Savolainen, (2007) stated these information seeking methods are problem-focussed, individual, purposive and a cognitive process. He further stated (1995) that an information seeking approach fails to grasp the richness of information as it is constructed through individual and in sociological context.

It is important to take a conceptual approach which can include information flows across all levels of all the societies in daily life, including on a global scale. As a result, global places can be considered "information rich localities" (Flint & Taylor, 2007, p.270). Savolainen (2007) confirmed that Wilson's research (2006), which had been extremely influential, has been the end point of the conceptualisation of human information behaviour. In spite of Wilson's later work emphasising the importance of the situated or contextual nature of information, and the significance of societal acceptance of it, and the efforts to extend his model of information seeking behaviour and its constraints, his approach remained focussed on purposeful information use, rather than taking into account everyday interactions with information. Information behaviour research does not consider a holistic picture of the variety of information an individual describes in their everyday lives, nor does it take into account the collective or societal nature of information-related interactions. As a result, information behaviour research cannot be considered the ideal approach to this study and an information practices approach will be taken into consideration due to the social and cultural aspect of the theory, as well as its emphasis on context.

The study is about the relationship with the socio-material and symbolic elements. People are connected to the temple through their physical interactions, but also through many shared symbolic meanings. Wenger (1999) and Lloyd (2010b) both state language, tools, symbols, values, perceptions, roles, regulations or rules of thumb are significant in creating shared meanings and collective practices. Castells (1996, p. 412) also stated the information can be taken many forms. In terms of space of flows, which for Castells was essential to information interactions, flows could be flows of images, sounds and symbols.

Buddhists and information

The few research studies on Buddhists and their information behaviours or information practices are recent, most having been published since this study began, and among these studies, only some focus on a diasporic community. This section provides a thematic overview of the findings of these studies, highlighting the theoretical approaches, the types of participants and the methodology used. In keeping with the practice theoretical approach of this study, this section will focus on the experience of individuals and the ways they construct meaning in their everyday activities. It acknowledges that information sharing is presented in many contexts, including McKenzie's (2003) discussion of passive monitoring and active seeking, Chatman's (1999) ''life in the round'', Fisher's (2005) everyday information seeking and casual interactions, Lloyd's (2007, 2009) corporeal information, Dervin's Sense-Making (eg 1999) and so on.

Much information research has focused on occupational information phenomena and studies of information use in everyday life have usually been confined to the part of daily living which takes place outside work or study (Agosto & Hughes-Hassell, 2005; Savolainen, 1995). Studies concerned with religious groups tend take this latter approach. For example, Michels (2012) investigated the experiences of information seeking by leaders of a Baptist church with a focus on their roles as personal faith builders; as well as on their leadership role in the church. This study was particularly concerned with the impact of technology on their personal and corporate information seeking processes, highlighting two media sources (Christian radio programs and television), websites, and social media (YouTube, blogs, and Twitter) as important sources of information. The conclusions of this study are that religious information

practices do not differ significantly from every day-life information seeking (ELIS) experiences, except when subjects were acting in leadership roles.

However, information practices go beyond the daily life of day-to-day practices engaged with the material world and its benefits. One such area of investigation is motivations for religious activities. This topic is interwoven with cultural values through participants' social and religious context. This extension of the concept of the everyday is relevant to this study, with its focus on the monks and devotees of the MA Temple and the spiritual aspects of their daily lives.

Motivations for religious activities are the focus of several studies. As Kari and Hartel (2007) argue, researchers in information studies have not yet investigated far beyond everyday life and problem solving, with little emphasis on what they call "the higher things in life" (Kari and Hartel (2007, p. 1133). They start from the premise that there is empirical evidence for asserting that higher things "are 'deeper,' more natural, and more intrinsically human" than lower things, referring to the work of Maslow and proposed that higher things in life are pleasurable or profound phenomena, experiences, or activities that transcend the daily grind. They argue that any conceptualisation of information behaviours must take into account that the consideration of metaphysical ways of knowing and that information practices and spiritual means go beyond the conventional concepts of information behaviours (2007, p. 1131). This position is based on a theoretical article by Bates (2002, p. 2.) which uses the information seeking notion of various "layers of understanding", with the spiritual, which includes religion, philosophy, and the quest for meaning in life as the foundational layer of the conceptual framework proposed. It is this conceptual positioning of the spiritual in a model of information seeking that is relevant to this study.

Since that very early work, several other studies have been published. Gaston et al. (2015), for example, explored the everyday information behaviours of Buddhists in Laos in terms of the non-Western context. According to their findings, they revealed that the religious and spiritual beliefs played a significant role in information activities. Their investigation took place over a nine-week period in Vientiane, Laos in 2011. There were 30 Buddhist participants. Their analysis revealed that the primary contextual factors affecting information behaviour among the participants were their social and cultural environments, with the religious context embedded within the social and cultural values playing a significant role.

Another good example of the everyday life information seeking (ELIS) studies that could be considered "beyond" an everyday focus on work-related perspectives is to be found in Chabot's doctoral research completed in 2019. His research aimed to study the religious information practices of Kadampa Buddhists in North America. Chabot's findings are important in terms of filling the knowledge gap on how spirituality fits into today's information practices research. He examined whether there are religious or existential motivations for engaging in religious information practices to understand the role of information in the attainment of spiritual realisations. His study was able to test the scope of ELIS research and extend its boundaries further into unknown territories. Chabot's research helped to reveal "spirituality" as a significant attribute of the ELIS field of research.

Chabot's research has many parallels with the aims of the present study. One similarity would be filling the gap in research into non-western perspectives of information practices, especially Buddhist information practices. In addition, both studies add "spirituality" in the context of the current everyday life information practices research.

Chabot's (2019) investigation on the everyday life spiritual information practices of Buddhists of the New Kadampa Tradition focuses more narrowly on the importance of spiritual information from the individual devotee's point of view only, such as how they receive, describe, read, give and teach Dharma. This is because Dharma is personal and part of the individual experience of attaining Nirvana. This reflects the non-western view of Buddhism. According to Buddhists, no one could make someone else enlightened; this is something that an individual should practice within and regard as an individual achievement. According to Bodhidarma, the spiritual realization in Zen also cannot be achieved through intellectual study; it must be experienced by observing oneself.

A key feature of the information practices perspective is that information practices are social and interrelated and include secular as well as non-secular aspects. Chabot was able to distinguish these dualities as motivations for religious information practices but did not engage with the underlying power and capital dimensions associated with them in any detail.

Even though the MA Temple devotees are similar to the Kadampa Buddhists, in that they live in a different country from the one they were born in, the approach taken to studying their information practices is different. The present study of the Mahamwena Buddhist Temple focuses its attention on a broader range of information practices than Chabot's study. While it focusses on devotees who seek Dharma, it also examines the information practices of the monks who represent a large Buddhist organisation that operates throughout the world.

In terms of spiritual information practices, Chabot's research is the closest to the present study found in the review of the literature. The main aim of Chabot's research is to

bring the spiritual context to information practices research. In doing so, he takes a person-centred approach, excluding more materialistic, social centred and symbolic aspects of information practices. His findings emphasise the importance of understanding the dualities of the participants' information practices.

There are other studies reported in the literature that also outlined the large-scale goals of information practices in different perspectives. Another significant study is that by Gorichanaz. Gorichanaz (2015), who investigated the information landscape of Zen Buddhists, found that it has changed in recent years. The focus of his study was the most popular podcasts and iPhone apps on the U.S market targeted at Zen Buddhists. His study demonstrated how this information landscape was constructed through technological advancements.

Gorichanaz, (2015) proposed a religious information landscape as a subset of the information landscape. He defined the religious information landscape as including, "sites where believers gather; religious objects and their use; social networks; prayers, rituals and sacred texts; rulings, exegeses, sermons and other interpretations; and books and other sources that relate religious belief and practice to everyday life" (p6). This study is significant for the current MA Temple research as not only does he compare the Zen Buddhist and the Catholic devotees in terms of their physical and online religious practices but he also questions how the online spaces facilitate different kinds of spirituality as well as different forms of religious practices. According to his findings, online practices are more important to Zen Buddhists than Roman Catholics.

Gorichanaz's study links with this study in many ways in terms of the Buddhist group, their practices and different media of communications. His findings show that modern technology has created broader religious information landscapes than ever before as

religion can seemingly be practiced using entirely online tools (Gorichanaz, 2015). According to Gorichanaz, the Buddhist community engage with the online communities much more than Roman Catholics. According to his research, belief is most central to Catholicism, whereas practice is most central to Zen Buddhism.

A smaller scale study, with a focus on a different religious group, is that by Guzik (2018) who explored how information practices help converts to develop and present Muslim identities during their conversion to Islam. Guzik's approach to a practice theoretical approach is different from the approach adopted in this study. She has taken the theoretical lens of Goffman (1959) and his ideas about "self-presentation", bringing together the relationship between material aspects of information practices and the interplay between the personal and the public. This study draws on bodily and social participation among peer believers. These new devotees show their new identities to an outer public by using different materials such as academic publications, magazines, sacred texts, websites and online forums for learning their religion; the study showed that they reflected on the significance of practising postures, wearing particular clothing items and styles, and being physically present in worship spaces and at classes. It also emphasised the conventions for learning about Islam and for articulating their identities. According to Guzik (2018), the study of the information practices of these people undergoing religious conversion showed that religious conversion extended beyond a personal spiritual or ontological shift with religious identity being recognised by others through a person's actions, practices, and preferences, and through the ways in which others relate and respond to them. This finding mirrors that of Gorichanaz (2015), who found that devotees wish to be recognised as such by peer believers, family members, colleagues and the public.

As noted in an earlier section of this literature review, from a practice theoretical perspective, site is important, and the nature of information that a person expresses, the information that is shared and the routines of exchanges are bound to the site where social interactions take place (Schatzki 2000). These sites can be created virtually through the internet, the networks that, according to Castells (2000), are shaped into a network society through the use of information and communication technologies.

Information practices involving the use of the internet, rather than a physical location, is a focus of several studies. Both Tremlett (2014) and Meintel (2012) are concerned with how religious life has been altered and restructured due to technology. Tremlett observed that religions can no longer be conceived as monolithic communities that congregate in physical spaces as today's religion takes novel forms, with observances and associated practices occuring anywhere, seeming ubiquitous. Meintel focussed on religious society and the individualisation of the contemporary religious life, arguing that the new forms of religious sociality are partly fuelled by new information technologies such as Internet, chat rooms, DVDs, email and websites. The findings of her research illustrated that technology is used for four main reasons: building and maintaining contacts with other congregations and individuals within the same religious orientation on local and international levels; for governance and management of religious groups at a distance; for religious learning and training; and for accessing spiritual/religious resources, such as prayers, sermons and forms of rituals.

To a large degree, the findings on use of the Internet that emerge from these studies are in line with the findings of the large number of studies that show how the use of the internet has generated new forms of sociality, and they shed new light on questions that concern religion, and emerging forms of religious socialities.

Studies of information practices involving the use of information and communication technologies have also shown how technological advancements have allowed immigrants in the diaspora to stay connected with their home country, family and friends. Social relationships created around religion can be about more than spiritual purposes. According to Khoir et. al. (2015), in a study conducted in Adelaide, South Australia, ethnic and religious associations may keep immigrants connected with their own cultural backgrounds. The findings of their study showed that the Asian immigrants in their study were involved in community associations and had online links with both general grouping and with groups with a religious purpose. The main sharing activities related to daily activities, culture and religion, and knowledge and experiences. Significantly, they included religious organisations as community associations, demonstrating that associations such as that formed around a Hindu temple and a Buddhist association are important means connecting immigrants to specific populations. The participants used social media and chat applications, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, to communicate broadly within their own ethnic groups both in Australia and their home country. The study concluded that online media provide a convenient space to interact, promising an alternative mode of community interactions. In language reminiscent of Sack's concept of thick and thin places, this study concluded that immigrants need relationships that are both strong and weak in order to settle into a new country. The experience of participating in relationships that have both strong and weak links creates a feeling of security, contributing to both the immigrant' personal experience and that of the broader multicultural society.

In summary, these studies demonstrated that religious and cultural aspects are now emerging trends in the study of religious information practices. Firstly, there is the dual nature of the information practices which are work oriented and daily life oriented

(Chabot, 2019); and secondly the significance of the metaphysical ways of knowing in information behaviour (Kari, 2001). Information practices have different aspects, often with an interplay between the personal and the public (Guzik, 2018), or taking novel forms and occurring anywhere (Gorichanaz, 2015). This reinforces the conclusion that information practices are complex in nature (Gheradhi, 2009). These studies demonstrate that in understanding information practices of religious groups in non-Western context, much remains to be researched.

The social site

The notion of information practices is always situated and linked to a site. It contributes to the making of an information landscape (Lloyd, 2010b). They occur in physical space and in physical time, and they are materially embodied across time and space (Dervin, 1999). According to Schatzki (2001, p.11), they are "materialistic human activities organised around shared practical understanding". According to Savolainen (2007), they are social and more related to a group or community. It is a "complex web of relationships among people [that] depends on practical accomplishments", (Gherardi, 2008, p. 517), and according to Foucault, (1980), what people do and what it achieves in the world depend on power and knowledge relations. Furthermore, Lloyd (2010b) states, practices provide information skills related to our bodies. All these relationships between information and communities exist in various places. They are multilayered, intersubjective and overlapping and complex, being linked in different spaces.

The notion of site and how it can be understood in social interactions is significant for this study. For Schatzki, site exists in three forms. The first can be summarised as location, that is, where something happens. Here, location is something like context or setting, as it can include location in time, in thought and understanding as well as in

space, but it is not to be confused with place, which for Schatzki is the second form of site. Thus, the second form of site is physical space, where the practices take place. The third form of site is concerned with the practices or activities and the context within which they take place, where some aspects of the practices are inherently part of the context, that is, are intrinsically linked to the first or second forms of site which are the "nexus of action and teleological structures" that characterise a given practice (Schatzki, 2000, p. 25).

Lloyd, whose influential work brought the practice theoretical approach into information studies, has developed the concept of site ontology. She begins by narrowing the site of social action to one where information "becomes privileged as meaningful social phenomena and contributes to the construction or maintenance of knowledge" (2010b, pp. 251-252). She defines information as "any difference that makes a difference", noting that the difference can be a difference in knowledge or understanding, a difference in the way people interact, a difference in what people say, do or feel or some mixture. In this context, she argues that knowledge is "locally constituted", representing "the collective, embodied and informed work of people". Her use of the word embodied in this context may require some clarification: here, she is concerned with "the sayings, doings and sensations" of people, rather than the more strongly corporeal emphasis she adopts late in consideration of embodiment. For her, the ontology of a site, within these constraints has three elements to it: the first is what she refers to as 'practical understandings', that is, knowing how to do things in this given social context; the second is the rules, that is, the specification of what things are acceptable and which ways of doing them are acceptable in the context; the third is the teleo-affective structures, which can include "the overarching purpose" linked to the activities and thus to the sayings, doings and sensations of the group.

Robert Sack (1997, p. 141), a geographer, emphasised the importance of place; people cannot exist without places, but place is made by human activity. Place can be large or small and can be controlled in different ways; it can be public or private, going from the size of a room to a state or even an empire, but could also be something movable, like a car. He noted (2003, p10), “As humans we create space, frequent or infrequent, we transform places from one form to another”. For him, “places are even in our imagined worlds” (p. 11). This idea that place can be created in our imagination is important, because in creating place, in his view, humans can “transform reality according to the ideas and images of what we think reality ought to be” (p. 10). He conceptualises two kinds of place which he named “thick places” and “thin places” (Sack, 1997, p. 8). "Thick places" are rich with meaning, being those bounded places where people interact regularly with others, in tightly woven and ongoing relationships. Any place in a community, where people gather regularly, to meet others, including friends and family, for some shared purpose, is a "thick place”. “Thin places”, on the other hand, are more spatially fragmented and loosely interconnected. For Sack, contemporary society is organised in such a way that people may have multiple connections to “thin places”, through their workplaces, through friends and through different locations based on their desires. Individuals can choose to be in or out of these “thin places”. This notion of choice is important, because without it, people may feel trapped in a given locale, they are more likely to develop a thick, reactionary, and defensive identity, (Sack 1997, p. 10), losing that sense of control over their ability to create place.

As noted above, the material and immaterial perspectives of place are important to Sack (2003, p. 7), as imagination can enable humans to tackle otherwise complex moral issues, considering how a different reality could exist. For Sack (1997, p. 8) there are

advantages to place being ‘not so thick’. This increases people’s mobility, allows them to accommodate differences and increases the chances of empowerment (p. 10). For Massey (2012) ‘not so thick places’ increase the “progressive” nature of the place, facilitating change, with global places indeed being unbounded, dynamic, and open to multiple networks of material and social relations linked to the wider world, as Castells’ network society demonstrates. In comparison, ‘thick places’ are often considered to reflect the stability and narrower lives of times before the introduction of technologies that facilitated easy travel and easy forms of communication.

According to Antonsich (2019), thickness and thinness, boundedness and unboundedness of place are now frequently related to the regressive or progressive character of place, that is, the extent to which adaptation to new circumstances and transformation is possible.

An issue to consider here is how people create places, what their information practices are and what happens to the space during this process of transformation. A number of researchers have addressed these questions from different perspectives. Significant to this study are the perspectives of Castells, whose concern was with networks and networking flows and how people seek information through the telecommunication infrastructure which is the backbone to his spatial logic (Castells, 2000); Sassen, whose concern is with how global organisations are sustained, especially through the skills and expertise of employees which are locally based but used globally; Sack, whose interests are in how people create place; and, to a lesser extent, Fisher, whose concern is with day-to-day information flows through daily casual activities in a specific physical place. For each of these scholars, context has been a key element and thus it will be important in this study.

Schatzki's notion of site is relevant to this study, as it facilitates the creation of common ground among and between these scholars. Thus, cultural embeddedness in an information society does not disappear by being more open to the space of flows (Kostiainen & Sotarauta, 2003). The ideas behind Castells' work, which focuses on the world economy, capitalism and electronic exchanges of information via nodes, can be made more complex when notions of culture and spirituality are brought into the mix. One could argue that Sack's concern with people's capacity to create place is fundamental to Schatzki's third form of site. Fisher's work on information grounds brings a local and place-based view of place, focussing on mundane flows of information between people. According to Jessop et al. (2008), globalisation is a result of the interplay of various spatial formations and processes both local and global, that are bounded networks and by personal relations. For Harvey (1989), globalisation makes places appear less stable and secure than before and this, in turn, makes people feel more attached to the places where they have some control.

Using Castells' terminology, the place exists alongside flows and information practices can be seen to exist in each of them. For Castells, the place of places and space of flows are contradictory concepts built on two different spatial logics. In these two concepts, one can find the dichotomies identified by several scholars, including bounded/ unbounded (Tomaney,2007), progressive/ regressive (Massey, 1993), and thick/ thin (Sack, 1997). Each is concerned with different forms of connectivity, local (Fisher) global (Sassen), and networked (Castells,2000), with the form of openness always situated and linked to a particular site.

From Schatzki's third form of site, each conceptualisation is intrinsically linked to other factors, including morality and human desires (Sack, 1997, p.11), infrastructure of the network society with a focus on economic dimensions (Castells), the physical needs of

day today activities (Agnew, 2002, p. 16), diversity of the community (Roy 2009); and an understanding of globalisation that reaches beyond the geographical scale (Amin 2002). Capital accumulation and profit making can attract the skills necessary for work (Neal, 2003).

Information practices shape the sites and are shaped by them. Places change their nature from thick to thin and vice versa. Following Castells, the greater the globalisation, openness, diversity, networking, connectivity and flows, the more the local, the bounded society, is likely to be diminished in power or destroyed, while Sassen and Sack take a more nuanced approach. The notion of bounded and unbounded place will be explored further below.

Place – bounded and unbounded

The site of the social is very complex. It is at the same time more than the people and their ways of interacting, it is more than the infrastructure of place or of communications technology, and more than place itself. Connectivity and flows of information in social interaction remain gluing factors in an understanding of a site of practice, with other factors, such as production and consumption; and experience, identity and power also being significant. The following two sections will present place through two conceptualisations, the first labelled bounded place, with a focus on physical space, and the second labelled unbounded place, with a focus on place that is not limited to physical space. This distinction is not to be confused with the distinction that Castells makes between the space of places and the space of flows, going beyond that conceptualisation. At the same time, while place is necessarily related to Schatzki's notion of site, these sections review the contribution that place makes to the theorists whose work underpins this study.

Physical places in the real world are important. Although global organisations and flows of information are important, we still meet people day today to exchange information and knowledge. Thus, it is important to consider the role of place as the site for information practices.

Karen Fisher (aka Pettigrew) focuses on the concept of information grounds, which developed from case study observations in the real world (eg Pettigrew 1999). Although she is not included in this study as one of the major theorists, a consideration of place in information studies would not be complete without her work. Her concern with physical place was not, by itself, new, emerging alongside Chatman's concept of the small world (1991) and Oldenburg's 'the great good place' (1999). Fisher's research focused on social spaces and the casual interactions and conversations which take place there; these sites are marked by their openness and by the casualness of the social interactions that take place there. Thus, the concept of information grounds is more relevant to this study than the concept of the small world, which focuses more on information behaviours in settings which are closed and constrained.

Fisher, Erdelez and McKechnie (2005) argued that although information is created, shared, distributed and transformed into knowledge in these physical spaces, when people are there for some other purpose, we are not able to ignore the geographical place. Thus, Fisher brought a new concept, "Information Grounds", to information behaviour research, where she claims the meeting points such as cafes, shops, gyms, bus stops, saloons, parks and so on, those places where people congregate, are equally important as places to create, share, distribute and transform knowledge. In terms of information practices, they are important because these places occur across all levels of all societies in daily life. Fisher also argued that the notion of the bounded, physical space could also be found online in social media.

Similarly, Mitchell (1999) put forward the claim that the informational city as a place does not disappear in the virtual networks, but it is transformed by the interface between electronic communication and physical interaction by the combination of networks and places. However, unlike practices in virtual environments, physical interactions need a specific place. The work of Karen Fisher and her collaborators, (e.g. 2004, 2006), emerges from the individualistic information behaviour research, rather than socially oriented research. Nonetheless, this concept is important in the context of this study, because it assumes a social starting point. Information grounds are meeting points in communities where information is shared, distributed, created and transformed. People do not go to information grounds to seek information; instead, these are natural meeting places, where people may establish social relationships and incidentally share information through unplanned, casual interactions and conversations that take place there.

Sassen is also concerned with what happens in places where people meet together, although her concern is with the globalised production and consumption of transnational organisations (Sassen 2001a, p. xix-xx). She acknowledges that globalised organisations can only function well through information and places an emphasis on how a sense of local place is created through the hiring of people with appropriate knowledge, skills and talents. However, it is important, in this globalised organisation to understand that the information practices at the local level must, at the same time, contribute to the broader globalised organisation.

According to Sassen, there are four types of companies which combine strengths of local meeting places with globalised flows of information. They are: capital-intensive service providers (stock exchanges, bank, insurance companies); knowledge-intensive high-tech industries (medical, pharmacological, chemical and agrarian industry);

information service companies (computer manufacturing, software development, telecommunication, Internet firms); and creative enterprises and cultural facilities.

This categorisation is relevant to this study, as the temple, which is the focus of this study, would at first sight be identified as the fourth type of these organisations. Furthermore, Sassen (2015) has been recently developing a concept for a new kind of space; her previous work had begun to demonstrate that the separation of space into local and global was inadequate, because another space existed, where space and time come together and geographical places overlap.

This brief overview of studies into the physical location where social interactions take place has shown that physical space is important for information practices. However, its conceptualisation is not agreed upon. Further, as Schatzki noted, physical location alone is not sufficient to situate information practices. This study is significantly influenced by the work of Castells and the distinction he made between the space of places and the deterritorialised sense of place that he referred to as the space of flows. This leads us to a consideration of unbounded place.

Networks and networking flows

For Castells, the future lay not in places but in the flows of information made possible by information and communication technologies. These flows created and were created by networks and the processes of networking. While information flows among people in physical places have always existed, the emergence of information and communications technologies have added new dimensions to this phenomenon, leading to a concept which has become much more complex over the time. Castells defined the space of flows as “the system of exchange of information, capital, and power that structures the basic processes of societies, economies and states between different localities,

regardless of localization". He claimed that the "space of flows" changed the character of a space, bring a new "spatial logic", and this new space was dominant over the space of place (1993/1999, p 136).

This spatial logic broke with the traditional sense of geographic place, although the space of place remained as the location for social interaction at a community level. The space of flows, however, is created by the real time interactions of distributed social actors, whose points of connection attract wealth, power, culture, innovation and people. The informational places that these points of connection are organised around are networks (Castells 1989) and largely made up of flows of information. Castells coined the term "Network Society" to refer to this new space and the practices taking place there. Not only was the space of flows a placeless place, but it was also characterised by "timeless time".

Castells' work on the space of flows focuses on the production of capital in the world economy and electronic exchanges of information via nodes. His "Network Society" emerged late in the 20th century with technology-supported networks of goods and services for profit making. In elaborating his understanding of the network society, Castells emphasised the materialistic factors and was criticised for this. Urry (2003a,2003b), for example, noted that social theories in sociology are inadequate and insufficient to understand the complexity of networks and their spatiotemporal topologies and from the perspective of the social sciences, networks are extremely complex. In supporting his own perspective, Castells would counter that most researchers' conceptual view of the capitalist environment of these networks is too simple to analyse the complexity of the network, because the emphasis in studies of networking is often on the nonmaterialistic.

To understand Castells' view of the network society and the space of flows, it is important to keep in mind his emphasis at the time on capital and modes of development. According to Castells (1996, p. 18), a new techno-economic system was emerging in contemporary cities, that, in his view, could be adequately characterised by the term "informational capitalism" which is directly linked to an "informational mode of development". In explaining this, he stated that the technology not only changes and shapes the "mode of the production" but also the relationships of capital and labour, and in so doing, was bringing about a fundamental restructuring of ways of working. According to him, this restructuring meant that information is shared around networks, not piece by piece, based on requirement and need, but largely made up of 'flows', that is, volumes of information. These flows represent the processes that create our life, at the social, cultural, political and economic levels; they create the new type of society, the "Network Society" (Castells 1996, p. 412). Fundamental to the network society is the "space of flows", which is the material organisation of time-sharing social practices that work through flows. His space of flows include flows of capital, flows of information, flows of technology, flows of organisational interactions, flows of images, sounds and symbols (Castells 1996, p. 412). By flows he understands purposeful, repetitive, programmable sequences of exchange and interaction between physically disjointed positions held by social actors. (p.412).

Returning to Castells' notion of network logic, he explains that "the network society is a global society because networks have no boundaries" (2010, p.2737). Since the network does not have a specific boundary, one is unable to point to a particular place within the network. Thus, the network must be conceptualised as a 'process' not a 'place'. Because the functions of the networks are global in scale and can connect/disconnect different

places at a given time, so this is not just one place but a network with many "nodes" or many places – it is unbounded.

This idea that society in the late 1990s was both connected and able to free itself by using informational networks was supported by many contemporary society theories that emerged as a reflection of the increased complexity and interactivity caused by digitalisation (van Dijk, 2006, Wellman, 1999). The emerging technology could provide a much-needed explanation of such changes to new ways of meeting, profit making, doing business, social movements, and governance in the beginning of the 21st century. In these circumstances, Castells' claims that space is related to power, and the argument that place is about experience is not new, but an example of where social change can be attributed to new technologies.

For Castells, his conceptualisation of the network is based on the materialism of information practices, that is on the technology and other aspects of infrastructure that bring the process together. As noted above, Castells states it is important to bear in mind that information flows have both material and immaterial aspects. Technology has no purpose without the other aspects of infrastructure. Network as a process is a combination of interactions and material infrastructure that makes those interactions possible. His space of flows links up electronically separate locations in an interactive network that connects activities and people in distinct geographical contexts. The material and immaterial aspects of the space of flows are significant for this study, because existing side by side one finds the "space of places", that is the geographic location and the "space of flows", the networks through IT, telecommunications, and social media such as Facebook, the Internet, email, Skype, Google+, online forums, media networks and so on.

Castells' conceptualisations of the space of flows which dominates the space of places fails even though these concepts seem realistic and appropriate at macro levels, because his analysis is flawed, being based on what can be seen as the "mass self-communication" associated with social media, which may be no more than a new form of communication in a modernised society. Many scholars take a different approach to criticism of Castells' notion of network, asking how useful the network metaphor is, when taken to its extreme, because in that context it can explain practically everything, and in doing so, explain nothing, as Castells eventually seems to do (Stalder, 2006; Anttiroiko 2015).

Castells' theories helped to address and clarify the network logic within a wider conceptual framework to understand the trends of global transformations given technology as the main factor of social change. However, it is important also to keep in mind that Castells was first writing about this in the 1990s; the information rich places he identified were built around places and the flows emerged from relationships among them (Wellman 1999). In considering these changes to global working, Sassen placed her emphasis on levels of knowledge skills and expertise, which, she argued, always underpin processes of production and these will always dominate whatever may depend on the extra factors such as technology that support the flow of information. However, to reiterate, it is technology that is the most important factor in Castells' space of flows. This approach could be seen as technological determinism, but Anttiroiko (2015) argued that this approach had less and less relevance as a conceptual tool over time as the movements of information not only occurs in telecommunication network but also in physical places.

Certainly, the use of technology has been a main factor for globalisation, but physical places still remain important, as argued by Agnew (2002, p. 16) and Fisher et al. (2006).

The connectivity through the technology and infrastructure has been foundational to Castells' conceptual developments in the space of flows, permitting significant further conceptual developments as is discussed next.

Sassen (2001a, 2001b) shares Castells' concern for production and for collaboration, considering that the "globalisation" of financial markets is the backbone of the new global economy, which has become global because production and distribution is organised on a global scale linked with information telecommunication networks. However, she has a different understanding of technology. Sassen's technologies are mainly for communication, supporting her view of the importance of the human, unlike Castells, whose view is that the use of technological tools and infrastructure makes a network possible. To reiterate, for him, the informational economy is based on technology advancements and innovations and information is the material foundation of the network society (2010 p70). It is important for this study to consider briefly what Castells means by infrastructure. It is not just information technologies, but all kinds of infrastructure. Firstly, there is the infrastructure for geographical space/physical space (e.g. water, energy, transport) in order for companies to manage and control the global operations of urban centres, such as airports, harbours, and transport interchanges (Kokot 2008, Graham 2001) and secondly, there is infrastructure for digital spaces such as telecommunication networks or the space of information, as well as money and power streams). It is this second kind of infrastructure that is important for this study.

Castells' claims relating to the space of flows have been questioned by many researchers. Some theorists argue that Castells' network theory is a simply a result of the post-industrial society (Kumar, 2005), Others argue that Castells did not strongly relate his discussion to any existing theoretically oriented sociological tradition (Holton, 2005; Anttiroiko, 2015). In addition, Castells' claims mainly arose from studying online

practices in isolation or considering people in a separate world of 'virtual communities' as Rheingold (2000) did. A number of more recent studies have shown that treating the online world as separate is a mistaken view of social practices (see for example Godbold's study (2013) of online renal discussion groups and Walker's study (2010) of city-specific discussion forums). According to Walker (2010, p. 25), "… a rigid distinction between online and offline makes little theoretical sense … [and therefore] a methodological line between online and offline only reifies such a dualism". Thus, rather than separating in to two different domains, studies have integrated both offline and online social practices in to one to investigate the information flows in depth. This approach, advised by Bakardjieva (2009), seems the wisest course. She states

> *"As we move into the future, research on most areas of social life will be internet-related research. Thus, online and offline data will routinely be collected and used for what they are – complementary records of events unfolding within the same social world and not as specimens from two different planets"* (p. 114).

Castells himself moved away from the position that the space of flows was the pre-eminent space. He acknowledged there is a link between networking and the transformation of relationships of experience and that networks have been part of social relationships for a very long time. However, in his view, the networks formed through contemporary technologies "open up unlimited horizons of creativity and communication, inviting us to the exploration of new domains of experience, from our inner selves to the outer universe, challenging our societies to engage in a process of structural change" (2000, p1). In spite of this, he maintained the view that the place of places and space of flows are built on different spatial logics. It is this point that is important to this study.

Globalisation

A further conceptual area relevant to the study, in the context of information practices and the site of the social, is globalisation. The MA Temple, which is the focus of this study, operates globally with 40 branches in different countries and it has been using global information practices regarding production and consumption of cultural and economic capital, in ways that are very similar to the operations of those multinational conglomerates. The notion of the global has already been introduced in the consideration of unbounded place above. In further considering the site of practices, it is important at this point to acknowledge that the MA Temple is an organisation and one that operates transnationally. While Castells emphasises the importance of networks and networking through technology and infrastructure to make profits and wealth, Sassen's focus on successful businesses reliant on networking and technologies through communication is more relevant for consideration here. Global organisations give rise to a place of a connectivity that facilities the communications in many directions (Sassen, 2001; 2006). She emphasised that the global connectivity is an essential component of contemporary society and is best exemplified through commercial companies which have their headquarters in a major city and branches throughout the world. She, too, began writing at a time when the Internet was still relatively new, social media did not exist and online links were not taken for granted in the way that they are currently. Her focus also was on the interaction of global economy within and between nation-states (Smith, 2003). Although this study is not concerned with the details of how capital is transferred and flows in and between cities, nonetheless, her emphasis on the importance of communication and the knowledge and skills of people in processes of globalisation are particularly relevant as is their relationship to the development of global practices of e-commerce.

Globalisation is reflected in many aspects of the monetary economy, including the spatial structure of economic activities and the migration of people, as well as the spread of values and norms (Kempen & Marcuse, 1997). This creation of an environment, which tends to "unbundle" and "de-territorialize" information flows enables globalised organisations to communicate, coordinate, and promote their interests to a greater extent than in the past (Kirshner, 2008).

This phenomenon is referred to by many different terms, including information economy and its conceptualisation (Harvey, 1990), informational city (Castells, 2000), production sites and place of boundedness (Appadurai 1996). According to Smith (2003), in a context of globalisation, “any event can have unexpected, disproportionate and emergent effects that are often distant in time and space from when and where they occurred”. Thus, globalisation is again separated not only from physical place, but also from time, in a way that is reminiscent of Harvey's (1989; 1989a), ‘timelessness' or Castells’ (2010) characterisation of emergent ‘timeless time'.

Sassen (2006) also wrote about production from ethnic margins, with the corporate professionals and firms initiated in global networks. In support of this interpretation, this study contends that Manuel Castells’ ‘networked organisations’ also provided evidence of multiple production sites across the globe. This has been subjected to many contexts, Antonsich (2003, p17), states globalisation is about integration into the global network (‘space of flows’) which contributes to strengthen the identity of the locale (‘space of places’). Harvey (1989) states globalisation makes places appear less stable and secure than before and this, in turn, makes people feel more attached to their places, in a move reminiscent of Sack’s thick places. This phenomenon has many forms of explanation: diversity, openness, boundedness and unboundness, networks, connectivity flows among others. Massey (1995, p. 46) investigated “[w]hat happens to the notion of

place in this age of globalization?" some time ago. However, today, globalisation is widely recognised and considered through the lens of the economic dimension. In globalisation, capital accumulation and profit making in production attract the skills to be put to work (Sassen 2008). According to Swyngedouw (1997), this phenomenon can be understood as being 'glocalised'. In terms of the cultural aspect of this term, Roy (2009) brings a good example from Punjabi immigrants who live in Singapore and sustain their musical interests and practices through a variety of globalised means.

The question arises as to why the branch of the MA Temple in Sydney is important in terms of globalisation? More globalised practices, openness, diversity, networks, connectivity and flows, and virtual communities are argued to have destroyed the spatial boundaries of society. Place still matters but may no longer be bounded by a spatial proximity; Amin (2002) states globalisation must be understood by network form of organisation reaching beyond the geographical scale. According to Antonsich (2003), while the former notion of place has been heralded as progressive, the latter has been implicitly branded as 'regressive' as some individuals are not capable of integrating themselves in to a globalised world.

Sassen's information flow shows us the macro picture and infrastructure given her concern, looking more towards the finance and economics of the city. Castells (1996, p. 18) also emphasised that information technology revolution allowed restructuring of the capitalist "mode of production" characterised by his term "informational capitalism" which is directly linked to the "informational mode of development" in the information age as noted above. In the global economic environment, information is directly linked to money and skills. In support, according to Urry, (2003a, 2003b) social relations are the motor for networks;

> *"such relations are made and remade through machines, technologies, objects, texts, images, physical environments and so on. Human powers increasingly derive from the complex interconnections of humans with material objects, including signs, machines, technologies, texts, physical environments, animals, plants, and waste products"* (p.161).

In other words, materialism is a factor in globalisation. Regarding materialism, technology advancement and aesthetics of the temple buildings are two main important factors to be considered as aspects of materiality. However as discussed before, regarding the information flows, the mobility of the participants, skills, talents, expertise, small meeting places, organisational settings are other factors to be considered.

The production decisions in the Temple are not based on one individual but are made collectively within a group of people which has higher authority in the temple to make and approve decisions. Castells (2011) coined the term networked organisation. In terms of the global connectivity, not only do Sassen and her globalisation concepts together with Castells' networking both seem to fit well with the notion of the Temple as a global organisation and its production/consumption, but further Sassen's concern for skills, talents, and expertise are also relevant.

Sassen noted the importance for companies of being located in cities, because at that time, that indicated that a company was "in an extremely intense and dense information loop" (Sassen 2001b, p. 1810). This information loop was not concerned with how information flowed among and between citizens or employees; rather it was concerned with the infrastructure that could lead to the development of capital. This infrastructure

was the information technology that rendered the city where branches were located placeless. That is to say, place was subordinated to the technology that linked people.

Further, Sassen also explained that these places are production sites for companies in the information industry. The companies have branches all over the world and act as a single entity and by-product of the process of 'globalisation'. Creating infrastructure to establish new business centres and encourage professionalism of labour and high-end recreation and consumption can reorient cities to the real and imagined interests of global mobile investors (Sassen, 2001a). Ergazakis, Metaxiotis and Psarras (2004, p. 7) comment on the importance of a knowledge sharing culture among citizens, to match the IT networks and infrastructure of the global city.

However, Sassen (2012) distinguishes the technical capacities of such digital networks of doing business across borders from more complex socio-digital formations. She emphasises that mechanisms that influence the development of such interactive domains have little to do with the technology. According to her (1991), telecommunication networks enabled organisations to decentralise their operations across borders, but they still needed a mix of talent, skill and expertise that cannot be replicated fully within digital space.

In terms of "knowing" (skills, talent and expertise), the informational economy opens extraordinary avenues for production and consumption. In this organisation, the MA Temple, the community is diversified but it is the guru's capacity for writing books, the contribution from professionally educated monks (formerly doctors, engineers, academics) from various universities and other forms of expertise from devotees that constitute its significant skills talent and expertise. According to Sassen (2001b, p.

1810), “The mix of firms, talents and expertise from a broad range of specialized fields makes a certain type of urban environment function as an information center”.

Although Sassen’s concern is with companies that develop economic capital, her emphasis on the importance of broad-ranging knowledge and skills for creating an information centre is shared with MA Temple, so that organisations concerned with creating other forms of capital can seem to fit in her four-part typology of organisations, set out above.

In terms of human geography, for Robert Sack, (2003, p11), “places are even in our imagined worlds”. The new ways of ‘thinking space' have been considered to produce ideas among many social and cultural theorists (Crang and Thrift, 2000). Therefore, this has become another important aspect for the organisation to thrive and grow bigger. This is a common factor for organisations to survive in the competitive environment in management science.

> *“Social innovation refers to innovative activities and services that are motivated by the goal of meeting a social need and that are predominantly diffused through organisations whose primary purposes are social*” (Mulgan, 2019).

Therefore, innovation is a key factor to consider in the exploration of the practices of the Temple.

Technology has been one of the of the key factors in globalisation. It is widely claimed that "the ability of human societies to transform economic inputs into outputs of greater value, and hence to generate material wealth, rests on their technological knowledge" (Jones 2005). This generation of wealth no longer depends on manual tasks, but can be done by non-manual tasks, including mental tasks done by humans and automated tasks

done by machines. For Castells, the informational economy opens extraordinary avenues for production (Castells, 2011). Currently, we can chat, send text massages, and hold video conferences without any difficulties across the continents. The number of mobile apps and subscribers to YouTube channels, Facebook, Viber, WhatsApp and other tools and platforms continues to grow.

Information technologies have been used to increase collaboration and share talents, skills, and knowledge among each other and with different branches of the Temple. This is similar, as in Castells' words, the production and consumption are supported by the 'mode of production'. Without the electronic networks, the operation of this kind of organisation is not possible.

The MA Temple programs can be seen to exist in a kind of global city, an example of production in the context of "the space for the transmigration of cultural forms and the reterritorialisation of local subcultures" as well as the "formation of transnational identities and communities" (Sassen 2006, p. 75). Therefore, this space can be conceptualised as immigrant spaces, similar to Sack's (2003) thick places with strategic global sites of transnationalised modes of production and consumption (Sassen 2006). Antonsich (2003) states thinning out these places would either produce or reinforce new spaces of exclusion, marginalisation, and dispossession, so that for him, the definition of thin and thick places fades away. His argument focuses on local elites' views about how globalisation gives brings new meaning to the place they live, providing a good example of how thick and thin places are inter-related. However, this perspective is contested.

Castells notes that ICTs can link people together in networks, bringing them to a range of new experiences and by the same token, can marginalise people, cutting them off

from information and experiences. The effect of the use of technologies on the creation of new experiences will be explored in this study.

Information practices and the creation of capital

For Bourdieu, practice is an interwoven activity based on a central principle of the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes of individual within a society, put to use in what he called a field (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 54). Schatzki adapted Bourdieu's conceptual framework, including the notion of field. His definition of field is useful for this study: A field is a "realm of activity in which people pursue certain stakes, drawing on capitals available to them, not just economic, but cultural and symbolic capitals" (Schatzki, 2005, p. 471). He frames and presents this understanding through his practice theoretical approach, establishing that practices are not seen as the property of individuals but are instead the property of the social site. Schatzki also emphasises the importance of the shared understanding of embodied knowledge or know-how in practices (Schatzki, 2002, p. 3).

It is through this emphasis on embodiment and its role in the creation of shared knowledge that the practice theoretical approach has found its way into information studies, especially through the work of Lloyd and Olsson. Lloyd's concern has been with ways of knowing in situ – as situated action (Lloyd, 2010a). This has led her to place significant emphasis on one aspect of the practice theoretical approach as elaborated by Schatzki, the site, and within this to develop a conceptualisation of the knowledge in a site, which she refers to as the site ontology, as elaborated above. In taking this approach, which has been widely adopted, Lloyd and others in information studies, such as Olsson, have focussed on embodied ways of knowing in a site, leaving to one side the broader focus on the creation of capital which was important both to

Schatzki and to Bourdieu. Thus, even though Lloyd (2011) and Olson (2010) bring embodied practices and cultural sites of knowledge to enrich the understanding of information practices, they have ignored a key aspect of the social processes of interest to Schatzki and fundamental for Bourdieu, the relationship between practices and the creation of capital. Extending Bourdieu's conceptual framework of capital creation to understand the information flows along with Schatzki's conceptualisation of site would bring further insight to the investigation of information practices within the temple.

Marx stated that capital is created by work – for him, it is the economic value that accrues to employers, based on the exploited labour of workers. The perception that people's activities create resources of various kinds as a by-product of what they do has been a feature of the twentieth century conceptualisation of capital. According to Bourdieu (1984), capital is a product of social relationships in post industrialist society. Bourdieu's conceptual theory of capital criticises the focus on monetary exchange taken by Marx, although he still accepts the relationship between capital and 'accumulated labour' (1984). Neveu (2018, p. 347) proposes a provisional definition of capital drawn from Bourdieu's work, as follows:

> *"a collection of goods and skills, of knowledge and accomplishments, belonging to an individual or a group that he or she can mobilize to develop influence, gain power or bargain other elements of this collection".*

This definition has been adopted in this study, because it usefully makes the link between practices and capital. Capital is important to this study because the devotees and monks are engaged with the Temple in many ways, using their knowledge and skills in a variety of ways and thus potentially producing capital in various forms, that include, but go beyond, the creation of economic capital.

Bourdieu (1984) stated that there are three basic capitals namely, cultural, social, economic, which can be converted from one to another; and a fourth one which is symbolic capital, and which is a transfiguration of one of the others. For him, economic capital is, broadly speaking, economic wealth and resources, as understood in contemporary western society. By itself, it is not of significant concern to Bourdieu (as it derives from the economic practices subjectively focus on maximisation of profit). He argues that, to understand the social world, one must acknowledge all forms of capital. He places his emphasis on exploring social capital and cultural capital. Social capital is collective and includes benefits which accrue from membership in a social tribe, and which provides each of its members with collectively owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit. Cultural capital exists in three states: embodied, the objectified state in the form of cultural goods, and the institutionalised state which can be institutionalised as formal qualifications but is also to be found in the knowledge and understandings that make someone a productive member of their society. Symbolic capital, which rests on "knowledge and acknowledgments" and arises from economic, social, and cultural capitals, must also be included here. An example of symbolic capital is reputation, which is clearly social in nature, being bestowed by others in the community. Symbolic capital is not material and cannot be bought and sold on the market.

Neveu (2018, p. 347) noted that the concept of capital has been widely used in the social sciences. Relevant to this study are the approaches taken by Castells and Sassen to capital. As noted above but relevant to the argument here, Castells developed the notion of informational capital which is based on information flows. For him, modern societies build wealth and resources using technological advancements and social relationships in the form of complex network of institutions across the technologically enabled space of

flows. It is information exchanged among and between organisations that leads to power, and this in turn can become economic capital. This exchange and accumulation of information, which can only happen through networking, is what he refers to as informational capital. For Castells, this was the most significant form of capital for the late 20th century. Sassen is concerned with globalised organisations and their role in the creation of wealth. She focused on the place of production as a site in terms of the creation of economic capital in a world of transnational transactions. Of relevance to this study is her emphasis on the role of human capital in the workings of globalised organisations, through the knowledge, expertise and experience of employees (Sassen, 2001a).

The Temple is a site with many social relationships and interests, and with power and influence deriving from many factors. Therefore, to understand these in the context of the practices of monks and devotees, a consideration of the creation of capital using Bourdieu's conceptual framework is relevant to this study. It is key to identifying and understanding the nature of the capital it creates within the temple community. In doing this, it will extend the focus of material as well as immaterial aspects of capital creation in the information practices research through its observations of the interactions of devotees and monks. This will enable the study to go beyond the institutional, exemplified by Castells' focus on informational capital and Sassen's emphasis on human capital, to consider other forms of capital that emerge in this social site.

Power and experience in information practices

Information practices are always related to a site, as noted above (Olsson & Lloyd, 2017). These practices are shaped by many factors, including the power of the networks and the ways it changes the experiences of day-to-day life. According to Castells, space

and place lead to considerations of power; he argues that places are the "space of experience", and flows are the "space of power" because according to him, power resides in and is created in the network. Furthermore, he emphasises that the space of flows dominates the space of places as its power is used to dominate and shape practices that occur in the space of places.

Foucault's (1977) concern for power and knowledge is certainly important from the social perspective. For Foucault, power and knowledge are now two different products, but they are conjoint entities of same social process. He states

> *"We should admit ... that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations"* (Foucault, 1977, p. 27).

Information practices help to (re-)produce power/knowledge relations. They are considered as authoritative in a particular community (Heizmann, 2012) and as is demonstrated in Olsson's (2010) study of theatre professionals where he emphasised the power relations related to "emotional truth" through discourse.

Fairclough (2005) also argues that discourses are expressions of social practices which "contribute to [the] s reproduction and transformation" of social life". Nicolini (2012) echoes this view, stating that, discourse, at all levels, is shaped and constrained by social structure. According to Castells (1991), information and telecommunication networks have had a direct impact on the relationship between social structure and power since the late 20th century.

The power of identity is also significant for social practices. Castells identified that recognising identity as a defining principal of social organisation and analysing the significance of cultural, religious and national identities as a source of meaning for people had implications for understanding social movements (2010). According to Gee (2011, p. 13), Castells transformed the notion of nation state into a network state, where individuals can have multiple identities, depending on the interactions with an environment of different networks. Castells sees this kind of power ending as social movements and environmental movements (2010) although Gee does not take such a formalising position.

In terms of the power of information as it flows and informs, Castells was concerned with power in the network. Whereas the power of decision making was in the centre of the hierarchy of organisations in the past, he emphasised that in the network society, power resides not in one place but in the network itself. However, the network is not homogenous; it is after all created around a technological infrastructure, which has points of linkage which he referred to as nodes. With their technological infrastructure, these nodes, which are informational places, are not separated by administrative borders, or political boundaries, but can span entire regions, or even broader geographical areas.

For Sassen (2001), the power of the globalisation is communication. However, she further extended Sack's two kind of places "thin" where spatially fragmented and interconnected and "thick" places where and people's relationships are more cohesive (Sack, 1997, p. 8).

While power found in information that flows and governs organisational decision making, there are also flows of people. For Sassen, power can arise through emigration,

with individuals and organisations creating a "linkage for potential migrants" through social networks (Sassen 1988, p. 20). The consequences of globalisation lead to the existence of many places where local cultures exist in globalised places. These globalised places may then become global cities, sites for commercial operations that are both centred on that city, but at the same time, dispersed across the world. Economic globalisation is not only about the massive dispersal of operations around the world but also about new geographies of centrality as well as marginality, created in part by migration (Sassen, 2006, p.3). In other words, the movement of people around the world creates new social worlds, where migrants may be marginalised or sense that they are cut off from their previous lives and therefore disempowered. At the same time, these movements create globalised corporations, which bring economic power as well as the power that resides in organisational cultures of specialist knowledge. Further, Sassen (1999) also recognises that "the Internet has emerged as a powerful medium for non-elites to communicate, support each other's struggles and create the equivalent of insider groups at scales going from the local to the global".

A completely different kind of power is the concern of Sack. He argued (1993) that space and place have powers, an argument relevant to this study because of his linking of place and social behaviours. The first power is that in place of human interaction, rules of behaviour apply, governing social interactions and deeming actions and people in or out of place. The second power is in spatial interactions, where distance becomes particularly significant. The third power lies in the creation of meaning, from appearances and experiences. This is relevant to this study because of its emphasis on the information practices of a diasporic community, in a site of cultural significance.

Thus, it becomes clear that power can be understood in several ways relevant to this study and, similarly, experienced in a variety of ways. To fully explore the expressions

of power for participants in this study, it has been necessary to set out how power is conceptualised by the three key theorists for this study.

Conclusion

This chapter provides a discussion of the work of theoretical works that have influenced the development of the conceptual framework underpinning the knowledge produced in this thesis. It starts with an overview of the practice theories in the broader social sciences before focussing on their application in the narrower context of information practices research. It provides a summary of literature on information practices and information behaviours in the context of religion, with an emphasis on Buddhists. The literature review aims to build a better understanding around the theoretical framework of social site and the different capitals it creates within the various places (bounded and unbounded), and networks (local and global) associated with the Temple. It touches briefly on power as understood by the three key theorists.

This review has identified some gaps in the literature that the study aims to explore. Firstly, there are very few studies on Buddhists and their information practices from a non-Western perspective and this study aims to add to a growing but still very small literature on this topic. Secondly, this literature, and the broader literature on information practices, has not brought together such a broad conceptual basis, emphasising the importance of technology, of globalisation and of place in a study of the information practices of a diasporic community of devotees. Thirdly, in information practices research, there has been no focus (or at the most a very limited focus) on the outcomes of practices, that is, on the creation of capital. Finally, Although Lloyd (2010c) placed some emphasis on site in her development of a site ontology, and Gorichanaz has explored information landscapes in his study of Zen Buddhists, studies

of information practices are not specifically concerned with site and have not used Schatzki's three approaches to site to interpret their data. These are gaps that this study will go some way towards filling.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodological approaches adopted to analyse the study's research questions. The chapter begins with the research questions. It then outlines the possible methodological approaches considered for the study along with their pros and cons before describing and justifying the chosen research methods applied within the case study of Mahamewnawa Temple. It includes discussion of the range of different data collection methods used, and data analysis techniques, as well as ethical considerations involved with the researcher in terms of insider and outsider studies.

The research questions

This study is concerned with information practices and the site within which they take place. Its focus is the cultural site of the globalised Buddhist temple called Mahamevnawa Asapuwa, its branch in Sydney and the monks and devotees associated with that branch. The aim of this chapter is to describe how the researcher has operationalised research practices and discuss theoretical and practical implications. The study addresses the following questions:

1. What are the information practices of the globalised Mahamevnawa Temple?
2. How do these practices manifest in the temple as a social site?
3. What are the outcomes of these practices?

Considerations of the practice theoretical approach

This study is concerned with what the monks and devotees do and how they describe what they do, as well as how they communicate with each other and what the purposes behind these sayings and doings are. It is also concerned with the outcomes of what people do, using the concept of capital to label them. Through this practice theoretical approach, an understanding of the otherwise invisible information practices will emerge, presenting a picture derived from the data collectively of what people do and how they talk about it. Fundamental to developing this understanding is what Schatzki refers to as 'site' (2000, 2002), a complex concept with three levels of meaning, all of which are relevant to this study. The first, as noted in the previous chapter, is context or setting, which can be both embodied and conceptual; the second is physical space; and the third is the context within which the practices take place, acknowledging that some practices are so linked to the first two levels of site that they cannot be separate from them.

The objective of this chapter is to demonstrate the decisions through which a sound methodology was identified, one that enabled an exploration of information practices in order to understand the complexity emerging from participants' sayings, doings and relatings, as well as from the outcomes of practices. It also aims to shed light on the multi-dimensional notion of site or context within which these practices take place.

To answer the research questions, key areas of investigation included what monks and devotees said about their practices, the ways monks and devotees talked about place and the flows of information and information products, the traditional aspects of temple life and the ways in which these create various forms of capitals. The types of knowledge disseminated by the temple and the audiences for these knowledges are important and are investigated through the descriptions of activities from monks and devotees as well

as through analysis of the website of the temple and other digital technologies. Understanding how the expertise of the monks and devotees was important in supporting the outcomes of practices is also an area of investigation.

This study draws on the work of information practice theorists such as Lloyd (2009) and Olsson (2016), as well as practice theorists such as Schatzki (1996, 2002), (Bourdieu (2008) and Neveu (2018), to inform its exploration of information practices associated with the Temple. To ensure the complexity of the social is uncovered in this study, it also draws of the work from a range of social scientists, including Castells (1999) and his concept of networked society, Sassen (2001) and her conceptualisation of organisations in the globalised economy, and Sack (2003) and his notion that place is socially constructed.

Potential methodological approaches

Foregrounding a qualitative approach

The nature of the research problem demands a qualitative approach. This study examines concepts associated with what people do, and the outcomes of these actions, as well as with the notion of the site. It is concerned with the local and the global, with a micro-sociological approach and with more macro approaches. Therefore, this researcher needs a methodological approach that will facilitate understanding what this temple means to people in their everyday lives and as well as revealing globalised processes of information exchange within the temple community. I will also need an approach that will support data collection in the field, so that the practices of the monks and devotees are observed where they happen and that the descriptions of activities are similarly situated in the context where they take place and have their meaning.

"Qualitative Research" means any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification (Strauss & Corbin 1998, p10). It can refer to research about persons' lives, their lived experiences, behaviours, emotions, and feelings as well as about organisational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena, and even interactions between nations. Qualitative research is a process of interpretation, carried out for the purpose of discovering concepts and relationships in raw data and then organising them into a theoretical explanatory scheme (Strauss & Corbin 1998, p10).

Qualitative methods are also useful for exploring substantive areas about which little is known (Stern, 1980). The focus of this study, the MA Temple, is one about which little is known in a scholarly sense. There is very little in the Western scholarly literature that focuses on the practices of the Sri Lankan Sinhalese diaspora in their everyday lives; it appears that there is no academic research published on the MA Temple, and there is very little scholarship at all on the information practices of monks and devotees from a Buddhist temple. Thus, again, a qualitative approach is clearly appropriate for this study.

There are many difference types or approaches to doing qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). A vast literature has been developed on the procedures and underlying philosophies of qualitative research focusing on the natural behaviour of people and their perceptions of the social world (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Yin, 1994).

In the next section I will explain some of the approaches relevant to my research focus, demonstrating their strengths and weaknesses and justifying my choice of methodology for this study.

Research focus

The focus for this study, then, is those members of the Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhist community who are members and devotees of the MA Temple. They are members of the Sinhalese diaspora. It is tempting to jump to the conclusion that this will be a case study of this group. The research question requires an intensive analysis of the community, using many types of data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p170). However, in a case study, the boundaries among and between concepts are clearly drawn, and different forms of data collection contribute data, the use of which is also almost always clearly defined in advance. However, one of the assumptions in the practice theoretical approach is that practices, outcomes and site are inter-connected so that boundaries cannot easily be drawn; indeed, boundaries are likely only to emerge once the data have been collected and analysed.

Scholars note that different methodological approaches have different strengths and weaknesses and acknowledge that the researcher conducting any study must make a decision about which approach to choose as most studies can be undertaken from more than one perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p195). One way to determine an appropriate methodological approach is to identify potentially relevant approaches, setting out their strengths and weaknesses, so that a comparison can be made. Another way to determine the methodological approach to a study is to analyse the literature to identify what approaches are commonly used. In the sections that follow, I will use both ways to justify my choice of methodology.

Identifying relevant approaches

Three relevant approaches will be presented in this section: Critical Discourse Analysis; grounded theory and ethnography.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is potentially an appropriate methodological approach for this study, given its focus on interactions among and between people existing in a social context and their relationships to meaning making, knowledge and authority (Olsson, 1999). According to Wodak and Fairclough (2010), CDA is based on eight principles as follows: it addresses social problems; it is a form of social action; it is concerned with power relations, which can be found in spoken and written communication; discourse is the expression of a culture or society; discourse is not transient, but offers a long term perspective; discourse expresses an ideological position; there is always some form of intermediary between the text and society; discourse analysis is of necessity interpretive and explanatory. Some of these principles are relevant to this study, including the notion that speech can be understood as a form of action, that discourse is not transitory, that a society or group can be understood through its discourse and that discourse analysis is necessarily interpretive and explanatory. CDA is particularly useful for identifying the systems and sources of power and control in a society.

Olsson has used critical and Foucauldian discourse in information practices research to study the relationship between information, power and practices in a range of communities including information researchers (2003), theatre professionals (2010), archaeologists (2016), car restorers (Olsson & Lloyd 2017; 2019) and martial artists (Olsson & Hansson, 2019).

Application to this study

This is not a study that starts from the notion of a social problem arising from some imbalance of power in the society. Nor is it a study concerned with ideological positions, in order to reveal conflicting ideological positions. Thus, Critical Discourse Analysis is not the most appropriate methodology for this study.

Grounded Theory

A second potentially relevant methodology is Grounded Theory. Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 12) use the term grounded theory to mean the theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analysed through the research process. Glaser & Strauss, (1967) defined a grounded theory as

> *one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis and theory stand in reciprocal relationship to one another.* (p. 23)

In this method, data collection, analysis and eventual theory stand in close relationship to one another. A researcher does not begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind (unless his or her purpose is to elaborate and extend existing theory).

In grounded theory the researcher collects data in the field, typically from interviews, and the process of analysing this data begins almost immediately. When more information is gathered in the field, more analysis is undertaken and so the process continues. Through this process categories of information emerge, and the researcher

aims to collect and analyse until no more new units or categories of information can be found. This is called ‘saturation’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Furthermore, Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 12) state that grounded theories, because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding and provide a meaningful guide to action. A grounded theory approach can be particularly relevant in exploring new areas of research or in taking a new approach to an existing field of study, setting aside assumptions and preconceptions of the field. An iterative and comparative approach to data analysis may have something to offer this study, however, grounded theory does not offer an appropriate methodology for this study. Although it is the case that the study is breaking new ground with the non-Western focus of the study, and it is a study focussing on what people do (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p195), nonetheless, there is already significant research exploring well developed concepts relevant to this study such as such as information practices, capital, space and place, globalisation and so on.

Grounded theory has been used less commonly in information practices research. Hicks (2020) has developed a grounded theory of mitigating risk in the information practices of language learners. French and Williamson (2016) used a grounded theory approach to explore the information practices of welfare workers and Chabot (2019) has taken a grounded theory approach to his study of New Kadampa Buddhists.

Application to this study

According to Creswell (2013), grounded theory is more useful when the researcher has limited knowledge of the area of the study or inquiry, the intention of this approach being to generate theory. In terms of the MA Temple research, it is not a study without a strong theoretical underpinning. The practice theoretical tradition is underpinned by

well-defined concepts, even though Nicolini asserts (2013, p1). “There is no unified theory of practice”. Assumptions around naïve empiricism, as well as of the importance of information practices prevents me from choosing this approach. There are also limitations of grounded theory research as not only it is conditioned by many factors we see, but also there are practical difficulties in grounded theory; because it takes time to collect and transcribe interviews (Bryman, 2008, p. 574), which are the only source of data. Therefore, I determined that for many reasons this approach is not the most appropriate.

Ethnography

A third potential methodological approach is ethnography. Vidich and Lyman (2000, p. 38) emphasise that ethnography is “devoted to describing ways of life of humankind … a social scientific description of a people and the cultural basis of their peoplehood.”

Ethnography describes the social worlds of small groups of people, including activities, interests, and rules and styles of engagement (Miles and Huberman, 2002). In this context, it also describes the ideologies, behaviours, relationships, and contextual factors that define these communities (Lofland, 2002). It mainly focuses on cultural groupings and as a research discipline it has its roots in anthropology (Creswell, 2007). Here, the researcher has to spend an extended period of time collecting data in order to understand the behaviours of people and reasons behind their motives. This will involve observation (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995) of the group, especially their interactions and their descriptions of their behaviours and motives, which are intensively studied and recorded (Creswell, 2013).

Historically, ethnography has been associated with the study of small-scale societies, especially in the context of anthropology. More recently, ethnographic methods have

been applied to various aspects of the study of social interactions in organisations and other cultural groupings (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000). Ethnography also provides a unique approach to investigate local effects of global structures and transformations. It provides a micro level perspective on the effects of global transformation processes as well as systematic insights into the perceptions and strategies of local people.

Ethnography emphasises the recording of detailed and extensive qualitative information about people, events, cultures and practices of a community. This method of field research includes direct and indirect participant observation, as well as various techniques of interviewing for collecting details of people's practices in conversations.

The researcher must always make sure that the questions asked are according to the interview guide which consisted of many open-ended questions that would open conversation and encourage participants to talk. This researcher was careful when selecting these questions as Weiss (1994, p. 212) stated that "biased interviewing occurs when we encourage respondents to provide material supportive of our thesis". The interview guide consisted of broad questions rather than actual specific questions that needed to be asked in an orderly manner. This opened up the directions for discussion. I did not seek a predetermined output, solution or outcome from the participants. The questions were open ended and non-directive. The best example is "Tell me about the temple", "Tell me how you came to this temple", "Tell me what the temple activities mean to you?". This kind of question helped participants to talk about their own experiences and encouraged them to express their own thoughts and feelings.

Apart from interviews, ethnography can include the analysis of documents of various kinds. Its approach allows for an interpretation of the practices of individuals in the broader context of the community, giving the possibility of co-existing points of view.

Ethnography has been used by information practices researchers such as Veinot (2007), Lloyd (2007; 2011; 2014), Robinson and Yerbury (2015), and Olsson (2010; 2016; Olsson & Lloyd, 2017; 2019a; 2019b) in order to "*move beyond the interview*" (Olsson, 2013) and gain a richer picture of participants' embodied, social and in-situ information practices.

Application to this study

In terms of the practice theory perspective, ethnography is an appropriate methodology. It gathers data in a range of ways, and observation plays a key role. As Nicolini (2012) states, to study what people do, the researcher must observe; one does not study practice without proper observation. Nicolini (2012) also states "Studying practices through surveys or interviews alone is unacceptable." He argues that this is because interviews do not give data on what people actually do (Nicolini, 2012, pp. 217-228). However, others argue that interviews are an equally important and valid way to capture cultural understanding related to a site (Halkier, 2017).

Research methods applied to the study

Methodological approaches found in the literature

The studies reported in the literature on information practices take a qualitative approach, which is often referred to methodologically as ethnographic (e.g. Olsson 2005; Lloyd 2009). These studies focus on a group defined by common interests or common work roles, and use a range of data collection methods, including interviews, observation and analysis of documents. Bourdieu, who is often claimed as the first practice theorist and who began as an anthropologist, similarly used a range of data

collection techniques to gather data on what the people did and how these actions could be recorded (see Wacquant, 2004).

As noted above, this study draws on the work of other scholars, and it is appropriate to consider the methodological approaches they have taken. Castells, Sassen and Sack have all taken a constructivist approach. This is clearest in the work of Sack who asserts that people construct the notion of space. To understand how they do this, and what their definitions of space and place are, Sack explores the relationships between people and place through the activities they engage in and establishes the notion of thick and thin places, which expresses the strength of the relationship that people have to others and to a specific location. Sack's work is important to this study not only for its theoretical contribution, but because methodologically, Sack focussed attention on place as a social practice. His focus is on the micro-sociological. Although relatively unimportant conceptually in this study, Fisher and Naumer's (2006) work on information grounds also takes a micro-sociological approach, relevant to this study of information practices because of its focus on how meeting places incidentally become places where people exchange information.

Castells, in his exploration of the notion of networked society, was less concerned with the empirical. His observations of the world around him led him to conclude that human activities are organised around networks and largely made up of flows. These flows include flows of capital, flows of information, flows of technology, flows of organisational interactions, flows of images, sounds and symbols (Castells, 1996, p. 412). His descriptions of what these flows might be, how people might interact with them and what they might lead to have given many scholars a framework for empirical investigation, focussing on the social interactions of people with each other, with information and with technology and on the outcomes of these interactions, which for

Castells are likely to be some form of capital. Importantly for Castells, "Network society is global society because networks have no boundaries" (2010, p. 2737) and this assertion encourages scholars to consider the relationship between the local and the global. Methodologically, Castells's work is important for this study because of his focus on the importance of the structural elements of context in any analysis of people's actions and interactions.

Sassen's concept of "globalisation" in the context of organisations and her emphasis on the importance of knowledge, skills, expertise and talents in global cities are derived both from an abstract conceptualisation and from empirical analysis. Both function at the macro-sociological level, in a similar way to Castells' concept of the network society, and both demand the rigour of constant testing in different empirical contexts. Sassen (2014) describes what she calls the "Before Method" as fundamental to her work. Using this methodological approach in the early stages of conceptualising a project, she asks the question "What don't I see?" and begins working "at the ground level", to understand the practices of individuals, from which she is able to move to a more abstract theoretical level. This methodological approach has been relevant to this study, because it encouraged a focus on what was hidden or what was taken for granted, even though the end point might have been different from Sassen's.

Next, it is necessary to investigate the chosen methodological approach for this study and justification for choosing it.

Choice of methodological approach

This research examines concepts associated with the notion of the site (Schatzki, 2002) in terms of information practices. It is concerned with the traditional placed-based temple and globalised flows of information through network of places and information

networks. The significance of this research is that it brings contradictory theories together. It also brings together literatures from different fields, including information studies, social geography, economics, and sociology to shed light on the phenomenon of the information practices of the MA Temple community.

The literature, as noted above, especially in the section Buddhists and Information, suggests a fairly small range of methodologies is to be found in studies of information practices and other literature relevant to this study, all of which draw on socially constructed, qualitative approaches. The study is one which is concerned with interpreting what people do and what the outcomes of their actions are. To do this, in a practice theoretical approach, it requires a methodology which can take both a micro and a macro approach, and which can demonstrate the interplay among a range of factors. Because of its relationship with culture, ethnography is a good methodological fit with the research to understand the social worlds from the perspectives of the community around the Temple and its branches. Furthermore, the stories people tell are important for the researcher as they shed light on an understanding of the context in which people interact. These stories are social products rather than facts related to the globalised exchange of specialised information and expertise. Through the analysis of these stories and the activities observed, the outcomes of practice, the capitals, such as cultural capital, are revealed. The full understanding of the complexity of the practices, and the intricate inter-relationships that lead to the outcomes and their interpretation as capital, requires not only the micro-analysis of the stories, but the macro analysis of the networking of the characteristics of global and local workings of the Temple.

According to Schatzki (2001), a practice theoretical approach is concerned with understanding a social world through the sayings, doings and relatings of a group of people. The focus in this study is a diasporic Sri Lankan ethnic community associated

with Theravada Buddhism. Thus, there is a clearly defined group, with a complex set of relationships, evident through social networks spreading across various parts of the city of Sydney and extending beyond spatial limits as well as transcending the boundaries of the nation state as well. A challenge in undertaking this ethnography is recognising that on the one hand this community exists in physical space and in embodied social relations, but at the same time, the temple acts as a network and the information flows generated by monks and devotees exist in the digital world across and beyond physical boundaries of the Sydney-based Temple. Ethnography will provide a micro level perspective on the perceptions and strategies of monks and devotees and their information flows; the use of the practice theoretical approach as a conceptual framework facilitates the bringing together of this micro level approach with a broader perspective that will give insights into the global processes of the Temple as an organisation.

Ethnography is, therefore, a suitable methodological approach because, as a social researcher and member of the Temple, my focus is to bring out the social reality. This reality for me is something which the MA Temple and community construct for themselves in their everyday interactions in their own cultural terms. This is intersubjective and tends to produce many culturally determined varieties and patterns of human practice and social organisation (Vittikh, 2015).

The ethnographic enquiry explored these relationships firstly through interviews with monks and devotees. Interviews offer a way for us to hear people voices and begin to understand their culture from the inside and can allow us to develop descriptions of someone's culture which preserves their voices (Cortazzi 1993, p.1). Secondly, I conducted insider participant observation of temple events and social gatherings. Thirdly, I also undertook analysis of the activities of the Temple recorded in the

websites for the Sydney-based Temple, for the headquarters set up in Sri Lanka, as well as for the range of other digital media used by the monks and the devotees.

In terms of the role of a researcher, it was my role is to act as an outsider and critical researcher. However, I can also regard myself as an insider of the community, as being a part of the same culture. In terms of benefits, this gives me a better understanding of the cultural norms and practices, knowledge which it would take an outsider years to acquire. As well as being a part of the Temple community, as a researcher I am also wearing metaphorical glasses made of theories and concepts derived from a range of different researchers, including Castells (1999), "space of flows", Sassen's (2001) "globalisation", and Robert Sack's (2003) thin and thick places. Through these, I aimed to develop a better understanding of this society and their social networks.

The devotees' and monks' thoughts, perceptions, beliefs and experience are all aspects of their culture which we need to know about and be aware of as key factors in this research. The culture of this community, from an information practices perspective, has not been the subject of previous research in our field.

Insider/ outsider studies

Insider research is to be found in ethnographic studies, especially in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology (Hellawell, 2006), but although it is common, there is as yet no universally-agreed definition. Mercer (2007, p.3) stated that an insider is "someone whose biography gives her a lived-in familiarity with the group being researched" and an outsider is "a researcher who does not have any intimate knowledge of the group being researched", while for Brannick & Coghlan, (2007) "insider" research has been described as research which is undertaken within an organization,

group or community where the researcher is also a member. A similar point is made by Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p.58) who emphasise the importance of insider researchers "shar[ing] an identity, language and experiential base with the study participants".

Insider/Outsider research carries many benefits yet confronts the researcher with multiple challenges as well. A key benefit of insider researcher is the 'pre-understandings' that the researcher brings to the design of the study (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007). This helps the researcher in designing the research questions effectively as such insights may not be easily understood by an external researcher or 'an outsider' (Smyth & Holian, 2008). Insider research provides a valuable contribution to theory and practice. For Alvesson (2003, p178), the deeper knowledge of the research setting, well-grounded experiences and observations related to the setting may lead to better theoretical development, because even after months of research work in an organisation, outsiders will still have a relatively limited knowledge of the setting. Marshall and Rossman (2006, p.62) list some of advantages of insider research such as "relatively easy access to participants; reduced time expenditure for certain aspects of data collection; a feasible location for research; the potential to build trusting relationships", all of which enables a deep level of understanding in the research.

Insider research is not without criticism. Some researchers consider 'distance' is necessary for valid research and highlight the range of criticisms at insider research in terms of the researchers' personal position (Mercer, 2007). Brannick and Coghlan (2007, p.60) refer specifically to accusations of insiders "…being too close and thereby, not attaining the distance and objectivity deemed to be necessary for valid research". Chavez (2008, p. 475) stated that this positioning of the researcher depends on "the aspects of an insider researcher's self or identity which is aligned or shared with

participants". Morse (1998, p.61) also advised against this type of approach in research in organisations because "the dual roles of investigator and employee are incompatible", leading to problems for the researcher. One of the reasons for this potential incompatibility is the existence of insider researcher's bias (Chavez 2008), which could influence the research questions, design and data collection procedures. Insider researcher bias could also include "taken for granted assumptions" (Asselin, 2003, p.100). Another problem that could arise is a potential issue of dealing with damaging information (Alvesson, 2003) as participants may not share information for fear of being judged, or because of the impact on their ongoing relationships in the organisation (Chavez, 2008). However, this kind of dilemma is not unique to insider research, but also would be relevant to any research which uncovers sensitive information.

Creswell (2013) notes that insider research is often open to criticism and one solution is to ensure 'trustworthiness' in the research design. Corbin, Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p.60) counter criticisms, arguing that an insider / outsider "dichotomy" is too "simplistic" as "holding membership in a group does not denote complete sameness within that group. Likewise, not being a member of a group does not denote complete difference". Instead, they offer the "notion of the space in between" explaining that we can sometimes feel more of an insider than an outsider but ultimately occupy a place between the two. This idea is also proposed by De Guerre (2002, p.333) who states "a pure insider is too caught up in the action to practice reflexivity and a pure outsider is not close enough to understand what is really going on".

Attempting to self-define as either an insider or outsider is oversimplifying what is a much more complex issue. However, my task as a researcher is not only to attempt to define my position in these terms, but also to recognise the variety of roles I occupy. It was my responsibility to be aware of the potential conflicts of being a member of the

group as well as a researcher within the same context. In the following paragraphs, I present my reflections. I have chosen to write about myself in the third person here, to give myself some critical distance.

The researcher is an insider as he is a part of the temple community. However, the researcher is also, as a researcher, an observer of the temple, so he acts as an outsider to the temple as well. Here, the researcher discusses consequences of both these perspectives.

Being an insider to the research brings many advantages as well as disadvantages as there are trends, limitations, merits and demerits of this approach. The researcher is reminded that insider research has been contentious in ethnographic studies (Naaeke at al., 2011). According to Headland, Pike and Harris (1990), the degree to which an ethnographer immerses himself into the culture being studied will differ, taking into account where he must mix his outsider perspective with the insider perspective. The current research is a good example for this phenomenon. The researcher understood that there are pros and cons of being an insider and having an outsider role. Headland, Pike and Harris (1990) note that the balance of the two perspectives depends on the researcher, and it can take various shapes, specially being acknowledged as a member of the community, as the researcher is.

Here, the researcher shows how he balanced these two roles effectively and ethically and how he became a part of the research being an insider and then an outsider at the same time. As an outsider, the researcher's main role was to document and analyse the cultural narratives of the Theravada diasporic community living in Sydney in terms of their information practices. The researcher's focus was on the qualitative approach to understanding the interpersonal communication and exchange of information in face to

face, and virtual encounters at different sites of the temple. Since the researcher himself is a part of the diasporic community and with the researcher's father being a Theravada Buddhist, the researcher believes that as well as being the outsider researcher, he also has insider roots to the temple. Not only that but also the researcher has come from the same ethnic and racial background as the temple participants, therefore the researcher can be perceived as an insider, both by himself and by members of the Temple community.

Being an insider, the researcher was able to understand the language of the Theravada Buddhists and what they recounted easily. Growing up with the same cultural background helped the researcher to understand these how cultural narratives arise and what their underlying meanings are, as well as interpreting their causes and effects clearly. It also meant that the researcher was able to build trust among the temple interview participants easily, because he could show through body language that he related to what he observed and heard in their responses. As a result, the participants talked freely, assuming the interviewer was capable enough to understand the descriptions of what they do, along with their feelings and thoughts.

The participants also have sense of belonging and friendship with the interviewer, because of the acceptance of their shared background as members of the Sinhalese diaspora. It would have been extremely difficult to conduct these interviews if the interviewer were an outsider and not coming from this shared background. Therefore, his cultural identity helped the researcher to extract insights into their information practices, which would not have been possible otherwise. At first, the participants were generally cautious to meet the researcher in his role of interviewer, but once they realised that the researcher is someone from their ethnic and cultural background, they did not want to offend him by refusing to participate; they were eager to help him.

The interpretation of the monks' and devotees' information practices in data gathered through observation and interviews would have been very difficult for an outsider, because to a large extent the underlying beliefs and causes for their actions are hidden among the everyday understandings of their own society. For an outsider, to gain this kind of knowledge would have taken long time. The participants were not suspicious of the researcher, and they tended to relax and opened up, appreciating the opportunity to engage and to talk about topics they were very interested in.

On the other hand, the researcher as an outsider is doing a scholarly study based on the temple community's information practices, with his focus being how to conceptualise the information practices in terms of the site and understand the capital flows in terms of what the participants do at the temple. In that case, the researcher was an outsider to the temple and needed constantly to be aware of this position. From this perspective, he has been an ethnographer researcher who was documenting the conversations, interviewing and taking notes.

He was the researcher conducting a study and therefore different from the temple community. Though many researchers claim this type of insider/outsider research is biased (Naaeke et al. (2011), the researcher had to work with other researchers who were clearly outsiders to the MA Temple. These outsiders included the supervisors of his doctoral studies. Their constant questioning meant having to explain and clarify his data and interpretations in terms of the ethnic and cultural factors of his own knowledge and in terms of the literature, and this helped the researcher to clarify his assumptions and not to bring unexplored bias to the study. Any assumptions that remain are unintentional.

In the context of having these dual roles, it must also be noted that it was sometimes a disadvantage acting as an outsider, as the participants could not understand why the researcher asked certain questions; they knew the answers to those questions were obvious and that the researcher as a member of the Temple community was well aware of the answers. There were occasions the participants considered them "silly questions" and the researcher was aware of their unspoken frustration. It is the case that some of the questions that the researcher had asked were very simple, but they were essential to the study. From time to time, the researcher needed to emphasise that this is a research study, and the audience is not the Theravada Buddhist community but a community of scholars concerned with information practices, so that it was necessary to present data that would make the practices of the Temple community understandable to scholars from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. This explanation presented other problems, casting the researcher as an outsider within the Temple community, because this clarification then meant that some interviewees anticipated really difficult questions, for example relating to Buddhist scripture, and prepared accordingly. However, having to answer this kind of simple question revealed new truths, as the outsider researcher expected. In part, this was the case because participants could not make up or invent stories quickly enough to deceive the researcher. Participants also knew that giving deliberately misleading statements would not work, as the researcher had grown up in the same cultural background as they had.

Yet, even posing these simple questions led to problems for the researcher. He went through a difficult time because some of the answers to the simple questions are so obvious to someone from the community, that participants gave only partial answers, and he sometimes had to repeat the question several times, reminding the participant that the scope of the research went well beyond the Theravada Sri Lankan community's

practices and their cultural understandings to related to a field of conceptual knowledge in information studies and beyond.

This account brings out the challenges of how to balance these roles as an insider and outsider: insider because the researcher belongs to the same ethnic group and is a member of the Temple and outsider because the researcher is doing doctoral study at the university and is an observer of information practices. When the researcher is at the temple observing the participants, the researcher always had to act in both roles. When worshipping time came, the researcher had to worship, chant, and do rituals with the participants. At this time, the researcher felt that he was an insider, no different from the other devotees. However, the activities of devotees of the Temple, associated with the Temple, are more than worship, chanting and religious rituals. To some extent, when the researcher was outside the religious aspects of the Temple, the researcher felt that he has been an outsider. To become more familiar with the participants' actions in the wider context of Temple activities, the researcher spent more hours in the activities of the Temple so that he could bring a similar familiarity and be an insider, sharing the participants' experiences of the temple. This helped the researcher to understand what participants do, why they do it and what the context is.

Consequently, these two roles gave rise to many practical as well as ethical considerations while doing the research. One unanticipated aspect was that the researcher had to be careful when taking notes, and he had to ensure the security of the audio recordings; frequently, participants talked about other participants, including gossip and politics with their stories, demonstrating their trust in the researcher as a friend.

The researcher had to be guarded in his reactions and comments all the time. There was always the possibility of being biased or making a partisan comment. However, the researcher was constantly aware of this. He was careful not to engage in gossip when he was there to as a researcher, and not to reveal what interviewees had said and done with or about other participants. It was the researcher's ethical responsibility to being faithful to the scholarly work and to the temple community and interview participants. Being an insider helped dig deep into the temple practice and being an outsider allowed a deep consideration of the theoretical bases of the study, revealing the complex nature of the ethnographic qualitative research approach.

Another factor to bear in mind in this study is that the participants are members of the Sinhalese diaspora. The researcher has been living in Australia for long time; and to some extent, members of a diaspora often feel emotionally and ideologically distant from their own culture. On the one hand, this was an experience shared with the participants, who sought to establish links with their culture. On the other hand, this sense of distance helped the researcher to adjust to the outsider's role. Since the researcher has multiple identities being Australian and Sri Lankan, there were many instances when the researcher did not feel like an insider or an outsider.

So being an insider and an outsider went in hand in hand for the researcher, and it would have been easy to act without knowing which role he was taking. Therefore, the researcher had to maintain awareness of his position and balance the roles accordingly. To avoid the bias that might arise from an imbalance in the roles, both in the data collection process and in analysis and interpretation of the data, the researcher always needed to ensure he was using multiple sources of data, verifying and matching them to ascertain that the findings were trustworthy.

As an example of probing and gathering data from multiple sources, when participants were talking about how they made money for the celebrations, they tended to say they did this by soliciting donations. Participants tended not to reveal that selling books in the temple was a significant source of funds in the first place until the interviewer asked about their involvement in selling food, and books, which other sources of data had shown him were significant sources of income for the Temple. Therefore, the message that the devotees and monks like to portray outside world is different from the full picture, painted by the wider range of sources. Being an insider revealed that temple also sells various things to fund the temple activities and being an outsider gave the impetus to identify other sources of data.

To strengthen his position as an outsider, the researcher sought advice from outside experts, especially his supervisors, but also from the literature, to understand the consequences of playing these two roles hand in hand. The advice received allowed him to look at the temple from different perspectives and angles. Whether he was comfortable with it or not, the researcher had to wear outsider's glasses to look at the research. Interpreting and reporting the findings within the parameters of ethical considerations was a very important aspect of the research.

The researcher here extracted the best of both the insider and outsider actors' roles to the benefit of the research. The researcher understood that the roles complement each other, and tensions brings the best of both worlds. Naaeke et al. (2011, p. 160) noted the importance of both perspectives when they stated that

> *"Without both insiders and outsiders making their respective brush strokes, the canvas will probably never be completed. ... Insiders and outsiders should realize that their perspective and contribution to ethnography is relevant and significant*

while … immersing himself/herself into the culture, learning the language and bracketing his/her personal biases".

However, to say that it was easy to ensure that the canvas was as complete as possible, in the words of Naaeke et al., would be to deny the challenges inherent in learning how to balance the roles of insider and outside in this study.

Data collection

The approaches to data collection used in this study were those commonly used in ethnographic studies, and in studies using a practice theoretical approach. These included participant observation, interviews, document analysis and field notes. Each will be considered in the following sub-sections. These will be followed by a description of the ways the researcher used each data collection technique.

Participant observation

Participant observation is a central data collection technique in ethnographic research (Eriksson et al., 2008) and part of the broader qualitative research paradigm (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). It gives detailed information on action and behaviour. In this technique, the researcher serves as the primary instrument for observing and collecting data (Creswell, 2003) by using various methods for gathering data on interactions and relationships through the recording of behaviour, conversation, and experience in situ (Van Maanen, 1995).

According to Jorgensen (1989, p. 12), "The methodology of participant observation is exceptional for studying processes, relationships among people and events, the organization of people and events, continuities over time, and patterns, as well as the immediate sociocultural contexts in which human existence unfolds". The main

advantage of this method is that the researcher shares the everyday life and activities of the people in the chosen setting, becoming an insider to the research and thus sharing experiences and developing a feeling of what it is like to be part of the community studied. Rosen (1991, p16) states that being an insider to the group develops a "working knowledge" that enables a good understanding of the culture studied. Another significant benefit of participant observation is "that you get fresh impressions, right as things are happening. You can see how the experience evolves, how the impressions change, how people navigate a situation" (Morrison, 2002, p. 31).

However, there are also challenges and disadvantages to this data collection method. the challenge is the researcher needs to understand the site as an insider while describing it to outsiders. Another weakness is that, being the medium for the data collection, the experiences and bias of the researcher may influence the results. In the ideal situation, finding the balance is important as the ethnographer using participant observation should try to be an outsider as well as an insider. The insider and outsider experience and the challenges this poses have been discussed in detail above.

Interviews

Ethnographers extend what they learn through participant observation by carrying out interviews to understand the setting or group. Interviewing is "a valuable method for exploring the construction and negotiation of meanings in a natural setting" (Cohen et al. 2007, p. 29). It also enables interviewees to "speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings" (Berg, 2007, p. 96). Interviews generate data participants own behaviour, circumstances, identities and events.

There are three types of interviews, structured, semi structured and unstructured interviews. Semi-structured and unstructured interviews are usually more appropriate for ethnographic research. Gubrium & Holstein (2002) point out that, unlike the structured interview, semi-structured and unstructured interviews, often referred to as open-ended interviewing, create a situation where greater flexibility and freedom is offered to both interviewers and interviewees, in asking questions and in answering them. In this context, the interviewer would be more "keen to follow up interesting developments and to let the interviewee elaborate on various issues" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 136). In the semi-structured interview, the interviewer starts from a set of topics and questions, and can "probe and expand the interviewee's responses" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 88). As Jorgensen notes, researchers often "gather data through casual conversations, in-depth, informal, and unstructured interviews, as well as formally structured interviews and questionnaires" (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 22).

Interviewing is also not without its challenges. One challenge is the requirement for a participant's consent This process of seeking informed consent makes sure that the research is aware of ethical considerations. According to Cohen et al. (2007), interviews are considered an intrusion into respondents' private lives and a high standard of ethical considerations should be maintained as questions asked can be sensitive. A second challenge is in documenting participants' responses. In contemporary times, audio-recording is easy. However, a consequent challenge is the need for transcription. There are arguments for and against the researcher doing the transcriptions, which are extremely time-consuming. If a professional transcription service is used, or a technologically-enhanced automated system as available through Office 365, the researcher must check the transcriptions for accuracy. A final challenge in semi-structured and unstructured interviews is in making sure that all the topics have been

covered. Berg (2007) recommends. using a basic checklist that would help in covering all relevant areas

One aspect of interviewing not covered in the standard texts is use of language. It is assumed that interviewer and participants are all speaking the same language and that language is the language they would normally use. Thus, issues arising from the interviewer and participants using another language are not raised. A key challenge is that a study undertaken in a non-Western context, about people interacting in a non-Western cultural way is likely to bring up ideas for which there is no close equivalent in English and questions arise over how best to communicate these ideas. In this study, the interviewer faced the challenge of conducting interviews in English where it is not the participants' first language and not the language normally used in the context of the Temple. Thus, it is not surprising that participants had difficulties explaining their practices in English, because they are not used to expressing their cultural norms and religious practices in English, and often, there is no appropriate English term, and understandably, they moved into speaking in Sinhalese. A devotee commented: "It fills my mind with "shraddha". I don't know the English term for Shraddha." In cases where that happened, the researcher did not interrupt. This researcher understood what they meant, because these are words and phrases from his native language and shared culture. The challenge for him was to convey the content of the interviews in a scholarly way when the language was inadequate. This was not easy as Pali, the language of Buddhist practices, is a language which has multiple meanings for the same word, and people assign a meaning according to their understanding of their practices or the scripture. The key lesson for the researcher was not to analyze the Pali words for the meanings that he might give them, but to understand how these words created appropriate linkages to their behaviours and motives. In the context of the thesis, his

solution to this challenge was to include a glossary. Another challenge arose when participants began using their shared first language, because it indicated a shift in the relationship between researcher and participant to something less formal, and with a level of trust based on the researcher's insider status. The section on Insider/Outsider Studies discusses the question of trust.

Content Analysis

According to Given (2008) the analysis of documents is a useful data collection method in ethnographic studies, especially in studies that involve organisations. In those cases, there are many documents related to the setting of the research, which are helpful in placing the participants and their actions and responses in a wider context. In an organizational setting, these documents could include: advertisements, work descriptions, brochures, newsletters, websites, minutes of meetings, reports, and many other kinds of written items. All these documents could be used to understand what is taking place and general issues which might affect the site of the investigation.

Documents also represent how the participants of a study present themselves to other people. The website contents and documents, for example, may provide introductory information about the organization as well as documentation of past events. In this study, documents were found online from several sources. These included the MA Temple website, its YouTubechannel, official Facebook, its TV channel and the live video streaming of Temple activities. The collecting data from different sources helped the researcher to reconcile different kinds of content in the context of the research question.

The multiple sources of documentary data such as website and online sources and YouTube, provided help to identify the range of events happening daily, weekly,

fortnightly, monthly and yearly, giving a sense of the life of devotees and monks over an extended period of time. As some of these sources are aimed at people who are not members of the Temple community, they helped the researcher to clarify what a reader unfamiliar with the Temple would need to know as background. For the researcher, these sources were useful because they validated these stories gathered in interviews and filled in gaps in the researcher's experiences, such as when an interviewee talked about a particular event, the information about that event was readily available on the website.

Given (2008) cautions that privacy or copyright issues may apply to business-related site documents and that it is important to take steps to obtain necessary approvals before including them in research. The researcher should not use the documents that they do not have permission to use. If the researcher uses the documents, it is important to use appropriate references to cite the documents.

Field Notes

Field notes are an essential element of data collection in an ethnographic study. These are the notes made by the researcher, documenting his reactions, thoughts and observations. These should be made as soon as possible after the researcher has been "in the field" (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011). Writing field notes takes time but without field notes, details may soon be forgotten. Therefore, it is important to plan for writing down field notes in the same way that plans are made for gathering other kinds of data. While some researchers prefer to make fieldnotes online, others prefer to use a hard copy notebook they often refer to as their journal.

Data collection in this study

Ethnographic research data collection involved the researcher spending as much time as possible within the specific community in order to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' everyday practices. The practices and interactions of devotees and monks were recorded as field note observations in a journal. Interviews were conducted in field settings and were recorded and professionally transcribed prior to COVID 2019. These were then also summarised in the journal. As an active participant in the research process, the researcher constantly needed to evaluate his role, his relationship with participants, and applied this to developing an understanding and interpretation of the participants' social worlds (Unger, 2005). Data was also collected in an analysis of MA Temple website, Facebook and YouTube channels and observations at various temple sites.

The recruitment of participants was done in several ways. The researcher sought permission from the governing board of the Temple to conduct the study and permission from them to post a notice explaining the study on the notice board at the Temple and on the website, asking people to volunteer to take part in the study. Some participants may have agreed to take part because they were known to the friends and acquaintances of the researcher, however, all participants took part of their own free will. Once potential participants had made an initial contact with the researcher, the follow-up was organised using the method specified by the participants, including telephone, email, personal contact and social media. Direct contact was made with the monks based in Sydney. The communication protocols of the Temple were used to contact the monks in the main temple in Sri Lanka to seek information on the Temple's publication program.

There were 25 participants in the study, 10 monks and 15 devotees. The monks were between the ages of 29 and 40 and were only those based in Sydney. The devotees

ranged in age between 21 and 55 It was recognised that people attending the Temple or reading the invitation to participate in the study may not only be Buddhist devotees, because the website is publicly available, however, all participants identified themselves as devotees.

In the interviews, key areas of investigation included the reasons for participating in Temple activities, what the Temple meant to them, types of knowledge disseminated by the Temple and the audiences for these knowledges, the expertise of the monks, the use of digital technologies in traditional aspects of Temple life, the flows of information and information products as well as the outcomes of these activities, including material and non-material benefits. The researcher began by asking participants about their motives for being a member of the Temple and the conversations evolved from there. Only three questions were pre-planned: Why did you go to the temple? What does the temple mean to you? How did you know about the temple? Other questions about engagement with the Temple and its activities followed a conversational line. The researcher's task was to facilitate an easy-going atmosphere where participants felt free to discuss any topic and, in any way, they chose, but maintaining the formality of a research interview. The topics of conversation and styles of address included were consistent with the group's everyday relations and interactions. Burgess-Limerick and Burgess-Limerick (1998) argued that conversational interviews involve setting the agenda interactively and can be a powerful way of gaining access to a participant's interpretation of their experiences. That approach was adopted here and implemented successfully.

Each interview lasted approximately thirty to forty minutes. It was conducted in the manner chosen by the participants: face to face or online using Skype or Viber, at times and locations convenient to the participants. As noted above, interviews were conversational in style (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998). A major

challenge in beginning fieldwork from a position on the 'outside' is to develop relationships with unfamiliar participants by finding shared interests and values. This process often requires much time and patience. Atkinson et al., (2007) stated a more 'inside' position allows research relationships to develop more quickly. However, although he was an insider, this researcher was a novice in conducting research and needed to learn how to carry out research interviews as well as to develop new relationships with unfamiliar participants and to establish appropriate scholarly relationships with those he knew well.

This process of developing a relationship with participants was helped because the participants shared his interest in their activities in the Temple and, therefore, in the interviews. Thus, the researcher could focus on making sure all the topics he was concerned with were covered within each interview. The researcher was not looking for short answers but for participants to talk about their activities and explain what they did. Rather than looking for facts, the study sought to gain insights and perceptions about the Temple. The interviews were conducted in English, although both the researcher and the participants speak Sinhala and would normally use that language in the context of the Temple. English was used in order not to introduce issues of ambiguity in translation in an English language thesis. All participants were fluent in English and use it in their day-to-day working lives. However, it was clear in the interviews that all participants wanted to express ideas and activities for which no English words were easily found, so that from time to time Sinhalese words were used in the interviews by participants, and in these cases, explanations were sought for the study, even though the researcher was very familiar with the meanings of these words, as noted above in the section on Interviews.

The Temple is part of a large organisation, and like all organisations, will have information about is strategies and workings which should remain confidential to the organisation. It was rightly assumed that the interviews with the monks would not reveal any confidential data, although the purposes of the research and the focus on their practices as monks was emphasised before the interviews began. The identities of the monks have been anonymised. However, it was not possible to de-identify the main guru, nor would it have been appropriate to do so, as he is the figurehead of this globalised Temple.

Participant observation was carried out at various temple sites, such as the main Cattai temple (where the monks reside), community halls, devotees' residences (where temporary programs are held either weekly or fortnightly), parks and even schools. During the observations, the researcher was participating in the events and programs as an insider. He noted down important points on his iPad and mobile phone whenever possible before he could forget them. This was not an intrusive practice as devotees were observed regularly using mobile phones and iPads to take photographs, search online, access recordings and so on. After returning home, the researcher documented in detail what happened during the observations and the reason behind them. These observations went on over a period of 6 months, mostly at the weekends, as the researcher was working full time.

The researcher observed that participants were often silent during the various programs while engaged in shared practices with a spiritual focus. Participants engaged in different practices including Seela programs, alms giving, chanting and celebrations where they engaged in information practices with a shared purpos. During the period of data collection, the researcher himself organised some of the alms giving programs and

invited friends to participate. This decision, part of his normal activities within the Temple, added further complexity to his insider/outsider status.

The participants were observed practicing meditating, an internally focused practice which can be practised anywhere but was an experience enriched for participants by doing so together, under the guidance of monks and in the sacred space of the Temple. However, the observations were not confined solely to spiritual practices. During the short breaks in these practices, participants had numerous conversations regarding their career, studies, jobs, neighbourhoods, Australian immigration laws, children, politics and so on.

The researcher took photos during these programs, something that many other people taking part in the programs did. He did not emphasise to temple devotees that he was engaged in observation during these Temple events. Although the community had been made aware of the research taking place via email and notices at the Temple, consent from individuals was sought only for the interviews. The Temple is a public place, so researcher had to balance the insider and outsider roles at the temple sites and the disruption that seeking individual consent for taking photographs would have caused to the events being observed. No photos taken of individual interviewees have been used in the thesis.

The observation showed the researcher how people connect to the different sites based on their different purposes, likes and dislikes, aims and objectives. For example, the researcher saw a devotee for the first time at one temple site and has never seen them in a physical site since, but only in online participation. On the other hand, he noted that another devotee participated in an online dharma talk once and then attended physical locations afterwards.

Observations were not just things seen by the researcher but also the things heard by him while at the Temple sites that were taken into account. In one instance, he overheard a devotee say she stopped coming to the temple because one of the ladies who worked with her at her office started coming to the Temple too. In another instance, a devotee said he preferred to come to activities on weekends because he got to talk with people, something he appreciated after 5 days of hard working. For him, this was the only opportunity to relax and talk to members of the Sinhalese Community. There was also an instance where a devotee introduced his partner to the researcher and stated he met her at the Temple, and they subsequently got married. The Temple practices are social and being part of these activities helped the researcher to gain a more in depth understanding of the Temple community's complex social practices.

The website of the Sydney branch of the Temple was also an important source of data for the study. It has two parts to it; it provides a description of the founding of the Temple and its development in Sydney on the one hand, and on the other hand, it provides information on activities for the members of the Temple community, including spiritual activities, cultural activities for children and community-based activities, such as involvement in blood donation and Clean-Up Australia. The website was analysed to provide an introduction to the Temple. Although all the information there was known to the researcher, given his status as an insider, it was a useful guide for the researcher as an outsider, to identify what other outsiders might need to know about the Temple. The information on events and activities was compared with the statements participants made about activities they took part in, as a means of validating those accounts. Use of the Facebook page and other online sources such as the TV channel and live streaming are covered above in the description of participant observation.

Data analysis

The data that has been collected through interviews, observations must be processed before detailed analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Ethnographic studies produce large amounts of data and therefore a systematic approach to analysis and interpretation is essential. This study used two approaches to data analysis, a priori coding and emergent coding (Stemler, 2000). In a priori coding, the categories are established prior to the analysis based upon some concept from the literature and its operationalisation. Here, the main concepts relevant to this study from the work of key theorists, as identified above, were listed and their key characteristics identified. Preliminary analysis of the data, using a priori coding drawn from the work of Castells, Sassen and Sack, allowed a preliminary picture to emerge from the data (Bryman, 2008). As a result, it was relatively straightforward to understand and reveal the complexity of the organisation and the relationships of both monks and devotees to the Temple specially with the importance of information technologies and of physical place being at the heart of these relationships. A series of patterns emerged from the data, and the consolidation of the data from the a priori codes showed conceptual similarities and differences. However, although, as noted, patterns emerged and a preliminary picture emerged, it also became clear that although the a priori codes derived from existing literature had been useful and facilitated significant understanding of the data, they were not adequate, and thus it was necessary to turn to the thematic analysis of emergent coding, to find ways to conceptualise the data that did not fit neatly in the established codes.

With emergent coding, themes are established following detailed examination of the data, in an iterative way. There are many considerations when developing codes and many textbooks give advice on steps to take and processes to follow (e.g., Lofland &

Lofland, 1995). The advice common to these textbook sources is to identify what the data is about. The textbooks identify different ways of applying codes (Krippendorff, 2004). The first way is to define them by the source, whether interview transcript, website, field notes and so on. The second way is to separate them by type of respondent (monks and devotees). The third way to define them is to use referential units (what they said, did and meant in terms of the research conceptualisations); in this study, all three ways were used, with sentences and paragraphs being appropriate for the third way.

Each of these ways was used to develop the coding frame, in an iterative process. The researcher wrote notes and refined the definitions for each category and subcategory. In this process, it was important to go beyond the words that were used as labels, for example to recognise that mentions of "Temple" could have many different meanings and therefore needed to be coded differently.

The data analysis for this study was done as a step-by-step process. Firstly, the analysis began by addressing points that Krippendorff (2004) recommended such as what the data is about, what was its context, and so on. The data from various sources was consolidated and carefully checked. The consolidated data, including the field notes and online documentary sources, was then loaded into NVIVO, a very useful tool for organising the data and managing the process of analysis. It was particularly helpful in "keeping the relations between the parts [of the data] intact" (Miles & Huberman 1994, p. 56), while also allowing the researcher to explore all the possibilities of meaning in the individual parts of the data.

In considering the process of analysis, the literature sometimes refers to a process of secondary analysis. The thematic analysis of emergent coding could be considered in

this way. Bryman (2011) states that the secondary analysis offers rich opportunities (p587) to investigate the data that has been under-explored. However, in this study, emergent coding is not seen as a secondary and therefore less important level of analysis. It is an essential part of the iterative processes of coding. For example, the coding relating to capitals, the outputs of practices, could only be done once the practices or activities themselves have been analysed and interpreted.

From the sections set out above, the strengths of ethnography can be seen, and the way that ethnography has been used in this study demonstrates high quality research design and analysis. Ethnographic analysis is critical to understand the social worlds of the participants. It was clear to the researcher as insider, that taken as a whole, the data from the context of the Temple, from the observations and the interviews, could give rise to interpretations that did not emerge in a straightforward way from the systematic processes of a priori and emergent coding. Therefore, it was important to consider what other analytical processes might be relevant to drawing out meanings appropriate to the aims of this study. It became apparent that narrative analysis offered a useful approach.

Narrative analysis

Narratives can also be seen as a reconstructed perception of life experiences (Polkinghorne, 1995). The stories of the participants allow the researcher to reflect on what they do at the temple. According to the Bryman (2011, p. 582) "stories are always told with a purpose in mind" and although narrative analysis is mostly applied to life history research, the application can be broader than this (Mishler, 1986, p. 77). Therefore, Bryman (2008) argues that narrative analysis relates not just to the life span but also to accounts relating to episodes and interconnections between them.

The application of narrative analysis uncovers the stories interviewees are trying to explain. An example from this study could be the purpose of participating in the temple activities. Questions such as 'tell me how did you come to this temple?' and 'what makes you participate in temple activities?' are more likely to provide a narrative account. By asking follow up questions like 'then what happened?' interviewees were stimulated to provide a flow of details and impressions (Bryman, 2008), thus providing a useful narrative.

Narrative analysis allows seemingly hidden stories to emerge over the course of the interview. In this study, the target of the inferences would be related to the information practices of the temple and to their outcomes, and especially to the creation of capital within the Temple as outcomes of day to day activities.

To keep track of these elements of the narrative which were spread throughout the interview, the researcher took the advice of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and coded the data with numbers to identify the piece of information, using the conceptual frameworks of the study, supported by the affordances of the NIVIVO software used for coding and managing research data. These codes were useful in identifying people's patterns of interactions and practices, and relationships to the site, and the numbers were helpful in integrating them across the extent of the interview and also across the field notes on participant observation. An advantage of this approach to analysis is that the coding system can be rearranged for further analysis and clarification of findings. This helps to provide an approach to analysis that includes data from various sources, including website analysis, field notes (participant observation) and interviews. It was this approach to narrative analysis that led to the emergence of findings in terms of site and capitals.

Content analysis

As noted above, the website and Facebook page were used to provide background information on the Temple for those who are not members of the temple community. Thus, the content analysis for this purpose was very simple and was based on identifying the history of the Temple and its positioning in Sri Lanka and in Australia, establishing the way the Temple was represented both in terms of the physical buildings and its vision and mission, and noting the way its particular or special features were described, especially its claims to innovation and popularity. Emerging from this process was the need to go beyond the website for outsiders to be able to understand key terms and concepts that the participants took for granted. This led to the creation of a glossary, drawn together from a range of sources.

Secondary analysis

According to Mauthner et al. (1998), qualitative data can be analysed a second time with a different context. This allows the researcher to explore the data that was not investigated in the themes selected in the first instance. As noted above, Bryman also states that secondary analysis offers rich opportunities to investigate data that has been under-explored (2008, p587).

In this study, the emergence through narrative analysis of the importance of site and of the creation of capitals led to a secondary analysis of the data. This time, the data was categorised and organised by different capitals (defined as the outcomes of what the people do at the temple site). The capitals and the ways they were introduced were taken into the consideration. This was done by analysing the narratives of each person and their statements about their contributions to the temple and then investigating how their descriptions of their information practices changed over time. In this way, it was possible to identify how people talked about how one outcome might lead to a second

outcome. In conceptual terms, this mirrored the transformation of capitals from one mode to another.

The approach to data analysis and description demonstrates how ethnographic analysis is critical to understand the social worlds of the participants, supporting the main objective of this research the description of cultural phenomena, that is the information practices and their outcomes of the Temple community.

Ethical considerations

All ethnographic studies require careful attention to ensure that the research is conducted in an ethical manner. This is even more important when the researcher is recognised as a member of the community being studied. As noted above, the researcher has been a member of this Temple and is a member of the Sri Lankan Sinhalese diaspora. He is also new to ethnographic research. He benefitted from the guidance of the university's Human Research Ethics Committee and the conditions of the approval he was given to conduct this study (UTS APPROVAL NUMBER: 2015000013).

Being a member of the Temple community meant that the researcher may know things about the devotees who took part in the study outside of the interview process. Consequently, it was important to be very clear on the focus of the research question and the data to be collected through the interviews. It was also important to recognise that participants may have been reluctant to speak freely about their practices and their interactions with the temple and wary of speaking openly about what these practices meant to them.

It was also recognised that some of the participants might reveal aspects behind their participation in the temple that could cause embarrassment, such as accruing financial

benefits or overcoming the agony of traumatic events during Sri Lanka's lengthy civil war, including the death of close relatives. Personal information such as this was likely to be beyond the scope of the study. However, even if such information were to fall within the scope of the study, it would be important to maintain the confidentiality of this information. It was imperative that private information as such should not be distributed and shared with other participants. As a social researcher, protecting the dignity of the participants of this research was and remains important. Lack of attention to this significant ethical aspect could have led indirectly to emotional harm to the participants. Maintaining a focus on collecting only data relevant to the study, and de-identifying it at the point of collection, avoided the dangers associated with these aspects of the data.

Data were retained in accordance with the NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act and the university's policy and guidelines for doing field research. Thus, interviews were recorded but participants were de-identified and allocated a code, which was subsequently not used because the nature of some of the interview data could have led to the identification of participants, and the transcripts protected by passwords. In any report of the study, such as in this thesis, participants were not identified, being given only the label of male or female devotee, and their characteristics were not given so that they are in no way identifiable by other members of the community. Similarly, monks were not presented as individual respondents. It was acknowledged that it would be more difficult to de-identify the monks, who are public figures in the Temple, therefore, they are all given the label '*Thero*'.

It is accepted practice for researchers to gain written consent to take part in a study. However, the particular circumstances of the context of this study, a context where some participants did not like to consider any kind of materialistic benefit, whether to themselves, to the researcher or to the community, meant that there would have been practical

difficulties to gaining consent from every participant of the study. However, all participants were informed about the study, they volunteered to take part and they were all assured of the confidentiality of their data. It is unlikely that some participants would have spoken to the researcher if written consent had been required. In some instances, the participants requested the outcome of the research, the researcher agreed that once the doctoral examination process was complete, the researcher would send a brief summary of the findings to the participants and the link to the full thesis to the Temple.

Interpretation and reporting -writing up

The aim of ethnographers is "to produce a 'thick description' of a culture" (Geertz, 1973, p. 10) by using the evidence and express it clearly to the readers (Bryman, 2016). Although there are various forms of ethnographic writing in academia, including plays, novels, poems, narratives short stories, movies, videos, and even live presentations with discussions.(Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2011, p267), the ethnographic report is very common.

Van Maanen identified three types of ethnographic writing that he labelled realist, confessional and impressionist. Realist writing presents the data gathered as facts, with the researcher as the authority. Confessional writing positions the researcher at the centre, with the findings of the study being presented through his or her perspective. Impressionist writing uses literary techniques to give a sense of lived experience.

The writing in this study aims to convey the reality of the observations in the context of the research framework. This is ethnographic reporting. Its "truth claims" are not based solely in what research participants said, but also on the researcher's "personalized

seeing, hearing, and experiencing in specific social settings" (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 222).

This approach to ethnographic writing is well established. "Ethnographic realism" was adapted by the first generation of ethnographers. Clifford (1983) stated that the "[t]he goal of ethnographic realism is to give the reader a sense of 'you are there, because I was there'" (p. 118). It is described as "a mode of writing that seeks to represent the reality of a whole world or form of life" (Marcus & Cushman, 1982, p. 29). In this method, the researcher explains his argument through carefully chosen quotations and statements that provide the context for the content; this way of writing is particularly critical as raw data in ethnography is not always text-based (Van Maanen, 2011), with field notes becoming important for recording the researcher's understandings and interpretations of the world of the participants.

The researcher's insider and outsiders' roles are important in this case. Van Maanen, (2011, p. 55), stated that the fieldworker is required to be a 'sober, civil, legal, dry, serious, dedicated transcriber of the world studied', but at the same time, he must be able to go beyond that to understand how to represent the complex and sometimes conflicting interactions he has been part of.

A key criticism of early ethnographic writing was that Western researchers could no longer portray non-Western peoples with uncontested authority as their cultural representation was acknowledged to be always partial, contested, and could be political (Marcus, 1990). This approach to ethnographic realism was criticised on several grounds: that it presented an all-encompassing description of another culture; that it used an all-seeing yet distant narrator; that the people presented are composite rather than specific individuals; and that it presented an outsider perspective.

This type of critique would not be applicable to the way that ethnography is written in this study. Although this study is presented as an ethnographic report, presenting the researcher's observations, it is also recognized and acknowledged that the researcher has interpreted the data. His position as an insider to the Temple, belonging to the same ethnic and religious group as the participants in the study, means that he is not distant from the culture, nor does he try to present an overview of the culture, but instead describes and interprets everyday practices. There are implications of being an insider and an outsider, but these have already been addressed by the researcher in the section above on insider/outsider studies.

During the writing up the findings and discussion, the researcher's intention has been to follow the advice from Angrosino (2010, p4) "helping the reader 'hear' the actual voices of the people whose lives are being represented". As the devotees and monks often present very particular view, it has been a challenge to represent what on the surface may appear to be conflicting perspectives on the same topic.

Therefore, how the researcher presents the analysis and writing up is important. During the writing up, the researcher has attempted to ensure a balanced view of the descriptions when reporting the outcome of the analysed data. Weiss (1994, p.213) states:

> *"We can easily make an argument come out our way by treating comments that support our view as gospel and subjecting to sceptical scrutiny those that don't, by reporting material we like and disdaining the rest, and in general by behaving like a lawyer with a brief to advance".*

The best approach was to think about the researcher's insider and outsider roles. Therefore, the researcher always sought to uncover the real story and explain the phenomenon under the consideration rather than prove or disprove some preconceived ideas. This involved the

researcher acting as a cultural translator as participants were doing and saying things that always had an underlying spiritual and cultural context. Thus, the researcher had to produce several drafts to bring the original meaning of what participants had said and done to the surface in a western context and present it in a way that could be understood in this western context.

The resulting chapter, Chapter 4 Findings, introduces the Temple, and provides a glossary of the key Buddhist terms used by devotees and monks, so that when findings on the devotees and their practices are presented, the reader is prepared, to some extent, to enter into a different cultural world. The researcher has chosen not to give separate identifiers to the devotees and monks, identifying the respondent only as a male or female devotee or a monk. This is not because he wishes to create composite characters, but because in a close-knit community such as this, linking responses by a pseudonym would have provided clues to the real identity of the participant.

The researcher has preferred to use Van Maanen's realist approach to writing, alongside the kind of thick description Geertz (1973) refers to. A key reason for taking this approach was that it enabled him to elucidate the otherwise invisible practices, and to demonstrate from the evidence how capital is the outcome of practices and how one capital can be transformed into another. An impressionist approach to writing might have left the researcher open to the charge that he was fictionalising some aspects of representing the findings. Writing is a key aspect of ethnography, and requires as much attention as other elements of the research process, including data collection and data analysis.

Ensuring quality in the study

Lincoln and Guba assert that in qualitative research, authenticity, adequacy, plausibility, and neutrality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) are the key attributes of quality. The research design of this study, the ethical considerations detailed above, as well as the ways the findings were reported demonstrate that a focus on quality was essential to this study.

Authenticity is the easiest of the criteria to discuss at one level. The data was collected from members of the Temple community, a group who were directly relevant to the research questions of this study. And yet, the demonstration of authenticity has been challenging. The study is carried out in a non-western context, by a researcher from that community, that is by a non-Western researcher. The data was collected through interviews mostly in the English language and through an analysis of websites in English and Sinhalese, and, as noted above, some participants commented on the difficulties involved in discussing their practices in English. Thus, the challenge was to present the data in such a way that participants would recognise them and acknowledge the accuracy of these depictions at the same time as making the reports of these practices which are not part of a Western cultural context understandable, without making them seem exotic.

Authenticity was key in this study, as it is in any ethnographic study (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). The researcher being part of the organisation as an insider was able to bring in depth analysis of the different perspectives of the temple through various stories people told. According to Weiss (1994, p, 213), “people who do research should have only one concern in their work, and that is to capture, with scrupulous honesty, the way things are”. Keeping that in mind, the researcher always had to deal with challenges in terms of the participants and “the way they see the temple as a site”, while what he saw was

issues of the temple as an organisation, politics among the participants and concerns from devotees and monks. During the analysis, the researcher and his personal conceptions of the temple were challenged by the participants' views expressed in the data. The researcher always had to make sure that his findings were authentic and appropriate to the context working by double checking and diligently working with scholarly outsiders (his supervisors). There were many occasions when the researcher had to act as a cultural translator to help his supervisors understand the meaning of the spiritual and non-Western context. There is a complexity to this study that may not be applicable to other studies. The researcher worked to keep intellectual honesty by reporting things in the way participants said them (the transcripts reflect the way participants spoke, not always using standard English), recounting what he had seen and interpreting the data in according to the cultural knowledge of participants, although expressing the findings through the concepts of Western scholarship.

Accuracy can be seen as an element of authenticity (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). This was both easy to implement, and also challenging. The words of participants are used to substantiate the interpretations of the researcher. However, the insider researcher was responsible for those interpretations, positioning them in such a way that they reflected the statements of the participants. The process of developing this thesis, through discussions and interactions with the supervisory panel, was useful in working towards the accuracy of the data, although it often required a lengthy process of discussion and negotiation to ensure that the meaning and tone of the answers of the participants were reproduced by the researcher and understood by his supervisors, acting as surrogates for a wider audience.

The criterion of adequacy was perhaps the easiest to evaluate in the context of this study. Adequacy of the data can be assessed by the extent to which the data covers the

differing aspects of the research question, allowing the question to be answered in full. As is expected in an ethnographic study, there was no shortage of data relevant to answers to the research questions. Being an insider, the participants in the interviews tended to trust the interviewer and consequently explain and describe things with a level of candour that well beyond his expectations, once he had communicated those expectations.

The criterion of neutrality is complicated in this study by the insider status of the researcher. Scholarly convention would lead a different researcher to insist on his outsider status as a way of ensuring neutrality, presenting the researcher as having no relationship with the study beyond intellectual curiosity. However, as noted above, the researcher in this study is an insider, a member of the Temple community who could have been a participant in a similar study conducted by someone else. Thus, it has been important to follow the recruitment processes agreed by the university's Human Research Ethics Committee, which ensured some level of formalised or arms' length relationship. The second point is that in the analysis, it was important to let the data speak for itself, not forcing one or other themes to emerge, and not suppressing some data in favour of other comments or observations.

The final criterion is plausibility. Plausibility is concerned with the extent to which the findings of the study are believable and acceptable in the context. The data in this study has led to findings that are plausible. They extend existing lines of enquiry reported in the literature, as will be discussed further in Chapter 5, and thus can be seen to be in line with what might be expected in a study based on a practice theoretical approach. Other evidence that the study meets the criterion of plausibility is that the findings have been presented at peer reviewed conferences and accepted for publication in a peer reviewed

journal. Thus, other scholars have agreed that the findings are plausible, a measure of plausibility listed by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Conclusion

The chapter outlines the research methods adopted by the study in the context of the research question and the practice theoretical approach. It reviews a range of different methodological approaches to investigate the research questions and their pros, cons, and concerns and justifies the choice of ethnography. It then introduces at length the importance of the insider and outsider perspectives relevant to this study.

Following a discussion of the data collection and data analysis methods common to ethnography, the chapter provided a description of how the researcher collected and analysed the data and how this data was used to help to answer the research questions. Finally, it explored the ethical considerations and the complex issues involved in writing an ethnographic report, concluding with the concern for quality in the study. The next chapter will present the key findings of the study.

Chapter 4 Findings

Introduction

Information practices research is a broad concept that has been developed over time, although at its core is Savolainen's view (2007, p. 120) that information practices research moves away from considering "the behavior, action, motives and skills of monological individuals" focussing instead on these individuals as "members of various groups and communities" and aspects that make up "the context of their mundane activities". As shown in the literature review, different researchers take different approaches and have differing perspectives on the phenomenon. Savolainen's umbrella approach has provided a good starting point for this study, drawing out who the participants are and what they do in the temple, emphasising the more broadly sociological approach in the current information practices research. The findings of this study reflect a broad sociological approach, bringing together the practice theoretical approach with concepts related to place, globalisation and capital.

This study focuses on a tightly knit group, so that it has much in common with previous studies, but at the same time, it differs significantly as its setting, the Mahamevnawa Temple, is a place that attracts parts of the Sri Lankan Buddhist diasporic community to engage in cultural activities in an overseas country. It is an everyday place that is being explored in relation to information practices connected to the cultural beliefs of this community. The findings will be presented in five sections:

1. An Introduction to the Temple, providing a descriptive background to the subsequent sections, including a glossary of terms.

2. The temple and its purpose, covering the people associated with the Temple and what they do at the temple, in other words, the (information) practices of the temple, including a vignette;

3. the Temple as site, covering physical place in various manifestations as well as virtual place and networking;

4. the Temple as Organisation, covering its business activities; and

5. the Development of Capitals - the outcome of the practices of the temple.

The identification of information practices has been challenging, as they are 'invisible' and 'complex' as Savolainen (2008, p3) and Gherardi (2009a, p118) claimed, as these practices are likely to be invisible, interwoven within many layers of other practices related to various activities.

Information practices related to culture are used to shed light on what people do at the temple site, how they understand the temple, what the temple means to them and why they are involved in these activities. The typical information practices research is normally based on aspects related to the creation and sharing of knowledge, solving problems, sources of information and its flow and a focus on cognitive and, more recently, emotional outcomes. However, the temple information practices are based on gathering merits; in the Buddhist context, merits are seen to accrue through doing good works or having good thoughts and gathering merits is important as it has an influence on a person's next life and also on their path to Enlightenment. This point is addressed in greater detail in terms of *Karma, Nirvana Pin and Kusa* from page 154 onwards. This adds to the complexity of these information practices and sheds light on why the information practices are considered "invisible" and "complex". It is the information practices of this community and how they are manifest in the site of the temple that

gives the different meanings to the temple itself and leads to differing outcomes of practice.

Introducing the Mahamevnawa Temple

To understand the information practices of the MA Temple, it will be important to extend the brief introduction to the Temple presented in Chapter I, Introduction. This description of the Temple will provide a basis for situating the practices. It is drawn from the Temple's websites as well as from the interviews with devotees and monks. The website, https://mahamevnawasydney.org.au/ presents a lively view of the Temple, its activities and community, in English. The website is very polished, with beautiful images complementing the informative text. The Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/mahamevnawa.sydney/, at the time of writing in 2021, appears not to have been updated since 2019, but it is a reminder that the culture of the Temple is unfamiliar to those who are not Sinhalese Buddhists, as the much of the key information about events is written in Sinhalese.

Image 1 Main temple in Sri Lanka
Source: https://mahamevnawasydney.org.au

Mahamevnawa has become one of the best-known Buddhist monasteries in Sri Lanka since it was founded in 1999 by the Chief Abbott of the Mahamevnawa Monastic Order, the Most Venerable Kiribathgoda Gnanananda Thero. It is a monastery in the Theravada

tradition. As noted in Chapter 1, The Temple has many branches in Sri Lanka as well as branches throughout the world, where it attracts members of the Sri Lankan diaspora.

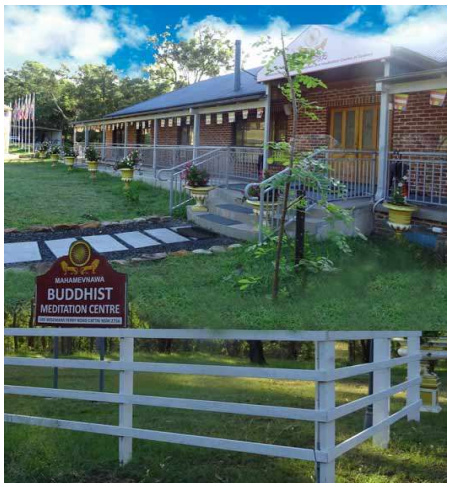

Image 2 Temple building at Cattai, Sydney
***Source*: https://mahamevnawasydney.org.au/**

Image 2 depicts the Temple building at Cattai, in Sydney, acquired in 2015, during the course of this study. The monastery in Sydney was the first to be established in Australia, back in 2007, existing in a number of locations before moving to the large and relatively secluded site in Cattai.

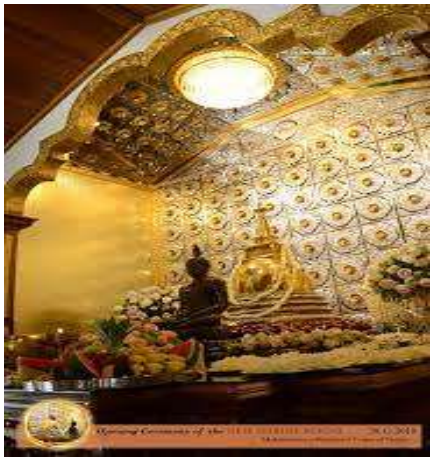

Image 3 Sacred Shrine room, Cattai, Sydney
***Source*: https://mahamevnawasydney.org.au/**

Image 3 shows the sacred Shrine room, which was "offered to the Gauthama Buddha's dispensation on Sunday the 29th of December 2019, with the blessings of the Chief Abbott of the Mahamevnawa Monastic order, the most Venerable Kiribathgoda Gnanananda Thero in the presence of the Maha Sangha", according to the website.

The monks associated with the Sydney branch of the Temple are Sri Lankan and have been trained in Sri Lanka. At the same time, as evidence from the interviews shows, both they and the devotees are aware that these monks have a knowledge of languages which is unusual, from Hindi and Tamil to English, German, and others, with the suggestion that some monks are learning Chinese. A major spiritual purpose of the monastery is to teach the teachings of Buddha on mindfulness, meditation, virtue, and generosity to lay devotees, so that they can learn and practise these teachings themselves. However, this spiritual purpose is only a part of the services provided to the community. Alongside the Dharma programs and the major religious events, there is a range of community activities overseen by the board of directors, who work in a purely voluntary capacity. There is no charge for involvement in any of these services.

The website details eight areas where the Temple provides free of charge services to the community. The first, as might be expected, is the spiritual development of members of the community, through the teachings of Buddha. The second focuses on training in meditation, leading to good mental health and a sense of tranquillity; regular programs for children and for the elderly are identified in the website. The focuses on family life and a peaceful and harmonious society are linked to good mental health. The third is the opportunity to engage in volunteer activities in the community, contributing to Australian society and across the world through programs such as blood donations, Australia Day clean up, making donations to hospitals and providing meals to disabled people in institutions, without discriminating based on race, religion or any other

criterion. Fourthly, the Temple provides Sunday Dharma School and other Dharma programs for children. The fifth area is teaching children and young people to learn the Sinhalese language, in order to create a strong link with the culture of their parents and forebears. These programs are intended to establish inter-cultural and inter-generational awareness and to lead to social cohesion. The sixth area is the provision of blessings and spiritual advice and includes visiting hospitals and aged care homes to practise meditations and to chant blessings. In the interviews, devotees comment on the innovative approach to chanting which has been developed by the Guru and used by the monks, where the message of Buddha is "*deliver[ed] in a different way*". A monk refers to their use of "*Kavi bana* [poetic Buddhist recitals]" which make the message of the Buddha "*more meaningful*". The seventh area of service is the provision of a library of books in English and Sinhalese on the teachings and practices of Theravada Buddhism, Sri Lankan history and Sinhalese cultural practices in order to encourage self-education. The final area of services involves devotees in the broadcast programs which originate from Sri Lanka, enabling them to watch and listen to the Shraddha TV and radio broadcasts as well as to contribute to these programs which are available across the world.

Several major religious and cultural events are held each year and attract great support from devotees. These include: the Vesak festival which celebrates the Birth, Enlightenment & Parinibbana (Death) of the Buddha, which is held on the full moon day in the month of May each year, and attracts as many as 1500 devotees; the Poson festival celebrating the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka, held on the full moon day in June each year and attended by more than 500 devotees; the Kathina festival which commemorate the end of Vassana/Rainy retreat period and is attended by over

500 devotees; and finally, a New Year blessings ceremony (following the Gregorian Calendar used in Australia) is held on the 1st January each year.

The Temple also has a significant publishing program. The Guru, Ven. Kiribathgoda Gnanananda Thero has written many books (around 90), most of which translate the thoughts of the Buddha into Sinhala so that they are easy to understand for contemporary devotees. He has also translated the sacred text of Pali Sutta Pitaka into the Sinhalese language. Eleven of these Tripitaka books have been published to this point. One series of books, named '*Amā dam rasa vaahena vistarārtha Dharma padaya*', has been extremely popular with devotees. It uses the Atthakatā for the fascinating 'Dharma Padaya' preached by Buddha. In addition to this, devotees can purchase audio recordings of the sermons of the Guru, which are available in their hundreds. The Temple also produces a newspaper, '*Mahāmēgha*', aiming to take the message of Dharma into the wider society. Preaching from Sri Lanka is available through live webcasting.

Although the participants in the study, both devotees and monks, are aware that the researcher is part of the community, and knows the Temple, its significance and its workings, some go out of their way to explain some aspects of the Temple which will be set out here. The Temple is known as *Asapuwa*, an old word which has been brought back into the language. In the past, it referred to a rural retreat or a hermitage. Now, it is applied to the temple. It represents a sense of peace and tranquillity: and it is a place that promotes peace of mind. An upasika (female devotee) said*: "as the name implies, it was an Asapuwa to me".* In a related sense, it is a place of silence or quiet place. An upasaka (male devotee) said:

> *Here in Mahamevnawa, we do not focus or regard it as a meeting and greeting place. It is a quiet and unique place here. We don't come here to chat around. We*

appreciate silence and it is a place where promote peace of mind. Meditation is something done in quiet location.

The technological infrastructure is important to monks and devotees, bringing about new temporalities and new spatialities. If we take the MA Temple as an organisation, it is made up of networks which transcend physical boundaries. Most of the devotees take the use of information technologies for granted. Statements such as "*I got to know those programs through emails*" or "*you can call this number*" or "*I watch a lot of things on YouTube*" or "*I follow their Facebook page*" are common throughout the interviews from devotees. Similarly, the monks take for granted the use of technologies in their roles. For example, one notes that meetings of all the monks in the various temples are held online, and another comments on the expense that would be involved "*for the air tickets to visit other branches and head office*". When devotees may not be able to attend a special occasion, "*we record and upload later on YouTube*"; and where there is no branch, "*we get them [the devotees] all in one place and use Skype to do the preachings. It is a group call.*"

Monks and devotees sometimes remark that there is no English word for a concept or a cultural or spiritual activity. Thus, before presenting the findings, a glossary of important terms is presented here.

Glossary

Before going into the empirical data in depth, this glossary elaborates some of the terminology and concepts in the temple's culture which their practices build upon. This will make it easier for an outside reader to understand and grasp the difference of this practice and what they value and accumulate. Much of the participants' interview conversations are based on these terminologies. The definitions of these terminologies

are commonly understood in the community, and are widely included in resources for those wishing to understand Buddhist practices. Here, the information in wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org) has been used to validate the definitions. The words have been transliterated using differing conventions over time, and it is acknowledged that variant spellings exist. An example is *Nirwana*, which is spoken and written by some devotees as *Nibbana* and which also occurs in its English form of *Nirvana*.

Anatta	Everything is deprived of a self. However, there is no self-inherent entity. Absence of self is a completely new concept about which only Buddha talks. The most essential point of Buddhist knowledge. Foundation to understanding of Dharma
Anicca	Everything is impermanent and limited to a certain duration. Everything liable to disappear.
Ajahn	Teacher, often used as a title of senior monk or nuns of more than ten years seniority in the monastery.
Arahat	Literally: a 'worthy one'. A person whose mind is free of defilements; who has abandoned all ten of the fetters that bind the mind to the cycle of rebirth, whose heart is free of mental effluents (Āsavā), who is thus not destined for further rebirth. The title for the Buddha and the highest level of his noble discipline.
Ariya	Noble, noble one. i.e., one who has attained transcendent insight on one of the four levels, the highest of which is *arahant*
Asapuwa	An old word which has been brought back into the language by the Guru. In the past, it referred to a rural retreat or a hermitage.

	Now, it is applied to the temple. It represents a sense of peace and tranquillity: and it is a place that promotes peace of mind.
Āsavā	Cravings, mental effluents, taint, fermentation, or outflow. Four qualities that taint the mind, sensuality, views, becoming, and ignorance.
Avijja	Unknowing; ignorance; obscured awareness; delusion about the nature of the mind, the main root of evil and continual rebirth
Bhavana	Meditation. Development of cultivation of the mind, wisdom development, contemplation
Bhikkhini	A Buddhist nun
Bhikku	A Buddhist monk, a man who has given up the householder's life to live a life heightened virtue (*sila*) in accordance with the *Vinaya* in general**.**
Buddha	The name given to one who rediscovers for himself the liberating path of dharma, after a long period of its having been forgotten by the world. According to tradition, a long line of Buddhas stretches off into the distant past.
Dana	Giving, liberality; offering, alms.
Dharma	The truth of the way things are: the teachings of Buddha that reveal the truth and elucidate the means of realising it as a direct phenomenon. It denotes both Buddha's teaching and direct experience of nirvana, the quality which those teachings are aimed at achieving.
Dukka	'hard to bear', suffering, inherent security, instability, stress, one of the three characteristics of all conditioned phenomena.

Gati	Habits that help mould the character of a person
Karma	Volitional action by means of body, speech, or mind, always producing an effect. By our thoughts, speech, and actions we create karma which leads to the future rebirth. The rebirth occurs in a good or woeful state due to recombination or re-thinking of karma. The condition of one's future rebirth is the direct result of one's good or bad deeds. All thoughts, speech, and actions originate in the mind. The result of one's good or bad deeds (karma) can be seen even after death. It is because of lack of knowledge and our defilements that we are here in *Samsara* which is the chain linking to the existence of the human worlds and divine worlds.
Kathina	A ceremony, held in the fourth month of rainy season, in which the Sangha receives a gift of cloth from lay people.
Kilesa	Defilements—*lobha* (passion) *dosa* (Aversion) and *moha* (delusion) in their various forms, which includes *Vedana* such things as greed, anger, hypocrisy, violence, pride, conceit, envy, obstinacy, intoxication and complacency etc
Kusal	Wholesome, good, meritorious. An action characterised by this moral quality—*kusala kamma* is bound to result eventually in happiness and favourable outcome, Actions characterised by its opposite *Akusala kamma* lead to sorrow.
Manōmaya kaya	"Mental body". The mental body is mostly energy rather than matter. Living Beings in other realms have different "bodies" and different Manōmaya Kāya

Mahayana	Mahayana Buddhism is one of the schools of Buddhism and it places on the process of attaining Nirvana through the purification of the consciousness and has been expanded to respond to the needs of local people it served.
Nimmana	This is one of the 20 great heavens known as Brahma Loka, which have lifetime of millions of years. To born in Brahma Loka we need to achieve contemplation or jhana or smadhi in deep meditation. Nimmana is one of these realms.
Nirvana	Ultimate bliss, Final liberation from all the sufferings, the goal of Buddhist practice. The liberation of the mind from the mental effluents (*Āsavā), Defilements (Kilesa),* and around the rebirth, and can be described or defined. Nirvana in some contexts denotes the experience of awakening, in others the final passing away of arahant. The word 'enlightenment' is often used to describe attainment of Nirvana. One must go beyond all attachments to get to Nirvana. This is the goal of Buddhist practice. The final goal is empty of all conventional characteristics. Thinking means duality. The non-dual nature of Nirvana has neither subject nor object. So Nirvana cannot pinned down with words. Therefore, the Nirvana is the final liberation from all suffering.
NobleTruth	The first and the central teachings of the Buddha about *dukkha*., its origin, cessation and the path leading towards its cessation. Complete understanding of the four Noble Truths is equivalent to the attainment of Nirvana

Panna	Wisdom; Discernment; insight; intelligence; common sense; ingenuity. One of the perfections.
Pin, punya	Merit. A concept considered fundamental to Buddhist ethics. It is a beneficial and protective force which accumulates as a result of good deeds, acts, or thoughts. Merit is connected with the notions of purity and goodness.
Rebirth	Thoughts, speech, and actions based on cravings, anger, or delusion, are impure and unwholesome. Such deeds harm the doer and all others affected by the deeds. They also product of karma which leads to unpleasant births. Attachment to materialistic things is the cause for suffering as they all are impermanent. The Buddha said "Yayan Tanha Ponobhavika" The craving for materialistic things is the reason for our rebirth.
Saddha	Conviction, faith, trust. Confidence in the Buddha that gives one the willingness to put his teachings into practice. Conviction becomes unshakable upon the attainment of stream-entry
Sakkaya Dhitti	Non-self: a theory of soul, moving beyond the notion of individuality and speculation as to the eternity or otherwise of one's own individuality. It is perennial habit in all beings to develop a concept of "I" or self. According to Buddhists, the body is merely the combination of thirty-two perishable materials. We are not what we think we are. We are not definitions we have given ourselves. When you see a reflection in the mirror, you do not see yourself, you only see a reflection, there is no self to see, which means non-self (objects are merely combinations of

	elements). The goal, *Nirvana*, is beyond attachment. So, Buddha said the true nature of *Nirvana* is emptiness. when our consciousness is rooted in this world, however, we cannot become aware of emptiness.
Samadhi	Concentration, one-pointedness of mind, mental stability; state of concentrated clam resulting from meditation practice.
Samsara	Wheel of existence, 'perpetual wandering', the continuous process of being born, growing old, suffering and dying again; the world of all conditioned phenomena, mental and material.
Sangha	This term denotes the communities of Buddhist monks and nuns.
Sati	Mindfulness, self-collectedness, recollection. Or clear comprehension
Satpattahna	Foundation of mindfulness- body feelings and mind and mental phenomena, viewed in and of themselves as they occur
Seela	Virtue, Morality. The quality of ethical and moral purity that prevents one from performing unskilful actions. Also, the training in precepts that restrain one from performing unskilful actions.
Sill Program	A Sill program, sometimes referred to as a retreat, is a whole day event where devotees take part in a range of activities, including Dharma sermons and discussions, meditation, reflection, chanting and offerings. Devotees may also use the program as an occasion to meet friends.
Sothapanna	Stream enterer or stream winner. The person who abandoned the first three of the fetters that bind the mind to the cycle of rebirth and thus entered the stream of flowing inexorably to nirvana, who

	have attained at least stream- entry which is the first of the transcendent paths.
Theravada	The 'Doctrine of Elders'—the only one of the early schools of Buddhism to have survived into the present; currently the dominant form of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and South- East Asia.
Thrilakshana	The Three marks of existence. Buddhists believe that there are three characteristics that are common across everything in life. The three marks of existence are important as they can help Buddhists to achieve nirvana and end suffering. They are suffering, impermanence and non-self
Thero	Monk
Tipitaka	Buddhist Pali Canon. There are three principal divisions of the canon. The vinaya pitika (disciplinary rules), Sutta Pitaka (discourses), and Abhidhamma pitika (philosophical treatises)
Triple Gem	Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Refuge in the Triple Gem is taken when someone becomes a Buddhist for the first time by making a commitment to embody the virtues of Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, and also to study and practise the teachings of the Buddha.
Upasaka	A lay devotee (male)
Upasika	A lay devotee (female)
Vipasanna	In Theravada Buddhism, meditation involving concentration on the body or its sensations, or the insight which this provides.

Vinaya	Buddhist monastic discipline, 'leading out' of the household life and attachment to the world. These rules and traditions define every aspect of the bhikkhus' and bhikkhunis' life.
Wisdom	Wisdom as understood in the Buddhist sense, differs from wisdom in the worldly sense. In Buddhism, wisdom is closely connected with deep contemplation and attaining Nirvana.
Zen Buddhism	This is a school of Mahayana Buddhism that originated in China. It has become very well known in the West, since the 1950s, especially because of the influence of popular writers from the US in the 1960s and 1970s.

The Researcher and his Observations

This short section records the researcher's observations and reflections about the temple and its devotees during the research. These are taken from his notes taken during the research.

The researcher has two different roles in this study. As indicated in the methodology chapter, he had to balance the insider and outsider roles when doing this study. The researcher used to be a regular participant in the temple's activities and was an insider and member of the temple community. Therefore, the observations noted here were done while he participated in various temple events, as well as while he interviewed participants. As an insider of the community being researched, he participated in all the activities, programs, celebrations, chanting, seela programs, and community activities, such as blood donations, in a way that was no different from any other temple participant. During these observations, most of the devotees and monks did not identify the researcher as an outsider to the community. The participants were not aware that the

researcher was observing them, rather they saw him as the insider that he was, taking part, and helping them to conduct those events.

The researcher, initially, had doubts about how to analyse temple practices from a practice theoretical position. The temple information practices are, from an insider's perspective, aimed towards finding the truth of the existence which is known as "*Samsara*". This is very different from those of the western, secular communities that practice theory is usually used to research. However, during the literature review, the researcher learnt that there is no unified approach to practices and that by bringing concepts from a range of theorists outside information practices research, including Castells, Sassen and Sack, the research would be able to shed enough light to develop an understanding of the temple communities' complex relationships and practices.

The researcher's initial impression and understanding about Buddhism was that Buddhism itself is all about practice "*sati*", "*satipattana*". During the meditation events, the Buddhist practice is about observing practitioners' own mind and the body, a practice called "being mindfulness".

From the insider perspective, going to the meditation room means you have to practise your mindfulness, which is being aware of the condition of the mind and experiencing the changing condition and the not-self. When we talk about *sati* or mindfulness, this is what Buddhism means to most of the Buddhists. Therefore, as an insider, the researcher's aim was to not only to watch his mind but also to observe other participants' embodied practices. In doing this, he was following Buddhist practices of observation. At the same time, he was aware that this observation reflected the role of an outsider. and sometimes this made him, as an insider, feel guilty.

The researcher had to visit various locations to observe different groups of devotees and monks and their practices. The researcher observed the Sangha and laypeople who work together through traditional forms of daily group activities, ceremonies, chanting, instruction, and discussions, sermons and so on. Sangha is the group of monks and possibly nuns associated with a Temple. These programs were held in temporary places such as under the trees, routine places such as community centres, houses and even broadcast via YouTube, Facebook and other media such as TV. Thus, the researcher would sometimes listen to these programs on the internet and even on the TV and read magazines and temple news forums as part of his observation. During these events, the researcher was also acting as a member of the temple community helping them to achieve their goals or purposes.

He was able to justify his outsider role to himself by considering how an observing nature helped Buddha become buddha. An observing nature brings the attention to this moment, here and now. According to the researcher's understanding, "Buddhism" means whatever you are feeling physically or emotionally, knowing the way (it is known as consciousness), is how we experience the present moment. Taking Buddha's words to heart, the researcher was conscious about the present situation and determined to observe the participants all the time with the intention of gathering data and facts for his research.

Therefore, like a typical devotee, the researcher himself took refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, which is expressing the "waking up" or sort of enlightenment in Buddhism. In Buddhism, the refuge means the place where we feel safe by taking part in chanting, programs, events, activities and occasions that reflect on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

In the beginning, the researcher was aware he had brought assumptions with him, and he feared that what he was doing was useless, as he thought everyone in the temple came to learn dharma and practise dharma in the same way that he did. However, the careful observation as an outsider, and the interviews, began to give him insight into the complexity of the devotees' and the monks' practices, relationships and motives. It shed light not only how they think about this place not just as "a site" of worship but also how they understand it in other ways; it also shed light on how they give meaning to what they do, which the researcher came to understand as practices - their activities and purposes and motives, and the outcomes of those practices – which he was able to conceptualise as capitals. In other words, the complex web of information practices and its relationships became clearer through these observations.

At the end, the researcher recognised that Buddhist practices about mind and body are complex in nature. From his perspective, there are things that Buddha preached 2600 years ago that are somewhat similar to the practice theoretical approach and its dualism of mind and body. The researcher had not expected that he would be able to see parallels between the current investigation of this study about information practicestheories and Buddha's teaching of contemplating the mind and body, making sense of sensory pleasures, understanding the nature of knowing and waking up.

The People of the Temple and their Practices

The following section describes the people of the Temple and what they do. Two groups of people are associated with the Temple and make up the participants to this study: devotees and monks. There are differences in the perspective that monks and devotees have of the temple, as might be expected, and the relationships are also different, devotee to devotee, devotee to monk, monk to monk, monk to individual devotee and

monk to a community of devotees. The Temple as a place has no meaning without the information practices of these people. The practices of the devotees as individuals lead to outcomes of benefit and success in their lives, at one level, this is the gathering of merits; similarly, the community of the Temple engages in practices leading to benefit and success for the community; and the practices of the Temple as a business organisation also lead to positive outcomes.

The devotees who took part in this study were men and women who were all members of the Sri Lankan Buddhist diaspora; their reasons for being in Australia were not part of this study but some revealed that they had come to Australia as refugees and others that they were from the government's category of skilled migrants. Some devotees were students, others are parents of small children and others still were close to retirement age, with some being grandparents. Some were relative newcomers to Sydney and others had been here many years. Some reflected on visits to the main branch of the Temple in Sri Lanka and others on their introduction to the Temple through various online sources. They were all people with a high level of education, something which was revealed as they discussed the kind of voluntary work they undertook.

The monks, mostly aged between 30 and 40, are highly educated, with professional experience before becoming monks; as one monk said: *"Before I became a monk, I was a qualified medical practitioner".*

The monks expressed their goal as being to spread the Buddha's message, making a shared "place" of worship and establishing a range of other cultural and practical activities for devotees. The monks who participated in this study were also involved with a range of social practices. They acknowledged that being a monk involved travel from one monastery to another, and in the context of this Temple, that meant travelling

from one country to another, and being willing to learn the vernacular of that country. This acknowledgement of the Temple as a globalised organisation gave the monks a broadly based understanding of the Temple, which differed from the perceptions the devotees held of the Temple. This emphasis on a networked organisation is different from the kind of networked organisation that emerged in the late 20th century with technology-supported networks. However, in part the Temple is popular because it functions in a society familiar with these technology-supported networks.

> *I think the one of the reasons the temple is famous because young people have got attracted to the head monks (Sydney) preaching. I mean it is attractive to anybody but as you know when you get to know Dharma at that stage, it will be very good timing for them to think about their life and make use of that time on what they actually want them to be.* (Upasaka)

It is also clear that the following statements from monks are good evidence that not only are young devotees attracted to the Temple, but also monks were ordained as young men. The interview showed that that many of these monks were ordained either after school or university studies, meaning that they were either teenagers or in their early to mid-twenties.

> *Most of the monks, then, were young. Then I thought then I should not wait till I grow older to become a monk and practice Buddhism. We can do it even in young age. (Thero)*
>
> *At first, I knew nothing either about Mahamevnawa or about the Guru of the temple Ven Kiribathgoda Gnanananda thero. At the age of about 16, I wanted to become a monk. (Thero)*

What People do at the Temple

There are many examples from the data that demonstrate that the Temple is a place of various information practices. Starting from the cultural perspective, the main purposes of the temple participation is religious. One devotee noted:

> *I think there is something more when you are physically present at the temple than worshiping alone at home because the best possible way to worship Buddha is with a monk.*

Even though worship is presented here as a social practice, it has complex relationship with other practices that can be seen as symbolic in nature. Many devotees emphasised the importance of the monks teaching scriptures, with spiritual practices being based on "Buddha, Dharma and Sangha". Even here, where one might expect some acceptance of a common understanding, in their interviews, devotees note that an understanding of "Buddha" can be a source of debate, with common ground emerging from participants' descriptions indicating that in any shared understanding, the Buddha is a symbol. Similarly, the "Guru", head monk in Sri Lanka and founder of the Temple, is presented as a symbolic representation of this temple. While they may have different meanings associated with them, these symbols all represent links to their Sri Lankan community heritage, and to that extent, some of the practices also fulfill various symbolic requirements. That is to say, the seemingly straightforward action of being present at the Temple can be understood in several different ways, with competing interpretations sometimes co-existing.

While participants may meet for day-to-day religious activities, it is the search for understanding and personal enlightenment that is important. This was expressed by many of the devotees. Two examples indicate the information practices are not only embedded, materialistic, worldly, and secular, but are also focussed on the immaterial and spiritual.

> *That was the place where I could cultivate the good habits and practices and be engrossed with the dharma knowledge and a place where I can gather merits* (Upasika)

> *You are becoming some spiritual person by practising five perceptions and monks always teach us to follow scriptures. Then you will become an "Arya" Person and through that, they change themselves, organise and identified as a good person who could do something good and contribute to the society.* (Upasaka)

Here, they specifically focus on achieving four noble truths as another devotee stated: *There is an opportunity for us to develop our spiritual journey by achieving four noble truths while helping others to achieve it too.*

The spiritual purpose of the Temple is emphasised when it is described as a '*place of silence'*. This access to silence is seen to bring about psychological and emotional wellbeing, as explained by several devotees and presented in the section introducing the Temple.

Calmness and peace of mind is achieved from meditation, practising Dharma, listening to Dharma and so on, according to devotees. The temple is a '*Place of tranquillity*'. These activities have increased the relationship that devotees have with the temple and encouraged them to participate in temple activities frequently:

> *No matter what the place is they do events beautifully and they were amazing…They know how to create that same tranquillity in different places. This is why, I need to visit this place.*

When we have time, we can practice wherever. When we practice, we develop calmness in our minds, and it improves our lives and other good qualities. When we feel those things in our minds.

When we feel that experience, we will have strong bond with the temple. (Upasaka).

These practices are all about the spirituality and inner happiness. Devotees appreciate the fact that the vision and mission of the temple is based on the non-materialistic. They refer to accumulating "Merits" which will be used in future lives or "*Samsara*". These findings indicate that non secular information practices are important in this context.

Devotees take part in many Temple programs that are not directly engaged with spiritual practices, such as listening to preachings or taking part in meditation (bhavana) programs and cultural celebrations, but that might be seen rather as socially oriented, community-based programs and activities such as blood donations, clean ups and working bees. However, it is important to recognise that participating in these activities is a way of gaining merit as will be explored below. Taking part in a working bee, volunteering one's skills as a plumber or electrician for example, is a way of gaining merit.

Thus, it can be seen that even though the main purpose of the temple is to promote and preach religion and religious activities., the practices show the complexity of interactions taking place in the site, which can also be considered both as a cultural site and a place to meet people and build up social relationships.

Social practices are multi layered and inter woven within the diasporic community and are often seen as a way to improve aspects of their lives in a foreign culture. The Temple community belongs to the Sri Lankan diaspora. They are people from various backgrounds. What they are missing in an overseas country is their roots and a sense of

belonging. Thus, some social practices are related to a place that represents being part of the Sri Lankan community. Devotees expressed this need for belonging in several ways, but the shared practices of the monks and devotees of the Temple were central to this:

> *This temple, as far as I've seen belongs to the Sri Lankans community. We live far away from our motherland. In this country, we just go to work and it's like day-to-day routine work. There're few things that we do over and over again such as going to work, return home, do children's works. Apart from that find a place that you own community from your country coming together and to see them working. They all are in the same position as you are and coming into that place and doing work with them makes me happy……. That is great to see! It is kind of representing my community and also showing that we are also friendly community in this society*. (Upasaka)

> *…I've seen something different in this temple. The temple communities are getting all the people together and do social work and building the friendship among us. It is also helping to build the trust among us. So, it's more like I'm looking at the temple not as a religious place but also to find good friendships and also to get together with your community and to be a part of something like great social work.* (Upasika)

These practices were not only important to devotees for themselves, but also for their children. A parent commented:

> *I want my children to grow up in Buddhist culture and learn what the life is all about. So, [that] they make right decisions for their own life. That's what makes [us] go to this temple.* (Upasika)

Since the community of the temple is mainly built from the diasporic Sri Lankan community, their programs give many devotees a sense of community. One of monks, involved in setting up these programs said:

> *I forget to tell you early; we have done heaps of things as volunteers towards the environment and towards the local society of Australia. I'm the one who organises and gives leadership to all these things. As an example, we conduct cleaning programs such as working bee programs, blood donation programs and tree plantation programs. The message that we try to give through all these programs is "how to live the life meaningfully".* (Thero)

Devotees reflect this relationship between community activities, wider community benefit and personal gains. One devotee described activities he was familiar with:

> *So, we tend to do a lot of community-based activities like blood donations like the one we held on 3rd of October. Then we had our Australia Day clean-up activities which our youth group primarily took participating. Then we went a long trip to Bundanoon to distribute meals, it is a hostel for about 40 elderly people. I couldn't make it, but I heard others had good time and enjoyed it. They offered food, beverage and some presents like in December Christmas time* (Upasaka)

Another indicated:

> *when I normally participate in the sill program, they distribute those leaflets and put banners kind of things like Alms giving. Blood donations etc* (Upasika)

A third devotee, having participated in a working bee observed:

> *We enjoyed [taking part in the working bee] a lot. It is very nice to do such things at the temple and other places we gather. We can meet the people with same*

ideology, and it helps to calm down our minds when participating these events. (Upasika)

Devotees repeatedly said these social connections not only helped them to be a part of the diasporic society by supporting the maintenance of their culture but also gave them the opportunity to develop old friendships and make new ones, as the following quotations show:

We see same faces and we also meet them at the temple after a long time. It's a good place to meet old friends and also create new friends. (Upasika)

We will find the people with same interests. If you do something together in peace, it will help to develop the friendship. I love making friends in the temple. (Upasika)

When we go to different programs, we also have intervals or break times. During those times, we see people and greet them by saying say "Hi", and then we start talking. Sometimes, if I see one of my friends, or relative of mine, they introduce their good friends of them, and in that occasion, we communicate with each other a little bit. But if we want, we can build the friendship by sharing contacts. (Upasaka)

Several devotees explained how small casual interactions, similar to those that Fisher and Naumer (2006) identified in their development of the concept of the information ground, led to more sophisticated information practices.

The importance of regular, shared practices of communication is found in this statement from a female devotee:

> *We got to find people and their different skills and abilities and what they are good at. Sometimes when you keep communicating with them, they become our good friends. So, we get to know about other things and information through them not only related to Buddhism but also something that could be helpful for your career along the way. The communication is very broad in that place.* (Upasika)

Creating social relationships may begin with finding the likes and dislikes of other participants This is done by talking with one another and sharing their interest. The devotees understand the temple as a place of gossip for Sri Lankan community too. The importance of information practices can be found in the way that devotees describe what they do when they engage in activities at the Temple. Talking, meeting and sharing are verbs that occur very frequently in the interviews with devotees.

> *We talk about lots of things and share information with each other.* (Upasika)

Another devotee added:

> *We talk about Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and apart from that, when you get more friendly with people, and there are many occasions that they attempt to talk about their backgrounds and their work, hobbies. Sometimes we talk about other temples and other places and things happened even in Sri Lanka etc.* (Upasaka)

One interviewee stated the fact that he meets his friends during one of the events at the temple. That would seem to be the motivation for him to follow the temple activities. In this way, he finds people with whom he shares interests, and he can work alongside them, giving them all a sense of belonging to the Sri Lankan community, because being a part of the community is what they lack in an overseas country.

> *We can meet people with same ideas; we meet our friends. Today we had a working bee program. We enjoyed meeting different people at the event. I love to see Sri Lankan community in wherever the place. (*Upasaka*)*

There are many examples and evidence that the social practices of the community increase every aspect of their lives; they even say that people have met at the temple, and they got married afterwards. Not only do these findings of the research lay a solid foundation for the current understanding of the information practices research but also, they also go beyond that, providing insights into both the complexity of practices and their invisibility.

This section has shown that practices of devotees show complex set of interactions. Spiritual practices, through listening to preachings or engaging in meditation, exist alongside practices which emphasise the maintenance of Sri Lankan Buddhist culture among the diaspora; social practices, which emphasise the development of friendships and engagement in the community of the Temple as well as in the wider Australian community, exist alongside the invisible practice of gaining merit. The temple is more than a centre where people gather to share spiritual experiences, or to meet, talk and take part in community activities. It is also a place that gives opportunities for the kind of service that will enable devotees to focus on their future.

Before leaving the Findings on the practices of monks and devotees, it is important to consider the issue of power. Power is an important aspect of the information practices at the temple site, as devotees and monks are continuously making decisions in connection with all the activities of the temple. It might be assumed that the monks make all of the decisions, but there are differing views on this. A female devotee explains:

> *Monks will be priority and monks will tell which way will be good …. But it always allows devotees to give their ideas and they will be discussed and then they take other Monks' and devotees' ideas into consideration too. So, it is not monks ruling everything* (Upasika)

Another devotee has a different opinion:

> *Whatever happens the head monk of the temple (branch) is the one who organises everything, He gives us the direction and the guidance. So, we go with the head monk's (Sydney) guidance and directions, then we get together and discuss "how", when, what etc. Thereafter, each person is being given a role to do. The head monk in Sydney is the one who plans, and we carry on as per his instructions.* (Upasaka)

The pattern that emerges is of collaboration at all levels, whether in branches of the Temple, at the head office, or even at temporary gatherings. The influence of technology (which will be explored further below) on information practices is significant. Castells claims that physical places are what he refers to as spaces of experience, and that digital spaces, spaces of flows are where power resides. But the practices of monks and devotees suggest that it is not possible to make this distinction. Leadership in activities shifts back and forth, between the global and the local. Information and communication technologies mean that there is a strong sense of decentralisation, with specific location being unimportant. A monk speaks of how there are several ways to participate in meetings, starting from being online: *Just in case we are not able to participate, they informed us the decisions they took during the meeting. Sometimes they send the audio file too.* (Thero). This might suggest the power of the network, however, as will become clearer in the rest of this chapter, experiences and power, practices and their outcomes cannot be separated so neatly.

A Vignette – Alms-giving and its Information Practices

Vignettes are useful ways to present a snapshot of data. This ethnographic vignette is written by the researcher. It describes the alms giving program organised at our residence in Sydney for the 10th anniversary of the death of my father-in-law, with a focus on the information practices associated with it.

Sri Lanka is the home of the pure Theravada form of Buddhism. Buddhist's experience is complex round of ceremonies, rituals, and devotional practices that are based on the aim of attaining Nirvana. Buddhists believe to attain Nirvana, they need Merits (good Karma). Therefore, most of these rituals are based on gaining merits, although the tradition of giving alms is hardly exclusive to Theravada Buddhists. One type of alms giving is generally known as *sanghika-dana*, the alms given to the community of monks, and it brings special merits to the living and their deceased relatives.

According to Theravada Buddhist culture, family and friends can perform good deeds on behalf of the deceased individual, offering merit to the loved one. The relatives of the dead person will offer charity to monks or a monastery in order to gain positive karma for the deceased person. Buddhists carry out this ritual annually. They believe that these rituals will do good for the spirits of the dead person as well as being an opportunity for living relatives to collect more good Karma.

In Sri Lanka, monks are often invited to perform this ritual at a person's home, and they will be offered food during the day. Buddhist monks provide counsel to those who seek guidance and mourn for losing their loved ones. The Buddhist community believes that looking after monks and bearing the responsibility to care for their physical needs also brings merits. Monks, on the other hand, are expected to care for the spiritual needs of the community in return by conducting these events.

In order to bring monks to our house, we had to notify the temple and find out which days the monks would be available to visit our house. We initiated the alms giving program by sending an email to the temple and following up with a telephone call. One of the monks advised us to check their calendar on the internet and visit him when we were free. Since where we live is quite a long way from the Temple, he suggested we should meet at one of the places he normally conducts a sill program. My wife and I visited the community centre where the monthly sill program was conducted to discuss the arrangements for the almsgiving day. We confirmed the date and time, and the transportation arrangements. Monks never drive, so someone has to collect them and take them back. The head monk also advised us to meet one of the caretakers at the temple to organise things to take home on that day. These were both practical requirements, such as mats, vases, speakers and so on, as well as symbolic representations of the Temple. We also spoke to the person who records dharma talks at the temple as they used to record and publish all the Dharma talks.

Buddhists believe that working collectively to gain good karma will enable them to have more support from people they meet even after death. So, whenever something is organised, the monk's advice is to do it as a social event rather doing it individually. He advised us that doing things collectively would "help to be born famous in the next life". He also advised that it would help us "shine like a leader in future", and even be reborn with leadership qualities in the next life.

We invited about 20 people to the alms giving ceremony. There were family friends, neighbours and relatives among them. Some of them had not met the dead person (my father-in-law) personally but they knew the dead person's relationship to us. We made sure to invite people not just only looking at their membership of the temple but also

companionships and friendships that they have shown towards us in past years, so that among them, there were some Christians as well.

Once the date was confirmed, preparations began at once. We bought food items, cleaned the house and decorated the house with Buddhist symbols such as flags and *sesath* (a traditional sunshade or fan).

On the day before the event, the first appearance of guests was at around 6:00 am. Elders gave us advice on the correct placement of mats, cushions, bowls, candles, *sesath* and Buddha statues and images. We decided that it would be best for the monks to sit in our spacious living room against the side windows. Some of the invitees brought us home grown fruits and vegetables to cook and offer to the monks. They helped us to with the many tasks that have to be done: vacuuming, sweeping, washing, cleaning, cooking items, burning incense sticks, decorating our house with flowers, and so on. Normally the devotees must sit on the floor during the ceremony therefore, removing furniture and making space was time consuming. Men helped arranged furniture while women helped in the kitchen to cook and prepare meals. The fruits and vegetables need to be cooked in a certain way as some of the monks having health concerns such as diabetes. Also, from a cultural perspective, the fruits must be served without seeds and there were specific bowls that we needed to use when offering food.

The transport task was given by one of my friends. He brought the monks from the temple. at about 10AM with the relic casket, representing the Buddha. It was brought home on the head of one of our relatives, under an umbrella or canopy. As the monks stepped into the house, I washed their feet, while someone else wiped their feet. My friend also brought Dharma books from the temple to distribute to the invited participants.

We first offered food for the Buddha statue as Alms are first offered to the Buddha in a separate bowl and are placed on a separate table with a Buddha statue. After the monks were all seated, the head monk gave a short address on the significance of the occasion. Then he started the event by worshiping the triple gem which is primarily the faith or confidence in Dharma. As lay people we had to repeat it three times.

Buddham saranam gacchami	I go to the Buddha as my refuge.
Dhammam saranam gacchami	I go to the Dhamma as my refuge.
Sangham saranam gacchami	I go to the Sangha as my refuge

Once the head monk had completed the chanting, the food was offered at 11am by myself as the chief householder. In doing that, I said the following, which is in Pali:

imam bhikkham saparikkharam *bhikkhusanghassa dema* *Adhivasetu no bhante bhojanam parikappitam Anukampam upadaya patiganhatumuttama.*	These alms, along with other requisites, we offer to the whole community of monks. O Noble one, accept with favor this food which has been ritualistically prepared. Receive it, out of compassion

Before monks started the meal, we gave water to clean their bowls. Our relatives, friends and neighbours were given different food items to serve and they put rice, fruit, vegetables and curries in each of the monks' bowls. Some invitees also brought their own dish to offer monks. Food was served by everyone, even children participated.

Image 4 House alms giving – serving food
***Source*: Researcher**

We did not disturb the monks while they consumed their food, but constantly checked if we could serve more. When they had finished eating, we gave them water to clear their bowls. We offered betel leaves, areca nut, and certain other items like cloves, nutmeg, cardamoms**.** These items give a pleasant smell and taste when chewed. The monks must finish eating before noon. Once the monks have finished eating the other alms were offered. Normally the other needs for a monk include a robe, medicine, water, soap and so on.

Once the offering of food was over, the monk started to bless us with a Dharma sermon. It was about benefits of alms giving. The monk preached that offerings of food to monks, and all the other rituals completed would bring and ensure the safety, good luck, and prosperity for our lives. He emphasized that there are six realms that any living been can be reborn into, fortunate realms and unfortunate realms. Those with positive Karma are reborn into one of the fortunate realms. The monks said that the merits gained from this event would help everyone gain good karma.

The head monk finally recalled for the mourners "*Thrilakshana*", the three marks of existence, which are: *Anicca*, *Dukka* and *Anatta*. Therefore, he asked us to practice meditations to train our mind. This involved a period of deep silence. Meditation is a

very important part of Buddhism. Through meditation, we believe we can calm and clear the mind, making it peaceful. We also believe meditating with the Sangha (the group of monks) helps their mindfulness to penetrate our body and mind. When the meditation is over the monk gave a Dharma speech.

He stated that Karma of good actions that we gained during this ceremony such as generosity, righteousness and meditation would bring about happiness in long run in this life and the next life (*samsara*).

One of the monks ordered the *punnanumodana* (giving merits or transferring merits. The Buddha said that the greatest gift one can do for one's dead ancestors is to perform an act of merit and transfer these merits acquired. Therefore, all the participants were called upon to transfer the merits they have thus acquired for the well-being of their dead relatives and friends. The monks were also requested to offer merits for beings in the *deva* (Heavenly realms) worlds. *Deva*-worship (worshiping God) is based on the theory that a superior being can always help an inferior being when the latter needs such help

The Buddhists believe these are the methods to open modes of consciousness to realize the true nature of the life which means nothing lasts forever and everything that arises ceases. Though meditation is used as a relaxation technique in today's world, according to Theravada Buddhist culture, the aim of the meditation is to develop the single point of concentration called *Samadhi*. The monk emphasized the importance of *Samadhi* during his speech.

Ceremonial almsgiving is often preceded by a *pirit* ceremony, which means monks conclude the event by holding a white string while chanting prayers in the Pali

language. The string starts from an image of Buddha. It is believed that the vibrational effect is engraved in the thread which will carry good effects to the body of the person who wears it. After the ceremony, the string is coiled back and tied on the right wrist of all the listeners by saying the verses printed below. Image 5 depicts the *pirit* ceremony.

Image 5 The *pirit* chanting
***Source*: Researcher**

Sabbiitiyo vivajjantu *Sabba-rogo vinassatu* *Maa te bhavatvantaraayo* *Sukhii diighaayuko bhava* *Abhivaadana-siilissa* *Nicca"m vu.d.dhaapacaayino* *Cattaaro dhammaa va.d.dhanti* *AAyu va.n.no sukha"m, bala"m.* (https://www.dhammatalks.org/)	May all distresses be averted, May every disease be destroyed, May there be no dangers for you, May you be happy & live long. For one of respectful nature who constantly honours the worthy, Four qualities increase: long life, beauty, happiness, strength

The proceedings were concluded by saying these verses.

Transfer Merits to all Devas	
Akasattha ca bhumattha Deva naga mahiddhika Punnam tam anumodittva Ciram rakkhantu loka sasanam	May all beings inhabiting space and earth, Devas and Nagas of mighty power Having shared this merit Long protect the dispensation. (world's religious system)
Akasattha ca bhumattha Deva naga mahiddhika	May all beings inhabiting space and earth, Devas and Nagas of mighty

Punnam tam anumodittva Ciram rakkhantu desanam	power Having shared this merit Long protect the teaching.
Akasattha ca bhumattha Deva naga mahiddhika Punnam tam anumodittva Ciram rakkhantu mam paramti	May all beings inhabiting space and earth, Devas and Nagas of mighty power Having shared this merit Long protect me and others.
Etta vataca amhehi Sambhatam punna sampadam Sabbe deva anumodantu Sabba sampatti siddhiya	May all devas share this merit Which we have thus accumulated For the acquisition of all kinds Of happiness and prosperity.
Kayena vaca cittena Pamadena maya katam Accayam khama me bhante Bhuripanna tathagata	If by deed, speech or thought Heedlessly, I have done any wrong Forgive, O master O Victor, Greatly wise.
Transfer Merits to the Departed Ones	
Idam me natinam hotu - sukita hontu natayo (three times)	
Aspiration	Let this merit accrue to our departed relatives and may they be happy
Imina punna kammena Mame bala samagamo Satam samagamo hotu Yava nibbana pattiya	By the grace of this merit that I have acquired, May I never follow the foolish, but only the wise up to the time I attain nibbana.

All the items brought from the Temple were prepared for their return to the temple in the same manner as they were brought. Because the monks have given up incomes, salaried positions, and material comforts to exemplify the Buddhist way of life to their communities, it is the custom for Buddhist devotees to collect merit by giving gifts and financial support to monks. Buddhists believe that being a monk is not easy,

as they have to give up all the worldly comforts to pursue enlightenment. The monks believe that their primary purpose is to practise and preserve Buddhist teaching while living a life without luxury and traveling from one place to another.

Since we have been given a spiritual blessing from the monk after their meal, in return, we devotees also gave merits (*punnanumodana*) for the monks for attending the event and giving the dharma speeches. We all offered final gratitude to the monks before their departure.

Our friend who provided transport to monks took them back their residence.

However, the event was not over. The people who participated in the ceremony had start talking about their livelihoods, about their children, their schools, their problems and so on. Some families that we had invited hadnot met each other before and they created new friendships through this event. It was clear that during the event people had lot of chit-chatting not just about Dharma about their day to day lives, about their children and their education, their property investments and so on. In the end, one would have said that it was a family gathering, if it had not been for the rituals and monks.

Image 6 Gathering after the event
***Source*: Researcher**

Image 7 Catching up with friends
***Source*: Researcher**

In the evening, we went to the temple again for evening chanting. This was not the Temple in Cattai, but a place that routinely became the Temple, in a suburb close to our house. We offered vases of flowers, incense, joss sticks, beverages, fruit drinks, medicinal items, oil-lamps. We worshiped before the shrine room, at a *dagaba,* and Bodhi-tree. Buddhists have separate verses for worshiping *dagaba,* or a Bodhi-tree. There are three types of worshipful objects mentioned here.

Vandami cetiyam sabbam sabbathanesu patitthitam, saririkadhatu mahabodhim buddharupam sakalam sada (https://www.accesstoinsight.org/)	Forever I do worship all the dagabas situated all over, all the bodily relics, the Mahabodhi (tree), and Buddha-images.

Image 8 Temple Dharma speech- evening
***Source*: Researcher**

The evening chanting was completed by a small dharma speech, and chanting. And later again the transferring of merits to all the participants.

Samanta cakkavalesu Atragacchantu devata Saddhammam Munirajassa Sunantu saggamokkhadam Vipattipatibahaya — sabbasampattisiddhiya sabbadukkhavinasaya — parittam brutha uttamam (https://www.accesstoinsight.org/	May the divine beings of the entire universe come here to hear the good doctrine of the King of Sages that confers both heavenly happiness and the freedom of Nibbana. Please recite the noble *pirit* for the avoidance of all misfortune, for the attainment of all success, and for the destruction of all suffering.

We handed over all the medicine and dry food we had collected for the monks who reside at the temple. Alms also consisted of donations that my wife and I made to the monks' temple maintenance. Monks normally do not touch the money. So, we put them in the donation box. We bowed to the monks again and left the temple. That marked the end of the Alms-giving ceremony.

Adaasi me akaasi me Ñaati-mittaa sakhaa ca me Petaana"m dakkhi.na"m dajjaa Pubbe katam-anussara"m Na hi ru.n.na"m vaa soko vaa Yaa vaññaa paridevanaa Na ta"m petaanam-atthaaya Eva"m ti.t.thanti ñaatayo Ayañca kho dakkhi.naa dinnaa Sa"nghamhi supati.t.thitaa Diigha-ratta"m hitaayassa Thaanaso upakappati So ñaati-dhammo ca aya"m nidassito Petaana-puujaa ca kataa u.laaraa Balañca bhikkhuunam-anuppadinna"m Tumhehi puñña"m pasuta"m anappakanti.	*He gave to me, he acted on my behalf, and he was my relative, companion, friend."* *Offerings should be given for the dead when one reflects (thus) on what was done in the past. For no weeping or sorrowing or any kind of lamentation benefit the dead whose relatives keep acting in that way.* *But when this offering is given, well-placed in the Sangha,* *It works for their long-term benefit* *And they profit immediately.* *In this way the proper duty to relatives has been shown* *And great honour has been done to the dead* *And the monks have been given strength:* *You've acquired merit that's not small.*

***

Practices as Information Practices

All practices are information practices because all practices and actions are based on information and knowhow. This vignette provides insight into the complexity of the information practices that people engaged in during the ritual, and can stand as an example for other practices observed or uncovered during interviews and reported here.

The researcher in his role as host seeks factual information from the head monk on a suitable date to organize the ritual from the head monk. The response to this seemingly

simple question - which in effect is “Please check the online calendar” – shows how face to face interactions are supported by telephone and online communications. This example demonstrates the impact and influence of information technologies in the day-to-day activities of the Temple community.

The use of information technologies is important in the information practices associated with this ceremony. The initial plan included the intention to record and publish the dharma session, as this was a common practice within the Temple community. However, while this action would have represented the use of technology in cultural practices, the reality was that we also needed a level of technological skills to carry out the recording and prepare it for others to listen to and this was knowledge and skills we did not have.

Cultural knowledge underpins much of the conduct of the ritual. Thus, the information practices of those taking part in this ceremony are about knowing the complex cultural information of what and how to perform rituals. The rituals are based on the cultural beliefs of Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhists and to some extent, this cultural knowledge is taken for granted. For example, we would know from childhood that there are many rituals to perform when monks attend a home: washing the feet of the monk at the ritual entrance, covering the seats with white cloths and so on. These are actions that the researcher as host had seen in Sri Lanka since his childhood and these actions are part of the cultural knowledge that the diasporic community brought from Sri Lanka.

Even though the death memorial ceremony is held every year, this is the first time that the host had to organize something like this on his own at his residence in a foreign country. There were many instances where the host had to seek information and explanations about what needed to be done and how the actions should be performed.

The list is very long, and includes what seem like ordinary everyday tasks, including preparing food, washing bowls, serving food, offering betel leaves after the meal, clearing the room and so on. If the host was in Sri Lanka, he may not have had to take on this responsibility, as these rituals are usually led by the elders in the community; but if he had had this responsibility, he would have been given advice by elders, probably without even asking for it. In this instance, the host had to become the elder in this particular ceremony. Therefore, he had to receive advice from the monks and his friends quite often.

The temple care takers are very familiar with what needs to be done at such a ritual and have put in place a system that makes the carrying out of such an important ritual straightforward for the diasporic community. This includes being offered the opportunity to borrow artefacts from the temple and being given instructions on how to use them. This information practice demonstrates that the young diasporic community is having to adapt in foreign countries because its members are not in the same position as they were in Sri Lanka. If the ritual had taken place in Sri Lanka, the items could have found and borrowed easily from neighbours and relatives, who would have helped with their placing and use in the home.

In the Buddhist tradition, it would be expected that the monks and the Temple caretaker would offer advice, often without the devotee having to ask. In this vignette, there was at least one example of one of the host's friends providing information that was crucial to the ceremony and that was probably taken for granted cultural knowledge, but knowledge of which the host/researcher was completely unaware. One of the host's friends advised him to remove the seeds from the fruit to be served to the monks, because monks are not allowed to eat fruits containing fertile seeds. If they are offered fruit with seeds, the person who offers the fruits will have to slightly damage the fruit

by saying *"kappian karothi"*. This is a good example to show that taken for granted cultural knowledge may not be shared equally: the host had not been exposed to this kind of information but his friend, who had been exposed more broadly to the Theravada forest tradition from which the MA Temple derives, had.

The information practices around the use of language are a significant part of the ritual. Before the ceremony, the host had to explain the meaning of the ritual for the guests who are not Buddhists, including his Christian neighbours. This was so that they would know what to expect and be ready to take part in a ceremony whose practices were not at all known to them. As well as this, it was important for the non-Buddhist participants to be surrounded by Buddhist participants who would offer advice and show them how to behave and what to do at particular points in the ceremony, when the monk had given instructions in Sinhalese. An example is when the monk tied the pirit strings around the wrists of the participants, ensuring that the cultural norms for this important aspect of the ceremony were understood and appropriately enacted.

Another aspect of the information practices around the use of language was evident in the chanting of the monks. The Temple has developed and adopted its own chanting methods specific to the temple. For example, there are verses to say (in Sinhalese) at the Sangha's entrance to the house. This example, which is recent in origin, has demonstrated that some of the practices have changed over the time establishing a new culture and tradition among the people.

A key aspect of the information practices of these monks is that most of the time they preach, they do not use the traditional Pali, but use a translated version of Pali which is in simple Sinhalese. All the dharma talks, counselling and advice was given in Sinhalese too. However, as seen in this vignette, parts of the chanting were still done in

Pali because the language itself is culturally important in Theravada Buddhist culture. It is an important part of the information practices of this Temple for both monks and participants to know which language to use in a particular context.

The ceremony was the reason when people came together, but once it was finished and the monks had left, different information practices emerged. Whereas the language of the ceremony was determined by the ritual itself, switching between Sinhalese and Pali, with some translations for those who spoke only English, after the event, the invitees used the English and Sinhalese as they normally would, switching easily back and forth, depending on who they were talking to and what they were talking about. Mostly, the informal social conversations were about their daily lives, reminiscent of the informal approach to information seeking and sharing. From the perspective of the researcher, this made the home of the host into a temporary meeting site for sharing information through gossip.

As has been shown above, these information practices are complex and interwoven with one another. They do many different things. The practices are social and collective and cannot just be isolated and simplified to a focus on individual information seeking behaviours. Participants use the simple term “the Temple”, but they refer to the community, which not only represents the people with a shared set of religious beliefs, but also their imaginary worlds. By the same token, the Temple acts as a single entity however it has different production sites and, in that case, it is difficult to point to a one single geographical location as the temple. In addition, all the devotees and monks are connected and sharing information through electronic media, and their virtual presence practices constitute one the most important ways they engage with the temple. The temple for them is a web site, a TV program, a magazine, even, celebration or religious program on the internet. At the same time, the temple is a physical place, understood in

different ways, including as an Information ground of the kind that Fisher and Naumer (2006) conceptualises. Having considered the practices of the monks and devotees, the next section shows how they understand the temple as a site.

The Temple as Place

The temple as a "site" is understood in many different ways. Thus, at one level, the temple is the location that the temple community construct in their minds. This is not geographical and located in a fixed place. Nor does it exist in the space of flows that Castells describes, but as a shared social construct. Although they can be seen to construct a symbolic place, it is not only related to people, to place, or information, it also includes the unforeseen; and it is interwoven with various other relationships that are part of information practices such as symbols, religious practices, beliefs and habits. In a kind of reverse, devotees make the physical places symbolic, presenting them as a representation of culture.

> *At "Asapuwa" temple premises, we do not get any chance for show off and being selfish. We practice "Sakkaya Dhitti". which is about me.* (Upasika)

The Temple is a physical place. For the devotees, the temple is a place where monks reside, and it is a location that is a representation of monks. However, these are not just any monks, not ordinary monks, but the Sri Lankan ethnic monks who can help them think of being a part of the Sri Lankan community or the diaspora in foreign country. This is how people's use and understanding of the local site of their worship are discussed.

MA Temple is an organisation focusing on Theravada Buddhist culture, with branches in different countries. These branches are connected to each other electronically as one

might expect in any global organisation, but at the same time, the temple has a strong local presence. Many devotees are aware of the global dimensions of the Temple, and several have experience of branches of the Temple in Sri Lanka.

> *I went to Kundasale branch in Sri Lanka, one of my friends introduced me to that branch. That is how I connected to the temple* (Upasaka)
>
> *When I was in Baththaramulla, I knew [about the Temple], and I have been to branches like Kaduwela Branch.*
>
> *I've been to the head office when I was in Sri Lanka.* (Upasaka).

Most of the time monks called the temple "Mahamevnawa" while devotees used the word "Asapuwa". Mahamevnawa is common to many places as an organisation. In other words, for monks, it is not just a temple but also a place of an organisation called "Mahamevnawa". For devotees, however, their meeting points are small. "Asapuwa" reflects the meaning as a "small place" in the Sinhalese language, but it also a word that carries the mean of retreat, suggesting a place of peace and withdrawal from the everyday world, as noted earlier. The place the devotees refer to is not necessarily a permanent place or a building. There are occasions that devotees and monks talk about gatherings under the trees, or in community centres and so on.

Intriguingly, the findings in the next section will show that as a site for the practices of devotees and monks, the Temple is more than a geographic place. It is made by devotees and monks not only in space, physical and virtual, but also in time.

This section will show that the scope of the meeting place goes beyond its physical perimeter. In this case, the "place" that the devotees and monks are referring to may not have a physical location, size, limit or perimeter. The analysis shows the MA Temple

Sydney branch also can be regarded as such functioning outside Sri Lanka, but programs available in Sydney may actually be taking place in Sri Lanka and experienced as happening in Sydney. In Sydney, the programs of the Temple are held in different locations that can be seen as being temporary, routine or permanent.

Site and place

The information practices are hard to see ("invisible" as Savolainen stated, 2007) as the places where they occur themselves are complex in nature and the understanding of place is different from person to person as their social interactions can take the meeting place for granted. The research extends the ideas of site ontologies of information practices research by exploring the insight in people's activities using a combination of tools, including Schatzki's (2000) site and Sack's (2003) consideration of the reality of the places.

Schatzki's work emphasises that there are three kinds of sites. Firstly, the geographical site or physical place, secondly the context or setting where activity takes place and lastly the place as the "nexus of action and teleological structures" (Schatzki, 2000, p. 25), which derives from the first and second type of sites. On the other hand, Sack also states that the places can be categorised in different ways. "As humans we create space, frequent or infrequent, we transform places from one form to another" (2003, p10). According to him, people cannot exist without places and places are made by human activities. In his view, humans can" transform reality according to the ideas and images of what we think reality ought to be" (p. 10).

The empirical data revealed that the temple community has a mesh of practices not only with the sociocultural, material, and technical arrangements but also with different types of capitals. Their information practices are multilayered, intersubjective and

overlapping and complex and linked in and to the different places. The data clearly shows how the practices create the Temple as a "social site" and demonstrate what they tell us about "place" as a concept. These social sites of the temple emerge from what participants value, admire and inspire of the temple as a "place" and what they take for granted.

The Temple as a Permanent Place

Devotees and monks speak of the Temple as a place they can go to. This might suggest that they see it as a geographic location. However, these visits are situated in time. Some are considered permanent places, such as the local branch that devotees visit day to day in NSW or where monks reside or branches of the Temple in Sri Lanka. Permanent places are recognised through a building with a special purpose.

One devotee said: *"I also visit the temple whenever I'm free".* (Upasika). Another devotee speaks of going to *"Polgahawela Asapuwa … whenever we go to Sri Lanka".*

Devotees may list these places by name, such as Cherrybrook, a suburb of Sydney, or Kaduwela, a suburb of Colombo, but they are always presented as a place that can always be visited, that is permanent.

The Temple is also seen by devotees as a routine place, similar to Fisher, Landry and Naumer's (2006) information ground, a place where people gather on a regular basis, and exchange information on a range of topics, not necessarily related to their purpose for being there. The practices of devotees take them to the Temple on a regular basis, whether in Sri Lanka or in Australia:

Those students told me that one of the programs of the Guru are held in Weligama. I took part in the monthly Sill [seela] program at the Businessman Mr Jinadasa's Building. Later he gave me some books and MP3s. (Upasaka)

I visit the monastery on Wednesday and Friday as there is a Dharma Sermon after the chanting in the evening. (Upasika)

A routine place may also emerge because the monks work with a devotee to establish regular programs in places where there is no permanent place. A monk explained:

We select one person to initiate and organise Dharma program close to their residence. He/She knows the area well and they know the people who live close by. So, we do programs at the selected areas every month. (Thero)

The third presentation of place is the Temple as a temporary place. These are different from routine places in two ways. First, they are acknowledged by devotees not to be lasting, but secondly, and importantly, efforts are made to replicate the experiences of visiting a permanent place, through the use of statues and other decorative or symbolic elements.

Image 9 Buddha's relics of frontal bones – a replica brought to a temporary place to mimic the real temple in Sri Lanka
Source: **Researcher**

Several devotees spoke of being involved with the temporary Temple, either for ongoing spiritual practices or for one-off celebrations. Examples of creating a temporary temple include the following:

> *When I came to Australia, I thought I should find this place. The place where monks lived was a bit far and I could not visit the place, but they had everything in different places and managed to create the same temple atmosphere such as in community centres, clubs and even individual devotee's houses. They used to bring huge statues and everything from the temple to these places all over the NSW and gave a marvellous, unthinkable and unforgettable experience to the people.* (Upasika)

Another devotee explains that,

> *Most importantly, they had these functions regularly in different places close to where I lived. Some of them were in Cherrybrook, Pennant hills, Castle Hills, Seven Hills, Blacktown etc. etc. so I had the same feeling that I am going to the temple* (Upasika)
>
> *They conduct different Dharma programs in different areas.* (Upasika).
>
> *A few devotees got together and invited the monk and we first had it at a house in Granville. That was where my temple was. That was the place where I could cultivate the good habits and practices and be engrossed with the dharma knowledge and a place where I can gather merits* (Upasaka).

Examples of one-off celebrations of special events include:

> *At first, I didn't go to the monastery. I listen to Dharma that was preached outside the temple. The Dharma was preached in a coconut estate* [in Sri Lanka]. (Upasika)
>
> *One of my friends who lives in Canberra has organised a one-day program and invited all his friends and neighbours at his place.* (Upasaka)
>
> *They had a chanting at Roselea community centre in last year. I don't know where it would be in this year. But I enjoyed it a lot*. (Upasaka)

These examples show how devotees relate to geographical places as their place of worship, through time. Physical places in the real world are important to them, as their practices need to be situated in a site. Site appears so important that people make 'temporary' places for worship and other cultural activities. These temporary places are also sites where people meet for different events and exchange information, as shown in the previous section on information practices. These are temporary settings where devotees engage in social and community-based activities such as blood donations, working bee programs, youth programs and other get-together events.

However, for monks, there is no such place that can be considered permanent. This is a cultural understanding, because Buddha himself has preached that monks should go from place to place to preach and, the only time they should stay at temples should be the rainy season. It is called "*Kathina*" according to Theravada Buddhism. This was recognised by devotees, and it was expected that monks would go from place to place to preach:

> *"Sometimes people can't come to the temple, so Buddhist monks go to different places and they conduct Dharma sermons to the people in that area for local community."* (Upasaka)

Place beyond the local

As reported above, the Temple is both a site for the practices of a globalised community and for a very local community. The diasporic community members mostly wish to maintain a connection to their motherland and its cultural heritage as well as seeking a better life in Australia. The Temple helps them to do this through the place-based practices described above. The practices of the Temple as a globalised organisation will be explored below. In this section, the focus will be on the practices of devotees and monks in the Temple as it exists online.

People today are more spatially fragmented, but they are interconnected online. The Temple exists online, and the importance of its online existence is shown through the many references made to online practices by devotees and monks. Consequently, their information practices can be seen to work hand in hand in between these two separate spaces of the physical space and the virtual space. Thus, the site of the Temple is not bounded by spatial proximity; it reaches beyond the geographical scale.

The temple is a representation of young and contemporary society, which is technologically savvy. Most of the monks and many of the devotees have become adults during the early 21st century, which is the internet and social network era. Therefore, they take the use of technology for granted for their temple activities.

The Temple has a strong online presence, as noted in the first section in this chapter, and uses communication platforms, such as websites and forums; social media, such as Facebook and Viber; and online collaboration and communication tools such as email and YouTube; as well as the more traditional communication medium of the telephone. There are many instances where the devotees mention the importance of the Temple online to their practices, for example finding information online or following their

spiritual practices. The website is described as a place by some devotees, which may be more important than the physical settings.

> *Yes, actually I should mention about their website. Website is Mahamevnawa web site. They put everything on that website. If they are organising something, it's one of the main things in regard to the telecommunication or internet and how they distribute their work. I normally visit the website quite often.* (Upasaka)

Devotees know the branches of the Temple have their own website and email addresses. Some branches are specialised in media networks such as TV, online broadcast on Facebook and YouTube. The response of devotees shows how interactions in cyberspace have become a part of their interactions with the temple. They now connect with the Temple and its services and with monks any time. The connection does not depend on physical location.

> *I can give you many examples, of how I use information technologies to connect with the temple]. Telephone and emails are common things and today we mostly use Viber, and Skype. There is a Skype group that discuss about conflicting topics regularly. I visited their website once a month or two times a month. Mostly, Dharma preaching is on YouTube and some on Facebook as well. We can connect and ask questions.* (Upasaka)

> *I use not only their websites, I watch lots of things on YouTube and Shadha TV online, I follow their Facebook pages. Usually, I go to the Sri Lanka Page. There are quite a lot of articles, if I need to find local stuff, I go to Sydney page.* (Upasika)

If I go to "YouTube" I can find lots of programs as well as and I often go to Facebook. I see they have specially Facebook page called "Mahamevnawaasapuwa". I see lots of programs in there and I'm a follower of them and I see lots of programs coming in. (Upasaka)

I have seen lots of photos and videos about recent pilgrimage to Boddh Gaya. I see lots of information and also the community work that the temple is doing through the Facebook because my friends are sharing information on Facebook. It's good to see them as well. (Upasaka)

We also use emails and viber as well, whenever someone receives something in relation to the religion, we would share it with our friends as text massages. (Upasika)

Devotees speak of the ways they access and consume the spiritual and cultural production of the temple.

we have our television channel there in Sri Lanka, so they do LIVE telecast, sometimes we watch TV when he is preaching. So, it's not a personal contact that means he preaches in general, so we listen. (Upasika)

It was a monthly dharma discussion on every Poya day on the TV. There were few famous monks on that program, "Nauyane Ayruadhumma", "Ariayawansa Alankara", Our Head monk [in Sri Lanka] "Kiribathgoda Gnananada Thero", "Kadugoda Upali". There was a question about what is "Nibanna". (Upasaka)

Another devotee's conversation shows how audio cassettes, CDs, MP3s, USBs are used to produce Dharma materials.

First, we went to Live Sessions in the monastery conducted by the Ven. Kiribathgoda Gnanananda Thero, our Teacher. They have books and also they have a library, so we joined the library, and we bought some books and CDs then we heard he was doing his preaching on the TV, Radio and Audio Cassettes, MP3s and most of the time in Live sessions. (Upasika)

There are instances where monks reinforce the idea that the temple's message and the technology are a focus for young people:

Young children normally maintain and take the responsibility to maintain the website under our supervision, recording and live streaming. (Upasika)

Information technologies are fundamental to the practices of the monks, especially in the ways that they establish relationships with devotees. They use technology to produce cultural knowledge and distribute the products, as well as to focus on teaching and learning.

I can give you many examples, telephone and emails are common things and also today we mostly using "viber", "Skype. (Upasika)

We really do things via e-mail. Face book is used to spoil the minds of the people. However, we use it to spread the dharma of the Buddha. (Upasaka)

*There's a Buddhist group. The "Skype" is so good in that and so does the Viber. Today, particularly this temple using lots of internet and telecommunication methods to communicate to give their ideas and to distribute their ideas. I think, I see great success in there. Even in Sri Lanka there is majority of people are following this particular temple. (*Upasika*)*

Another aspect of the temple is the production and consumption of cultural material through electronic networks. Digital newspapers and magazines are important as people read them online and hard copies of such newspapers are distributed in local spice shops.

> *There are children's papers such as newspapers and the children's books. They are also written in Sinhalese and English. We can find all these books on the internet Amazon. I used to read these books online. That is just the one thing in this temple.* (Upasika)

> *So, we also advertising the Pahana newspaper, monthly programs of events.* (Upasaka)

The practices described in this section take place in virtual space; the emphasis from the interviews shows much more clearly how monks and devotees are engaged in information practices than the descriptions of their engagement in practices in physical space. Practices both in physical space and in virtual space place a significant emphasis on networking.

The Information Practices of Networks

The temple is a place of networking. The findings in this section continue to show that the information practices of the temple operate on the basis of the people's social practices, cultural relationships and an individual's information seeking and in particular how these practices are inter-related with networking. These relationships may encompass casual inter-personal interactions, formalised information flows, networking at the organisational level, membership of a globalised community and as an individual need/purpose.

Information and communications technologies are important to the temple and the production and dissemination of cultural and information productions. In the permanent setting of the branch, there is a computer room in the temple with all the facilities, available for devotees, especially for listening to Dharma. For the monks, these technologies are a part of daily life of training and preaching, as will be shown in the next section on the Temple as an organisation.

As shown in the previous section, communication technologies allow devotees to meet other devotees in an electronic space, to set up their own information networks; they meet in Viber groups and Skype meetings, they communicate synchronously or asynchronously with others through a range of information and communication technologies. A monk described how:

> *these devotees get together and have their own collection of dharma distribution methods such a twitter. So, others come to know about all these programs. I don't know how this happens. But it is amazing.* (Thero)

It is important to remember that these online networks complement those formed through the meetings in physical space. Whether they are formed in physical space or online, interactions are complex (Gherardi, 2008), linking into other aspects of the lives of the devotees, as the data from the interview demonstrates. Some devotees begin their networking online and then continue networking in the physical spaces:

> *I first heard Guru's preach over TV, and then connected to the temple. After listening and following dharma programs online, I started to go to the different programs held in various places around Sydney later on.* (Upasaka)

> *Yes, I started following the temple programs on the internet and one day I went their Sill program, ever since I participate sill program once a month* (Upasaka)

Others meet first in a routine or a temporary space and then come to the internet later, in order to maintain the interactions and exchange information:

> *I met one of my old friends at the market after a long time and he took me to the temple. Now I listen to dharma programs online. (*Upasaka*)*
>
> *When we go to different programs, we also have intervals or break times. During those times, we see people say "Hi" to them, and then we start talking. Sometimes, if I see one of my friends, or relative of mine, they introduce their good friends, and in that occasion, we communicate with each other a little bit. We exchange our contacts each other and add him/her in contacts to talk later (*Upasaka*)*

From Castells' perspective, the online networking space, the space of flows becomes a space of place and the space of places become a space of flows. In other words, the information practices exist within these two spaces, with no distinction between them, although it is important to recognise the significant role that the technology plays in supporting their social networking.

It is clear devotees and monks are technologically savvy and part of the network society. They use all kinds of technological devices to transmit and connect through social media and media networks. Monks, who take their laptop for children's programs or their mobile phones, create a totally new "place" for temple operations as social interactions of the temple have been fundamentally modified by advanced communication technologies, and these are characterised by parallel activities, regardless of physical distance. Through these networking processes, it is possible to glimpse the monks and devotees operating in "timeless time" (Castells, 1996).

These findings demonstrate that the temple as a site of practices exists in physical place, virtual place and in networking. There are many social practices embedded in the complex webs of relations established through these practices, and significant emphasis is placed on these social interactions by devotees and monks. However, this may seem to be at odds with another practice in the Temple, the practice of seeking isolation and tranquillity. For the monks who are actively taking roles in the network, they are constantly engaged in training, which will take them in reality or metaphorically into the solitude of the forest. This is why, for devotees, the symbolic representation of the Temple as 'asapuwa', the forest retreat, is important, especially to people who are socially fragmented due to either lack of technological tools or expertise.

This section has shown how the concept of site informs the practices of monks and devotees. Place is also seen to exist online for devotees and monks, as well as in the web of relationships created through networking. This, space is significantly more complex than the distinction Castells drew between the space of places and the space of flows, although the relationships of technology to networking is reminiscent of his elaboration of the space of flows. For Castells, "space of flows" and "space of places" are two different, potentially contradictory concepts, but they co-exist in the common ground of this temple and its activities. This section has also demonstrated how, as Sack argued (2003), place is created by people in their interactions. From that perspective, place can have multiple dimensions, which, importantly for this study, are dislocated from physical space, being time-based, virtual, global and symbolic.

The Temple as Place of Organisation and Business

The Temple operates as a globalised organisation, as has been shown in the exploration in the previous section of how place is considered by devotees and monks. It is also a

successful business, involved in the development and sales of devotional materials and in garnering financial support through other means, especially donations. From this perspective, the monks can be seen as members of this organisation, even if they cannot strictly be considered employees.

This section of the Findings will consider the practices of the globalised organisation. The MA Temple at the centre of this study is one branch of a complex networked organisation that links people throughout the world. Like any multi-national company, the vision and mission are strategically the same for all branches.

Vision

A Monk explained the vision of the Temple as "*promoting nothing else but only the Dharma*". In aiming to fulfil this mission, monks are expected to "*cultivate humbleness ...* [they] *are not asked to do things beyond that*". (Thero)

One of the monks spoke of the Temple as an organisation:

> *This is an organisation, and we have different branches all over the world. Our head monk in Sri Lanka cannot personally go to each branch, so he has his students assigned to each branch locally and overseas to run the places and work towards a common goal of teaching true Dharma in simple way* (Thero).

Another monk also spoke of the Temple as a globalised organisation:

> *Our Guru got invitations from devotees to establish branches everywhere. So, there are around 50 branches in Sri Lanka. and 20 in overseas. America, India, Australia, Germany, Italy, there are 5 branches in USA, 3 in Australia, 4 in UK. There are so many others* (Thero).

The vision of the organisation is to help the people to attain higher spiritual status. The organisation also has a strict Code of Ethics based on their vision and mission:

> *The Guru of the temple has created the timetable in such a way that it avoids the instances of doing bad things and helps in doing good things It`s for our own goodness that he has done with a timetable. By making us do all these things in set times we don`t miss them. The ones who like to be good would become a monk there at the monastery.* (Thero)

One of the leading committee members of the organisation also emphasises that the organisation has policies and the importance of following guidelines and procedures:

> *It has lot of branches around the world, and they have their own guidelines to follow and procedures and so forth*. (Upasaka)

A temple this big, functioning on such a large scale, is not possible without proper infrastructure. Yet, as shown in the previous section, to some extent, the infrastructure itself is not what creates this organisation. It is not set up in a building like corporate offices in big cities. At one level, it is similar to the small to medium size businesses which operate in temporary or routine places such as Saturday markets.

Castells' emphasis on nodes in a network could be applied to the way the temple works in electronic space, as this type of operation would not be possible without infrastructure. However, a practice theoretical approach places its emphasis on what people do, with features such as the infrastructure for networking being an aspect of site.

Material practices

The Vision and Mission of the Temple as expressed above are concerned with spiritual matters. Yet the Temple is also seen as materially successful. Innovation and attention to appearance and reputation have been key factors for the success and popularity of the Temple all over the world. Innovations in spiritual practices, such as the use of the vernacular and approaches to chanting will be considered here, and the creation of temporary places and the use of information technologies have already been introduced. The spiritual practices of the monks and devotees seem completely removed from materialism and flow of information based on materialistic benefits, nonetheless, the Temple has material concerns and significant practices associated with those concerns.

A devotee commented: *There are lot of legal affairs to fulfil and should adhere too. We should think about the mortgage with Upasthayaka [Assistanec) committee. All these buildings are on mortgage agreements.*

Nonetheless, the Temple is financially successful. Every organisation needs money and other resources to exist. The Temple in Sydney needs to pay rent, mortgage, electricity, water bills and so on. Even though the avenues where money flows are not transparent, it is clear that raising money has been a main activity for devotees and monks in many ways. One such activity is the production and selling of religious materials. The Guru's translations and preachings are a very important source of income for the temple, as are other books and recordings related to the Dharma; the Temple also produces and sells books for children.

> *This temple is publishing books and newspapers not just for adults but also for children. … The main monk, Kiribathgoda Knaanananda Thero not only publishes all his Dharma talks on books, a paper or on a newspaper but also on the internet.* (Upasaka).

The production of books happens in the main branch of the Temple in Sri Lanka:

> *Polgahawela is the place [from] where [they] distribute books to other branches in Sri Lanka and other books shops in the country.* (Thero)

The books represent the key messages of the Guru and can be seen as fundamental to the existence of the temple as a spiritual place.

> *Probably [the new book] has been sold out already. Sometimes people had already bought them. Probably the person who manage it, doesn't bring lots of those, but when the new translations are coming, he will bring them. People will snap it up quickly. Probably I doubt some of them are out of stock as well. We bring Tipitaka books as well.* (Upasika)

> *There was a separate place in the temple for Buddhism related books. One side of the monastery is the library at the moment in small scale which we need to promote as a big place where we can sell the books as well. Those are there in a small but nice shape. So, then it is easy for the people to come and see the books available. But at the moment it is small these are the things which we could improve in the future.* (Thero)

Devotees make many references to the sale and purchase of these items as the following example shows.

> *If I talk about my contribution, they kind of sell Buddhist books in front of the place like they conduct the sill program. So, I think those funds go to improvement of fundamental facilities of temple.* (Upasaka)

Another source of income is donations in various forms. Donations are of different types. Some of them are goods, furniture, bill payments (electricity, water, council

rates), sponsoring on air tickets, accommodation. *There is a calendar at the temple premises where you can sponsor the meals for any day during the year and $50, $100, $500, $1000, $5000 tickets for other infrastructure projects.* The way the capital is raised, produced, consumed towards temple advancements is also important as some of these funds have been raised at the physical temple and others through electronic networks.

> *[My donation] is not that much when I compare with other people because I have a two-year-old son and small kids and I am working mum for five days. So, it's hard for me but I contribute moneywise what I can afford. I normally donate monthly a fixed amount.* (Upasika)
>
> *Other than that, I'm actually considering of buying kind of an annual membership like which everyone can buy and like you know annually can contribute a certain amount of money to improve the facilities and basic living conditions of the Monks. (*Upasaka*)*

Account Numbers for the deposit of funds are listed on the websites to make the practice of donating money easier.

> *I even contributed to the temple through internet because they have their account numbers online on their websites. I contribute financially every month.* (Upasaka)

Money also flows from one place to another. A devotee said:

> *"I sold my property in Sri Lanka and donated to the temple in Sydney. Through the online donation."* (Upasaka).

According to the mission of the Temple, the purpose of these donations is not the achievement of a material gain, but meritorious deeds or good "Karma" which is not

materialistic. Devotees also donate their time and skills, taking on roles that in other organisations would be paid.

> *I do them free of charge. Because they are just meritorious deeds.*
>
> *It is completely voluntarily basis. So, there are no fees to pay for any of the committee.* (Thero)

Knowledge and Skills of the Monks

As noted in a previous section, the monks in the Temple are young and highly educated, something which both devotees and monks refer to.

> *I think most of them are very educated. Most of them are even like doctors, engineers, graduates from universities. I think. They have understood the life and they want to practice Buddhism and therefore they have given up everything and I think they are doing a really great thing. I always admire the Monks at Mahamevnawa Temple for that reason.* (Upasaka)
>
> *Until I finished my final exams of the university, my mother did not allow me to become a monk. After doing the final exam only I was given the chance or permission to become a monk and be with dharma.* (Thero)

However, not everyone can become a monk. There is a process of selection as one of the monks described:

> *So, we look at devotion and discipline and respect towards our common goals rather than their skills. Then we narrow down the chosen ones according to their*

skills and competence. Some are clever at clerical work, legal affairs, visa documentations, buildings etc. After that we assign suitable jobs based on their abilities and capabilities. (Thero)

The professional skills and experience of the monks has been one of the specialities of this temple and this has become one of the main reasons people have been attracted to the temple. The level of education might have helped the temple administration to carry out functions to a high professional standard. Some devotees emphasise the difference between themselves and the monks, giving the monks a status above them:

All the monks who became monks are not just normal people. They have had a good career and education and has been a good family life such as doctors, engineers. (Upasaka)

The monks bring different skills and talents to the organisation, in a similar way to what one might find in a globalised organisation that relies to some extent on face to face, localised interactions. (Sassen 2008). Language ability is crucial to the Temple and its operations. The language skills of the head monk in Sri Lanka are very important to the Temple and

"*his ability to translate Pali language to Sinhalese is amazing; it caused the temple to thrive among new generation as they could understand the scriptures in simple Sinhalese language*".

The Guru of the temple used the language in a way that it is comprehensible for anybody. That proficiency of the language was especially important in changing our lives. [For]The person who does not understand English the word water may seem meaningless but if we translate it into the language, he uses it will be

understood well. So, we can see that one must tell something to somebody in a comprehensive way. (Thero)

The translations have been fundamental to the publishing program of the Temple.

I know personally he translated books …. It was wonderful commitment and dedication to give this message about the discourses of Lord Buddha, to the society.

The findings also showed that monks learn the local language where their Temple is, and this makes it easier for them to communicate with devotees and to preach. Monks and devotees give examples of this practice.

Dharma Pada was translated to Tamil, some monks learn Tamil and they preach in Tamil. They are doing it in Tamil schools. There are photos on the Facebook. (Upasaka)

If we go to Bodhgaya in India or if we go to main Buddha's places in India, there are so many Mahamevnawa temples around those places that organise so many things. Those monks can even speak Hindi. They speak Hindi and conduct all the programs in Hindi and the whole villages are becoming Buddhist now. In India, you don't see much Buddhist people. Now there are so many Buddhist people in India. (Thero)

When we go to each country, we use its national language to teach and distribute Dharma, for an example the countries like this we use English, India- Hindi, Korea- Korean and these days monks are learning Chinese to go to China and establish another branch. (Thero)

Another important skill is the ability to preach. The development of this ability is considered a special talent of the Guru.

> *It's the talent of the Guru of the Temple. He has produced very valuable monks who can preach dharma of the Buddha as same as it is preached by the Lord Buddha. It's amazing for me.* (Upasika)

The innovative approach to chanting, developed by the Guru is also seen as important, in particular being a drawcard for potential devotees.

> *There was some specialty in the preaching of the Guru of the temple. Maybe it is the way he preached dharma. I don't understand why it was happened. First, I went there and joined the worship. From that day I had a close relationship with the monastery.* (Upasaka)

Monks have skills relevant to a globalised enterprise and their assignment is based on their skills and expertise.

> *The name was given by our head monk in Sri Lanka. "Sangha Upasthayaka" is the head/leader of the branch. He finds the relevant skills of the other monks and depending on their skills, he will be assigned different programs to different monks.* (Thero)

Governance Practices of the Temple

The governance structure of the Temple marks it out as an organisation, which in some ways is similar in structure to that found in multinational conglomerates. There is a hierarchy of authority within the temple. There is a leader in every branch temple that members need to get advice from to resolve any conflicts. Members cannot take their own decisions but need to consult the head monk at each branch they have been

assigned to the service. In addition to that, there are 3 types of committees to get approvals from. They are in the main temple 'head office'. Periodic meetings are held monthly, every 3rd and 6th month, and annually. A monk explained the management structure:

> *In terms of the management, there is a committee called "Sangha Sabha" which represents elderly monks who ordained earlier than most of the monks. There are about 12 senior monks for that (meeting will be held once in every month). There were about 12 monks in Sangha Sabha. I don't know the exact numbers as minutes of those meetings do not come to us. They don't give it to us. But we know things on Sangha Upasthaya meetings and Maha sabha meetings. Then we have "Sangha Upasthayaka Sabha" which represents senior monks from every branch (the meeting will be sent once in every three months). If there are 50 monks, there will be 2 from each branch. There are Upasthayaka (Assistance) committees in these temples. We make decisions with them but sometimes if we need advice, we direct them to a board of monks who control and accountable in the temple operations. They are in Polgahawela. Most of the time, we seek advice from them. If it is an overseas branch, head monk in Sri Lanka himself will involve directly solving all the issues. We firstly seek advice from the board usually. But sometimes if we think we should go directly and ask from the head monk in Sri Lanka, we can do so and get permission from the highest authority, who will be our head monk in Sri Lanka. In addition to that, there is another one* [committee] *called "Maha Sabha" which represents all the 800 monks (the meetings will be held once in every 6 months). There are periodic meetings for each Sabah.*
>
> (Ajahn)

Thus, decisions are not based on one individual but are made collectively within a group of people who have higher authority in the temple to make and approve decisions. It is also noted that conflict resolution operates in a way similar to large corporate organisations.

Devotees also take part in some decision-making in the same way that public shareholders might in a multinational company as they are involved with decision making at the branch level. The influence of the Guru who started the organisation and the Buddha whose scriptures also part of the governance structure must also be taken into account.

> *All of us have come to this place for a purpose of understanding the four noble truth and seeking our freedom and peace and live with no worries. But, in the sake of distribution of Buddha, dharma, we would do anything. Our head monk in Sri Lanka is the one coordinate everything.* (Upasika)

The Guru of the temple is seen to take a main role in terms of governing the organisation. The temple decisions are also taken based on the advice of the Guru and teachings of the Buddha (*vinaya*) explains the disciplines that monk should adhere to:

> *Even here* [in Australia]*, not only Sydney there is a temple in Melbourne and Brisbane, I don't know there is one in Darwin, but this all because of community and their communication and that the work community get together and do the things together, that's the power of main monk who always conducting those things.* (Upasaka)
>
> *Whatever happens with the head monk in Sydney of the temple he is the one who organises everything, He gives us the direction and the guidance. So, we seek the head monk's guidance and directions, then we get together and discuss "how".*

> *Thereafter each person is being given a role as to what that person would do. The head monk in Sydney is the one who plans that, and we actually carry on as per instructions.* (Upasika)

Devotees and Monks have also identified the Guru as their leader, but most of the time they describe him as a team leader and a role model rather than the person of authority and responsibility.

> *One of the main characteristics was, he never wanted to be bossy. Other thing is his leadership as a head monk in Sri Lanka and advisor. He is very clever to make decisions sometimes we never understood why he took decisions as such. But eventually, over the time… we understood the reason behind such decisions. It was clear after two or three years. He has an ability to take long term successful decisions. He has a long vision.* (Thero)

The Guru also has a key role as a teacher or a trainer, who trained the monks so that they were fit for practicing "*Seela*", which according to the scriptures, it is the right conduct.

> *Head monk in Sri Lanka has taught us so many methods and practices which lead to seela.* (Thero)

> *Chief monk always tries to develop virtue ethics. He is someone who wanted to search for further teachings. We were given so many advices by him, we were given everything that a student should receive from a teacher. Chief monk has also set a great example by being very simple person, for instance he has been using the same watch for so many years. He never wanted to highlight himself, but quietly played huge role in distributing the religion.* (Upasika)

At the same time, transparency in communications and in information flows among the different branches is important. It not only supports the practices of the monks, but is important for developing trust and involvement among the devotees:

> *They are building trust because everything is transparent and seen through. Everything they communicate they publish on papers, on the internet and they sometimes use leaflets and even books to show them to the people and make them aware what they're doing. They also take people from among us to do the work. Lots of my friends are doing major part in organising those charity work or programs such as sill….* (Upasika)

The Temple has a reputation for innovation, not only in its use of the vernacular, but also in its approach to programs. In the previous sections of this chapter, the approach to establishing temporary meeting places, either in physical locations or online has been described and is reinforced here.

> *They used to bring huge statues and everything from the temple to these places all over the NSW and gave a marvellous, unthinkable and unforgettable experience to the people.* (Upasaka)

> *You feel it in the temple because you see the lord Buddha statues and religious symbolic things and it is always the set up.* (Upasika)

The 'set up' includes the presentation of the physical space, which is always of the highest quality. A devotee emphasised the imposing nature of the permanent buildings by referring to something quite mundane – the laying of tiles: "*If they build something, for an example need to lay tiles, they do it to maximum quality*."

The Development of Capitals

The MA Temple is a place with a variety of practices. Following Bourdieu and Neveu, the so called “capitals” in these findings are the outcome of these practices. They take place in various social sites that the monks and devotees socially construct, as set out in earlier sections of this chapter, including physical places modified by time, virtual places, networks, symbolic places, and organisations). What people do at these sites produces information of different kinds in different modes. These practices are complex and with multiple layers and meanings to them. The Findings indicate there are various capitals in the temple disguised within its cultural practices.

Bourdieu identified three key kinds of capital: economic capital, social capital and cultural capital, with a fourth form of capital, symbolic capital, which is a transfiguration of one of the others. The forms of cultural capital enumerated by Bourdieu vary and range from power, attitude to preferences, practices as well as goods. The research findings unpack Bourdieu’s cultural capital further by taking Neveu's (2018, p. 347) definition of capital as a tool, set out above in the Literature Review.

It is also important to keep in mind for this section of the findings Neveu’s claim that there are four corollaries to the definition: capital must have value or power, how that power or value increases depends on the context; and a capital can be converted into other capitals. Importantly, “A sociology of capitals must question the work needed for their appropriation or embodiment” (2018, p347). In other words, from a sociological perspective, it is important to consider how a capital is “performed”.

A key point of Bourdieu’s conception of practice is its attempt to understand the notion of sociality. By linking Bourdieu’s notion of capitals (2008) and taking Neveu’s (2018)

analysis of capitals, the research brings and gives birth to a form of capital that derives from cultural and symbolic capitals. This is a hybrid version of capital that this researcher has called *Karmic capital*. This kind of capital is not found within the Western definitions of capital and is very rarely found labelled as such within the empirical literature, where the few studies identified through scholar.google.com are divided between those using the phrase Karmic capital in relation to the accumulation of merit in a Buddhist context (eg Valpey, 2020) and those handful of studies and texts where it is used as a trope in western business practice, sometimes to label the idea that "what goes around comes around" (Conley, 2019). To make the argument clearer, this section starts with definitions of other capitals found in the temple practices and then situates karmic capital as emerging from a combination of attributes associated with the preceding capitals.

To understand karmic capital, this section begins with most known capitals of the temple. Firstly, then, is economic capital, which always has a direct and tangible profit from selling goods and services. The Temple makes money through publications and donations leading to the creation of economic capital. The wealthy Temple demonstrates community support through donation; it functions well as an organisation with a good business sense. Infrastructure, buildings (such as Buddha Palace in Sri Lanka), overseas facilities, media rooms and so on add material wealth to the Temple, and they are the symbolic version of economic capital.

The Temple attracts devotees because people want to be connected to something that is successful and this helps to turn economic capital into social capital (and vice versa). This leads monks and the committee to organise social events such as blood donations and working bee programs which brings symbolic capital, through grace, social experiences, respect, and reputation to the temple.

With the value of economic capital, arising from all the products, the Temple can offer services free of charge: that is, the Temple acts as an equalising force in the community. The social capital of the temple, evident through the large number of people who take part in events and help each other out, gives the Temple prominence in the Sri Lankan community. Thus, social capital developed through attendance at the temple becomes a way to create a sense of community among devotees.

Technology as the mode of production (informational networks, Media networks, social networks) brings the community to the temple. This will generate social capital for the temple, but it also develops human capital for the temple. In this way, the temple can harness the power of social media to get people to participate in various activities. This leads them to offer their expertise, skills (translation, technological, financial and managerial skills) and talents as well as professional experiences to the temple free of charge. The temple uses social media to encourage devotees' collaboration and encourage them to participate in various events and programs. The innovative chanting, translation abilities, monks and devotees' professional skills and the memberships are central to the construction of the temple's symbolic capital.

The events and programs organised by the temple generate cultural capital. Both the devotees and monks value the temple as an epicentre of cultural knowledge and therefore recognise cultural capital as a key product of this place. It happens in many ways. The temple is a place of production and consumption of cultural capital, as it creates and shares information related to different programs and events such as pilgrimages, scriptures (*Tipitaka*), meditation (*Bhavana*) programs, alms giving (*Dana*) and other religious activities such as Dharma Preaching, talks, sermons, children programs, cultural celebrations, chanting, and *sill* programs.

Devotees are attracted to the cultural products and increase their knowledge of scriptures. These events and celebrations clearly represent cultural practices, habits, and attitudes. The production of cultural capital is important to create wealth. the scripture books, statutes, and other symbols represents this capital.

Even though the temple is not listed on the stock exchange and does not trade on share markets, the temple is nonetheless concerned with growing its 'market share'. Its use of the affordances of multiple information and communication technologies and formats to aid in the rapid dissemination and exchange of information has been a very successful strategy to help devotees to connect to the temple in a variety of ways, regardless of their physical location. The best example is Zoom sessions and publishing books using speech recognition software. A devotee notes: *What monk preach today can turn into a book, CD, YouTube video at the same time it happens*.

This relates to Castell's notion of capital based on the use of information and communication technology as the mode of development which he called "Information capitalism", which operates 24/7 across the globe. Applying this to the temple, it is shown that people come to know and hear more from this temple than others through its telecommunication infrastructure such as media rooms and internet, access to laptops with monks. As a result, globalisation underpins many activities, especially on the monetary side of the economy operating in real-time using the technology and increasing the reach of the Temple. Symbols of this informational capital are found in high-tech devices, websites, apps, and online marketplaces, for example.

According to Theravada Buddhist practice, there are many cultural practices, symbolic representations, habits, and attitudes relating to secular life but there are also many of them that would not fit in the preceding capital definitions. Information practices are

based on what people do and capital is the outcome of these practices. The research sheds light on our understanding of the Sri Lankan diasporic community and their day today practices. Karmic capital is a form of capital that we have not recognised in the field of information practices research. Relationships with each of the established forms of capital can be identified, but it does not seem appropriate to consider karmic capital a form of symbolic capital, although following Neveu's definition, a form of symbolic capital might seem appropriate.

Explaining Karmic Capital

Karmic capital depends on good deeds. The value of this kind of capital increases with the person's contribution of alms, and what they cultivate through meditation. Together, these will bring more social capital as people identify an individual as the *Arya* person (person moving towards enlightenment). So called social capital will then convert to human capital as the people whom they know also contribute what they know such as professional skills, talents and expertise to the temple activities. Their volunteer work, selling books, food, making donations all contribute to the final economic capital of the temple.

Buddhist practice is based on meritorious deeds and wholesome deeds to create good Karma which will lead to the rebirth in a congenial place. These deeds are morally good and profitable. By giving alms and doing other good deeds, developing mental discipline and knowledge, and meditation, one will develop morality, wisdom and concentration. This moral wisdom is represented in many forms, including "*Sothapanna*", "*Sakadagami*", "*Anagami*", "*Arahat*", "*Buddha*" as explained above. These forms are the symbolic nature of this kind of capital and are referred to in scripture books.

Karmic capital is about rebirth, karma and attaining *Nirvana* by getting rid of attachment to physical objects or materialistic things. However, karmic capital can be found hidden between the culture and the symbols. Naming this kind of outcome of practice simply as "cultural capital" or symbolic capital does not fully unwrap the full potential of it.

The next section elaborates various conversations to show in detail how karmic capital is understood and what its characteristics are.

Devotees learn about cultural capital through what they talk about as "*engineering their minds*" to come to the realisation mentioned above by focusing on desire, and the reasons for desire for materialism, ending the desire for material things and how to end that desire (in Buddhism, this is known as 4 Noble Truths). This is done by carefully paying attention in looking at forming and decaying of the form (materials and thoughts) through their mind. This is called *bhavana* (meditation). Buddhists believe that this practice gives liberation as you realise everything is impermanent, leading to suffering and the non-self. As a result, they assume that they could eventually be free from all attachments. The aim of this study is not to test whether these beliefs are true or sincerely held. It is to clarify what devotees and monks do at the temple, what their social practices are. A devotee stated:

> *There is an opportunity for us to develop our spiritual journey by achieving four noble truths while helping others to achieve it too*. (Upasaka)

As a cultural practice this shapes the lives of devotees and of monks and the way they think. They call this kind of practice to "let go" which means the letting go of materialistic things. There are many examples that devotees used to express this:

Our new life (rebirth) will have somewhat similar habits (gati) and cravings (āsavā). Our rebirth depends on them. (Upasika)

The devotees emphasise that no matter how far away the Temple is, they need to visit the Temple to see the monks. Helping monks and offering things to them is practising letting go in terms of the Buddhist teachings. Therefore, connectivity for them is to see the head monk in Sydney physically. One of the Buddhist cultural norms is Sangha (monks), as discussed above. They regard them as most precious so they refer to them as one of the "triple gems" (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) and the monks are important enough to represent the Guru. Helping Sangha and offering things to Sangha are also treated as good Karma, with the hope of getting good things in future lives (after rebirth).

So, I do not want to make a special effort to meet the Ven Thero [ie the Guru]. That's why I told you when I see other monks, when I talk to other monks It's just the "Shrawaka Sangha". They are our role models and leaders of Buddha (Upasaka)

We see Sangha (monks) at the temple, we can collect lots of pin [Merits] by helping them, by listening to dharma, meditations. (Upasika)

They use both symbolic capitals (objectified and institutionalised capital) to achieve their spiritual goals. Being a part of the Sri Lankan Buddhist diaspora and members of the Mahamevnawa Asapuwa, they give value to the institution they belong to. They also give value to the symbolic representations of this culture such as Buddha statues, scripture books, relics, stupa, Bodhi Trees and so on.

Here, the purpose of this community is to find something beyond life: Nirvana or heavenly pleasure.

He [the Buddha] told us to gain merits. He also taught us how you can go in the path of the dharma. If you have enough merits. There are human beings who reborn even in heavens as they have listened to the dharma. (Upasika)

Unpacking them further, the underlying requirements, characteristics, and indicators of this Karmic capital are uncovered.

Merits ("Pin" and "Kushal")

In the sections that follow, merit and its key characteristics will be set out. The basis for this karmic capital is not collecting wealth or money. It is collecting good karma, that is merits, with the intention of having benefits in the future. For an example, to get enlightened, people need good Karma. To achieve "*Arahat*, *Sakurudagami*, *Sothapanna*" (higher mental states) they need good Karma, to go to heavenly realms they need good Karma. For empowerment of their future lives, for their rebirth, they need good Karma. For a life without obstacles, they need good Karma. For success of afterlife, they need good Karma.

At the end of the day, Swaminwahanse [Monk] *will explain to them those merits they received…* (Upasaka)

This is where I can cultivate good habits and practices and engrossed with Dharma Knowledge and place where I can gather Good Karma. (Upasika)

We believe that serving monks, cleaning temples and offering alms giving, be a part of what they're doing its all-good karma to get that good karma. (Upasika)

Focus Beyond the Current Life

Collecting good Karma goes beyond the current life. One of the main characteristics of karmic capital that is different from other capitals is its concern about the merit for future lives as well as for the present.

One could argue that the practices that lead to good karma are actually leading to cultural capital. That might be how an outsider would see it. From an insider's perspective, people practice good karma expecting good things for their next life. Working for good karma is a way of seeking wealth and comfort in the world with God. The goal of this practice is to end the cycle of rebirth (*Samsara*) which leads to suffering which they believe it happens once you destroy all the desires (*Nirvana*). Those who are able to do this, will have benefits in the afterlife, which are referred to as heavenly pleasure.

> *This is the place where I can cultivate the good habits and practices and be engrossed with the dharma knowledge and a place where I can gather good Karma for my Samsara.* [rebirth cycle] (Upasika)

A central goal of the MA Temple is to promulgate spirituality or inner happiness. Participants appreciate the fact that the vision and mission of the temple is based on the intangible, their spiritual status which will be used in next lives or "*Samsara*". This cannot be done without "*pin*", that is, good karma.

Intangibility

So far, we have seen information practices research almost entirely in secular environments; and previous information practices studies have not been concerned with capital. However, karmic capital digs deep into people's spiritual beliefs, where they

value immateriality and spiritualism which is “intangible”. Here, the “intangible” refers to the things that we cannot experience with our five senses. The intangible in this sense has not been a focus for research until this study. Mostly in our western culture something beyond the senses is considered something that cannot be subject to investigation. Thus, data from this study lays a foundation for investigating the value people place on intangibility and nothingness in this life, through their practices shaping their lives towards the afterlife. A devotee explains:

> *This is the curiosity about life and one of the things that surrounds life is the idea of death. What comes with the idea of death is what comes after the death, which is encapsulated in our ideas of God and religion. Buddhism is based on Anichcha, Dukka and Anatta (impermanence, suffering, absence of a personal and moral soul or non-self* (Upasaka)
>
> *Attachment to materialistic things is the cause for suffering as they all are impermanent. The Buddha said “Yayan Tanha Ponobhavika” The craving for materialistic things is the reason for our rebirth*. (Upasika)

Devotees explain that the world that society dictates is physical and secular, money has been made the god of that society, and the reward is material success. On the other hand, in the spiritual world you cannot see the tangible benefits, so the reward is more intangible. While information practices can be categorised based on their tangibility, in the context of this study the intangible aspects of these practices are important. Here, people practice to “let go”.

> *We are coming to practice let go.* (Upasaka)
>
> *… communicate with spiritual realms and dimensions to see Gods”.* (Upasaka)

I have lots of friends when I saw they chase certain material things, I just felt being lonely was the best thing for me. Because I do not value materialism. (Upasika)

At "Asapuwa" temple premises, we do not get any chance for show off and being selfish. We practice "Sakkaya Dhitti" which is about me [reasons for existence]. (Upasika)

Cultivate peace, calmness, quietness, and tranquillity

This characteristic is more concerned with focussing the inner mind towards God or Enlightenment. Therefore, devotees and monks appreciate calmness, quietness, and tranquillity. One way to collect karma is to practise meditation. The practice of meditation leads to mindfulness, awareness and consciousness. Those are built on calmness, quietness, and tranquillity. These are the underlying indicators of karmic capital and not evident in any of the other capitals. This aspect of practices was a common theme among devotees.

We go to the temple and meditate because it is quiet. Buddha himself said to go to an empty place, under a tree. Because it is where you can practice mindfulness (Upasaka)

The Lord Buddha preached something. One should try to reach the same goal. I'm enrolling you to have that goal only. The best thing to cultivate is the humbleness.

The result of coming to the temple over the years that I see most clearly is that I'm a lot calmer and patient than I used to be, Listening to the Dharma, and teachings of Buddha and trying to put them into practice, I've seen my mind cool down and become more peaceful. (Upasika)

There are occasions isolating and abandoning materialistic benefits and going for meditation and spend the time in silence. (Upasika)

Lord Buddha said to meditate in place where no people, under a tree or in monastery. because they are quiet places. (Upasaka)

End product of karmic capital– Samadhi, Nirvana

There are other elements of this karmic capital. Applying the awareness and consciousness achieved through meditation, devotees aim to arrive at ultimate *samadhi* (unification of mind) and recognition. This gives more attention to mind and its emotional dimension. The power of this karmic capital depends on how fit your mind is and how you can repel material benefits or attract to the divine or grace and inertia.

As you know, major Thero was saying to become "sothapanna" and he advises to follow Lord Buddha's teachings. Even under trees doesn't matter. (Upasaka)

For devotees, karmic practices mean putting in effort and commitment. Devotees travel to the Temple no matter where they are. This shows their commitment to collecting karma. Also, according to their cultural practices, helping monks, offering food and other requisites to them is regarded as good karma that would lead to "*Nirvana*" or even rebirth in heavenly realms. Doing these things physically, visiting the temple, makes them feel good about themselves. Even though the statements devotees made seem simple statements of cultural practices, they are significant for their meanings given to the underlying symbolism.

[By doing these simple things] *You are becoming some spiritual person … identified as a good person who could do something good and contribute to the society.* (Upasaka)

The analytical tools used by research concerned with the secular does not grasp the fine lines of value of such information practices, which in its own way includes wealth, power, culture, innovation, and people.

Spiritual – communication

For participants, their experience in the temple involves spirituality. Though it was not a focus of this study, and evidence from the data is difficult to verify in any empirical way, participants also regard spiritual communication as a sort of connectivity in the temple. Such things may not make sense in the materialistic world but here the community values things beyond their senses. During the interview conversations, devotees give some emphasis to spiritual communications, *Manōmaya kaya*, which is known as the higher level of consciousness of the Guru and monks. Devotees talk about instances that are inexplicable by the scientific laws of nature.

> *I know someone who could heal the ailing conditions through the powers he gained from meditation.* (Upasaka)

> *We have heard stories of people going to the hells after their death. A person from Badulla has got a heart attack and he has had the habit of consuming liquor, before taking him to the morgue his body was laid on a bed. He has gone up into the sky for half an hour and met the colleagues who were there at that time the king of the hell has come and inquired him whether he can tell of a merit that he has committed. He had remembered the Kathina of the temple. After a half an hour, the doctor has come and said this cannot happen. A dead person is alive again. It was even published in a newspaper.* (Upasaka)

> *One day the Guru of the temple told that there are monks who have come to the greater states of minds in Mahamevnawa. One devotee called Piyadasa meniyo has passed away. She was such a nice lady who never hurts others. When she was in the hospital the Guru of the temple has visited her. At the time she passed away a light has entered the cottage of the monk and showed that this lady was born in "Nimmana"* (Thero)

During the interviews, devotees and monks both talk about consciousness and higher states of mind. Some monks stated that the head monk in Sri Lanka can even transmit advice using telepathy. Though proving this kind of thing is beyond the scope of my research, I must take into account that people are giving priority to these phenomena, acknowledging them as something beyond their experience, which they deem to be related to spirituality and a higher state of mind. The importance of the monks' higher state of mind is clear from the statements indicating that if they meditate with a monk who has experienced the higher state of mind, their mediation is going to be successful.

Global Organisation through Karmic Capital

Given the previous section on karma and its relationship to spirituality and the intangible, and in particular, its distancing from the material, it may seem strange to now consider the findings of the relationship between the global organisation of the Temple and karmic capital.

Globalisation through information flows and communication shows us only the macro picture of profit making. As explained above, to gain infrastructure for the temple, as an organisation, the Temple needs economic capital. Although the global economic theories do not give much importance to non-materialistic things such as *Seela*, *Kusal*, *Akusal*, Merits, Good karma, *Nirvana*, four noble truths and so on, these have become

the core of the success of this kind of global organisation and this non-materialistic capital is also integral to its economic capital (fund) raising.

The Temple community, that is to say, the devotees, and their intention of earning of good karma brings the necessary capital to the temple. In this way, karmic capital could be said to disguise its roots among other forms of capital, especially cultural, economic and symbolic capital, and even including social, human and informational capitals.

The knowledge of spirituality, spiritual communications, spiritual experiences have become part of the devotees' day to day activities and represent what they do in the temple, which is putting *Samsara,* the afterlife, in first place, before everything else. This outcome of practices is somewhat different to pure cultural capital. because the goal is not related to the community at large, but to empowerment of personal life in this life and beyond in the afterlife. The responsibility of the monks is to support devotees in that:

> *monks are not asked to do things beyond that. They gain more good karma by helping people to gain more good karma* (Thero)

Devotees emphasised that there are no payments for any committee members, and in a Western sense, their involvement is based on charity. As noted above, some devotees speak about their work as volunteers, even when they are doing significant physical work to support the Temple and its infrastructure.

The infrastructure is gained through karma as people do things free of charge to collect good karma.

> *So. we can experience that we are not going after the physical things. We are not going after those physical things. We are shifting from them. We just look at*

qualities and how to help other people and their compassion to gain good merits.

(Upasaka)

As noted above, people also make donations of money to gain karma. Through these examples, it can be seen that karmic capital also takes a nonsecular approach and it transforms to economic, and social capitals. Cultural capital and symbolic capital can be objectified and institutionalised in many ways; similarly, the way karmic capital is objectified and institutionalised also can take many forms. On the one hand, it could lead to social, economic, human, informational capitals, and it can certainly lead to forms of symbolic capital, but on the other hand, these other forms of capital can also lead to karmic capital. This shows that capital is transformed and generates powers within the community in various ways as outcomes from practices that may not seem to be directly related.

The global vision of this organisation, to help people to attain higher spiritual status by collecting more good karma for the current and future lives, is completely different from the materialistic approach but nonetheless can be seen to be in line with the goal of comfort and empowerment. For some, that goal appears as a materialistic benefit in this life and future lives, and for others it is a form of social empowerment by becoming a Buddha, Arahat, Sangha, God and thus finding an attachment to many symbolic values, places, or figures in a way that can both be seen as reputation, a key form of symbolic capital and as something far beyond that. The economically oriented system of networked, globalised organisations can relate to the economic capital and success of the Temple as a globalised organisation but is completely unable to grasp the underlying values such as karma, which move wealth and its consequences into a different form of currency altogether.

Transformation of Capitals

As has been shown in the previous sections of this Findings chapter, there are many reasons to be connected to the Temple, apart from accumulation of direct profits through goods and services. However, to some extent, it is the goods and services that bring more people to the temple. And the more people who come to the Temple, they will bring with them the possibility for even more goods and services, as they implement their intention to collect more good karma. This causes the temple to standout from others.

In terms of their information practices, monks and devotees are engaging in cultural practices as part of a community in order to achieve their karmic goals. This is a part of the cultural networks that people value: their expressions about their spirituality. Through their sayings, doings and relatings, the data has shown the importance of their spiritual life.

Through cultural capital, economic, human and social capital, the Temple creates a reputation (symbolic capital) for providing opportunities for devotees to create good karma through accruing merit. Objectified forms of capital are found in the form of CDs, books, scriptures, statues and decorations, buildings and grounds. Then there are the celebrations, events and programs that exist as institutionalised cultural capital, alongside symbols such as Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. The creation of various commodities and products and the emphasis on their dissemination can be interpreted to suggest that the spirituality on which the temple is founded is an example of various capitals (informational capital and of economic capital, cultural capital, human capital, and karmic capitals), existing at the same time. In a way, these capitals can only exist because of Castells' notion of the space of flows, when the space of flows itself is seen to go beyond the technology, infrastructure, wealth, power and innovations.

Whereas other capitals value the comforts of a materialistic life, – even social capital can be seen to value connections with others, which may in turn lead to other benefits – karmic capital gives value to "giving away' or "letting go". Thus, it seems paradoxical that it can be linked to an increase in the very material capitals it shuns.

The creative activities (human capital) also bring more people in to the temple, such as the unique chanting style of the monks which is different from the traditional prayers. In this way, human capital transforms into the other forms of capitals. As we have seen, the publishing of books which are then sold through Amazon is a good example of converting cultural capital to economic capital. These activities of the Temple give it more power within the community, as it attracts more devotees from the diaspora, and this leads to more and more social events, greater appreciation of the knowledge and skills of the monks, and more fund-raising activities, all the while leading to more karmic capital.

Karma are the actions that have future consequences. This is the capital which people could take refuge in and relate to personal empowerment. As shown above, several devotees commented on the sense of dislocation from the country of their birth, as well as a sense that their working lives gave them no satisfaction. Sometimes this capital is an important asset for groups who have been disconnected from the society as well.

The temple is built on the "karmic capitalism" based on karma. It has disguised itself among cultural and symbolic capitals. It depends enormously on cultural perceptions of something which does not obtain to such a degree for the objective power of the economic capital or social ties. Karmic capital clearly derives from the main sociological capitals; a key difference, that must be taken into account is the timeframe within which the outcome of practices becomes evident. Whereas economic and social

capitals become apparent fairly soon after practices such as publishing, or meeting others, have been enacted, and cultural and symbolic capitals begin to emerge a little later, the benefits of karmic capital cannot be experienced in this life, even though it is the outcome of everyday practices in this life.

Conclusion

The researcher, here, brings together some reflections to conclude the findings chapter. This section will reflect on the similarities and differences between what the researcher observed and what people told him in the interviews and what his expectations were.

At the beginning of the study, the researcher's perception was that the devotees were homogenous and shared a common purpose with the monks, but now at the time of writing towards the end of the research, his perception has changed significantly. The research clearly shows the information practices of devotees are heterogeneous as are the practices of the monks: ranging from bringing their kids to teach them about their Sri Lankan culture, making money out of selling books and food, cultivating mindfulness, achieving career objectives, sharing food, making friendships and many more. Devotees do not all come to the temple for the single purpose of developing mindfulness as he originally thought.

There are also devotees who criticise some of the activities in the temple, especially in terms of buying a permanent place for the temple. During the period of observations, the researcher heard numerous occasions where the devotees discussed and even criticised some of the programs, the venues, times, and perceived wrongdoing among the organisers. Acting in his outsider role helped the researcher to listen those criticisms and endeavour to understand the reasons behind them.

The findings have shown that Theravada Buddhist practice is complex. Rather than a devotion, it is a practice itself. It involves both mind and body as explored in existing information practicestheory, something observed in studies by Olsson (2010, 2016) and by Lloyd (2007, 2010) referred to earlier. As an insider, the researcher has a significant interest in questions of embodiment, but the outsider role dominates here and the intention of the researcher is not to go on that path.

The insider status of the researcher enabled him to understand in a different way that the "*Vinaya*" of the Buddhist practice lays down many detailed rules concerning our behaviour towards the material world. This can be summarised as follows: we can get what we want these days, but even when people do get everything or much they want, there is still sense of the meaningless of their lives. So, people here, at this temple, do things to collect good karma. It begins from both symbolism and culture and is transformed, in the context of the Temple, into economic capital at the end.

The researcher's initial impression of meditation in the Australian context was that it was something for stressed people with little to do. In the context of the Temple, the researcher found people who were genuinely interested about meditation practices, the same as him. However, the observations and interviews clearly showed that the way the devotees see the temple is purposeful and heterogenous too, so that it would not be accurate to say that all devotees share his interests.

In this study, the researcher's experience has been fascinating and insightful. It has been a great discovery. He has been going to temples for a long time, but his insider status meant that he was never able to think conceptually and interpret those experiences before. The Temple provides the opportunity for wisdom to rise in many ways. Here,

with the Temple as a “site”, the researcher used it for his PhD, whereas others used it for other personal benefits and agendas which have elaborate and enmeshed meanings.

This study has been complex as it has been able to bring together the spiritual and the secular, the material and the immaterial. Putting on the outside researcher’s lenses all the time during the research, the researcher was able to identify much of the taken for granted, interpreting the data gathered from members of this diasporic society related to significant practices that too often are dismissed by outsiders as “cultural practices” which can only be considered exotic and therefore outside an analytical frame of research.

Chapter 5 Discussion

Introduction

This chapter will show how findings about the socially based practices of monks and devotees elucidate the conceptual complexity of information practices in the Temple, and through this shed light on the tensions that exist in these practices. It will begin by comparing the findings of this study with other recent studies of the behaviours and practices of Buddhists and other religious communities, including the roles of community-based religious groups in the everyday lives of diasporic communities. The next section reflects on how the information practices of monks and devotees create the Temple. Then it will turn its attention to the importance of place in this study. It will demonstrate how social practices create the Temple as place, not as a single geographical location, but as a number of contexts for information-based activity. It will continue by discussing the role of networks, linking the local and the global. Following, it will explore the tensions inherent in the spiritual, social and commercial flows of information. The chapter concludes with a section that shows how the use of a practice theoretical approach facilitates a rethinking of three key concepts: power, place and capital.

Comparison with other studies

The findings of this study, which is broader in extent and focus than most of the other studies on information practices in non-Western religious context, confirm the findings of those studies at the most general level, but extend conceptual understandings in many areas.

ELIS research

Studies of Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS), such as the work of Michels (2012) and Khoir et al. (2015), have explored information behaviours of people involved in religious communities, identifying sources of information key to their lives. At one level, this study could be understood in the tradition of ELIS research, in that its concern is with information and the everyday, but its concern is not only with the way participants seek and use information; instead, it focuses on the information practices of devotees and monks in a Buddhist temple. There is little information practices research outside of secular environments as most research has focused on occupational information phenomena.

Thus, this study adds to the small number of studies concerned with everyday practices from the perspective of religious observance and spirituality. This study does not focus only on the individual participants, as does the study of Chabot (2019), but it acknowledges that the community of a Temple includes the monks and a Temple such as the MA Temple is also an organisation with a global reach. Thus, this study goes further in positioning the devotees in their organisational environment, an environment that they all acknowledge, through references to the purchase of books, the watching of YouTube videos produced by the Temple and the emails and alerts they receive.

This study is concerned with information practices linked to spirituality and what Kari and Hartel (2007) referred to as “the higher things in life”. However, the findings of this study show that the layers of understanding that Bates (2002) put forward do not exist in a hierarchy of fields of knowledge, nor in a pyramid as proposed by Maslow, with the material need for food and shelter as fundamental and spirituality at the apex. Rather, the material and the immaterial co-exist, the spiritual and the practical exist in the same information practices.

The distinct practices of Buddhism are clearly identifiable. Guzik (2018) defined "*the religious identity* ... as the distinguishable style or expression of a person's religious affiliation and spiritual values, which may be recognized by others through a person's actions, rhetorical practices, and preferences, and through the ways in which others relate and respond to them". Gorichanaz (2015) refers to the practices of Zen Buddhists, especially in seated meditation, emphasising the importance of this practice alongside other practices of chanting and dharma talks. Meditation, chanting and dharma talks are all practices of significance to the monks and devotees in this study.

Gorichanaz also identified the importance of scriptures, but whereas he identified the existence of a canon of Zen texts, in Chabot's study of New Kadampa Tradition (NKT) Buddhism (2019), which like Zen Buddhism is part of the Mahayana tradition, it is the writings of the Venerable Geshe Kelsang Gyatso that are the foundation of all teachings. In the MA Temple, part of the Theravada tradition, it is the writings and preachings of Buddha, translated from the ancient Pali into the vernacular, whether Sinhalese, English or some other language, by the Venerable Kiribathgoda Gnanananda Thero and his followers that are the foundation of all teachings, although these are clearly presented as the thoughts and words of Buddha. In all three studies, the participants engaged in religious information practices as part of their everyday routines yet also noted the transcendent in their experiences.

In his attempt to emphasise the significance of the non-Western context of the Zen Buddhists in his study, Gorichanaz (2015) compares their practices with those of Catholics, noting that whereas the Buddhists emphasise practices, linking the physical and embodied with the spiritual, for the Catholics, the link is between the cognitive and the spiritual, a matter of belief. Chabot (2019) places his emphasis on a tradition that has become attractive to Westerners, but the participants in his study are drawn only

from among Western practitioners of Buddhism, since NKT comprises “almost entirely convert Buddhists”, that is to say, they have learned the practices of Buddhism from an outsider’s perspective. In this present study, there is no external comparison group, members of the Temple community are acknowledged as part of the Sri Lankan diaspora, making a new life for themselves in Sydney, a Sydney with an extensive multi-cultural, multi-faith tradition. Participants note some disjuncts between their lives as residents of Sydney and their lives as Theravada Buddhists, including the existence of spiritual practices for which they have no words in English as well as the emphasis on Sri Lankan cultural traditions that they wish their children to be able to maintain.

Finally, there is a distinction between Buddhist tradition followed by the participants in Chabot’s study and those that are followed in this study. According to Chabot (2019), the New Kadampa Tradition Buddhists are trying to save their traditions from invasions while MA Temple Buddhists are trying to spread the religion through various sites of the world and focusing on building and creating more places to practice Dharma. This distinction will have influenced what devotees do and how they talk about these practices.

Methodologies

The recent studies of information behaviour/practices in a religious context have used a range of methodological approaches. This study used an ethnographic approach, taking the MA Temple community as its area of interest, although selecting the devotees and monks of the Sydney branch as its focus. This approach differs from that used in the other studies presented in the literature review. Chabot used a grounded theory approach, (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), thereby assuming that there was no appropriate theory to guide the interpretation of the data. Chabot’s research is also broad-ranging. Like this study, his study was conducted within a naturalistic framework (Guba &

Lincoln, 1982) and, importantly, his research was conducted by a researcher who possesses 'insider status' within the community of study. Insider status allowed both Chabot and this researcher to recognise the limitations of using western conceptual tools to analyse the non-western context of the study. However, in both studies, the insider status also permitted a level of interpretation which would not have been possible otherwise.

An ethnographic approach, with its multiple sources of data, and interpretive approach based on thick description, requires a conceptual underpinning broad enough to encompass a wide range of activities and perspectives. Thus, this study of the MA Temple differs from the other studies because it has used conceptual framings from several key theorists to support the practice-theoretical approach which facilitates the exploration of the practices of devotees and monks in the globalised, technologically enhanced organisation.

A practice theoretical approach allows the researcher to go beyond descriptions of sayings, doings and relatings to consider the outcomes of these practices, although this approach is very rare in information research. This researcher is aware of few other studies in the field which have linked practices with their outcomes, Lloyd's study (2007) of firefighters and the link between training and professional competence being one. Addressing the relationship between practices and capital directly, Neveu (2018) has explained how for Bourdieu, capital arises as the outcomes of what people do, and how different capitals emerge as forms of capital interact. This focus on capital, in particular on karmic capital, sets this study apart from other studies of information and religious practices.

Creating spaces

The importance of the use of information and communication technologies in the practices of the devotees and monks in this study was matched by the importance of online sources of information in other studies. Meintel (2012), for instance, found that participants in her study used internet sources for three purposes, which mirror the findings of this study. Her participants established and maintained contact with others with the same religious orientation, both locally and internationally; they used the internet to access spiritual resources, such as prayers and sermons, and the decision-makers used the internet to manage groups who were physically distant from them. Similarly, Michels (2012) found that church leaders used the internet to access relevant resources and Gorichanaz (2015) found that Zen Buddhists regularly used the internet and social media to access devotional materials.

The findings that the Temple operates as a multinational conglomerate links with studies not previously used in information research. Sassen's studies of the workings of globalised organisations shows that technology not only has an impact on governance, but also emphasises the importance of the local, where the specific knowledge resides. According to Sassen, this concentrated knowledge, expertise and skills cannot be replicated through the informational networks or technology.

Going further beyond conceptual approaches usually used in information research, the study's use of the work of Castells (1996, 1999, 2000), in particular his work on the network society, demonstrates that the use of the Internet facilitates the temple being a "network" for its information practices, The temple is constantly changing from a physical place to a networked place and vice versa. This provides an example of a "process" (in Castells' words) that connects various informational networks, physical places, and virtual spaces together. This process creates various social spaces for day-to-

day temple activities that go beyond the religious, into the social, the organisational and the financial.

Therefore, the technology focus in this study goes beyond that found in other studies, not being limited to seeking religious information, but also highlighting its use in creating, transforming and sharing different types of capitals within these social sites.

Culture and Ethnicity

The study of the MA Temple is unique in the sense that the participants belong to the Theravada Buddhist tradition. This is the first study that explores this Sri Lankan diasporic community in information practices research. Khoir et al. (2015) also focussed on migrants, and their links into communities in their adopted homeland of Australia at the same time as they maintained links with their country of origin. Khoir et al. were concerned with identifying sources of support for migrants to become integrated into their new community and found that they need linkages that are both strong and weak in order to settle into a new country and to create a feeling of security. This study showed the important of secular and nonsecular information practices for this group, and access to a wide range of information sources and support.

Focussing on this study

The conceptual framework for this research has derived from overarching information practices research (e.g. Lloyd 2013; Savolainen 2008; McKenzie 2003; Olsson 2013). The research develops an understanding of the information practices of monks and devotees at MA Temple and refines it through the conceptual lenses of Castells (2010) "space of flows" and networked society, Sassen's (2006) "globalisation" and social

construction, Sack's construction of place (2003) as well as Fisher's "information grounds" (2006).

Information practices focus on the social, collective, non-purposive aspects of the ways people deal with the information and their interactions, breaking with the conceptual tradition of information behaviour research.

The study has shown participants are attracted to the temple and connect to the temple for various reasons. The information practices that emerge are not only limited to dharma – that is, spiritual purposes – but also are linked to various social practices, activities and interests such as food, music, celebrations, culture, careers, business connections and friendships. These practices emerge from a range of events such as blood donations, working bees and children's programs as well as meditations, prayers and other religious activities and engagement with the voluntary activities of donations and the commercial activities of producing and buying religious texts and recordings. As shown in previous chapters, this study assumes that all practices are information practices, being based on knowledge and information. However, it is also important to acknowledge that information practices can be categorised in different ways. Thus, the practices emerging from events such as blood donations and working bees are likely to be based on the exchange of information related to everyday life, whereas children's programs are based on inculcating spiritual and cultural information, and meditations, prayers and other activities involve the use of cultural information, mostly learned at a young age, and which binds the community together. The commercial activities of the temple, like commercial activities of any kind, are underpinned by a broad range of information practices, exercising appropriate legal judgments and sharing details of stock movements in publishing.

The experiences of monks and devotees not only link individuals into the physical social group of the Temple, but also demonstrate the existence of information networks, social networks, media networks of various interests and expertise. The findings of the study demonstrate that the information not only flows between individuals but also within the various social groups and even between global institutions (branches of the temple and other collaborative institutions) through varied information networks. These practices are part of the everyday lives of participants, who take what they do in this shared community for granted (Olsson 2013), describing what they do in a taken-for-granted way. As a consequence, these practices are rendered "invisible" to the participants (Savolainen 2008, p. 3), and that presents a challenge for the researcher who must elaborate them in detail. Teasing out these social experiences based on shared activities and to some extent a shared sense of identity laid a good foundation for investigating the information practices of the temple with its emphasis on social context.

Thus, it is important to emphasise the significance of the setting within which these social interactions take place and the contexts within which information is disseminated, and shared. As Moring and Lloyd (2013) argue, particular social practices are produced through social interactions within this specific setting, and it is possible to identify social conditions that fundamentally shape this setting. The setting for this study, the MA Temple, is extremely complex. As the findings show, the Temple exists as a permanent building but it can be created temporarily; it is a place for spiritual development, for friendship and for the maintenance of ethnic culture; it is a global business and a place for quiet contemplation; it is sustained through the skills of the monks and through information and communication technologies; its devotees see themselves as individuals and as members of overlapping networks, as do the monks; the interactions of those engaged in this social setting lead not only to spiritual capital as

might be expected from a religious setting, but also to economic capital and informational capital. Within this setting, exercises of power can also be determined.

The social relationships found in the Temple are varied. Gherardi (2008, p. 517) pointed out the importance of knowledge in sustaining complex social relationships: “To know is to be capable of participating with the requisite knowledge competence in the complex web of relationship among people material artifacts and activities”. Few studies have attempted to untangle this complex web of relationships but by using an information practices approach, that is what this study has attempted.

To give a focus to the information practices in this setting, which comprises multi-layered social relationships, the conceptual starting point of Castells’ notion of information flows provided a way of bringing together the people, their communications and the means of communication as well as the outcomes of interactions. Sassen’s concept of the globalised organisation shed light on the institutional perspectives of the MA Temple and its workings. Fisher’s notion of information grounds provided a basis for interpreting face to face interactions in fixed locations. And Sack’s contention that people create place gave a frame for exploring the temple as a place. Up to this time, these conceptual frameworks have not been linked in terms of information practices research. Analysing them in depth can draw their own similarities, differences and overlapping ideas to shed the light on Gherardi’s (2008, p.517) “complex web of relationships among people, material artifacts, and activities”.

Constructing the Temple through Information Practices

This next section will explore how people, artifacts, information, and their relationships socially constructed the Temple using the information practiceslens. It will investigate how different relationships of practices have shaped and been shaped by temple places.

As the overarching theoretical framework for the study is situated within information practices, the various social practices of the temple enable it to be recognised as many socially constructed "places" simultaneously. The findings demonstrate how "practice is a bricolage of material, mental, social and cultural resources" Gherardi (2001, p137). Teasing out these invisible practices, which can be "difficult to see in great detail" (Savolainen 2008, p. 3), makes both the practices and the notion of place more comprehensible.

Gherardi (2016, p10) states that it is difficult to enumerate the ingredients of a practice, as a "resource of action becomes a resource only within an assemblage of relationships". These relationships are complex, and the activities that makes the temple a place, process, symbol, network or even an organisation similarly are complex. It is a place with an intricate web of social relationships with places, people, practices, activities, technology, artefacts and functioning in information realms enabling the construction of the "temple" in various physical places, in networks, practices and even in people's minds. This study does not seek to list the elements of the information practices of the MA Temple, but rather to show how the multiple Temples are constructed both practically and conceptually.

The temple community consists of monks and devotees, just looking through empirical lenses confirms their interest go beyond the learning (devotees) and teaching (monks) of

Dharma practices. People are connected to the temple through many symbolic, imaginary meanings, as well as through the material activities of blood donation and spiritual celebrations. Therefore, the study has shown that people, the monks and the devotees, are interconnected, but that the activities in which they take part are also interconnected. These participants in this study see the temple through different lenses as they share information in different settings at different places and for different purposes. The practices of the temple community imbue the temple with different meanings. Some meanings derive from the interactions of people, such as building trust, developing friendships and sharing gossip, whereas others emerge from engagement with the spiritual purpose of the temple, where interactions almost paradoxically lead to tranquillity and silence too. Some meanings emerge through the virtual environment through informational networks where one person's network of interests overlaps another person's network of interests. This also creates a network of networks of interest.

Furthermore, the information practices of the temple are constituted by both monks and devotees and are not the practices of individuals. Equally, they are not solely the practices of an organised group, as one might find in other religious settings. Even though some monks and some devotees emphasise the importance of solitude and withdrawal through meditation, practices that might be seen as individual, these are nonetheless social activities, part of the repertoire of practices recognised within the context of the Temple. Thus, these can be seen as social practices, alongside other practices enacted in their 'mundane activities' (Savolainen 2007, p. 120) by different individuals and in different locations. The amalgamation of these different informational activities is what makes the temple live.

Re-thinking the Temple as a Space or Place

The temple is clearly a physical place. The findings from this study would seem to support the idea that it is in line with Fisher's concept of information grounds. Devotees go to the temple for a variety of reasons, and while they are there, for example participating in a working bee, they exchange information with other devotees. However, Fisher's concern (2006) with the categorical factors that can be used to analyse information grounds seems misplaced. For Fisher, an information ground is created through the behaviours of individuals. In the tradition of studies in information behaviour, her concern is with how information is exchanged formally and informally and how these processes can be modelled.

In the context of the MA Temple, it appears to be social practices that create the information ground, rather than relationships between people, place and information. These information practices, which are 'socially constituted, conditioned and negotiated' as people interact (Moring and Lloyd, 2013), and a focus on 'the fine details' of these interactions (Gherardi 2012, p.2), have provided a way to understand how people give meaning to these interactions beyond the mere establishment of a place for serendipitous information exchange.

This focus on information practices as socially based, collective rather than individual, is useful in shedding light on the practices of meditation and solitude which is important to some participants; some devotees noted the importance of meditation and solitude is seeking information from within themselves. The conceptualisation of information seeking is always to identify the tangible benefits or at least to identify the information found. However, the findings of this study show the devotees and monks trying to awaken their inner capabilities by the meditative practice of seeking understanding in

their inner minds. According to the Lloyd (2010a), observing the bodies of participants is a vital part of the processes of information practices research and for Savolainen (2009) information is a cognitive construct where mind cannot be treated separately from the body. Applying these conceptual approaches to Buddhist religious practices is challenging, because meditative practices in this context are trying to separate the mind from the body. Monks and devotees are trying to find the supreme bliss of their mind by separating the body from the mind which they called the "nibbana", [*Nirvana*]. However, at the same time, one can does not attain "nibbana" without other people. There is a social process embedded into it.

The findings have shown that MA Temple is not only a place where individuals seek spiritual fulfilment and day to day information but also an organisation which has spread all over the world with help of both monks and devotees. In this sense, it is both a symbolic place as well as a physical place and it operates virtually. Taking the perspective set out in the literature review that it is interactions and practices that shape place, these categorisations are not unexpected, matching Sack's (2003, p.5) description of place as being something that humans create, frequent or infrequent, even in our imagined worlds.

Sack proposed that places were "thick" or "thin" places (2003, p249). The findings of this study show that the Temple is at the same time a "thick" place, that is a cohesive setting where people come together for a shared purpose such as dharma preachings, and a "thin" place, which is spatially fragmented, and where people are relatively loosely interconnected.

Whether in person or online, the Temple is associated with the beautiful buildings, the relationships among and between monks and devotees and messages from the Guru.

The temple grounds are also the site of social activities described by devotees, such as blood donations, working bee programs, youth programs and so on. These could be seen as thin places, with people engaging in these activities being only loosely interconnected. Another example of a thin place could be the place created online by monks using technology to preach to those beyond the immediate reach of the Temple; the monks and devotees are only loosely connected and those involved are certainly spatially fragmented. However, in considering "thick" places, Tomaney (2007) brings out factors such as local rootedness, familiarity, security, and identity.

Thus, it is difficult to sustain the argument that these are not also thick places, created by the practices of the devotees and the monks. However, considering them all as thick places would overlook the sense that devotees and monks have that these places are inherently different, because of the practices that take place there. Thus, it is proposed that a different categorisation of place is more appropriate in the context of this study, that of permanent, routine and temporary place.

Permanent place can be used to refer to the temple building and infrastructure, including the Temple website, where people gather together for spiritual purposes, where the monks and devotees have defined practices and where monks share the Dharma with devotees, through the messages and interpretations of the Guru.

Routine places are those that are brought into being on a regular basis, whether physically through activities such as the working bees or blood donation programs, or even online, through specially agreed discussion programs or forums. People gather at these places and share information physically or virtually that is not even connected to the spiritual purpose of the temple. Therefore, the findings show that the social

interactions taking place in these routine places are prompted by several purposes, and at one level can be seen to be fragmented.

The third category of place is the temporary place; this category can be seen to mirror the permanent place. Here, the temple is created for a day or even for one or two hours in a place, such as someone's home or a community hall, which then reverts to its ongoing purpose. The use of statues and decorations conveys a sense of permanence by bringing in the familiar; perhaps representing in a way an infrastructure to the temple, in the same way that the space of flows requires an infrastructure. Temporary uses of urban space can be experimental and innovative; they can subvert the power of authority, especially planning authority, as people in a locality assert their power, using their needs, culture and aesthetics to create the atmosphere that successfully reflects their wishes (Henneberry 2017, p.6-8). In the case of the temple, which often creates temporary temple spaces in devotees' homes or community halls, they are clearly innovative, often implemented by an individual, although equally, supported by the organisation of the temple.

Yet, as Henneberry has pointed out (2017, pp. 249-250), it is the users of the spaces and the atmosphere they create that render a temporary space authentic and without the flows of information, the social practices and the symbols and culture of the temple as a spiritual organisation, the temporary places of the temple would not be possible. The temporary places created by devotees of the temple are clearly disruptive of the urban environment in which they briefly exist. Sack (2003) insists that place is something that humans create, and that is indeed the case with the temporary place.

Artefacts that are seen to represent the idea of the Temple – statues, decorations and other artefacts – are used to transform the home or community hall, to make it stand in

for the permanent place, where the information practices of that permanent place are bracketed by the practices of the secular world. The temporary exists because of the capacity of the human imagination to emphasise symbolic meanings over the reality of everyday life; it is brought into being with the placement of artefacts and ceases to exist when the artefacts are removed. The temple can be moved from one physical place to another, and still be the Temple, even if only for a few hours. The infrastructure is important as placing the infrastructure and mimicking the atmosphere and characteristics of the original place allow it to be replicated, in some sense.

Sometimes, places cannot be replicated. When the monks travel from place to place, the Temple is not diminished because it is socially constructed. Participants stated that changing places of events did not make any difference to their participation. However, it is worth noting there are many occasions people do not bother about any facilities at all in creating a temporary place. The concept of “Under a tree” or the” Empty house” was highlighted in several conversations where infrastructure was given zero value and importance to their spiritual life, following the instructions of the Buddha. Thus, although Gherardi (2001) emphasises the importance of the material in sustaining practices, for some participants in this study, the material was of no consequence in some of their practices.

Places global and local

The findings of this study demonstrate that the practices of the monks and the devotees associated with this Temple lead to a reconsideration of place and space, of the relationships between place, whether local or global, and information flows, of the spiritual and secular activities of the Guru and the monks and of the relationships of the devotees with the Temple and the monks.

The temple has many branches all over the world and small meeting places locally, which are coordinated in many ways in order to function as a one unit. Thus, it can be seen as a "networked organisation" in the way Castells described (2009). Its operations depend on contemporary ICTs which "open up unlimited horizons of creativity and communication inviting us to the exploration of new domains of experience" (Castells, 1989, p. 1) and they all are interconnected with purposeful, repetitive, programmable sequences of exchange and interaction between physically disjointed positions held by social actors (2010, p.412). As Moring and Lloyd (2013) argue, particular social practices are produced through social interactions within a specific setting and it is possible to identify social conditions that fundamentally shape this setting.

Monks and devotees are both aware and not aware of the networked organisation of which they are a part and of the role that ICTs play in creating the setting for the Temple. The very way the temple is referred to, *Asapuwa*, suggests a traditional rural retreat and withdrawal from society. Some of the older devotees openly state that they have no interest in the use of computers in this spiritual context, preferring the physical action of attending programs in person. Yet, there is an insistence on the youthfulness of the monks, their professional backgrounds and their ability to exploit information technologies.

This technology-focussed network and the information that flows through it is very much like Castells' networked society. Castells claimed that networked societies have no boundaries and thus can be global (2010, p. 2737). The findings of this study support this claim; the temple clearly has no geographical boundaries and can be seen as a global organisation too. MA Temple is an organisation focusing on Theravada Buddhist culture in different countries. The starting point for the study was that the MA Temple operates globally with 40 branches in different countries, and it has been experiencing

global information practices regarding production and consumption of cultural capital which are very similar to the operations of multinational conglomerates. All these global branches are in numerous countries and connected to each other electronically through ICTs, the same as a global corporation, giving them the capacity to operate in multiple sites simultaneously. Using the technology and doing business across borders is important to understand networks. However, from the social sciences perspective, networks are much more complex.

The findings show that Castells' argument that place is unimportant in a network does not hold. Physical place is especially important to the devotees and the monks as the research data clearly explains the reason why the MA Temple has been so successful as it is the connected organisation with devotees and monks linked both through the space of flows and the space of places, in Castells' terms. From Castells' perspective, this would be a networked organisation whereas from Fisher's perspective, this is a place of casual encounter and everyday experiences. This study of the MA Temple shows that it is a place that brings together various information that not only connects parts of the organisations and links people virtually, but also is the focus of the daily experience of global and local communities. The two co-exist.

The Temple is not only a global organisation itself; it is set in the midst of a global movement of people. Globalisation and transnational migration have given a new meaning to urban places. According to Castells (1996), different flows come together creating global networks and these developments have bypassed the space of places. The Temple is a product of this transnational migration, and it has become a gathering place for people of many kinds. The findings show that one of the purposes that devotees have for engagement with the Temple and its community is to maintain their identity as Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhists and to develop an understanding of this

identity in their children. This is an acknowledgement that as people enact their identities, they

> *"give the material world certain meanings, distribute social goods in a certain way, make certain sorts of meaningful connections in our experience, and privilege certain symbols systems and ways of knowing over others" (Gee, 2011, p. 13).*

A simple example shows this in operation, pointing out one of the differences between monks and devotees. Devotees called the branches of the Temple "*Asapuwa*", and they are seen to be meeting points. However, most of the time monks called the temple "*Mahamevnawa*", the Sinhalese name for the first monastery established in Sri Lanks and meaning Great Cloud Monastery, and a word which is common to many places as an organisation. In other words, for monks, it is not just a temple but also a place of an organisation called "*Mahamevnawa*".

This distinction is reminiscent of Castells' idea that elites will have wider ranging, even cosmopolitan, concerns and the ordinary people are concerned with the local (Castells 1996, p. 415). This adds complexity to the MA Temple as a part of a diasporic community. Sassen refers to the "reterritorialization of local subcultures" as well as the "formation of transnational identities and communities" in discussing processes of economic globalisation (Sassen, 2006, p. 75). This is relevant as a discussion of the ways that place is conceptualised through the practices of the monks and the devotees. The MA Temple is a globalised organisation, with the monks as employees. Sassen argues that globalised organisations give rise to a kind of "new geographies" with importance given to "centrality" and to "marginality" (Sassen, 2006, p. 45).

Globalisation also stimulates regionalisation (Taylor, 2003). According to Spink (2011), it is also noted that notion of place sometimes progresses as an opening for a globalised community. On the other hand, the strength of the local acts as a brake on globalisation and may mean that the local is not capable of integrating into a globalised world. The MA Temple community is clearly made up of both of these communities. The Temple functions for the diasporic community who would love to connect to the motherland and its cultural heritage while at the same time they are living overseas as they have left this motherland to look for a different life in Australia. For some participants, this possibility of connecting with cultural heritage goes beyond engagement with the Temple as they participate in activities in other temples as well. Antonsich (2011) explains this by noting that the distinction between thick and thin places is fuzzy. However, from an information practices perspective, it is clear that participants operate hand in hand in these two worlds at any given time.

A diasporic society can be considered liberated from the constraints of their previous lives at the same time as they must strive to re-establish themselves in an unfamiliar setting. These conceptions of place can be seen as being thick and thin at the same time. Members of a diaspora, like the devotees, value the local rootedness as well as the global diverse nature of their lives. They have freedom to anchor themselves and to unlink at any time. Fisher (2006) argues that the physical place of experience is important because it is involved in the process of building trust. While some devotees indicate that they value face to face meetings, others emphasise that digital technologies enable them to have experiences they cannot have face to face. Many participants stated that the Temple is helping them to build trust among the Sri Lankan community, as it is the place to connect and be part of the Sri Lankan community. It is also easier to build trust with those who share the same cultural habits and beliefs.

People today are more spatially fragmented as well as interconnected due to technology. Social groups are more flexible and bounded by different locations for many reasons. Thick places are about integration into the local world and thin places about integration into the global world (Sack, 1980). However, this study shows that integration into a global network can lead to strong, multi-layered attachments and thus to the creation of thick place, a place where people find themselves part of a cultural community, where they find enjoyment and, importantly in the Buddhist tradition, where their practices can lead to good karma.

Thus, in terms of the globalisation of the diaspora, the Temple as place still matters but it is no longer bounded by a spatial proximity as the MA Temple is as an organisation reaching beyond the geographical scale.

The Practices of the Workplace

The Temple is a globalised workplace and thus some practices in the workplace are information practices relevant to this study. Gherardi (2012, p. 2) advises that practice theory offers researchers the ability to observe and analyse the "fine details of how people use the resources available to them to accomplish intelligent actions, and how they give those actions sense and meaning". The findings of this study shed light on the work practices of the monks and on the business of the Temple.

These work practices allow the possibility of moving beyond Castell's notion of the "network society". Although for Castells (2010) the "network society´ is a global society and networking is a process, the network society cannot fully represent a workplace because it "has no boundaries" (2010, p. 2737) and because the nodes can connect and disconnect different places at any given time. Even though the monks are

not constantly linked within the organisation, and when they do connect online, it may be to different places depending on their purpose, a network is not just one 'place' but is recognised as being simultaneously one place.

Also, from the perspective that the Temple is a workplace, Sassen's emphasis (2006) on the significance of local sites of production, where members have specialist knowledge and expertise, over electronic spaces, is particularly relevant. Without the expertise of the monks and the specific knowledge and skills of the Guru, the electronic spaces of the network would lose their importance. Through the findings of this study, we can see the branches of the Temple as local sites of production and consumption of various expertise that, in Sassen's terms, are integrated within the global economy through transnationalised production circuits.

There are many more factors that help to glue these local and global places together, other than technology. Sassen refers to the "unforeseen and unplanned mixes of information, expertise and talent, which can produce a higher order of information" (Sassen, 2001a, p. 56). It is difficult to see the mixes of information, expertise and talent in the Temple as "unforeseen" or "unplanned". The practices within the Temple have had the effect of increasing collaboration and sharing talents, skills, and knowledge; from the perspective of the Temple as a workplace, this happens among the monks, but it is also clear that it happens among the devotees also. The knowledge and skills of the Guru and of the monks have enabled the Temple's business as a producer of knowledge which is disseminated in many ways, including being sold as books or in other recorded forms, to thrive. This business is made possible by information and communication technologies and in the workplace, it is these technologies that are important tools for the Temple's operations.

From an information practices perspective, Lloyd (2011, p. 285) has also emphasised the importance of information-related activities and skills, that are constituted, justified and organised through the arrangements of a social site. This practice-oriented study has shown that skills, expertise, talents, professional experience, spiritual knowledge, and creative knowledge are all significant factors enabling and supporting the development of social fabric. Most people who attend the temple are educated professionals and they are comfortable in in speaking English and have been educated in English though they may speak another language at home. However, in terms of the context of knowledge, the temple information practices have different aspects to them, which may be expressed in different languages. The study identifies the importance of the spiritual knowledge which is at the heart of the Temple as a place of worship and as an organisation.

The practices of the Temple as an organisation

The practices of the monks and devotees clearly show that the MA Temple is an organisation which operates locally and globally, with its branches and meeting points. These bring a level of complexity not often found in established organisations, because although its presence is permanent in its branches, its temporary meeting places operate rather like the "pop-up" premises found in the retail and restaurant sectors.

The study has shown that the MA Temple has integrated globally through trans-nationalised production as well as dissemination circuits that extend to include people and places not directly involved in the social practices of the Temple. Local meeting points are not directly connected to the head office of the temple, which is in Polgahawela in Sri Lanka, but to the local branches. In business terms, these are small production and consumption sites. The dissemination of cultural production occurs across various branches and places within and outside Sri Lanka across the globe

through programs, publishing, and distribution of online materials, books and community activities are done in every branch. The Temple, with its different production sites can be considered similar to global companies that have branches all over the world and act as a single entity, a by-product of globalisation. The Temple is interesting because it is not only a cultural organisation, but as it uses information technologies to disseminate its production; it is clearly a high-tech organisation.

The Temple is constantly in operation, not only because it functions in different time zones around the world, but also because it exists through the Internet. Through the practices of the people involved in it, the monks and devotees, the Temple creates and disseminates various forms of capital. Information flows across the localities and across national borders; money also flows from place to place, potentially facilitating cross-border investment. Castells (2010) states the importance of information being delivered in a timely manner ("timeless time") to generate wealth in the capital markets (economic capital). The book publishing and other commercial aspects of the Temple's work clearly generate economic capital. And, based as this production is on information flows, it can be seen to generate information capital, a resource fundamental to all of the practices of monks and devotees. These forms of capital would be expected in an organisation of the twenty-first century.

This study has shown that the practices of monks and devotees actually create four types of capital. The third is cultural capital, as outlined above. Monks and devotees are part of the Sri Lankan diaspora, and the various activities supported by the Temple facilitate the maintenance of that Sri Lankan culture for adults and help the children of devotees to develop an appreciation of the culture of their parents. The fourth kind of capital is a form of spiritual capital, karmic capital. The findings show how the social practices of monks and devotes as they seek to attain supreme happiness, through

Nirvana, have karmic capital as their outcome. These practices are also focussed around intangible characteristics of the place such as silence, tranquillity, purpose and meditation, collecting good karma for future lives, heavenly bliss and so on. For Buddhists, spirituality is a form of knowledge, different from academic knowledge but a part of the Sri Lankan Theravada culture and something that belongs to mysticism in the world.

The Temple is clearly constituted as an organisation through its practices. At one level, it can be seen as a kind of small business, serving local customers. Following this analogy, the representatives of the Temple in each location act as the retailers to the customers (in these case devotees) and local temples act as the distributers of the cultural capital of this temple and the routine and temporary meeting places are set up to manage the information flows.

The power of language should be mentioned here, as essential in the cultural production of the Temple. A skill of the Guru is the presentation of the teachings of the Buddha in the Sinhalese vernacular, rather than in the traditional temple languages of Pali and Sanskrit. Similarly, the monks are all fluent in the local languages where the temple branches exist, so that they are able to enhance the power of the spiritual through using language that matches the everyday experiences of people in a given place. Thus, the Temple is a site where the practices of devotees and monks lead to the creation of cultural capital. Devotees and monks are members of the Sri Lankan diaspora, and in the context of the Temple, they are able to practice their shared culture and devotees can give their locally born children some experience of their own cultural heritage.

Organisations have governance practices. The governance style of the temple shapes it social processes. While it might be considered that the governance style of the Temple

is similar to the organisation of a network, the findings of this study show that Castells' claim that power resides in the network itself rather than in one place is not altogether supported. The temple is an organisation, and it is a place of governance and power. But it is also a cultural network, consisting of nodes that link and connect with one another using electronic networks. These are the local and overseas branches. The traditional forms of religious authority have been reinvented for network society. Thus at one level, there is no command centre as such but several coordination places and several production sites.

On the other hand, if we consider information flows, the practices identify a hierarchy of governance and power within the temple. The Guru, who is the head of the Temple in hierarchical terms, acts as "networked power" which is the power of connected social actors (Castells, 2011) from this perspective. There is a leader in every branch temple who needs to get advice from the headquarters and to resolve any conflicts in his own branch. Monks cannot take their own decisions but must consult the head monk at each branch they have been assigned to and follow orders and gain approvals, as set out in the governance model. There are three types of committees to get approvals from. These are based in head office and meetings are held monthly, every third and sixth month and annually depending on the committee. Yet, it is also the case that local branches have a level of autonomy. To this extent, the Temple can be seen as any other globalised organisation, as considered by Sassen (2006, p. 45).

As an organisation, then, the Temple is decentralised yet has coordinated spaces. Castells argued (2000) that that each "node" of the network should contribute to the network, possibly through specialisations. Certainly, some of these nodes are more important than others as they contain extra skills, expertise, knowledge, or information.

In the Temple organisation, this is apparent as the specialisation works through the skills and talents of the monks and devotees.

Sassen (2001) proposed that, in a globalised organisation, all its employees have the skills to work in such an organisation and they have the technology to share their particular knowledge with each other. Sassen (2008) also notes that organisations which are successful in making money attract people with the skills to continue that success. While it is unlikely that the monks are attracted by the money-making capacity of the Temple, it is certainly the case that they recognise its success in drawing devotees and acknowledge its reputation. The findings of this study show that the monks are not only trained in the knowledge and practices of Buddhism, they are all highly educated in a secular professional sense, able to communicate well in English as well as in Sinhalese, and they are very competent in the use of information technologies and social media.

From a somewhat different perspective, Castells states that for the nodes in a network to survive, there should be some sort of contribution to the network and that those who do not or cannot contribute to the wider network will be excluded. There is no evidence of exclusion in this study, apart from the obvious one that there are individuals and groups who are excluded from membership, based on spiritual beliefs or ideology. The devotees are central to the practices of the organisation. Without them, there is no focus for the information flows and production of the Temple, and the everyday practices, for example of working bees and blood donations, would not happen.

The MA Temple is a technologically enabled organisation. This means that it works differently from organisations that have evolved from using traditional forms of communication and where central authority was maintained by the written word and local delegation. The organisation has numerous branches and meeting points all over

the world; as noted above, at one level, authority to make decisions is delegated from Head Office to those at the local level. Conceptualised from the technological perspective, individual monks and branches of the Temple are connected, acting as nodes of the "networking power" in the network (Castells 2011) which operate both in the space of places and in the space of flows. This networking power allows the monks to extend the sphere of influence of the Temple, as the technology allows them to not only communicate with people where there are no branches of the Temple, but also to increase the number of devotees, through a range of programs in places where there are branches. Through these practices of governance, the Temple has become a powerful organisation, through the number of devotees, through its global presence and through its strongly coordinated spiritual message.

The Temple as an organisation also generates power through its success as a commercial enterprise. This financial power is evident in the opulence of some of the Temple buildings. The Temple's publishing business would appear to bring in significant profits. Although this study was not concerned with the financial transactions of the Temple, it is also clear in the findings that it has the power to attract significant donations, enhancing its financial power. Thus, the Temple can be seen as innovative from Castells' perspective because of its 'profit margins' and capitalist mode of production. Yet its innovations are perhaps more clearly seen through the increase in the number of devotees. The Temple is creative in its use of social media, so that technological tools and social media platforms are supporting and shaping the flows of the power in same way as the companies can harness the power of the crowd by using social media to get people to participate in the activities of the organisation.

The site of this study is a Temple, and thus power is to be found in spirituality. Power is to be found in many symbolic representations, such as Sangha, Dharma and Buddha,

demonstrated through the use of phrases such as ‘the power of Buddha’. The teachings of the Buddha hold power in the real world, as they may be used to inform decisions taken in the Temple. From a devotee’s point of view, the temple power relations are made up of, exist around and derive from, spiritual authority rather than the hierarchical authority of the organisation. The spiritual profile of the Guru and the leadership he exercises through it are phenomena that cannot be replicated.

At one level, there is a parallel with Sassen’s argument about the importance of charisma in leadership, as well as skills, expertise and talent; it is the Guru who is the face and the voice of the Temple as an organisation, the ultimate head of their TV, Facebook and mass communication networks. While it is clear that the Guru is the source of spiritual authority, the skills and talents, and therefore the power, of the monks in communication and in the particular program areas of the Temple cannot be overlooked. This power is distributed across the globalised organisation and is experienced by the devotees and by other monks in the space of places.

According to the Castells (2011) power is constructed around empowered actors. As noted above, power is found in spirituality, and this in turn is the basis for the power of self-empowerment for devotees and monks throughout the world. This personal level of power, expressed by both monks and devotees leads to a form of collective power, which in turn gives the Temple, through its members, a different kind of symbolic power in local communities.

Insights from a Practice Theoretical Approach

The use of a practice theoretical approach has facilitated an interpretation of the complexity of the MA Temple. It has also shed new light on the key concepts of place

and the space of flows, as proposed by Castells, thus extending the practice theoretical approach.

This study has confirmed much of what is already accepted in the practice theoretical approach. From Gherardi's (2008, p. 517) perspective the focal point of a practice approach is being "capable of participating … in the complex web of relationships among people material artifacts and activities". This study has shown how monks and devotees interact and form that complex web of relationships, both locally and globally, face to face and through information technologies. It has shown the importance of the material in supporting the practices of the temple. Examples include the statues and other artefacts that help to create temporary places, and the Internet, which sustains the ongoing links of the globalised temple. From the perspective of the monks, and for some devotees the Temple is a place for gaining intrinsic rewards such as career development; it is also a place with a strong focus on raising funds, which is clearly a material preoccupation. At one level, the monks and devotees encourage creativity (innovation), wealth and power, in the same way that Castells considers points of connection in the global architecture of networks to attract wealth, power, culture, innovation, and people (Castells 1996, p. 412) and develop an economy based on information capitalism. The activities of the Temple are shown to be many and varied, from the social programs that devotees engage in, to spiritual practices of the monks and the money-making activities of the Temple as a commercial enterprise.

Taking a different approach to a practice theoretical approach, Olsson & Lloyd (2017), who suggest that the ways of knowing people use in their information practices can vary depending on individual and social settings, introduce the importance of embodiment and embodied knowledge. Lloyd's (2009) work with firefighters, ambulance officers and nurses has stressed the importance of corporeal sense-making, and this is supported

by Schatzki's view that maintaining practice requires activity and skill development and a shared understanding of the know-how (Schatzki 2002, p. 3).

This study reveals another form of practice, leading to knowledge, sometimes hidden through its solitary practice, but always 'difficult to see' because of its taken-for-granted nature. The site for this study is a Buddhist Temple, so at one level it is not surprising that spiritual practices were observed or discussed by devotes and monks. However, these spiritual practices cannot be encapsulated in the embodied actions of praying or chanting; rather they are bound up with a way of knowing and being in the world, so that taking part in a working bee or donating blood, activities that may gain merit, must be seen as spiritual practices based on culture.

Thus, to an extent, these spiritual practices are, as Savolainen notes (2008, p. 3), invisible. However, they are not invisible only because of their taken for granted nature, but because they are masked by other social activities, which in the secular world may have quite a different purpose. Further, the enacting of spiritual practices casts a different light on the material. On the one hand, it can be argued that the material is very important to the symbolic creation of the Temple in temporary places and thus to the support of some forms of spiritual practice. On the other hand, the vision of Buddhist practice is to let go of the material.

The importance of the material can perhaps be interpreted as being related to the cultural knowledge which devotees bring to all their social practices, so that the statues, recordings of chanting and so on are significant in the culture of the diaspora. It would seem that, for example, as soon as the statues and other decorations are in place in a temporary meeting room, that meeting room symbolically is transformed in a way that

the devotees understand and which has as a by-product, the effect of strengthening the relationships among and between them both culturally and spiritually.

A practice theoretical approach is based on observation and analysis, with the conceptual understanding that what people say and do, and an analysis of the context or site in which they act, are taken together to provide an interpretation of the collectively of their knowledge and practices. The findings of this study of the practices of devotees and monks in a Buddhist temple, based in Sydney, NSW, reminds us of the importance of considering what is hidden. A superficial observation might only see people giving blood and talking to others as they do so, or cleaning and repairing buildings and making friends in the process. These are significant social practices, where information is shared and the sense of working as a group is consolidated, but to stop there would be to ignore the spiritual practices which are an integral part of these activities.

Rethinking power

Castells is concerned with various forms of power which he sees as inherent in the workings of the space of flows. The power relationships he is concerned with are within the context of materialism (Castells, 2011, pp. 773-783). As an organisation, the Temple has links to all these kinds of power. The temple is a network organisation, and its power is distributed across the globalised organisation. The temple community is interconnected, through the different activities in which people take part as they are members of overlapping informational and institutional networks causing the devotees and monks to experience power relationships through multi-layered social relationships. The activities in which they take part are also interconnected with the space of places as well as space of flows. It acts as the overarching conceptual framework that affects every social practice in the temple.

As a network organisation, the Temple is very powerful, showing evidence of Castells' three types of power in a network. The temple has overlapping informational networks with other organisations (Networking Power), it has its own protocols (Network Power), it is involved with finance companies (Networked Power), and uses various multimedia, software programs, computers and technology to consolidate its networking (Network Making Power). From this perspective, Castells casts power relationships within the context of materialism (2011, pp. 773-783). These forms of power are clearly evident in the Temple.

However, to assume that this is the only form of power within the Temple is to deny the complexity of the Temple and its paradoxical nature. The Temple and its practices are also based on the power that derives from the spiritual experiences of the monks and devotees and the status attained in the effort to achieve *Nirvana*; thus, the power of a kind of self-empowerment cannot be discounted. The power of spirituality is something intangible, nonnumerical and non-secular. These information practices through which it is expressed are hidden by the practices of the secular world. These are part of everyday life and give meaning to the reality of the way the monks and devotees live everyday life. Therefore, people's actions in accord with their interests in spiritual and mystical realms cannot be avoided. In other words, these practices are hidden in the material world and embodied. This kind of power is to be found in many symbolic representations during the interviews, demonstrated by the use of phrases such as 'the power of Buddha', *Nirvana*, Supreme Bliss, Heavenly comfort, karma and so on. This form of power influences all the social practices and is found both in the space of places and space of flows.

Thus, this form of power, to a large extent, dominates and controls the power of materialism. In spite of Castells' emphasis that the space of flows, that is, networks and

networking, dominates the space of places (that is, geographic space) and shapes the practices that occur there, according to the findings of this study, not only does this spiritual power dominate experience or social practice, but that "experience" in the space of places can be stronger than the power of the workings of the space of flows. The findings of this study indicate that there are many occasions that exercises of power are found in localised experience. For example, the creation of the "pop-up" Temples in suburban areas can be seen as an exercise of power against the planning restrictions in the local government area. These local exercises of power draw on the knowledge, skills, talents, expertise, or professional experience of the monks and devotees in that place, supporting Sassen's claim of the importance of personal skills, expertise and talent in a globalised informational network.

Another form of power arises from communication and the use of language. An innovation in this Temple is in the use of language, through the use of the vernacular and also through the monks' chanting method, translated to Sinhalese. The use of language and communication are important in the power of the identity. Whereas Castells (2010) considers language from a European perspective, noting that it can be used to mark national boundaries, here the use of Sinhalese, instead of Pali or Sanskrit, marks the identity of monks and devotees of this Temple. This use of language, thus, both sets boundaries for the local and opens up to the global. It exerts power over the devotees. They become local as they are connected to the local pop-up places, and they become global at the same time as they are also connected to the various informational networks globally within the global organisation.

For the monks, language may exert power in a different way: they are exposed to the global identity of the Temple and their own place in it through various mediums of communication, including their travel, but at the same time, they must maintain the

local language of the Temple, Sinhalese, as well as the local language of the community in which they live, whether that be English, German or something else. Sassen would argue that these shifts between the local and the global create new geographies of "centrality" as well as "marginality" and create and shape local trans-nationalised networks between global sites (Sassen 2006, p. 45).

However, the findings of this study would suggest that this kind of mobility and migration also creates multiple identities and affiliations (Roy, 2011) that co-exist, being neither central nor peripheral. Therefore, people feel more attached to their places. In terms of the temple, this has affected their social practices by shaping their identity, diversity, openness, boundness, connectivity and networking.

Harvey (2003) also states that this is something that is heavily endowed with social meaning. The temple is an example of being ubiquitous and opening up to the networks of various interests and cultures. This has broken the old power apparatus style of religious organisations, at least in Western cultures, where a traditional bureaucratic form existed. The temple blends with other networks such as media, political, informational, cultural, economic and financial among others, and has transformed itself into a network state (Castells, 2000, p. 19).

Rethinking the space of places and the space of flows

Castells argued that in contemporary society, the space of flows would dominate the space of places, although he came to modify this position. This study has shown that through the practices of devotees and monks, in the Temple, a tension exists between the space of places and the space of flows. The space of flows is clearly important in the practices of the Temple. Consideration of its operations and its governance structure indicate that it does allow the "exchange of information, capital, and power that

structures the basic processes of societies, economies and states between different localities, regardless of localization" (Castells, 1996, p. 136), and without the use of information technologies and the Internet, many of these practices could not take place. However, the space of flows cannot be considered the preeminent source of power, as Castells indicated (2010). The space of place and the practices and experiences of devotees and monks emerging in physical places are equally important.

Moon (2019) considers this tension from the perspective of governance and health. He argues there are complex interactions of multiple types of power needed for a better understanding of global governance. In his terms, the temple community is scattered and connected to the various branches as well as meeting points. therefore, the temple functions not only between the power geometries of governance of global communities but also the power geometries of empowerments of local communities. Furthermore, power can be seen in many places, networks, nodes, actors in local as well as global landscapes.

As noted above, according to Sassen (2006 p. 45) globalisation is constituted of new geographies of centrality and "marginality". In terms of the geography of the operation, the temple is a global religious organisation. From Sassen's point of view, power can be exercised either locally or in the global landscape. According to Castells' network theory, power would be decentralised. However, the empirical data from this study shows that power is both centralised and decentralised: centralised in local meeting points but decentralised in branches throughout the world. In other words, power in the Temple operates more as Sassen argues, than as Castells proposes.

Therefore, in considering Castell's theory, it is also clear that while both technological advancements, in terms of social media, and the modes of production which lead to

various forms of capital including economic capital have tangible effects, there are also more intangible aspects to the networks that operate in this study. In support of this finding, Anttiroiko (2015) stated that the concept of the network has allowed Castells to maintain an explanatory scheme that appeared to work well with the macro theoretical analysis in the global informational areas but that is destructive when detailed analyses of social reality were clearly needed. Even though the digital networks have facilitated the flow of the power to a large extent, the space of places remains the key decision-making locations.

The practice theoretical approach allows a nuanced understanding of the tensions between the concepts, which do not, as Anttiroiko does, argue for a weakening of one concept to strengthen the other. Instead, the tension exists to support the existence of each concept. Taking infrastructure as an example: according to Castells (2001), there are two aspects of infrastructure, one related to geographic place and one related to digital space. This study shows the importance of infrastructure in geographical space through the creation of temporary places; and the importance of the internet and social media in making digital spaces possible. However, this study does not show that sense of clear boundaries existing in geographical space that Castells indicates is fundamental to the space of places. Rather, there is continuity in geographic space, through the routine and temporary spaces, and there is discontinuity of a kind in digital spaces, when the practices of the monks and devotees are confined to specific times.

Place is more than geographic place in this study, and Sack's conceptualisation of thick and thin places (2003) was useful in interpreting the findings. Above, it is noted that place is ambiguous, attributed many different meanings. It could be something imaginary, a place in people's mind, or a building, a virtual place created by technology, and so on; it is multidimensional and socially defined (Rolshoven. 2008).

The study also showed that as well has having significance for connectivity, place was important for isolation. Social isolation here, does not mean the social exclusion for which Castells blames information technology. Here, social isolation is embedded in cultural capital, and is concerned with arriving at a spiritual place, "*nibbana*" or *Nirvana*. This concept is completely different from isolation in Castells' notions of switched on and switched off community which arise as a consequence of information capital or Sassen's urban glamour zone and the 'war zone' where growing numbers of disadvantaged people are clustered. In a nutshell, isolation in the practices of devotees and monks is not about social inequalities, but about spiritual attainment.

This study was concerned with information practices in these places, leading it to explore knowledge flows in traditional placed based places and globalised flows of information, seen by Castells to work in different and contradictory ways.

The concept of information grounds (Fisher 2005), spaces where people come together and incidentally share information, was found not to be robust enough for this study of practices in the MA Temple, and Fisher's operationalisation of it limits it to a small fraction of the geographic space in which devotees and monks interact. Thus, its concern with the lifecycle of information grounds, how they are sustained and how they are socially constructed among different actors and perceptions is not appropriate for understanding the practices of these people. Nonetheless, conceptually, information grounds were useful to the study because they provided the focus for data collection from the devotees. They allowed word about the study to be circulated, amplifying the messages posted on noticeboards, and they gave the opportunity for interviews to take place within the accepted practices of the Temple.

Therefore, this study led to a re-thinking of the relationship between the space of places and the space of flows. These cannot be considered separate entities. Even though Castells' conceptualisation helped to address and clarify the network logic within a wider conceptual framework, facilitating the understanding of trends of global transformations and positioning the network technology as the main factor in social change, the effects of this technologically determinist position have become less relevant over time as the movements of information are shown not only to occur in telecommunication networks but also in physical places and to be prompted by factors other than the technology itself (Anttiroiko, 2015). Castells' notion of the space of flows over-reached itself, as not everything happens due to space of flows nor is everything in the space of flows some kind of technological apparatus.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the flows of information are complex, being individual, social and organisational. Information may pass from a single individual to many others for various reasons through various means. It may flow through organisational channels to many people or to a single devotee or monk. Information flows happen face to face, and online, synchronously, and asynchronously. As noted above, information flows from the mundane activities of monks and devotees; information also flows as the monks and devotees fulfil the spiritual purpose of the Temple. A third, and potentially surprising, flow of information and information artefacts arises from the commercial activities of the Temple, where books and audio and video recordings concerned with the spiritual message of the Guru are despatched physically and electronically in significant numbers.

Therefore, digitisation and socio-digital formation could be seen to have created new dimensions of information behaviours; however the social nature of information practices makes this concept superior to information behaviours as it is triggered by the

motives of the individuals not just only for everyday problem solving (Savolainen 2008, pp. 2-3). These practices are also "instances and dimensions of our participation in the social world in diverse roles in diverse communities" (Talja & Hansen 2006, p.125) and exist bodily, socially and historically (Lloyd 2007, pp. 188-193).

The practices from some of these spaces of place will end up in networks and some networks will end up in the space of places, giving a complex web of relationships. In a nutshell, the space of flows creates space of places and space of places creates space of flows. Information flows in different directions through formal and informal means. It passes from one individual to a social group and vice versa. The flows can be individualistic but collective as well. They are practical but can also be spiritual. Often the distinction is in the mind of the individual; yet the making of this distinction is a practice found across the participants in this study. And thus, the study of information practices could bring new insights into studies of what place means.

Rethinking the creation of capitals

The capitals of the temple represent the outcomes of people's activities in the temple. According to Bourdieu (1986), sociological work needs words to specify the nature and peculiarities of the infinite varieties and local combination of capitals and social worlds. For him, uses and effects of capitals must be understood in the peculiar space of fields as every priceless thing has its own value. So, every kind of capital that the temple creates has its own immaterialist aspect.

Bourdieu's theory is important to understand immaterialism. However, his cultural capital needs unpacking. The temple creates various capitals and cultural capital is at the centre. Cultural capital is found in "being a Sri Lankan Buddhist", meditation, chanting, collecting good karma as well as in the institutionalised forms of celebrations and

events. Symbolic capital, as Bourdieu explains, arises from other capitals; in the case of the Triple gem – Buddha, Dharma and Sangha – for example, it is clear that this can only be understood through cultural capital, as is the case with intangibles such as grace, social experiences, respect, reputation. Economic capital arises from turning cultural capital into objects such as scripts, books, buildings. Social capital is created through shared interactions that lead to friendships symbolic capital () and human capital, which is found in the local and globalised elites of monks and devotees, also emerges from the specialist knowledges of shared cultural capital. Neveu (2018) gives a provisional definition of capital that I think it is useful to reiterate here:

> *"a collection of goods and skills, of knowledge and acknowledgements, belonging to an individual or a group that he or she can mobilize to develop influence, gain power, or bargain other elements of this collection".*

According to him, there are four corollaries: capital must have value or power, but how that power or value increases depends on the context. As Bourdieu stated, capital can be converted into other capitals. And, importantly, "A sociology of capitals must question the work needed for their appropriation or embodiment". In other words, from a sociological perspective, it is important to consider how a capital is "performed".

The diasporic community comes to temple to teach their children their culture, they make friendships with others leading them to create social capital. They find jobs through these connections, make donations to the temple, and sell books and CDs, all of which, directly create economic capital. Some people work voluntarily and give their expertise to the temple whereas others learn their expertise through those who give their expertise, as well as through the monks and this makes human capital in the temple. Celebrations, events, Dharma programs that teach devotees about their cultural beliefs,

and the practice and maintenance of traditions will generate cultural capital. In this way, the temple creates various objects with monetary value, including scripture books, alms, CDs, magazines, statues and buildings. The temple also deals in skills of various kinds such as translation skills, chanting, meditations, ability to use ICTs, ability to live across cultures. The temple also has its own knowledge evident in the training to be a monk, and in Sri Lankan Buddhist culture for example, those who possess high levels of knowledge with titles such as enlightened one (*Arahant*) or Guru; it also acknowledges the importance of knowledge from the secular world: graduate education, professional knowledge,

All these are ways of facilitating influence or power within the temple. As set out above, the cultural capital of the temple gives more power within the community, as it attracts more devotees from the diaspora; the economic capital of the temple makes it powerful in several ways: and its success helps to turn economic capital into social capital as attendance at the temple becomes a way to create a sense of community among devotees and it also allows the Temple acts as an equalising force in the community.

In addition to this, there are various conversations that supports devotees and monks' intentions of working and helping one another. Some of these reasons relate to getting rid of desires for the material. This comes with the cultural beliefs that attachment to materialistic things is an obstacle to enlightenment. Devotees spoke of the need to "let go", to serve the monks, to offer alms and to carry out activities which are meritorious deeds.

All these activities are important for devotees concerned about merit for the next life. Through cultural capital, economic capital and social capital, the temple creates a

reputation (symbolic capital) for providing opportunities for devotees to create good karma through accruing merit. Cultural capital has various characteristics. Firstly, this can be objectified in the form of CDs, books, scriptures, statues and decorations, buildings and grounds. Secondly, it can also be institutionalised – which is connected to forms of celebrations, events and programs. Thirdly, it is symbolised – Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, Asapuwa. These are characteristics of Bourdieu's cultural capital.

The multi-faceted nature of each of the capitals caused a rethink about the existence of new capitals that combine symbolic and cultural characteristics of the capitals, among others, and derives from within them. The indicators of such a capital would give emphasis and more attention to mind and its emotional dimension. The power of this capital depends on how well your mind can reject the desire for material benefits or how well prepared it is to attract the divine grace or face inertia. This kind of capital gives more weight to people's imagination. The elements of this capital would have to include silence, tranquillity, peace, quietness, calm abiding, awareness, consciousness, *samadhi* (unification of mind), recognition.

There is ample evidence of capitals emerging from people's practices, and evidence that people deliberately undertake activities in order to accrue forms of capital. The combination of symbolic and cultural characteristics can be seen through this study to give rise to a new form of capital. On the one hand, it emerges as a kind of hybrid, but it is more than a form of symbolic capital. Its concern with actions that have a future consequence, that cannot be known at the time, mark it out as something different. This is the capital based on characteristics of karma, a capital that can give people a sense of security, and a sense of empowerment at the same time as they might renounce certain material aspects of life. The findings have shown that the practices of this temple are

based on people taking action to gain merit, in their words for “karma”, expecting good things either in this life or a next life.

This study has argued that a new form of capital has emerged in this study, and this has been labelled karmic capital by an insider. Karma is a concept foreign to Western culture. The question of whether an outsider would have reached the same interpretation is one without an assured answer, but one that has some implications for the relationship between practices and their outcomes. From this perspective, would the outcome of these practices have been seen as cultural capital? That is certainly possible, as explorations of practices that lead to cultural capital are found in studies of information practices (see for example Olsson, 2010, 2016). Yet, the link between the practices and the outcomes of cultural capital in these studies seem straightforward, unlike the situation in this study, where the practices and their outcomes shift and transform in complex ways, leading to entanglements with a variety of practical and symbolic meanings, dependent not on different practices, but on different perspectives from which to observe them.

Conclusion

The chapter provides insight into the findings and research questions by comparing and contrasting the findings back to the theories and findings of other information practicesstudies. In this chapter the researcher’s aim has been to address the temple as a social site of information practices and explore how the temple is constructed through information practices. It discusses the context of the place as a local and global site that is created through the information practices of the monks and devotees. The chapter also discussed the practice theoretical approach and its impact on allowing the research to consider power relations. The chapter continues with discussion of the multiple spaces of the temple, the context of the space of flows and space of places, emphasising the

contribution that the notion of place constructed through time, has made. It concludes with a lengthy discussion of the creation of capitals, exploring how karmic capital emerges, and how this kind of capital, which is both material and immaterial, existing in the present and the future, is not accounted for Bourdieu's set of capitals.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

This study has laid a solid foundation for broadening the current understanding of information practices and the development of capitals which are the outcome of these practices. In its focus on the information practices of devotees and monks from a Theravada Buddhist Temple with a branch in Sydney, it goes a step further in extending our understanding of the complexity and invisibility of these practices and showing the interactions between the Temple as an organisation; its practices in creating and communicating information; the people associated with the Temple and what they do at the Temple; their information practices; and the Temple as a site, covering physical place in its various manifestations, a virtual place and a place created in the mind. Networking emerges as a significant feature of the Temple as an organisation; an organisation that exists as a business as well as a place of spirituality. To fully understand the complex cultural practices observed in this study needs an insider; the researcher must have experienced the society under investigation. The researcher in this case is a member of the community. In this study, he has been able to bring his insider knowledge and experiences to influence his outsider status as a researcher, bringing his knowledge of the literature and of research tools and techniques to bear on his observations and on his own experiences.

This study has shown that information practices are invisible as Savolainen (2007) stated, and they are complex in nature and overlapping, as Gherardi (2008) argued. The research extends the ideas of site ontologies of information practices research by digging deep into its insights into people's lives and their activities using a combination of conceptual and analytical tools. This brings novelty to a practice theoretical approach by bringing concepts from different disciplinary backgrounds and using their lenses to

observe the practices studied. Further, this study has demonstrated how information practices manifest in a non-western and non-secular environment; contexts which have not been a focus of investigation in this way before. Although recently, several studies of people engaged in non-western non-secular activities have been undertaken, the findings of this study reflect a broad sociological approach, not found in those studies, bringing together the practice theoretical approach with concepts related to place, globalisation and the development of capitals.

The Study and its Contributions

The study has made a number of contributions to information research, and research in information practices in particular. Firstly, it is one of a small handful of studies to explore the relationships between people and information in the context of religious practices, especially non-western religious practices. The majority of the recent studies are concerned with information behaviour, in particular information use, and most appear to be relatively small-scale studies. The ethnographic approach used in this doctoral study facilitated the multi-faceted collection of data from a range of people engaged in various Temple activities. Thus, while some of the findings in this study align with those in other studies, the methodological approach means that the findings of this study are much more extensive and situated within the life of the Temple. The practice theoretical approach adopted here places information at the heart of what people do, emphasising the social aspects of processes and practices and leading to an understanding of how information, knowledge and know-how underpin social interaction.

Significantly, this study emphasises the importance of looking at information practices through a range of conceptual lenses. Information practices research was mainly limited

to social science perspectives concerned with social interaction. This study extends the scope of information practices research by looking through the lenses of significant scholars – Castells, Sassen, Bourdieu and Sack – and this has brought in insights from a broader sociological perspective, from communication, globalisation studies and social geography. The focus of this research is on the different conceptual foundations which facilitate micro and macro level analysis.

Running through the work of all of these scholars is the notion of place, which is fundamental to this study. In addition, for Bourdieu, Castells and Sassen, the concept of capital is important. Bourdieu is claimed as a practice theorist, and his emphasis on capital as the outcome of what people do is particularly important to this study. Bringing Castells' concept of the space of flows into information practices research has opened up useful avenues of investigation. In particular, it has reinforced the relationship between practices, capital and place. Castells placed his emphasis on the development of information capitalism through the space of flows; this starting point turned out to be a narrow and to lead to somewhat predictable interpretations but provided an opening for the deeper consideration of how capitals emerge. However, Castells' emphasis on complex networked organisations was invaluable to this study.

Sassen has addressed the global hubs and organisations where, she argued, information is created and shared between organisations which has branches all over the globe. Her work brought in the perspective of the globalised organisation and the importance of human capital in strengthening the links between local and globalised practices in an organisational environment.

Finally, the work of Sack, and his emphasis on place as a social construct is relevant to this study and very useful in extending the notion of site in the context of the practice

theoretical approach. Analysing the MA Temple as place has been complex as it operates in different spaces. Simultaneously, it is a thick as well as a thin place, which is constantly changing and which operates in various spaces. The temple in Sydney importantly is no longer bounded by spatial proximity. People are linked into the temple through different online communication methods but also place-based activities and programs. These complexities make Sack's work particularly important. His distinction between thick and thin places as noted above is challenged in this study and we also see how Castells's space of places becomes space of flows and space of flows become space of places, how the local and the global exist simultaneously, linked together by information practices that are interconnected in nature and intersubjective with different subjects and objects.

Secondly, information practices are based on what people do and the study has used this approach to shed light on the Sri Lankan diasporic community and their day-to-day information practices in the MA Temple, a setting that is non-secular and non-western in culture and beliefs. Practices are related to what the people do, however in information practices research, where concern is with the information and knowledge behind what people do, to this point studies have been largely limited to sense-making and embodiments. Therefore, this research opens up new avenues for information practices research with its focus on the development of capitals.

Starting from the conceptual underpinning that capital is created from the action and activities of ordinary people, this study has extended the scope of information practices research. This study has shown the complexity of capital and has underlined the importance of cultural knowledge, know-how and beliefs in understanding how capital can be conceptualised. The research findings unpack the concept of cultural capital, where Bourdieu's definition is abstract and nebulous and by bringing in the analytical

approach of Neveu (2018), the research has been able to demonstrate the development of various capitals within the temple community.

Thus, this research was not only concerned with the development of economic and social capital, but, one might say, repurposed the concept to apply it to the non-secular and non-western culture of the MA Temple. The emergence of karmic capital brings several innovations to information practices research, as it shows that two capitals are developed at the same time, one collective and one individual, one existing in contemporary time and one which will exist in the future. This mixed version of capital is a kind of capital that is not found within the current capital definitions. I have argued that it goes beyond the symbolic capital that Bourdieu and others identified as emerging from the other capitals and to some extent it is disguised within other capitals.

This research finds the MA Temple is built on "karmic capitalism" which is based on karma or merits. The research findings emphasise that taking a narrow Bourdieusian approach, karmic capital would be disguised in cultural and symbolic capital. It is something that depends enormously on cultural perceptions, and it does not hold the conventional power of economic capital or social ties. However, the fact that a resource gives power in society does apply to karmic capital too, as a person with good karmic capital is admired and respected in the temple community. Though power may not be the principal function of karmic capital, it would be disingenuous to discount it entirely. But, by the same token, karmic capital has an epistemological status that derives from these main sociological capitals: economic, cultural, and social capitals. This finding is very sophisticated in the context of information practices.

Global economic theories do not give much importance to the non-materialistic things that are valued by participants in this study, such as *pin* or *karma* (merits), *Nirvana*

(enlightenment), Samsara, Sakkaya Dhitti, and beyond this life. However, the research findings show how this form of capital has become core to the success of this global organisation and, and counterintuitively, to its raising of economic capital. The economic system of network organisations and its high level of economic abstraction is unable to grasp the underlying social and cultural values such as karma. Its complexity derives in part because it does have materialistic benefit in this life, bringing economic capital to the Temple, as well as bringing people to work together leading to social capital; it also leads to cultural capital, which may have material form, and symbolic capital which does not have material form, but arises because of the empowerment that can develop as people strive to develop the characteristics of the Buddha, becoming *Arahat* or Sangha. Yet the complexity of karmic capital also derives from the many symbolic values given to people, places, aspects of infrastructure, as well as a focus on the future, that take on a role in practices not included in earlier definitions of capital.

This has opened the possibilities for rethinking information practices not only within the western capitalist perspective but also outside of this perspective. The study has shown that people practice good karma expecting good things for this life and the next life, seeking wealth and comfort in this life as well as heavenly reward. The goal of this kind of practice is a capital which is at the same time economic, social, cultural, and even informational capital.

Thirdly, this study has extended our understanding of site in information practices. The notion of site as the context within which information practices take place was significant to Schatzki's practice theoretical approach. His work emphasised site through the title of the book, *The Site of the Social* (2000). Schatzki emphasised there are three kinds of sites. Firstly, the geographical site or physical place, secondly the context or setting where that activity takes place and lastly the place that is the "nexus

of action and teleological structures" (Schatzki, 2000, p. 25). Olsson and Lloyd (2017) have emphasised embodied information practices research, which have been linked both to corporeal sense making processes and to the arrangement of the social site of the information related activity associated with it. The focus here in information practices research was mainly on ways of knowing, recognising the collective situated actions and performances in a social context related to a social site. The physical site itself was secondary.

In this study, information practices are what the people do at the temple site. This is the focus of the study. Even though there have been approaches to consider what is meant as 'site', such as Kemmis's notion of the ecologies of practice (2012; Mahon et al. 2017), and Lloyd's notion of site ontology (2010c), this study has demonstrated that a broader approach to the conceptualisation of site is possible. In this study, it is clear that the participants (monks and devotees) socially construct the temple in various ways. In previous information practices studies, Lloyd (2010a) cast site in terms of activities associated with the use of information while Olsson (2016) cast site in terms of expertise; that is to say, both had constructed site as it related to the effects on know-how and sense making, and embodiment as a way of knowing. This study, on the other hand, has shown that participants conceptualise site both as a physical place but also as something which is created through actions and their shared imagination.

Here, the work of Sack (1980, 2003) is relevant as it confirms and demonstrates how, as Sack argued, place is created by people in their interactions. From that perspective, place can have multiple dimensions, which, importantly for this study, are dislocated from physical space, being time-based, virtual, global and symbolic.

The findings from the research show that place exists in many forms, including physical places, virtual places, networks (which are both a place and a process), symbolic places, and an organisation. Acknowledging this complexity helps to untangle the complexity of the places where information practices are enacted. Information practices shed light on what people do at the temple site, but importantly, they also shed light on the concept of site. From this perspective, the findings show how participants understand the "temple", what the temple means to participants and why they are involved in particular temple programs and activities. The notion of site which emerges in this study sheds light on why information practices are considered "invisible" (Savolainen, (2008, p. 3) and "complex" (Gherardi (2009a, p. 118).

The study clearly shows how monks and devotees create the Temple as a "social site" and demonstrate their understanding of "place" as a concept. These social sites of the temple emerge from what participants value, admire, and find inspiring in the temple as a "place", what they take for granted, their day-to-day experiences and what the temple means to them. The complexity expressed here is something scholars of information practices research, and indeed scholars in the practice theoretical tradition in general, would struggle to find in many other settings. A key feature of the conceptualisation of site in this study is that it categorises site by time, identifying, temporary, routine, and permanent places.

Site is also conceptualised as being local and global, and the study sheds light on the tensions between these two notions of site. Here it is important to consider the context of a diasporic community. The MA Temple is both a site for the practices of a globalised community and for a very local community, as diasporic community members need to maintain a connection to their motherland as well as their local community. The information practices can be seen to work hand in hand between these

two separate spaces, the local and the global. Castells and his theories of the Network Society have been useful in showing how these two sites co-exist both for the MA Temple as an organisation and especially for the devotees, but also for the monks.

Schatzki (2002) claimed that practice requires activity and skill development and a shared understanding of know-how and the work of Sassen (2015) has placed these at both local and global levels. Bringing these two conceptualisations together shows how the Temple is a place of leadership, power, and governance while at the same time, the invisibilities of the practices of monks and devotees create different senses of place.

To summarise these contributions, I will place them back in the context of the literature of information practices. Information practices research is a broad concept that has been developed over time, and as shown in the literature review, different researchers have taken different approaches and have differing perspectives on the phenomenon. However, common challenges to advancing the field were identified. Research evolved to the point that scholars realised the complexity associated with it (Gherardi, 2008). Savolainen (2007) had claimed that information practices were invisible and therefore difficult to investigate, whereas Olsson (2016) for example emphasised that information practices can present a complex web of relationships that people have with information. By conceptualising the notion of the site and the development of various capitals (the outcomes of what people do at these sites), this study suggests that these challenges are not insurmountable. It has added new dimensions to information practices research. Unpacking Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic capital and cultural capital within social practice theories is a novel approach that has shown how one aspect of the complexity can be simplified by following through the relationship between practices and their outcomes, as well as by considering site as the multi-dimensional conceptual space that Schatzki (2002) hinted at in his definition.

This study at the same time has extended the bounds not only of research into information practices, but also into the practice theoretical approach in general. It fits squarely in the theoretical tradition that Schatzki (2012, pp. 13) envisioned when he expressed the idea that a practice is a set of activities carried out by a number of different people, and reinforced by Savolainen's assertion (2007, p. 120) that information practices are based on the "mundane activities" of groups of people.

Starting from this shared understanding of information practices emerging from the mundane activities of a group of people, this research has extended and gone beyond the initial social aspects of the information practices. It has broadened the scope and landscape of information practices, by showing that even mundane activities can be linked to outcomes that have economic, cultural, informational, human and karmic significance.

A fourth contribution of this study arises from its methodological approach. Information practices research has been almost exclusively conducted in a western context. A challenge of research of this kind is to understand the cultural norms, behaviours and attitudes of the people in the context within which they interact. In this study, the researcher's cultural background enabled him to take research into information practices out of this western context, putting him in a position where, as is sometimes the case in ethnography, he had two roles: his role as an insider, a member of the Sri Lankan diaspora and a member of MA Temple community, helped him to understand the many cultural norms, the reasons behind them, their wordings and attitudes towards their actions; his role as an observer, as a researcher, gave him the critical distance to observe the temple as an outsider, to that he could focus analytically on the data he gathered, that recorded the practices people undertook and their explanations for these actions.

The Study and its Limitations

The temple is a large global organisation in many ways similar to a multinational conglomerate. Therefore, even though the participant numbers that researcher interviewed for the study are well within the accepted range for an information practices study of this kind, it was simply not possible to have a sample which represented the diversity of the large, international temple community.

Time was also a constraint, particularly for the participant observation phase of the study. The duration of the participant observation of the temple community was 6 months and the Buddhist calendar includes events and ceremonies over the course of the year. The researcher was therefore only able to observe a limited number of events. Traditionally, the length of ethnographic studies could extend over a few years. However, such a lengthy observation process is not feasible for a doctoral research project of this kind.

Similarly, the observations and interviews were all carried out in the greater Sydney area. Given greater resources, the researcher could have travelled to many temple sites around Australia and around the world to gather more data. This was also not possible with the study's budget and time constraints. The researcher has therefore chosen to focus on gaining a detailed understanding of one branch of the temple organisation which he was personally familiar with, while at the same time locating that study within the broader context of the temple as an international organisation.

Privacy concerns were a significant constraint on analysing the temple community's online information practices. Since the study represents a globalised online network community where posts are available and searchable by other community members, the

researcher could not ethically publish the open discussions/observations happening within the temple community. The researcher chose not to invade the communities' personal spaces and breach participants' privacy by including quotations from identifiable material. Indeed he chose not to use the conventional approach and identify interview data by some form of participant ID, but only by the designation of monk or devotee.

Language issues were another limitation. Given the audience for the study, the interviews were conducted in English, even though this was not the first language of participants. This led to occasions where participants could not readily convey their meaning in English, especially as some Buddhist concepts and practices do not have English names. As the interviewees were aware that the researcher is also a Sinhalese speaker, in these circumstances they used Sinhalese words and sentences to express their ideas. This would mean that the researcher needed to translate these sections into English as part of the transcription process. In doing so, it is inevitable that some linguistic and cultural nuances may be lost.

Even though the study has discussed the many advantages of balancing the insider and outsider roles of the researcher, it is also necessary to acknowledge that the role of being a community insider has its own limitations. It is possible that an outsider researcher with greater critical distance from the community might have developed other insights that the insider researcher overlooked.

The final major limitation facing the researcher was conducting a Western style of research underpinned by western assumptions and theories in a non-western context. Though conceptualising information practice theories using the tools from the western world has been a constraint, the researcher has used the non-western context of the

study, as well as his own identity as a researcher from a non-western background, to critically examine how information practices research can be applied in non-western contexts. In doing so, he has been able to provide insights into how information practices theory and research can be enriched by engaging with non-western contests and worldviews. The researcher contends that this is an important contribution to the field of information practices research.

The Implications for Future Research

The innovative approach of this study, as well as its focus on a non-western non-secular setting, have revealed a number of possibilities for further research. Four of those will be set out below.

This study demonstrates the benefit of insider-outsider research in a non-western context. As a result, the importance of a more diverse basis for understanding information practices is clear. Further research, conducted by non-western researchers in contexts with which they are familiar – that is to say, more insider-outsider research – will broaden the diversity of contexts for information practices research, giving an opportunity to test core concepts in other settings.

A key finding of this study is the identification of karmic capital as a separate form of capital. There are relatively few studies of information practices in religious and spiritual contexts. It will be important to investigate whether, in a different context, a concept similar to karmic capital applies. This would extend the work of Bourdieu, building on the analytical approach of Neveu.

Significant in all research into information practices is the relationship between the social, that is the collective, and individual identity. In this study, the social is created at

multiple levels, and the information practices are seen to have collective outcomes, at these various levels, as well as at the level of the individual. These outcomes, in this study, are conceptualised as forms of capital. There is further research to be done exploring how information practices take place in organisational contexts and how the outcomes of these practices are linked to social and individual identities.

This study has brought to the fore the architectures and infrastructure of information practices. In particular it has demonstrated the significance of the relationship between the structure of an organisation, the information technologies used, and the practices of the people associated with the organisation. It has demonstrated the contribution that the work of Castells and Sassen has made to the study of information practices, indicating how a broader sociological approach to social relations can shape the micro-sociological observations and analysis of information practices. This also has implications for the practice theoretical approach, suggesting, following Sack, that understanding how people create place can enhance an understanding of the concept of site, which is fundamental to research on practices.

This research focuses on cultural production, consumption, and experiences but it does not go in depth into the power and political perspectives. The social interactions among people and their view of the world could share more common ground with the cultural political as well, through an investigation using critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2013).

Currently, the consideration of politics and power sits outside of the scope of this study and is something that could be researched further. This has been a study of the information practices of Theravada Buddhists associated with a Temple in Sydney. There are other temples (branches) of the same community as well as unrelated Theravada

Buddhist temples in other countries, such as Thailand and Cambodia. Their interactions with one another also creates a larger scope for research, including overlapping relationships with power and politics. This research does investigate overlapping spaces of "space of flows" and "space of places' but it has not been concerned with overlapping "space of power".

Conclusion

The chapter revisited the aims of the research and concluded by summarising the arguments presented in this thesis, its findings, and their significance. It also described how the researcher has met his research aims by summarising the findings of the study and setting out the contribution the study has made to information practices research.

The researcher has emphasised the main points of his arguments in this section by summarising his findings from both the insider (being a part of the temple community) and outsider (the researcher) roles. Firstly, the researcher conceptualised the temple as a "site" which is understood in many ways by taking insight from theoretical frameworks of several scholars including Schatzki (2000), Sack (2003), Castells (2010), and Sassen (2006) and to a lesser extent, Fisher (2006). Then he emphasised that the information practices are to be found in the different activities, purposes, and motives of the MA temple community. Finally. the researcher explained the creation of various capitals within the temple site by taking a theoretical lens from Bourdieu (1986). This researcher's main focus was on how the information practices of a Buddhist diasporic community are transformed from their outcomes of cultural and symbolic capitals into the karmic capital. The findings of this research shed the light on unidentified and unclear information practices that are hard to see (Savolainen, 2007) and exist in a "complex web of relationships among people, material artifacts, and activities"

Gherardi's (2008, p.517). This study has more than met its aim of shedding light on these practices in a non-western context.

The chapter also reveals possible future research agendas including suggestions for future research. The future research agendas outlined would draw on the expertise and insider knowledge of non-Western researchers working in non-Western contexts to both challenge and extend existing theories and practices in information practices research based on Western intellectual traditions.

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