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***WHO GETS WHAT AND HOW?:  
CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE***

**Background Report**

**The Making of Modern Bangkok:  
State, Market and People in the  
Shaping of the Thai Metropolis**

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## List of Tables

Table 1	Completed Housing Units on New Housing Estates (Cumulative), Bangkok 1968-1977 .....	17
Table 2	Private Households (%) by Type of Living Quarters & Businesses used .....	27
Table 3	Changes in Estimated Slum Housing Stock, 1974-1988.....	32
Table 4	Agricultural Households as a Percentage of all Households, Outer Kets, BMA.....	44

## List of Figures

Figure 1	Kets (municipal districts) of the BMA, with major roads, 1993 .....	5
Figure 2	The First Bangkok Master Plan (1990) by Litchfield Bowne and Associates, 1960 .....	8
Figure 3	Present Bangkok Master Plan, proclaimed 1992 .....	30
Figure 4	Kets of BMA with highest population growth rates, 1987-1991 .....	33
Figure 5	Housing estate development and the built-up area, Bangkok 1970-80 .....	36
Figure 6	Kets of BMA with highest number of building construction permits, 1987-1991 .....	37
Figure 7	Ket Klong Toey, showing Sukhumvit Rd. area and location of high-rise and slums, 1993 .....	39
Figure 8	Expansion of urban area into Prawet (formerly Phrakanong), indicating inadequacy of subsidiary road provision in suburban areas, 1983 and 1992 .....	41

# The Making of Modern Bangkok: State, Market and People in the Shaping of the Thai Metropolis<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

The process of urbanization in Thailand is inseparably tied to the character of demographic, economic and social change since the close of World War II and even before. Bangkok, the centre of government and administration, the royal capital and cultural and religious focus, the centre of commerce and by far the largest urban settlement in Thailand at the beginning of this period, has been the major beneficiary as well as a principal victim of the many changes set in train from the early 1950's. While the most striking contrast in Thailand today is that between urban and rural living standards and opportunities, Bangkok's urban environment itself expresses much about the complexity and character of inequality among its own inhabitants as well as the nature of power and governance in Thai society. This paper interprets the economic forces shaping the physical patterns of the metropolis since around 1945, patterns which have expressed as well as influenced the quality of urban life and will increasingly do so in the future, given Bangkok's centrality in Thai society and economy. The purpose of this paper is not to reiterate in detail the now-familiar catalogue of urban ills besetting the Thai metropolis<sup>2</sup> but to delineate the main features of urban change in this primate city which throw light on the patterns of ecological change framing the lives of ordinary people.

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<sup>1</sup> My thanks to the TDRI 2010 Project in funding research assistance. Also to my colleagues at the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Chulalongkorn University, for providing recent information on planning for Bangkok. And to Gamonrat Monthongdaeng for her able assistance.

<sup>2</sup> There are now many recent reports which have assembled an impressive array of data, eg.: Anuchat and Ross, 1992; NESDB, 1986; Sophon, 1992; TDRI, 1991, 1992.

The physical and ecological changes which have transformed Bangkok as a living environment, the processes which have influenced the settlement patterns of its various socio-economic groups, and the factors which explain the distribution of its activities and relative power of its constituent groups, need to be considered in terms of global, national and local trends. The present functions, physical character, and existing problems of contemporary Bangkok find their sources in the interplay between the interests of the state, private and foreign capital, historical conditions, and of course, the demands and needs of the increasing population of urban dwellers.

The role of the Thai state has been to provide the conditions allowing private economic interests maximum advantage in the name of "development", with government acting less as an instrument of intervention for positive change (until very recently at least), than as a channel of overseas aid for infrastructure development and a conduit of private overseas capital. While true of Thailand as a whole, in terms of the urban framework, this has had particular consequences. While there has been a proliferation of agencies to implement an ever-growing web of programs, including urban housing, transport and service provision, and above all planning, such agencies have lacked sufficient legal muscle to challenge the interests of private property holders and entrepreneurs bent on maximizing their profits and advantages. Such problems are structural and reflect existing conditions of power among elites and institutions and are analysed in another report of the 2010 project; here we refer to conditions and consequences in the metropolis.

The range of factors hindering effective urban governance in the nation's metropolis include: an inherited centralized bureaucratic power arrangement with a division into vertical spheres of administration; an allied pattern of inherent rivalry between administrative sectors (whether government or semi-government) which prevents smooth coordination of programs and policy; an administratively weak metropolitan authority which, despite increasing professionalism in staffing and policy at management levels, is hamstrung by lack of powers and especially a lack of adequate revenue to fund services; and a conspicuous absence of institutionalized mechanisms for consultation and governance at the local level. Set against this one can add the overarching decisionmaking and veto powers of the Ministry of the Interior and the Cabinet. Over the last thirty, but particularly the last ten years, we have seen the birth, death, abandonment, sabotaging and general emasculation of various urban planning and infrastructure measures in the context of competing management jurisdictions and power holders in the urban arena, in the private and public sectors. The current environmental and

traffic crisis is an undisputed result of this pattern of power play, combined with a toleration of private sector indulgence (ranging from irresponsible land development to indulgence at the household level), complacency and inaction. Morell and Chai-anan's general characterization of politics at the national level applies as well to an explanation of the environment of urban management: "Thailand's political culture is an amalgam of individualism, pragmatism, and resistance to social organization on the one hand, and elitist, hierarchically structured relationships on the other" (Morell and Chai-anan, 1981: 16). Looming behind these competing groups is the shadow of the ever-growing metropolis, a phenomenon capable of turning the most sophisticated strategists into helpless witnesses of a leviathan which is threatening to grind to a crushing halt and stifle national economic growth in the process. How do we understand a city that has become a bye-word for Asian urban problems, yet at the same time is so crucial to a nation and its people?

Bangkok is more than ever a great 'site' of speculation and profit-making for elites which are at once local and national in character. Land and property development remain crucial to the economic activities laying the foundations for, and consolidating existing private wealth, and at the same time fashioning the environment of the city. That the city as a "place" for living has suffered as a consequence of this function is also clear. Here I will deal with those major trends which have produced the environment of Bangkok, both as a site of activities and as a place for living.

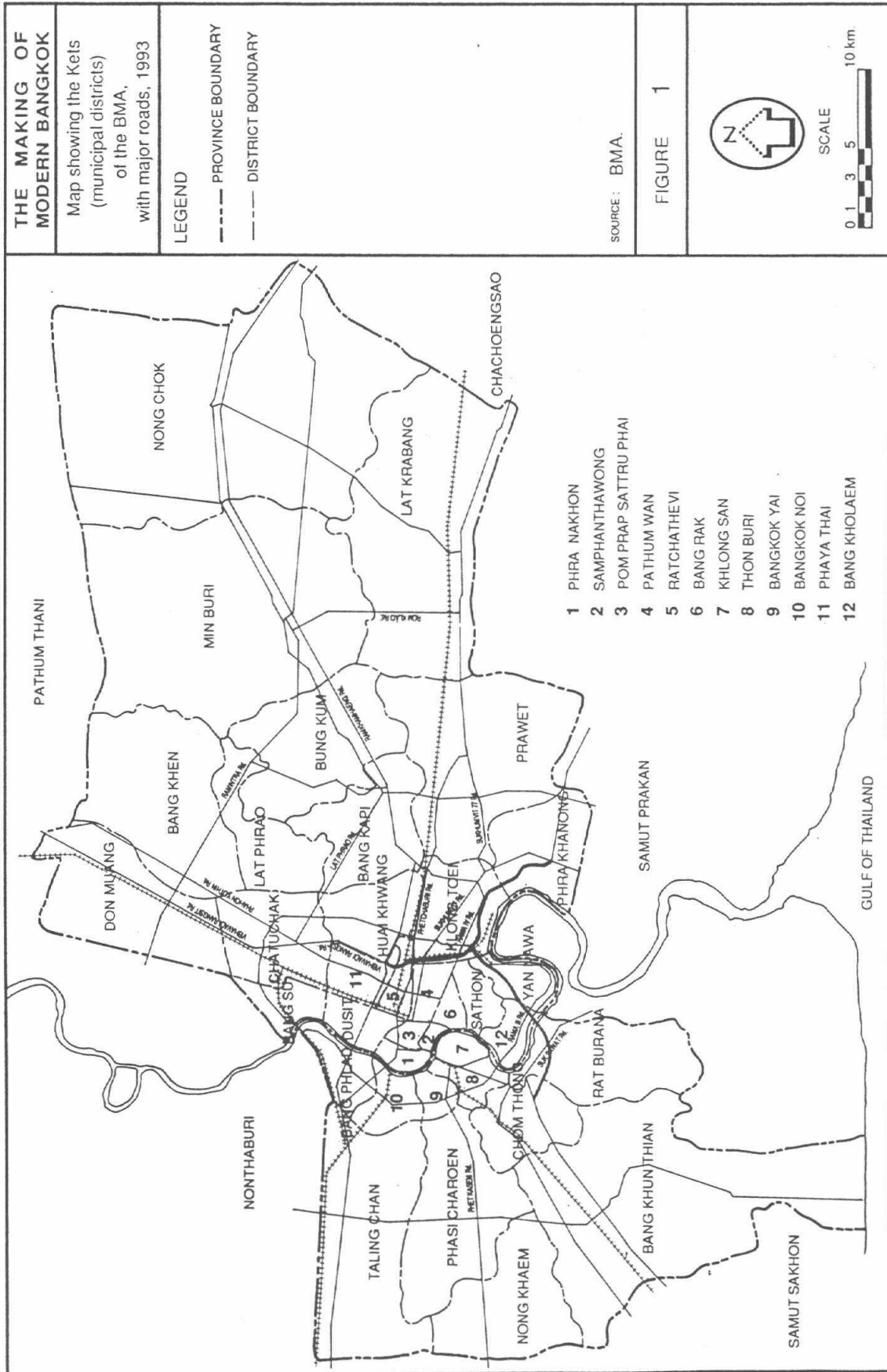
Any periodization of urban change in the metropolitan region is bound to be flawed in some way, since trends and processes overlap chronological compartments. In this discussion periods of economic and physical development are based largely on ten-year periods coinciding roughly with clusters of events, decisions or processes. While they mostly coincide with years of the inception or conclusion of development plans, causal relations between processes and planning decisions are not to be implied in all periods. Nor are such periods meant to indicate the temporal span of social or cultural change. The first period covers the years from 1945 to the advent of the Sarit regime. The second period, 1958-1971 spans the years from the inception of the development-oriented Sarit regime, the beginning of national development planning, increased foreign economic and military aid and economic investment to the close of the Second National Economic and Social Development Plan. The third period 1972-1981 coincides with the years which saw the foundation of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, National Housing Authority and the first great outward surge of suburban development.

The fourth period 1982-1993 covers the years of the Fifth and Sixth - and the commencement of the Seventh - development plans, encompassing the first concerted attempts to address urban planning questions in comprehensive and strategic fashion, the changes wrought by the renewed injection of foreign investment in Bangkok's industrial development, and the growing differentiation of its urban areas.

## **1945 - 1957**

Thailand entered the post-war period with an economic structure that was unchanged from the pre-war years, with an overwhelming reliance on the export of agricultural products and a tiny industrial sector. Bangkok maintained its traditional hold on trade, with the overwhelming percentage of imported and exported goods being processed, handled and distributed through the city, principally via the Chinese merchants of Sampeng. Bangkok's subsequent economic development was founded upon this traditional trading hegemony.

A number of significant trends were evident during this period. Aside from the significant export boom induced by the Korean War, foreign economic assistance beginning in 1950 (and supplemented by increasing government expenditure) was directed towards development projects aiming at increasing and diversifying production. At the same time imports into the Kingdom almost doubled (between 1951-1956), with the renewed trading activity boosting the strength of Bangkok's entrepreneurial class. Throughout the 1950's and into the following decade economic growth was services-led, not export-led, as had been the traditional pattern. While much of this services component comprised infrastructure activities devoted to such projects as irrigation and power supply, the non-infrastructure element of the services sector (trading and banking) saw considerable growth, and this took place largely in Bangkok (Chattip, 1968: 40-42). At the same time consumer goods imports were steadily rising, largely serving the as-yet-small urban elite and middle class, whose consumption level increased throughout the decade (Ingram, 1971: 226). Between the years 1947 and 1957 for example, the number of private cars in Bangkok-Thonburi increased by over 650%, from 3,259 to 24,976 (Manop, 1973:17). To underline the significance of this consumption trend, we can note that 87% of all private cars in the Kingdom at this time were owned by Bangkokians. The traffic jams so endemic to present-day Bangkok were already becoming a feature of life in parts of the city. (Donner, 1978: 835)





Suehiro Akira has outlined how the period of war and Japanese rule in Thailand destroyed the traditional hold of the European trading houses and banks in Bangkok, and how, in their absence, largely Bangkok-based Chinese entrepreneurs diversified their fields from trade to commercial banking and insurance. In 1952 there were 19 commercial banks and of these 14 had been founded since 1942. Such institutions by the 1950s were beginning to constitute an independent business base for financial dealings and investment (Akira, 1989: 154-157). Another trend influencing economic activity in Bangkok was the tendency for Chinese Thais, after the 1949 revolution in China, to retain their savings in Thailand rather than remit money to families in China. This provided a pool of capital which fuelled business development, particularly in the metropolis (Keyes, 1989: 152-153). The European firms which set up in the post-war period concentrated on such activities as importing or manufacturing consumer goods, specializing as import agents for items such as automobiles, or maintaining engineering divisions for the servicing and installation of capital works (Akira, 1989: 174-177). In addition to business expansion initiated by a growing number of private firms, local or foreign, there were also government efforts to promote various industries through the National Economic Development Corporation Ltd (1954). This also added to the activities promoting economic change in the Bangkok region (Ingram, 1971: 229).

### **1958 - 1971**

The great spur to economic development came with the accession to power of Field Marshall Sarit through his coup of 1957. Sarit's administration, committed to a program of economic and social 'modernization', sought to establish a climate conducive to increased overseas aid and private investment. Receptive to the World Bank Mission's report of 1958, Sarit established the National Economic Development Board (to which later was added the word "social", after the discovery of its ramifications!) and the Board of Investment to further plan growth and diversification in the national economy. An additional project was the devising, for the first time, of a development plan for the metropolis (Keyes, 1989: 151-153; Akira, 1989: 178-9; Ingram, 1971: 231-232).

### **BANGKOK ON THE VERGE OF TRANSFORMATION**

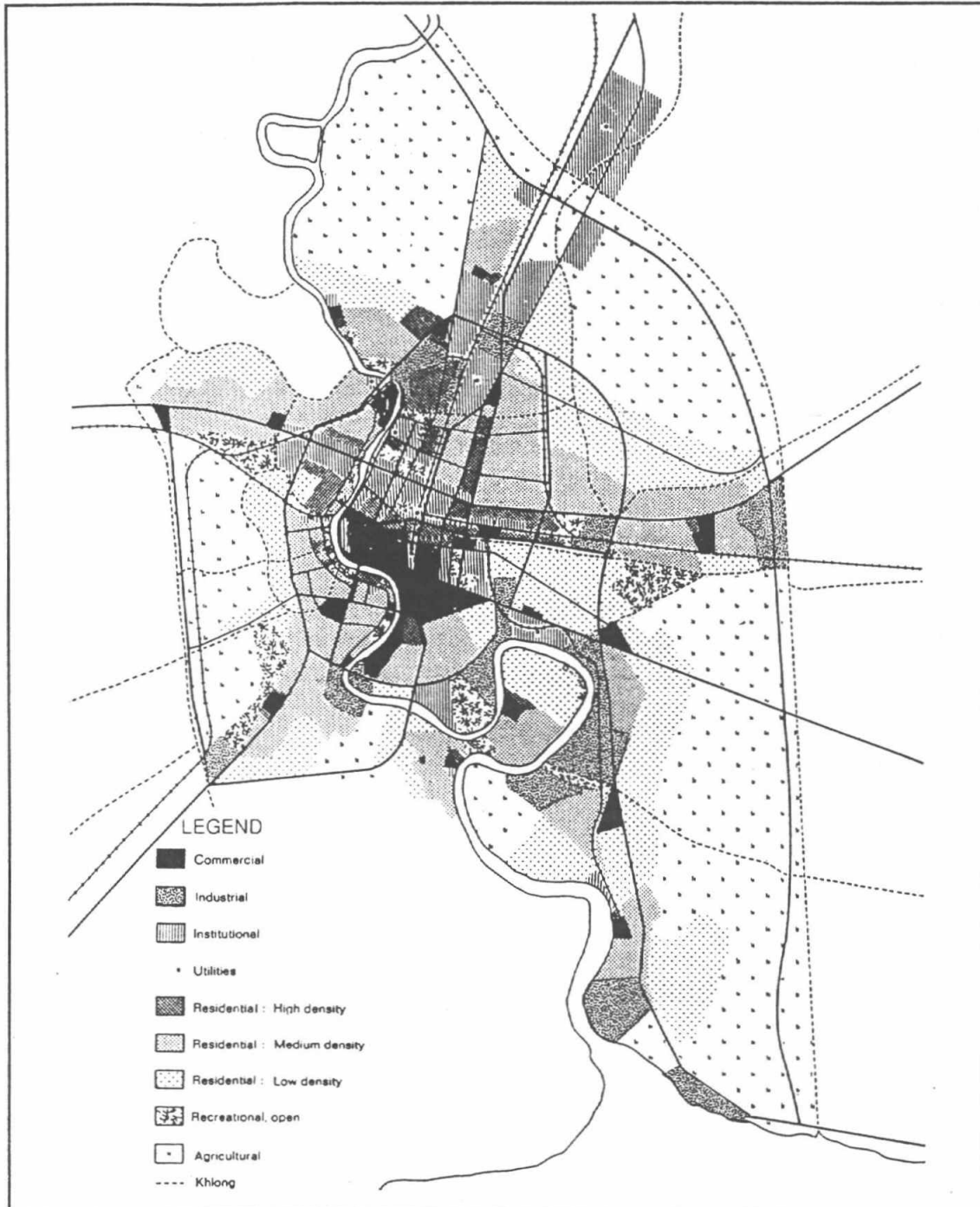
The Greater Bangkok Plan 2533 produced by Litchfield and Associates in 1960, aimed to establish land-use zoning and directions for urban growth for the following 30 years (See Figure 2). That the consultants, on arrival in Thailand, could find no adequate urban base-

map of the metropolitan area for developing a portrait of existing land uses is suggestive of the lack of monitoring by the municipality in the preceding period (Sternstein, 1982:109). The proposals of the Litchfield group are less instructive than their description and mapping of Bangkok, which indicate contemporary directions of growth up to 1960.

By the commencement of the Litchfield project, Bangkok had already made the transition to an automobile and road-based city in place of the former canal-based infrastructure. Certainly the two modes co-existed at that time, and in Thonburi - until quite recently - the canals were principal arteries of transport to markets. Nevertheless it was clear that the Klongs were declining in importance rapidly. While the consultants acknowledged the significance of the Klongs as drains for storm water, fire protection, disposal of sewage, and even bathing, their plan was predicated on the model of a modern western city. By 1960 a large number of both minor and major canals had been filled in and roads constructed in their place (Litchfield, 1960: 21-22). Some markets in the old city were still being supplied via the Klongs at this time, and Klong Padung Khrung Kasem was still in use for the transport of goods by boat. The Klong system, despite its redundancy, however, would determine much of the pattern of future urban development, with ribbon-type growth extending in parallel to older traffic arteries. In 1960 land values tended to be high along the major east-west canals, a reflection, probably of anticipated road development and older locational priorities.

As was typical of western observations of Bangkok and other cities of Southeast Asia, Litchfield's report emphasized the lack of clear zonal organization in the city, with little formal separation of industrial, commercial and residential uses. At this time, Bangkok was a compact city. In 1947 the Bangkok and Thonburi municipalities housed little over a million people in an area of between 60 to 67 square kilometres (using figures for 1953 - Donner, 1978: 792). In 1956 Bangkok's built-up area had increased to some 90 square kilometres (estimating from area figures of 1958). In 1960 the population of Bangkok - Thonburi was just over 2 million (Donner, 1978: 791).

In 1960 Bangkok's traditional functional organization was clearly seen, with the trading precinct overwhelmingly concentrated in the Chinese district of Sampeng. Litchfield's maps (presented in the company's report) show the concentration of business activity, as indicated by the higher land values, in Sampeng, along the old shop-house lined streets of Rattanakosin, and the Silom/Suriwong area, an extension of the old European business quarter along New Road. North of Dusit the population density dropped considerably, while



**THE MAKING OF MODERN BANGKOK**

FIGURE 2

The First Bangkok Master Plan (1960)  
by Litchfield Bowne and Associates, 1960.



SCALE



SOURCE : Sternstein, L. Thailand : The Environment of Modernisation.

the built up area to the northeast did not extend much further east than the northern railway line.

The pattern of spatial development followed existing major traffic arteries (for example along Rama IV and Sukhumvit Roads), so the ubiquitous shophouses extended along a certain length of such roads, a prelude to a pattern which would make for a high level of under-utilized land in the following years. But Sukhumvit Road at this stage was not the sight of much building activity. While Litchfield noted some tendency towards differentiation between areas according to housing-type in some suburbs, he stressed the mixed character of most neighbourhoods at this time. Other observations of the team show that some important future changes were not anticipated: most notably these include the rise of the land developers (Litchfield noted the existing dominant pattern of individual contracting for residential building) and the massive rural-urban migration of the following decades (See Litchfield: 26, 39).

Larry Sternstein's study of internal population movements in Bangkok sheds additional light on trends of settlement in Bangkok in these years. The areas which showed the greatest expansion in built area between 1956 and 1960 were Dusit to the north and Prakhong to the east, although the latter was still primarily a region of paddy farming. As yet the urban fringe had not extended into Bangkhen or Bangkok, to the north and northeast respectively (Sternstein, 1971: Table 4).

The most significant functional and spatial trend of this period was the development of the new port of Klong Toey. Mooted from the 1930s, the port was completed in 1954, and by the latter years of the decade industries were locating close to the port on both sides of the Chao Phraya River. This had a strong influence on development in the Samut Prakan area, which in 1960 was yet a small isolated community (Donner, 1978: 821-822). Klong Toey significantly enhanced Bangkok's trading capacity while at the same time the city's importance as a link in international aviation routes increased. Tourism was already an important money-earner in Bangkok when sea-travel was a major means of tourist transport, but developments in international air transport enhanced considerably this function for Bangkok. The entertainment precinct tended to concentrate in the area around New Road, south of the old city, but by the late 1950's it was spreading north and northeasterly, with new hotels and tourist services clustering along Silom Road. A second precinct was emerging in the Ploenchit area around the Erawan Hotel, built in 1956-7 (Litchfield p.45-46). In 1957 tourists spent 120 million Baht in Bangkok. Under the First Development Plan (1961-1966) a new

runway was built at Don Muang Airport to cater for new jet aircraft and the increasing volume of air traffic. By 1962 tourists were spending 310 million Baht in the country, largely in Bangkok (NIDA, 1967: 4; Tourism Authority of Thailand, 1990: 3).

## **TOURISM, HOTELS AND THE VIETNAM WAR**

The continuing expansion of tourism over the decade fuelled substantial growth in the services sector of Bangkok's economy, despite the lack of direct co-ordination by government, giving rise to further growth in the entertainment and hotel precincts of Silom/Suriwong and Ploenchit. The number of hotel rooms in Bangkok increased from 2,041 in 1964 to 8,763 in 1970, giving rise to claims that there were too many hotels in the city. Certainly the industry has been vulnerable to international changes and much development was driven by speculation; nevertheless, the claim by Donner that the new luxury hotels being built in Bangkok in the early 1970's were unnecessary did not anticipate the expansion of the trend in international business conventions which many of these establishments now cater for (Donner: 836). As in other tourist centres, the hotel industry in Bangkok enjoys the advantage of being attractive to real estate investors in search of profit in times of boom, but sensitive to changes in the economic and political environment, both at the local and international levels. The expanding scale of hotel accommodation in the city matched other related developments in Bangkok's service activities.

U.S. military aid to Thailand grew as the conflict in Indochina escalated, reaching peak levels in 1962-67 (Wyatt, 1982: 284). The presence of United States military personnel, both permanent and those on Rest & Recreation leave, provided an added boost to Bangkok's services sector, particularly the accommodation and entertainment sector. Bangkok's notorious red light district of Pat Pong was a product of this period. Originally an extension of the Silom business precinct, this through-way between Sathorn and Silom became a lucrative investment for the family of Udom Patpong during the Vietnam war years. The New Petchaburi Road extension was a precinct of clubs and bars relying on the custom of American servicemen. It is worth noting that overseas tourism was booming during the Vietnam War years, with tourists outnumbering R & R servicemen by 10 to 1 in 1970, although servicement probably had a lot more disposable income during their stays in Bangkok. But Rest & Recreation visits dropped drastically in 1972 with U.S. disengagement from Vietnam, while overseas tourism registered a 28 percent increase (NESDB, 1975: 36). Nevertheless, the R and R program had provided much of the infrastructure for the expansion

of tourism; and another legacy of the war period: ex-servicemen were among the groups investing in the bars and clubs that multiplied in the later 1970s and early 1980s in Patpong, Sukhumvit and Pattaya.

## **THE MIDDLE CLASS**

While Bangkok was becoming a centre for western consumer spending with a retailing and entertainment industry expanding according to cosmopolitan tastes, the growing city was also the centre of consumption for a burgeoning Thai middle-class. The education expansion programme of the later 1950s, boosted by overseas scholarship schemes, had produced an educated and well-paid professional stratum. By virtue of the historical concentration of administration and business in Bangkok compounded by 10 years of urban-biased development, three quarters of Thailand's university graduates resided in the metropolis. In 1970 the level of concentration of this group was higher than it had been 20 years earlier (Thai University Research Associates, 1976: 256).

The establishment of new universities in Bangkok added to the process of attraction which drew students from the provinces (despite the existence of Chiang Mai and Khon Khaen Universities) to Bangkok. This served to concentrate consumption power in the metropolis. The growing disparities in per capita income between the Bangkok Metropolitan Area and the other regions of the Kingdom was a clear enough indication of this trend. Between 1960 and 1970 per capita income in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area grew at a rate higher than the Kingdom's average, with income for the metropolis averaging 11,234 Baht in 1970 compared with 3,849 for Thailand as a whole (Keyes, 1989: 159, Prasert, 1987: 286).

According to Pasuk, the growing urban middle class was the greatest beneficiary of Thailand's economic development; indeed the development of this social formation, the "middle class" is generally acknowledged to be one of the more striking developments in Thailand in the post-war period. Bangkok siphoned off the larger proportion of the profits of national economic growth. The "urban middle-class revolution" (that is to say, the union between the key commercial, bureaucratic and military elements of the middle class) represented by Sarit's takeover of 1957 introduced a new period of ideological commitment to the open economy: "the dynamic growth of the urban sector helped to diffuse the values, tastes and aspirations of the urban middle class far beyond the posh Bangkok suburbs - and indeed far beyond the city limits" (Pasuk, 1980a: 19; 1980b: 450).

## MANUFACTURING

Investment in manufacturing from the early 1960's, particularly from overseas, expanded Bangkok's manufacturing base considerably and built on the existing concentration of industries in the southern districts of the metropolis. The First Revision of the Greater Bangkok Plan reflected these changes - it could hardly do any more than portray such changes, since the first plan, after a decade of bureaucratic ping-pong and political obstruction, had still not been authorized by the government. It showed the strong concentration of industry stretching along the riverside in Yannawa, Thonburi, the western edge of Prakhonong, and particularly Samut Prakan (Kammeier, 1984: 21). Of the four changwat comprising the Greater Bangkok Area, Bangkok held 54% of industrial establishments, Thonburi 20%, Samut Prakan 20% and Nonthaburi less than 4% (Donner, 1978: 827).

In 1960 the characteristic manufacturing unit in Bangkok was small, with an average employment of just 8.5 employees. The largest firm in fact had been established prior to the World War II. Moreover the largest employers were in those industries in traditional sectors such as hardware, printing, saw milling, rice milling and weaving. At the end of the decade, however, with new factories established under the government's incentive schemes for foreign capitalists and joint-venture schemes, the character of manufacturing began to change, and with it the average size of the manufacturing units. By 1970 the proportion of manufacturing establishments employing 100 people or more grew from 47% in 1963 to 72% in 1970, with the average number of workers per firm growing to 66. The period saw the rapid growth of promoted industries including car-assembly, textiles, electrical appliances and food processing. Such industries were in accord with the existing policy of import substitution, with the largest proportion of concerns manufacturing for the domestic market (Akira, 1989: 178-186). The First Plan had set a target of 9.3% annual growth for the manufacturing sector; in fact the actual growth rate 1961-66 exceeded that calculation. That Bangkok, Thonburi and Samut Prakan were the major sites of this transformation is indicated by the Regional GDP for 1972 showing the Bangkok region as responsible for nearly 60% of GDP in the nation's manufacturing sector (Thai University Research Associates, 1976: 268).

Thai government and business leaders were able to successfully present to their western allies and patrons a picture of political stability in a problem-wracked region and the indicators pointed to promising trends in economic development, bolstered by the impression of co-ordination through the development plans (NIDA, 1967). It is a great irony that the

nation's metropolis, the driving force and greatest beneficiary of the country's increasing income, was a victim of uncontrolled growth and unsupervised change that prevailed during this period.

## **SLUMS AND THE HOUSING CRISIS**

The rapid increase in the urban population during the decade 1960-1970 had not been matched by commensurate expansion in housing. During the period the greater proportion of private construction activity had been devoted to the profitable infrastructure projects generated by the development plans, with relatively little private residential construction activity. Such private construction did not benefit the thousands of low-income earners, most of them migrants from the provinces in search of work. A variety of public housing agencies were in operation during the 1950s and 1960s, but they were ill-equipped to provide sufficient shelter. Small pockets of public housing in areas such as Din Daeng and Suan Mai were established. The Din Daeng area was reported to house one of the largest slums in the metropolis by the early 1970s. By 1963 applications for public housing rental units exceeded the number available by nearly 2,000 (Thai University Research Associates, 1976: 111-115; Chiu, 1985: 64-72).

Litchfield's team reported in 1960 that there were an estimated 740,000 people living in overcrowded areas in Bangkok. Such areas, however, do not necessarily deserve the title of slums (Litchfield, 1960: 84). Later surveys in the decade place the estimate of slum dwellers at approximately 150,000 people. The trend for migrants to Bangkok to move into the central, crowded areas, while former residents moved to adjacent outer areas of the city was noted by Sternstein for this period (1971: 14). The older slums of Bangkok, such as Trok Tai studied by Akin, were already well-established communities with strong links to local economies and employers. They tended to be small in size. Trok Tai covered 8.8 acres for example. Most of the people were either born in the area or long-term residents (Akin, 1978: 10-11). But the newer squatter slums were composed almost entirely of rural-urban migrants and were in some notable cases, extremely large. The Klong Toey slum comprised over 25,000 people (79 percent of whom were born outside Bangkok) and covered 325 acres of land owned by the Port Authority of Thailand. Its development was tied to the nature of labour requirements near the port and, of course, the chronic shortage of alternative housing for the urban poor. Goldstein wrote of this, the largest slum in Bangkok: "Viewed from the air Klong Toey appears as a sprawling mass of tin roofs in a swamp, its houses built on stilts



over waist-deep water, with narrow, precarious plank walkways linking the shacks to the dirt roads. Klong Toey has become a symbol of the larger problem of squatter slums which are developing throughout the city" (Thammasat University, 1971; Goldstein, 1972: 38-39).

The majority of squatter settlements occupied land in the inner and middle ring areas of the city, because of such principal factors as accessibility to work and the fact that much of the unused government or institutional land was located there. Other settlements formed on private plots of land, or on areas unsuitable for other development, such as on the banks of the Klongs. So Bangkok Noi, Bangkok Yai and Thonburi housed many canal-side communities. The King Petch community, located along the Mahanak Canal in the centre of Bangkok, is another example of such a settlement (Sophon, 1985).

The level of security enjoyed by these slum communities depended, and still depends, on a range of factors relating to the value of the land and the type of owner and agreement, if any, between the parties. Eviction of slum dwellers was taking place throughout the 1960s by government officials to make way for new developments, for example the building of SEATO headquarters. The 'Community Improvement Office' which was responsible for some relocation schemes, was later incorporated into the BMA (Chiu, 1985: 72-79). The squatter settlements, located in areas often left vacant because of an inefficient land development process, were also the victims of private development pressure and government agency building schemes in later years. The situation of Klong Toey people during the harbor extension of 1972-3 is a case in point (Korff, 1986: 123-128). Whatever the type of ownership and tenure, the slum settlements were located in poorly drained, insanitary and flood-prone areas. The ecology of urban settlement in Bangkok at this time revealed much about the principal inequalities which had developed in the city (Thomas, 1979). The attention given to the slums by government and scholars since the late 1960's has meant that these settlements are the most documented communities of the city (See Archer, 1983).

## **1971 - 1981**

In 1971 Bangkok's population exceeded 3 million people and the urban area was almost double the size it had been twelve years before. Its problems were manifold, and the reports, plans and analyses produced by government agencies, consultants, and researchers during this period are numerous. Here we will sketch the most significant trends highlighted by this documentation. The early years of the decade saw the reconstruction of the urban

administration in the form of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, the formation of the National Housing Authority to co-ordinate public housing provision, and the creation of other agencies, such as the Expressway and Mass Transit Authority to improve transport and communication infrastructure. The revision of the first Bangkok Plan, published in 1971, modified the target metropolitan population upwards to 6.5 million for 1990 and attempted to provide some framework for land-use development. The plan operated as a guideline but had no statutory force (Kammeier, 1984: 20). It was not until the period of the Fourth Plan (1977-1981) that issues of urban development in a national context were addressed. Studies in the years before (particularly those relating to transportation) urged the adoption of an urban decentralization policy and a polycentric model of metropolitan urban development (Manop, 1973, 1985). This was embodied in the Greater Bangkok Plan 2000 prepared by the Department of Town and Country Planning according to provisions of the 1975 Town Planning Act. It was a reflection of the great power of the city's property interests that the plan, together with its zoning provisions, was rejected in 1978.

Private landownership and the dynamics of the urban land market were the key influence on settlement patterns and land use in Bangkok. The paradoxical permissiveness of the Thai administrative system in addition to the fragmented jurisdiction of urban management, allowed the urban environment to deteriorate further under the pressure of increasing traffic congestion and pollution. While regulations controlled building heights in some districts and building standards, there was no regulation of plot sizes in the city, so private subdivision could proceed at the desire of developers and landowners. Moreover, without land-use controls, planners could not hope to channel or forecast traffic flows in the expanding city (Kammeier, 1984: 27).

## **HOUSING ESTATES**

By the early 1970s the broad pattern of urban expansion conformed to the spatial trend evident in the previous decade, but at a much accelerated pace. This expansion was due to a number of factors, chief among which were the growth of a real estate and development industry financed from profits in the commercial sector, a re-orientation of the building industry to housing estate development following a drop in investment in infrastructure projects, and 'micro-speculation' on the part of the middle classes of the city (Durand-Lasserve, 1980: 12-14). Mixed commercial and residential development extended some 15 km. along Sukhumvit Road, a focus of the thrust of development into Prakhong. The

Prakhanong/Bangkapi area bordering Sukhumvit showed the highest concentration of new development by 1971. Mixed commercial-residential development also stretched north along the Phaholyothin Highway and southwest along the Petch Kasem highway.

Unregulated land-use had helped to duplicate the traditional pattern of mixed economic functions. Large pockets of land between the major roads were un-utilized, some still being farmed, some lying vacant, other land gradually being occupied by squatters whose tenure would be dependent on the economic decisions of private landowners, who controlled most of the land in the newly expanding districts of Prakhanong, Bangkhen and Bangkapi (see Fig. 8). Settlement on the then-suburban frontier was accompanied by slum growth. By the early 1980s the eastern ket of Phrakanong and the northern ket of Dusit held the largest single proportions of the city's squatter-slum settlements, a reflection of the suburban growth pattern over this period (Jantima, 1986: 37,77-81; Jintana, 1986). The *mubanjatsan*, or housing estates, now a standard feature of the Bangkok suburbs, were a product of the changes in the building industry during the 1970s. Boosted by increased availability of financing at attractive terms through commercial banks and finance houses, developers took to the housing estate idea with zeal, responding to the high demand for accommodation among middle and lower middle-class households in the city.

In 1974 the number of developer-housing projects amounted to 60 with a total of 23,106 units; by the following year the number had increased to 154 projects with 30,294 units under construction. Before 1973 the favoured location was to the north along the corridor of Phaholyothin Road. Due to increasing traffic congestion caused by rapid development as well as the pressures of competition among developers, housing projects tended to spread towards the northeast and east by the later-seventies (Nipan, 1982: 152-4; see Fig. 5). The figures on private housing projects just before the middle of the decade 1980-90 confirm this direction of growth, with Bangkapi accounting for almost 30% of all projects and Prakhanong 26%. Bangkhen to the north accounted for 16%. These were the highest levels of all the kets in the metropolitan district (Sa-Ngad, 1986: 197).

**Table 1 : Completed Housing Units on New Housing Estates (Cumulative), Bangkok 1968-1977**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Housing Project Units</b>
1968	275
1969	655
1970	1,227
1971	2,765
1972	6,655
1973	11,184
1974	12,916
1975	17,190
1976	22,798
1977	25,606

(Source: Nippan, 1982)

The new suburban landscape of developer-built housing estates was above all a product of new household formation within the middle class of Bangkok, and the movement of such households away from parental homes in the inner urban areas. The largest number of home-buyers during the 1970s were aged between 25 and 35 years and from Bangkok. Comprising many newly-married couples, the major motive for suburban settlement among this group was independence from the parental household; a factor which highlights social changes at the time. A smaller proportion of buyers were from outside Bangkok, with the highest proportion of these apparently purchasing homes for their children who were studying in the city (Nippan, 1982: 172-6).

## **PUBLIC HOUSING**

The account of urbanization in this decade must acknowledge the slump from the early 1970s caused by the international oil crisis and the rise in commodity prices, in addition to the political unrest of the 1973-1976 period. The trends discussed here, however, hold true despite this period of hiatus. In fact, building activity was strong in the public sector and in the private building sector also. The formation of the NHA signalled a new growth period in public housing, with projects aimed at provision of housing for the lowest to middle-income groups. The majority of the planned projects were aimed at alleviating the housing shortage

in Bangkok. The earliest projects for the lowest income groups focussed on Rangsit, Din Daeng, Klong Toey, Huamark (Bangkapi) Klong Chan and Thonburi. However, the optimistic production targets were scaled down within a few years to account for fund shortages and unanticipated delays (Chiu, 1985: 112-126).

By 1978 the NHA had abandoned its exclusive reliance on subsidized housing provision and adopted a multiple strategies approach which incorporated slum upgrading and sites and services projects on slum sites. The policy of slum upgrading, reflecting the government's decision to cease most expensive land purchase projects, also acknowledged the fact that relocation of slum dwellers to new housing would often be at the expense of the peoples' livelihood. Durand-Lasserve judged that NHA policy had amounted to a campaign to push the urban working class to the under-serviced periphery of the metropolis, but the changing policy of NHA at this time hardly supports this argument. Certainly it is clear that in abandoning its high-subsidy approach the NHA was compelled to acknowledge the strength of competition for urban land which had pushed prices so high (Durand-Lasserve, 1980: 21). By the mid-1980s the government's housing policy subcommittee proposed the creation of 'employment sites' along with housing sites. Such a proposal fitted with the trend of thinking towards decentralized growth (Wiwat, 1985: 10; Chiu, 1985: 129-131).

For the residents of the slums however, the projects of the NHA could not alleviate the problem of eviction pressure which was mounting under the impact of land development. In 1975 the NHA conducted its first survey of housing based on aerial photographs, judging that there were 108 slum sites and an estimated 26,739 families. Two years later the estimate increased to 250 sites with 70,000 families. At this time 84 of the slum settlements were under eviction. A further assessment in 1982 estimated 410 slum sites with 90 under eviction (Niyom, 1983: 6-7). The slum eviction problem was addressed in a number of ways by concerned public agencies. For settlements on private land, importance was placed on organizing the slum communities from within, although many private landowners had their own rental agreements with slum dwellers and compensation was agreed upon prior to the dispersal of settlements. Public agencies as landowners have not necessarily been more prone to listen to slum dwellers' demands than private owners; agencies such as the Port Authority of Thailand have been remarkably persistent in projects which entail removal of slums. by contrast the Crown Property Bureau tends to allow leeway to occupiers of land who are descendants of earlier leaseholders or renters of royal property. Urban wat are somewhat less sympathetic. Some success has been achieved in land-sharing projects, but a number of

special conditions need to be achieved before projects can be workable, not the least being the ability of slum dwellers to afford to buy newly-constructed houses (Yap, 1993: 50-58).

## **PLACES OF BUYING & SELLING**

In 1967 T.G. McGee in his urban geographical study of Southeast Asian cities maintained that social, cultural and economic factors had ensured that the Southeast Asian city remained distinct from the western city, despite the impetus of modernization trends. He cited ethnic pluralism, the centrality of family life, the shop house phenomenon, the coexistence of dual economics (the 'bazaar' economy and 'firm-based' economy idea of Clifford Geertz) and the lack of distinct economic/functional zones as significant characteristics. He did, however, raise the question of whether the development of relatively homogenous land-uses would emerge over time with further change (McGee, 1967: *passim*). He referred here particularly to industrial and suburban estates of the western pattern. By the 1970s analysts were clear that the trend in Bangkok was not towards specialization, at least with regard to the existence of a single mono-functional core with a set of surrounding homogeneous rings of activity. Litchfield's comment about the absence of clear-cut zones in Bangkok has often been repeated (Thai University Research Associates, 1976: 32-33; Manop, 1973: 9; Suvanamus, 1982). Bangkok's development created a polycentric city with multiple nuclei - with business districts developing around Pratunam, Raja Prasong, Siam Square, Silom and Suriwong. Since the 1970s further areas have developed, notably along Sukhumvit Road, with a strong concentration along Soi Asoke. The older hierarchy of markets, both food and goods, expanded with settlement, forming around important transport or community nodal points.

Retail food markets have expanded and dispersed following population growth and settlement trends. In 1980 the 203 private markets of the metropolis were dispersed in a manner reflecting population concentrations, with the exception of the old Pra Nakhon and Sampanthawong districts, which supported a much higher number of total stalls, probably reflecting the location of some of the larger market places. For a number of reasons, not least because of the established patterns of household food-buying, the need for easy and regular access by lower income groups, and the relative ease of access into petty-trading occupations, such markets persist and continue to act as focal points of activity in Bangkok's neighbourhoods, helping to preserve older forms of public life (See Chira et al., 1986). However, a key change in some older markets should be noted, and that is the decline of the

canal-based floating markets in the face of changing settlement and transport patterns. On the western side of the city, some former floating markets have been transferred to land. The so-called "traditional" Damnoen Saduak Floating Market, so popular to tourists, now functions very differently from the time when it served the local area (Dhidar, 1989).

The retailing patterns for other goods in Bangkok have undergone substantial change over the past thirty years, reflecting changes in production patterns as well as consumer tastes. The supply of ready-made clothing through the markets is a case-in-point. In the old Banglamphu market area for example, ready-made-clothing (as well as mass produced jewellery) forms the major commodity of sale. The department stores, which first appeared in the 1930s in Bangkok, expanded considerably after WW II, in response to western retailing patterns as well as the increasing purchasing power of urban consumers, with tastes for imported products. The first stores, located at Yawarat, reflected both the fact that such innovations were introduced by Chinese merchants, and that such a location was convenient for the major groups of consumers residing in the nearby European quarter. The trend of the 1950s was for the stores (notably Central Department Store) to move towards the Suriwong-Silom area. By the mid-1960s another group of department stores had clustered in the Radjprasong and New Petch area. The next phase saw the emergence of the trade centres, such as the Indra Trade Centre (1969), and Ploenchit Arcade (1970), which focussed activity around the nodes formed by hotels and other services. Such centres were deliberately designed to attract people through the provision of a variety of attractions, including supermarkets and theatres. The complexes developed during this period became very popular with the younger generation of Bangkokians, forming as they do ready-made air conditioned promenades and leisure centres.

The increase of the white-collar work force with expanding incomes encouraged changes in traditional patterns of consumption, while changes in the rhythm of urban life and the development of the suburbs encouraged the trend towards "convenience" or "one-stop" shopping. The shopping complexes, comprising department stores, supermarkets, offices and restaurants expanded in number from the late 1970s. But most of the largest complexes date from the early 1980s, including the larger branches of Central and Robinsons, New World in Banglamphu and the Maboon Krong Centre. While these stores multiplied their branches in the existing retailing districts, a developing trend from around 1983 was for branches to expand into the suburbs, so that today Central has branches in Wang Burapa, Silom, Chidlom, Hua Mark and Lat Phrao with Robinsons maintaining stores at Rachada, Don Muang and

Sukhumvit, in addition to the central area. In the suburbs, the stores form concentrations which draw customers from the surrounding residential suburbs, offering a variety of incentives to attract custom.

## **CHANGING ECOLOGIES**

Larry Sternstein's observations in the mid 1970s that "Bangkok is becoming more Thai", while true in social and cultural terms, explains little in terms of the characteristic built environments of emerging suburban communities. The shophouse form, extended to 4 and even 6 stories in many places and incorporating garages on the ground floors, is still ubiquitous and favoured by many people, since such structures are readily adaptable to so many functions (Santi, 1978). Outside the traditional Chinese streets of Bangkok's oldest trading sectors it is more difficult to classify the mixed population as 'Thai' or 'Chinese'. The observation that a clear distinction could be drawn between the housing preferences of Chinese and Thai people (The former favouring the brick shophouse, the latter the free standing wooden structure) are difficult to sustain, not least because of the emergence of different housing forms (for some generalizations about urban living, see Sternstein, 1974: 117).

Very little analysis has been made of the developing social and physical ecologies of neighborhoods in Bangkok. Anthropologists and sociologists have tended to concentrate on studying the slums, on problem areas, more than the established or growing suburban areas. The bulk of studies are those done by planners and geographers, which tend to concentrate on physical descriptions for policy development, with little social analysis. The few existing studies can be cited here. Eric Cohen (Cohen, 1985) has produced an interesting essay on soi development, using a case study of Sukhumvit Soi 22, which runs between the main roads of Sukhumvit and Rama IV. Aiming to highlight the dynamics of urban change in a characteristic Bangkok ecological micro-environment, Cohen proposed a number of stages of soi development, from 'rural' to 'mature urban'. Spanning the period 1945 to 1984, he traced development from the time when farmers first begun selling their land to speculators (around the end of WW II) through a period of 'uncontrolled urban settlement', giving rise to slum dwellings on rented land, a stage of middle-class housing (primarily in the small sub-sois) and shophouses (at the ends of the soi), to a final stage of business penetration and high-rise apartments. He described this phenomenon as 'lateral urban expansion' from Sukhumvit Road, involving a subsidiary process of sub-soi development.



An interesting point is Cohen's judgment that the soi constituted a 'semi-autonomous ecological subsystem', even though it was never a "socially integrated community" (Cohen, 1985: 19). In common with many sois in this part of Sukhumvit, there is a strong western presence in Soi 22, since accommodation and entertainment facilities are readily accessible. The Farangs comprise both working residents and tourists. Nevertheless the local low-income groups, deriving their livings from vending, transportation services or personal services (laundry work, for example) maintain a strongly integrated pattern of public social life. The middle part of the soi, reported by Cohen to be the least intensively used section, is in fact now the site of a high rise luxury hotel development of 33 floors. It is difficult to generalize from one case, but Cohen's point about the continuing socio-economic heterogeneity of the sois branching from the main arterial roads is worth consideration and further study. High rise condominium development and the continuing trend of prestige hotel and office construction in the Sukhumvit area is creating more homogeneous "privatized" environments in the sois between Asoke and Ekkamai. This will approximate to what has been informally named as the "Farang Ghetto" style, with its combination of apartments, offices and expensive restaurants and boutiques. What began as a suburban outpost of Thai householders in the post WW II period became a dormitory area for western expatriates, later with an added function of entertainment precinct, and still later an eastern extension of commercial activities along Ploenchit. Yet further to the east, in the indigenous Thai suburban sois (for example those branching from Klong Tan and Udomsook) the mixed character of neighbourhoods is likely to remain, so long as pressures for higher income residential development or redevelopment pressures entailing different land-use patterns do not emerge.

Another study, conducted by the Chulalongkorn University Centre for Environmental Research, concerned the process of physical and demographic change on the suburban fringes of Bangkok, Bangkok and Minburi. The study detected 3 existing forms of residential areas on the urban periphery: the dispersed homestead, the riverine homestead, and the slums. The first group were a product of the suburban housing boom, the second were traditional habitations, while the slums had accompanied the new settlement process through migration of the rural poor, or urban poor from the inner districts. Production from the rice fields near the developments decreased as a result of environmental change (pollution of water as well as rat infestation). As with Cohen's study, this research found a high degree of socio-economic heterogeneity in this area undergoing transition (Aurapin, 1978). Research on the process of urban encroachment into farmland and rural communities was continued by Thiravet Pramnanratakarn in his doctoral research on the effects of industrial and residential intrusion

in the northeastern ket of Minburi. In the following decade, an integrated ecological study of Bangkhen reported 'land speculation and land use management were outrageously out of hand', and the district was undergoing rapid transformation. Significantly the study concluded with the recommendation that:

“At present, suburban expansion should be decelerated or alleviated so that land use planning could catch up the process. Excellent agricultural land in the area should be preserved or protected, resulting in reduction of assorted ecological problems arising out of other land use activities” (Twesukdi, et.al., 1986: 81-83).

## **1982 - 1991**

In 1980 Bangkok's population topped 5 million people, with the urbanized area having grown 30% in the preceding decade to 239 square kilometres. Bangkok's level of urban primacy relative to other urban centres of Thailand rose from 33 times larger than the next city in 1970 to 51 times in 1980 (Sternstein, 1982: 107). The influence of metropolitan activity in the central region was far wider than the statistics of urban growth suggested, and limiting the city's rate and extent of growth became the priority for planners. Planning agencies had turned their attention to Bangkok's urgent problems from the middle 1970's, and the Fifth National Economic and Social Development Plan reflected such changes. The national plan aimed to establish a balance in growth distribution between the country's regions and this mirrored the strategies embodied in the metropolitan plan of the DTCP, which stressed decentralized metropolitan growth, conservation of the rapidly depleting agricultural fringe land, decentralized commercial districts, and the limitation of private transport and traffic congestion.

## **THE CONSERVATION IMPULSE**

The Rattanakosin bicentennial of 1982 stimulated much reflection and breast-beating about the future of the metropolis. The 5th plan adopted a policy emphasizing conservation of the old part of Bangkok (at least those parts of Rattanakosin reflecting landmarks in national development and identity) and efforts to further protect historical monuments. As a result, policy for heritage conservation in Rattanakosin was given legal bite with a special ordinance covering the old Krung Thep, restricting land use, building heights and new construction in the old area. This did not prevent the construction of the multi-storey New

World Department Store in Banglamphu. However, a committee of architects and other heritage specialists was responsible for devising various projects of restoration and development. The move signalled the reaction of some professionals and intellectuals to the rapid change occurring in the modern urban landscape of Bangkok, reflecting a broader based, but uncoordinated assertion of cultural and historical continuity in a society increasingly under the sway of western values and social habits. Such a reaction is reflected in the extraordinary creation of an anti-city, the so-called 'Ancient City' outside the metropolis, developed by the millionaire P. Viniyahbhun to express values apparently destroyed by modernization (Muang Boran, 1990). Fortunately, the plans for Rattanakosin have been relatively easy to implement, given the fact that 1) the area is so closely attached to the identity of the monarchy and 2) the old Rattanakosin Island area is not a precinct valued for new commercial development. So, unlike many western cities of the modern age, the old central core has been largely bypassed in favour of more promising real estate. But Rattanakosin Island remains one of Bangkok's great tourist assets, an essential item on all organized tour itineraries.

## **TOURISM**

By the year of the Rattanakosin celebrations, tourist arrivals to Thailand were over 2 million (compared to around 600,000 ten years earlier), and tourists were contributing nearly 24 million Baht annually to the national revenue compared to 2 million Baht 10 years earlier (Tourist Authority of Thailand, 1990). In the 1980's, Bangkok's service sector has been increasingly geared to the reception of overseas visitors, as well as Thai tourists. In the 1980s tourism became the countries' largest revenue earner. In 1984, Bangkok's larger hotels provided nearly 19,000 rooms, over 3 times the number in the country's second largest city of Chiang Mai. From the early 1980's, despite the low occupancy ratios of hotels (largely due to the international recession) the decade saw many new hotels constructed in the central areas of the city. Between 1986 and 1990, large establishments grew in number from 97 to 131 (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 1990). An allied trend, but with a different dispersal pattern, was the spectacular expansion of cheap guest house accommodation for overseas budget travellers. This development which accelerated some ten years ago with the expansion of backpacker tourism, was at first based on a simple process of the adaption of private houses by Bangkokians to accommodate tourists. It gave rise to an alternative spatial concentration of foreigners in the metropolis, particularly focussing on Banglamphu, which offered the advantage of close proximity to central tourist attractions. Today this concentration, which first centred on Khao San Road, has spread east, north and west in the vicinity of the

Banglamphu shopping area. In 1990 there were over eighty guest houses in the district, providing a total of 1,715 rooms. In that year this district accommodated over 238,000 travellers. This phenomenon has led to redevelopment and improvement of some of the area's old housing stock, but more recently proprietors have tended to build special accommodation with facilities including restaurants, travel and related services (TAT, 1991). The experience of Banglamphu reflects world changes in tourist industry trends and patterns of travel among young people, especially from Europe, as well as a process of adaption of small entrepreneurs to the opportunities afforded by this facet of internationalization.

## **INDUSTRY**

In the national economy as a whole, agriculture's contribution to economic growth continued to dwindle and manufacturing continued to increase. The Thai export economy experienced a structural shift, with manufactured products overtaking agricultural goods as major exports, reaching 68 percent of exports by 1989. Following recovery from the slump occasioned by the second oil crisis in 1987, direct foreign investment in Thailand boomed, reaching 7% of gross domestic investment by 1989, with Japan taking over from the USA as the major source (Bangkok Bank, 1985, 1987, 1989). Much investment was directed to export-oriented manufacturing. Over the past decade, annual economic growth in the BMA and surrounding region (expressed as gross provincial product) was almost three percentage points higher than the country as a whole (10.63), with manufacturing and services the leading sectors. Employment grew faster than the rest of the country, with an annual rate of 6.5% in the BMA and surrounding five provinces compared to 3.5% for the Thai workforce generally (Charit, 1993:115). Growth in the industrial sector, now in the direction of export products rather than import substitution, overwhelmingly favoured the Bangkok area, and new industries continued to locate near those services most important for supply and export. By the early 1980s there were some clear locational patterns in certain industrial sectors; for example plants manufacturing wearing apparel tended to concentrate in Klong San, Thonburi and Yannawa, with smaller concentrations in Prakhanong and Sampanthawong. The majority of textile plants were heavily concentrated in the intermediate districts, including Ratburana, Bang Khun Thian, Pasi Charoen and Prakhanong. For many other firms, however, there was a wide pattern of dispersal across the city. The small, family-run firms, which still form the great majority of manufacturing units in Bangkok, made locational choices on a somewhat different basis to more newly established concerns. The locational pattern also reflected the force of older historical developments in the city. As with other aspects of planning,

manufacturing land-use planning had been largely ineffective in concentrating industries in districts (Chatchai, 1984). Although the unorganized character of industrial dispersal remained by the close of the 1980s, distinct precincts had emerged in the neighboring provinces of Pathum Thani and Nonthaburi to add to the existing pattern of concentration in Samut Prakan. In fact the five provinces surrounding the BMA experienced the highest growth rates in manufacturing sector output and growth in manufacturing employment (TDRI, 1990: 38; Charit, 1993: 123).

### **SUBURBAN GROWTH, HOUSING AND PLACES OF LIVING**

As for the pattern of residential development, suburban dispersion had by the middle of the 1980s reportedly reached a limit imposed by travelling times and transport costs. The redevelopment of some inner areas and especially suburban infill in the north, northeast and east, took place. Propositions that the suburbs on the western side should be the site of government and administration lapsed under the pressure of residential development in that area (NESDB, 1986: 5). Fuelled by economic recovery in 1986/7, and encouraged by road constructions, suburban development (led by housing estates as the major vehicle) surged outward again in the west and northeast. Despite an increase in the provision of public housing for lower and middle-income groups, the bulk of residential construction was undertaken by the private sector. Units provided by this sector showed a substantial increase over the 1980s (NESDB, 1986: 36). Yet another trend in the housing pattern was the increase of apartments and condominiums at the expense of detached houses. This accounted for increased population densities in certain areas of the city.

As household composition and size changes, and as prices for land increase, the option, or recourse to apartment living has increased, signalling changes in life styles. The proportion of households residing in apartments increased from 2.6% to 6.2% between 1970 and 1980, and by 1990 this had further increased to 9.7% (NSO, Population and Housing Census, 1970, 1980, 1990). Increasing suburban land prices have influenced the trend to more concentrated patterns of residential land development. Multi-storeyed condominium blocks are now supplying the middle-income market, since the soaring cost of land has forced developers to build higher-density blocks and buyers have been forced to adjust their aspirations, while from the mid-1980s low cost town houses appeared on the market. While condominiums are not listed in the 1980 census, they were certainly emerging as a conspicuous mode of accommodation early in that decade, following the passing of the

Condominium Act in 1979. By 1982 there were some twenty-six condominium projects in progress in the city (2,362 units) and a further twenty-three (4,712 units) being planned. The early luxury condominiums were concentrated around Sathorn, Pathumwan, Ploenchit and the sois of Sukhumvit Road, with cheaper developments occurring in Samsen and Payathai (Bundit, 1983: 176-177; Sakchai, 1993: 9-11). In the later 1980s developers were providing cheap housing on the urban fringe to those households which had benefited from a general increase in urban incomes during the period. Due to increases in land prices in the past two years, however, options for cheap housing have been reduced somewhat, and the outer areas have been chosen by developers for high income housing projects in order to offset price spirals in inner areas. This has occurred in spite of the favourable financial provisions (encouragement of commercial banks and insurance companies to finance development, ceilings on interest rates etc.) encouraging construction in the housing sector (Sakchai, 1993: 15-16). Sophon estimated that whereas in 1991 some 50% of households could afford to purchase a new housing unit, by 1993 the proportion will be reduced to 40% (Sophon, 1992: 48-49). Townhouses and new detached houses now are affordable only by middle and higher income groups. Townhouses and condominiums, while overall comprising a small percentage of total accommodation in the city, are increasing in their share and dominate in certain areas.

**Table 2 : Private Households (%) by Type of Living Quarters & Businesses Used**

Accommodation type	1980		1990	
	LQ	B	LQ	B
Detached House	45.7	25.9	44.4	31.0
Row House	39.4	68.1	33.2	56.1
Apartment	6.1	1.8	9.7	3.6
Room	3.6	1.3	0.7	0.3
Town House	2.5	2.0	9.3	7.0
Condominium	-	-	0.3	0.1

(Source: NSO, *Population and Housing Census, Bangkok Metropolis*, 1980,1990)

The increase in employer-provided accommodation, near or on work sites, is a symptom of economic and work-force changes in recent times, particularly in the industrializing areas of the BMA's outer kets and the five provinces. In 1980, accommodation provided to employees by government and private sectors was about equal, but by 1990 households living in private sector employer-provided accommodation outnumbered

government accommodation by over 10,000. Moreover, almost half of this accommodation was in row house structures of the dormitory type, a clear reflection of the expansion of industry and consequent accommodation needs of the expanded private sector workforce (NSO Population and Housing Census 1980, 1990). Although we lack detail about the levels of distribution of such accommodation and its quality, it is clear from existing studies that the outer districts are housing the greater number of factory workers in dormitories on or near work sites. In addition there are other forms of accommodation such as apartments and single houses. Not surprisingly, the larger proportion of workers living in dormitory accommodation are single females, who make up the bulk of the unskilled/semi-skilled manufacturing workforce, particularly in the garment industries. (De Wandeler and Areepan, 1992: 124-126; Prapasri, 1993: 144-149).

## **POPULATION MOBILITY**

Not only were the housing characteristics of Bangkokians distinct from people in the provinces, but the population was far more mobile. The percentage of households always living in their dwelling was reported in 1988 to be almost half that of the Kingdom's average. Those who had always lived in the Amphoe of current residence comprised just 9.2% of the total urban population, compared to 34.5% for the whole Kingdom. Those who had lived in their Amphoe of current residence less than ten years comprised a proportion more than double that of the national average (44.7% to 18.4%) (NSO, 1988: 80). Current research indicates that Bangkokians continue to show high levels of residential change within the city (Apichat, 1993: 12).

But the nature of urban life in Bangkok cannot be fully appreciated unless we also acknowledge the large number of recent rural-urban migrants and the large numbers of temporary residents from the rural areas present in the city. In fact, it is because so many urban dwellers from the poorer provinces do not register moves of residence that existing data on the urban population is inadequate. Seasonal migration of people from the rural areas to Bangkok during the dry season swells Bangkok's population by as much as ten percent and then reduces it again during the wet season. Such seasonal workers are said to comprise as much as 40 percent of the transportation/production sector in Bangkok, ranging from construction work, labouring and work in small factories (Apichat, 1993: 17). Today, in contrast to the decade 1960-1970, rural urban migration accounts for a smaller percentage of urban population growth relative to the birth rate in Bangkok; nevertheless the continuing

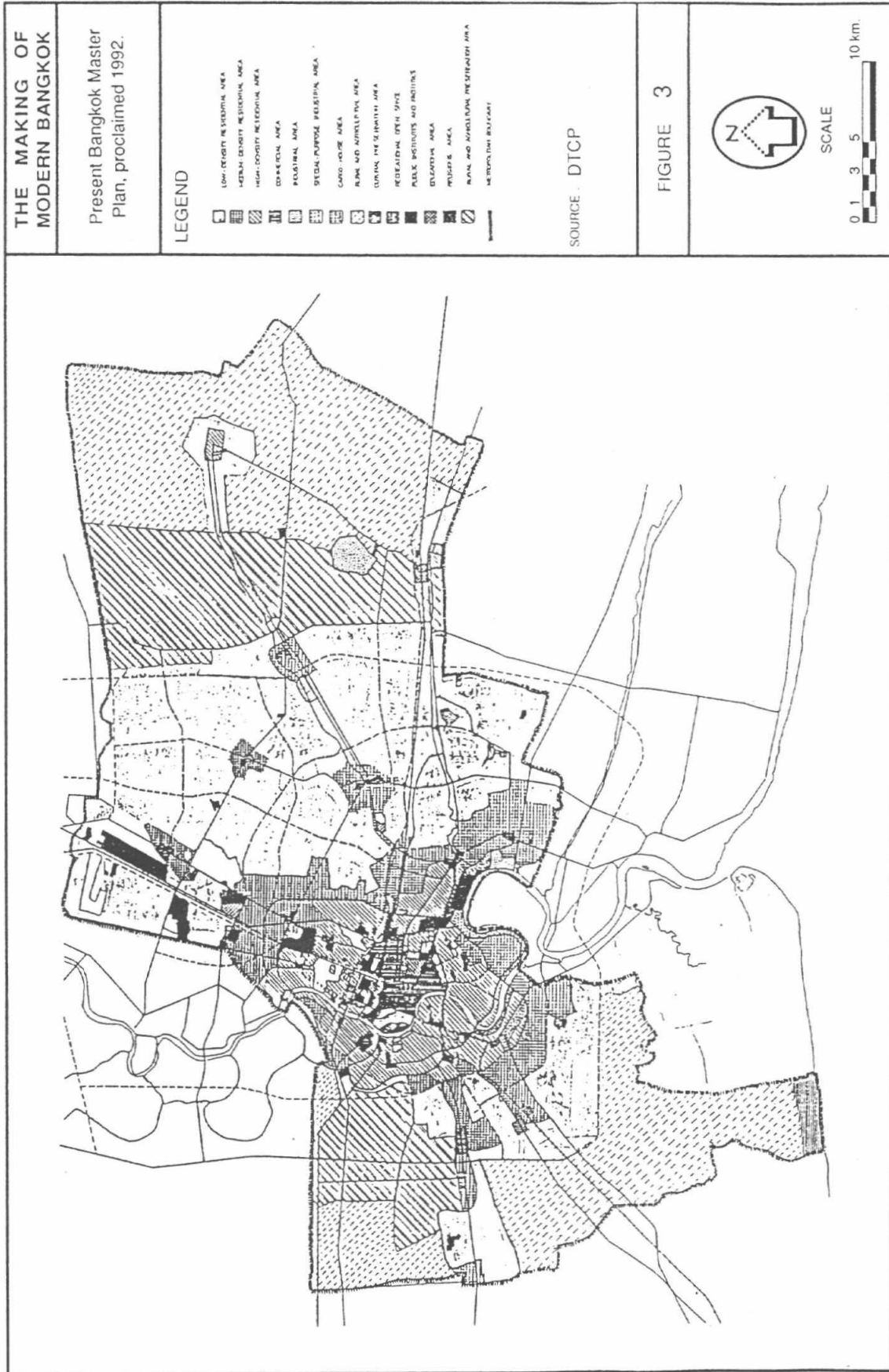
significance of rural-urban migration points to two major facts: 1) that continued disparity in income between the capital and the provinces will act to draw rural people to Bangkok, 2) that the workforce at the national level shows through its mobility a particular quality of adaption to changing labour market opportunities. However it should be pointed out that this market, centering on the expanding outer metropolitan area, is primarily a market for unskilled and semi-skilled labour. How it effects productivity and employer-employee relations we do not know.

We can not be sure about the level of change in rural-urban migration rates in the future (this depends on the scenario we adopt respecting directions of economic and spatial change at regional levels) but it does seem clear that for large numbers of people living in Bangkok, the city is a temporary dwelling place, no matter how significant a working space. This may explain the reason why conflicts and tensions over questions of urban amenity and environment in Bangkok at community and political levels are not as frequent and virulent as they could be: people simply do not regard Bangkok as their home. Bangkok is expedient; but for many individuals and families it is not the locus of meaning or commitment in their lives.

## SLUMS

For the least privileged sector of the population, the early 1980's were not promising. The severe floods of 1983 highlighted the plight of people living in the worst-drained and serviced areas - namely the slum dwellers and squatters. Notably it was the slum settlements along the Klongs that were most vulnerable. The likelihood of eviction increased with the advent of the BMA's flood control measures. A study later in the decade estimated that the intended evictions of Klong settlements in Lad Phrao, Premprachakorn, Bang Sue and Bangkhen would lead to a loss of 5,000 houses (Roovers et.al., 1989: 151-159). By the late 1980's it was noted that the total number of units defined as slum dwellings had decreased as a proportion of total housing, but had increased in absolute numbers. The calculation did not take into account high-rise tenements, factory dormitories or construction site lodgings, many of which offered inferior accommodation to the slums, where upgrading efforts had effected some improvement (NESDB, 1986:40). As the construction boom in Bangkok continues, the latter category of housing may increase. Between 1974 and 1984 an estimated 376 new slums developed in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area. Since such estimates are based on aerial photographic assessment requiring a minimum number and density of housing, it is likely that





the number of slum settlements is greater than this. For example, such estimates exclude 75 slums under bridges (Setchell, 1991).

Development pressures within the city have meant that the informal settlements in the inner city areas are experiencing the greatest decline in numbers, so that between the years 1984 and 1988, a quarter of all inner city slums disappeared. By contrast, in the rapidly industrializing areas outside the BMA, such as Pathum Thani and Samut Prakan, new settlements are being established, although it cannot be confirmed that the new slum dwellers are former residents of inner city settlements, except where they have been re-located as a matter of deliberate policy by the NHA on reserved land (Yap, 1992: 40-43). Claims by some analysts that Bangkok's housing market is responding to the needs of low-income earners has been based on the observation that the proportion of slum housing to overall housing stock has fallen; however others observe that there has been a "densification" of housing within slum settlements that has eluded these calculations, and that extrapolation of slum populations from housing data can be misleading. Given the additional fact that large number of up-country residents fail to register in the urban districts, dwellers in informal settlements - to which Akin (1991) and Sophon (1992: Ch. 4.) add construction worker settlements and other sub-standard employer-provided accommodation - are likely to exist in greater numbers than estimated from formal statistics. The existing growth trend is showing that informal housing settlements are expanding in the outer areas and are associated both with eviction pressures in the inner areas and possibly employment opportunities in the outer areas. The latter judgment must be provisional since we cannot assume that geographical movement in itself implies opportunities in new areas of settlement, especially if it is a result of government agency policy: forced relocation of slum dweller's places of residence to outer areas has in fact jeopardized the livelihoods of numbers of the urban poor, given that places of work for these people have not changed. While the changing settlement patterns are fairly clear, the population and labour market dynamics are more difficult to assess without further information.

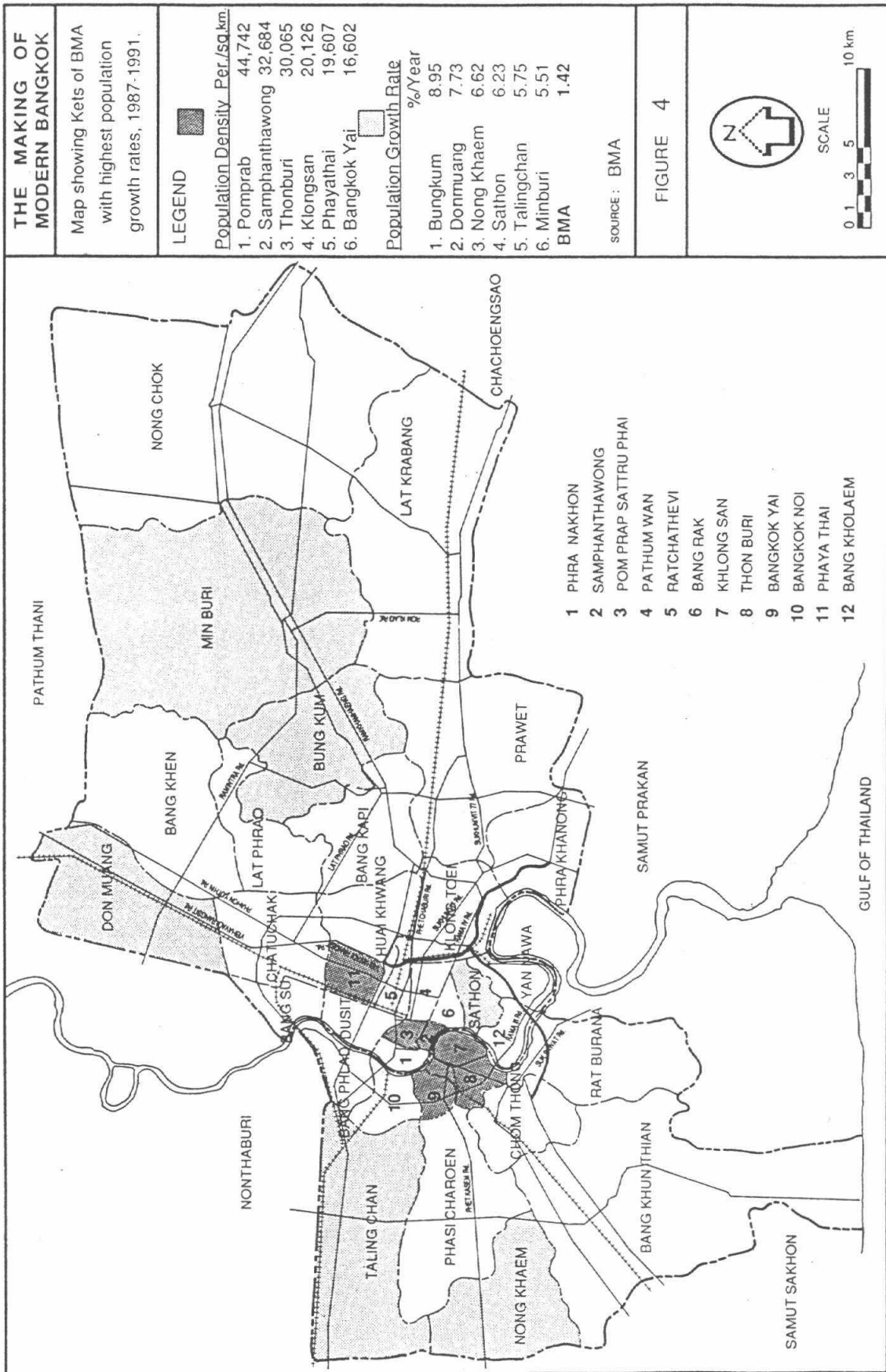
**Table 3 : Changes in Estimated Slum Housing Stock, 1974-1988**

Distance From City Centre (Km)	Change in Units	
	1974-84	1984-88
0-5	+168	-5,999
6-10	+3,735	-5,377
11-20	+13,490	+11,137
21-30	+2,355	+9,028
over 30	1,071	+1,704
Total	+20,819	+1,704

*Source:* Padco-LIF Land Market Assessment, 1990

### FUNCTIONAL AND SPATIAL CHANGES AND CHARACTERISTICS

The NESDB recommendations on metropolitan development for the 6th Plan classified the areas of Bangkok into 5 zones, representing the phases of Bangkok urbanization, from the 'saturated' to the 'rural'. The first 3 were described as forming rings, or 'belts' which shared similar rates of population change and density. Thus the core areas with declining growth rates and high densities were contrasted with the 'slowly Growing Urban' ring comprising Dusit, Phayathai, Thonburi and Klong San. The 'fast growing urban' included Bangkok, Phra Pradaeng (Samut Prakan west of the Chao Phraya River) and Phasi Charoen, to the west. The 'transitional area' included Bangkhunthian, Talingchan, Nong Khaem and amphoes in other outlying changwats (NESDB, 1986: Annex 2-4). The final sector, the 'rural' had attracted concern since the early 1980s, by which time a 'green belt' had been proclaimed. The effectiveness of green belt regulations in the face of the variety of government and authority policies and jurisdictions, and particularly the development interests of private landowners large and small, was already being doubted by planners (Suwattana, 1983). This area, encompassing Nonthaburi in the north-west as well as Talingchan, and Bangkok in the northeast has become prime residential land, with the green belt ordinance ironically buttressing the housing industry's drive for capturing large quantities of land for the middle-high income bracket. The recently accepted Bangkok Master Plan of 1992 designates these areas for low density residential use (See Figure 3). Planners have been arguing for another green belt to be designated, although it remains to be seen whether "green" in any such legislation will be interpreted so as to allow private golf courses to flourish.



Using a spatial model based largely on population densities and growth rates (and even on measures of urbanized territory) does not convey the dimensions of change in the physical environment, or indicate the ways that the areas of the city are developing in functional terms. For example, while population decline characterizes the inner kets of the BMA, these precincts are also the sites of the greatest physical transformation, which is a reflection of investment in new development. For instance, the newly-created ket of Klong Toey, which includes the port area as well as the commercial district along Sukhumvit Road extending north to Petchaburi Road (classified as an inner area), has experienced the highest level of building activity of all kets in recent years (Kiat et.al 1993: 83-84; see Figure 6). Such spatial biases in urban investment, measured in terms of commercial floor space expansion and building permit issues are confirmed by other data such as company and business taxes, which show something of the existing scale of business activity in the commercial zones of Bangkok. With future development constrained in the prime locations of Silom/Suriwong, there is a tendency for commercial development to extend eastward along the Ploenchit area, thus extending the business core along Sukhumvit. Functional changes will also ensue from redevelopment of urban land in the inner area, such as the site of the old tobacco monopoly factory in the immediate vicinity of the Queen Sirikit Convention Centre. Proposed use of such prime public land will be the subject of intense lobbying in the future. In this area there is a recent example of the conversion of government land to public spaces in the Queen Sirikit Park development - on the site of the former Meteorology Department. However, if current strategic planning proposals are accepted, remaining inner sites will be developed for institutional or commercial functions, thus reinforcing an existing trend (MIT Consultants Team, 1993b). So functional changes in areas are masked by demographic indices, if such are considered in isolation.

Discussions of socio-economic patterns based on surrogate evidence of activities can lead to wrong conclusions: such as arguing for an increasing trend towards specialization of functional urban regions on the basis of land-use activity alone. For example, the census data shows a high degree of business activity taking place in residential buildings; indeed there had been an increase in the proportion of such activity in detached homes in contrast to shophouses in the past decade (NSO Housing and Population Census, 1990: 241). Also, population density figures indicate nothing about standards of living in high density areas. Having said that, such evidence remains an important general source which must be used given the lack of local-area occupational and business data. The areas with the highest residential land uses (1986 figures) are the outer kets of Nongjok and Talingchun, the middle

ring northeastern area of Bangkok and the established northern ket (inner zone) of Phayathai. Those with the highest commercial uses include the old central area of PraNakhon, with Samphanthawong (including Chinatown), Bangrak (Silom) and Pathumwan (including Ploenchit). Predominantly industrial kets are represented by the middle district kets of Prakhanong (east), Ratburana (southwest), and the outer kets of Lat Krabang (extreme east) and Nong Khaem (extreme west).

Between the extremes represented by these districts are the many kets with mixed functions. They are distinguishable, and will be further differentiated, by the character and intensity of the demand being placed upon them, which is conditioned by past functions and activities and new pressures (whether from private sector developments or public sector interventions): these will in turn condition the pace of change. Established areas experiencing minimal pressures, such as Dusit and Thonburi, will maintain their existing functions, while the kets of Klong Toey and Chatuchuk, for example, will assume more pronounced commercial and business functions, given investment and building trends pushing from existing saturated business areas. While commercial pressures will dominate in some areas, others will be influenced by government controls and policy: thus the plans for further development of conservation in the old inner parts of Rattanakosin will see the demise of the market in the old Saphan Han area, in order to enhance the historical vista of Klong Ong Ang. Further north, near Banglamphu, a klongside market community in Ban Panthom has been removed to allow for the construction of the first water purification plant in the inner city. And nearby, behind Wat Boworniwet, a small Trok community will disappear due to the wat school's plans to extend its sports field on land traditionally leased by local residents. Close by, a BMA plan to link Dinso and Tanao roads with a cross street will transform the environment of a Moslem community, formerly enjoying relative isolation and quiet in a space behind Rajdamnoen Avenue. The above changes illustrate the increasing strains on small-scale communities and spaces in Bangkok's inner areas, as government and institutions push towards expansion of operations or more efficiency. The coexistence of urban functions and groups, so characteristic of the inner areas of the old Bangkok, will become increasingly difficult to maintain unless policies for community preservation are not pursued with the same zeal as infrastructure improvements implemented to smooth traffic flow.



**THE MAKING OF MODERN BANGKOK**

**FIGURE 5**

Map showing housing estate development and the built-up area, Bangkok 1970-80.

**LEGEND**

 BUILT UP AREA

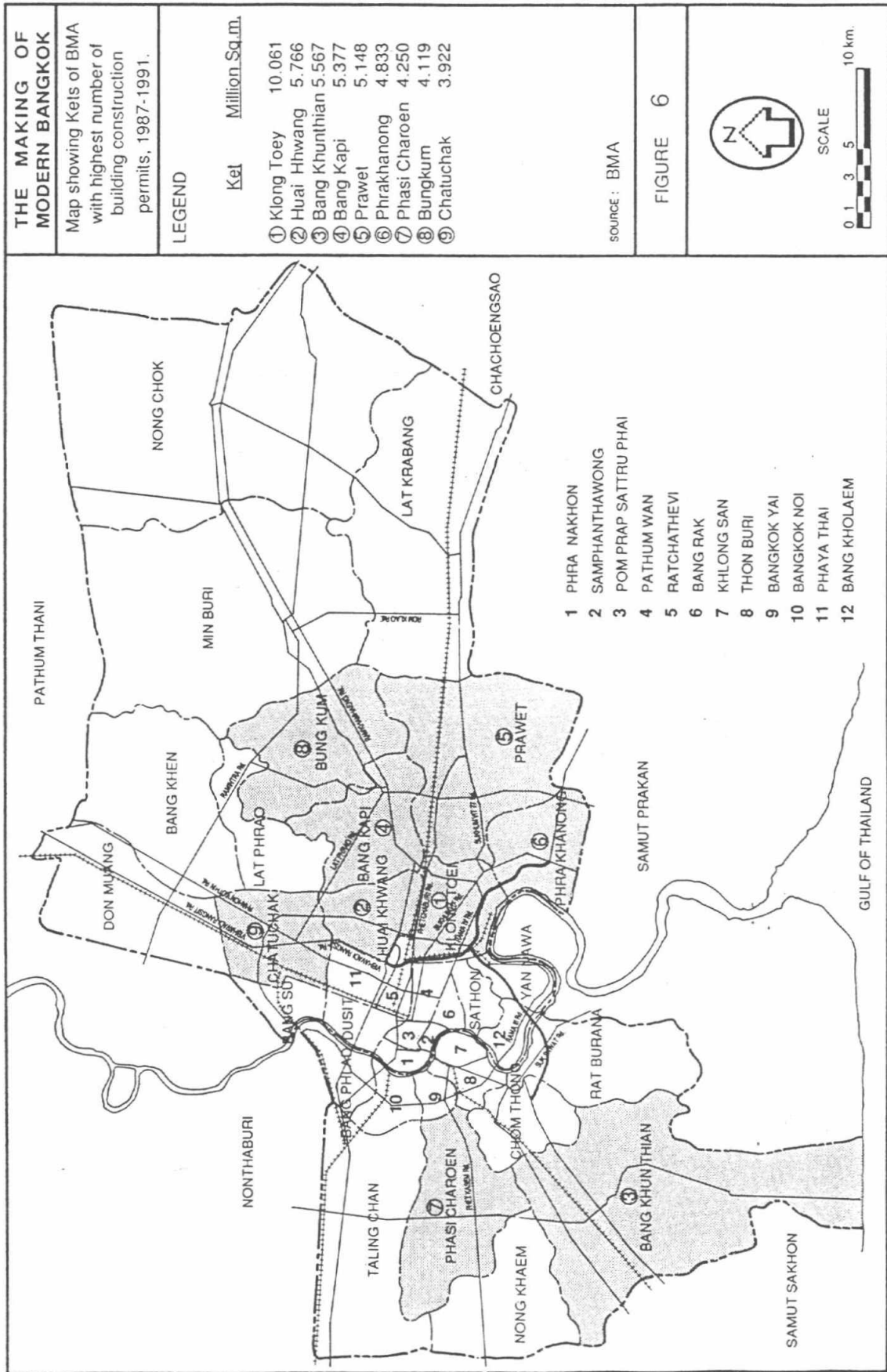
 HOUSING PROJECT



SCALE



SOURCE: Bundit, 1982.

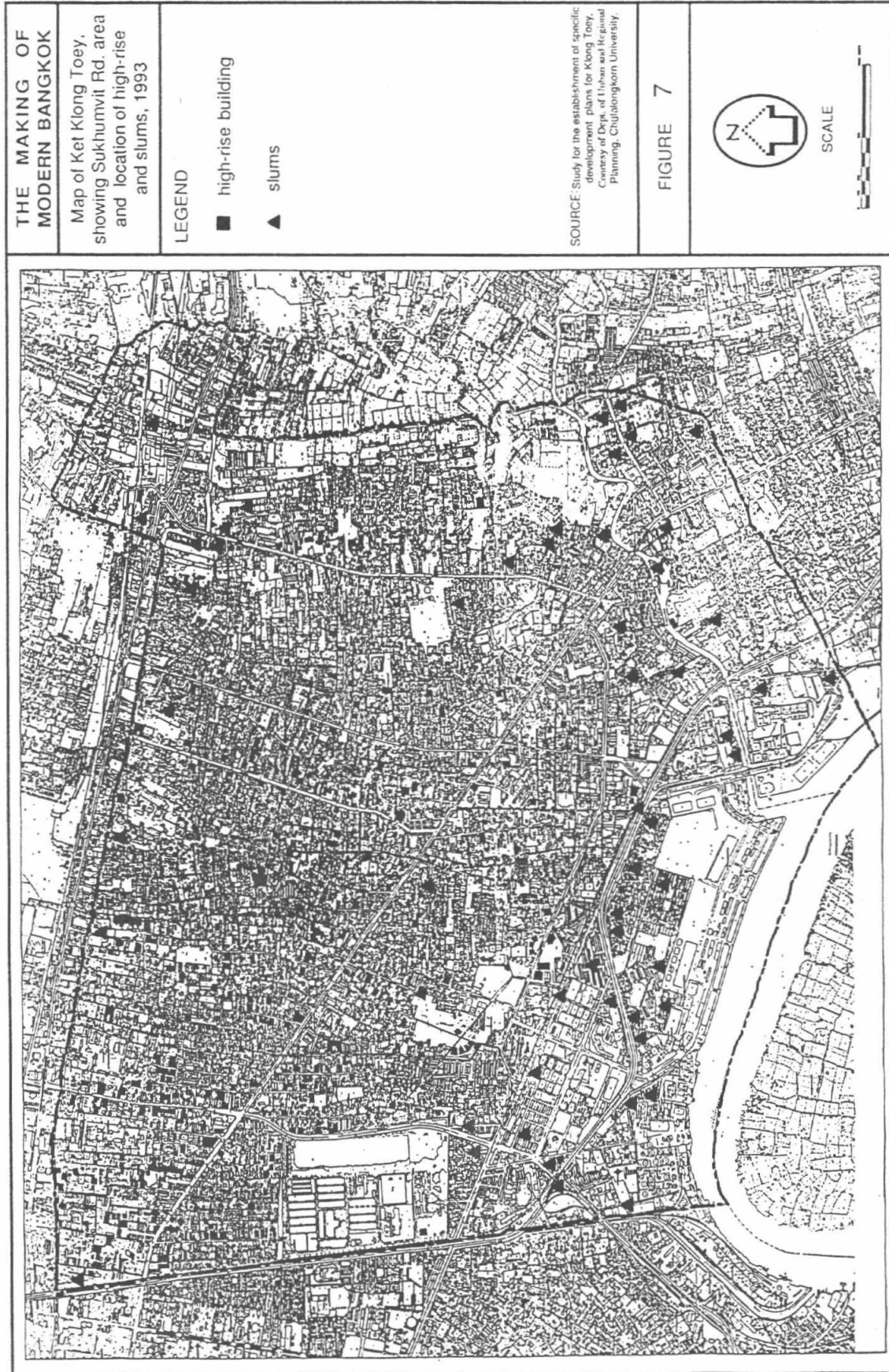




## GROWTH TRENDS AND INFLUENCES

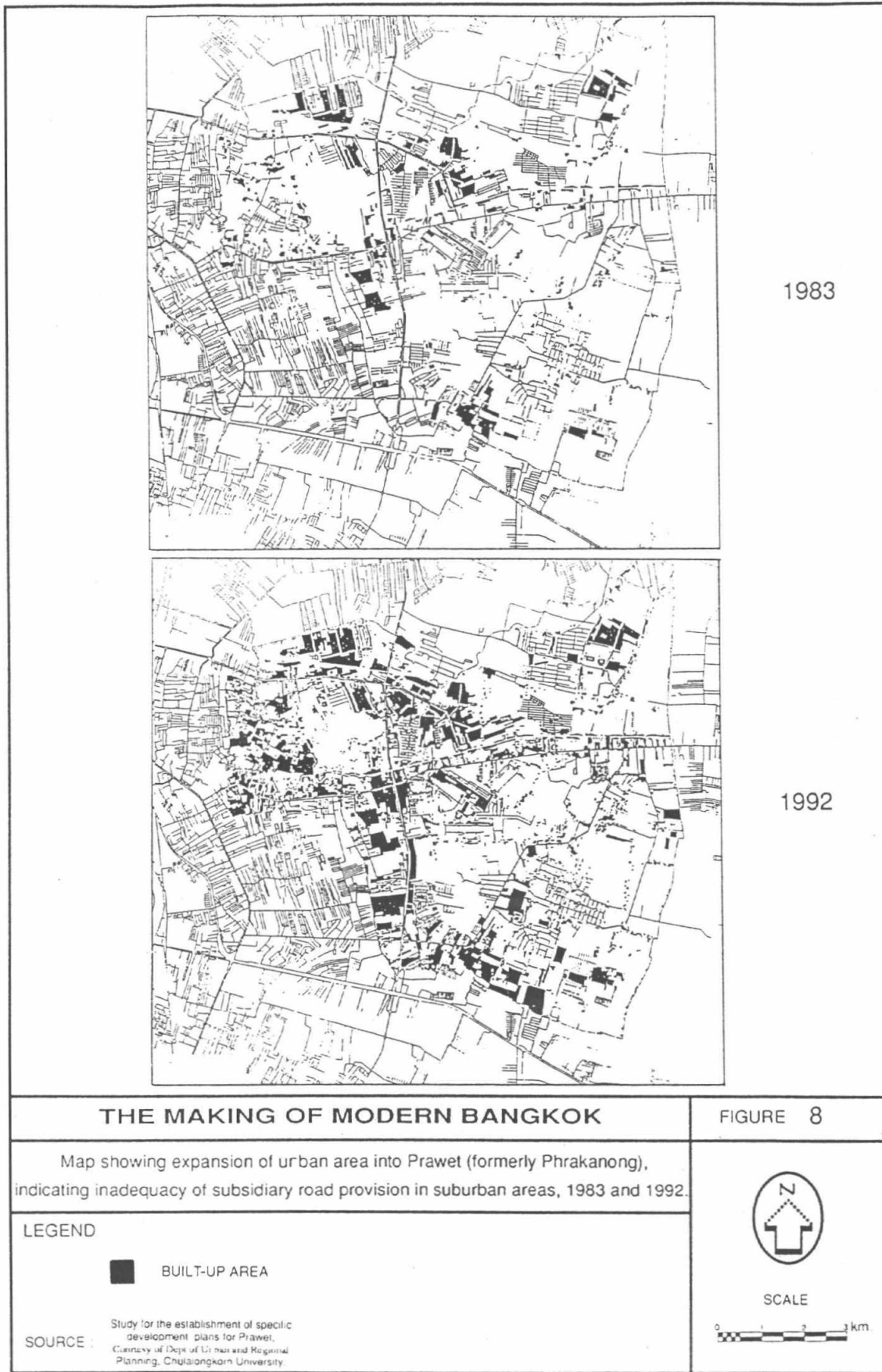
In addition to Ket Klong Toey, the areas presently experiencing high rates of new building construction are Klong San, Bang Khunthian, Bangkokapi, Prawet, Prakhanong and Pasi Charoen (BMA 1991; Figure 6). It is notable that such construction is largely in the housing estate sector, in contrast to Klong Toey, where most development is either commercial or high-rise residential. Factors such as land prices, proximity to services and communication routes, will determine the pattern of housing estate expansion and industrial growth. With respect to housing, the market will be served by further growth of areas with pronounced tendencies in that direction, such as Pasi Charoen, Talingchun, Bangkokapi and parts of LadKrabang, while mixed residential and light industrial areas closer to commercial facilities, services and major traffic arteries, such as Yannawa (Rachadapisek Road) and Prakhanong are likely to experience growth in residential development for the middle-income market. Larger industries will locate outside the BMA boundaries in the five provinces, while smaller industrial establishments will continue to dominate in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area, dispersed throughout the kets in different concentrations, in factory buildings and workshops, or more usually, adapted shophouses.

As noted already, dispersion of activities and status groups throughout the city will be conditioned by an range of inherited factors and new pressures, most fundamentally those which have to do with access and land prices. One analysis of building and activity distribution proposes the simple relationship between proximity to main roads, building types and land uses. Thus in locations close to main roads (the exemplars used are Sukhumvit and Phaholyothin, which account for the bias towards a linear/lateral distribution model) shophouses dominate, followed in sequence by housing estates, then unplanned housing areas and then slums (Tsukasa, 1992: 4-6). While a simple model and open to criticism, this does point to the relation between use and access in determining distribution of activity spaces in the city. So, for example, more than ever the slums that remain in their old locations are those which are marginal to the uses of developers, largely by virtue of poor access and undesirable location. This is clearly shown in the Sukhumvit area where most of the remaining vacant spaces west of Klong Prakhanong are the sites of new commercial and condominium projects, and the remaining slums are those located close to the less desirable areas near the three old klongs: Saen Saeb, Prakhanong and Tan (See Figure7).



Both the state and the market are involved in this process of change. Considered in terms of large-scale processes and the macro-framework, we can note new infrastructure opening up formerly unused or underutilized areas to residential development (the Ekkamai Ram-Indra Expressway for example), while new government projects such as the Second International Airport in Chachoengsao offer inducements to commercial building developers to commence new schemes, thus further stimulating development in the eastern fringes of the BMA. A reinforcement of this trend will be the proposed development of a government centre to house a number of department functions. This recently accepted proposal has been watered down from its first announcement: from a major alternative urban centre to ease pressure on Bangkok, to a site of several divisions of the government service. Nonetheless, it has spurred the existing push to the east. This also reinforces an existing tendency of urban growth towards the Eastern Seaboard Development, a project first instigated in 1981 with the objectives of construct a deep sea port and ancillary activities to serve as an eventual replacement for the international Port of Klong Toey.

What will these trends entail in socio-spatial terms? Population predictions of the growth of the ESB and proximate eastern provinces vary but there is no doubt that it will continue to expand at a higher rate than the BMR average, given existing indicators (Kiat, 1993: 2-3). Much, however, will depend on both government infrastructure provision and, even more crucial, the international environment of the region's economy. For example, recently developed industrial estates to the east depend very much on Japanese investment and industries (*Bangkok Post*, 5 Nov. 1993). Should the trading and investment climate change and industry transfer however, these areas will suffer. Currently industrial estate projects in the Chaochoengsao area aim to make provision not only for industry, but for permanent communities of employees, with services, education and training facilities. We can foresee a number of trends in settlement patterns emerging here - one is the possibility of haphazard development displacing agricultural land in destructive fashion (with the same consequences as for Samut Prakan a decade earlier) and second, the establishment of large settlements of workers in estate-based industrial establishments. And what of the populations of these new areas? Depending, of course, on the character of the industries, but assuming the requirements will be for semi-skilled labour, the industrial workforce will comprise people from the impoverished agricultural regions who now form the bulk of Thailand's highly mobile industrial workforce. Together with these newcomers will be small business entrepreneurs from Bangkok and the immediate region taking advantage of the opportunities created by new markets for retail goods and equipment and services. Local agriculturalists will either



continue existing activities, if already commercialized and viable, or, depending on proximity to the urbanized area, sell land and move away (CUSRI, 1991: 32-35). The juxtaposition of old and new in the landscape and in social terms will occur in Chachoengsao Province much as it has done for areas such as Pathum Thani. The scale of the environmental and economic impact on existing patterns will depend on the way such forces are regulated or channeled.

## **LIVELIHOOD AND ECONOMIC SURVIVAL**

A basic distinction often used in the literature about urban economic systems in the developing world is that between the two sectors, formal and informal. The "Dual economy" comprises a 'formal sector' characterized by contractual relations, formal procedures and training, registration and monitoring by government and relatively high capitalization and an 'informal sector' featuring small-scale, low-capitalized employment requiring little formal education. Some analysts add other criteria to define that large group in the urban working population making a living in small (or micro-) enterprises, such as "high levels of risk and uncertainty" (Igel, 1992: 37). Others have pointed to a range of activities that do not generate profit as such, but characterize the activities of the urban poor in their efforts to provide shelter and sustenance for themselves. This is described as "subsistence production", so-called because it stands outside the city's dominant profit-based system of production (Evers and Korff, 1982). Defined as the production of goods for the producer's own consumption, the actual scale of "subsistence production" in the slums as advanced by those who coined the concept has been disputed (Igel, 1992: 16-17).

Certainly informal sector activities characterize the livelihoods of many of Bangkok's people and are likely to continue to do so, as in the other urban areas of Asia. Attempts to characterize the spatial manifestations of these activities have centred on the slums. While the slums clearly house large numbers of the urban poor engaged in small enterprise, their activities span beyond the slum areas and encompass the city. Igel's economic study of the slums as 'economic survival territories' shows how a large proportion of the slum's incomes derive from outside the settlements themselves (compared with an average 30% of goods and services sold within the slums), and how these micro-entrepreneurs rely on the small-scale formal sector for supplies. Her work shows that the slums and their populations do not stand out as autonomous economic islands of activity within a hostile urban environment. Much as other research shows a high degree of social and occupational differentiation within Bangkok's

slums, her work highlights the integration of slum dwellers into the broader economic order of the metropolis.

So the slums, as earlier studies have shown, rather than being sites of a distinct economic sub-system, serve principal functions as settlements of low-cost and informal housing, often providing benefits of close location to work and/or markets for produce, for groups who may or may not depend to a greater extent than other city dwellers on community resources and help networks for their well-being. The slums as settlements are reducing in number, although probably at a rate slower than official agencies identify. Low-income accommodation options for the urban poor have increased in recent years, making it even more difficult to equate slum housing with the locations of Bangkok's low-income households (See De Wandeler and Areepan, 1992; Sophon, 1992: 43-46). Longitudinal studies of the socio-economic composition of low-income settlements are rare, so we can only speculate as to whether informal settlements, conceived as distinct socio-economic systems, have been drawn more closely into the urban and formal economy over the past decades. Certainly drawing sharp distinctions between the slums and the surrounding city, as is the habit of researchers on the kampungs in Jakarta, is inappropriate for Bangkok.

Igel's research goes to show the limitations of a territorial framework on analyzing economic activity in the urban system. Using the "household" as the relevant unit is more realistic but difficult for the conduct of detailed research into economic behaviour and networks. Statistical studies reveal the continuing importance of unpaid family labour in many households. The conclusions one draws from such data, however, are different, according to one's objectives, that is: - whether one interprets this data as indicating the strength of the household unit from a sociological perspective, or whether one interprets it as a potential problem for human resource utilization in a modernizing urban economy. Or, still, whether one focuses on the role of women, who predominate as unpaid workers in enterprises as contributors to, or victims of, important dimensions of urban production and services. With respect to the use of household labour in small business, it is clearly not only in the occupations characterized as informal sector or areas of employment of the urban poor that family work is important in Bangkok. As long as small enterprises remain an important unit of production and retail activity in the city, the family will continue as a characteristic working unit in the urban economy, both in the formal and informal sectors (Oudin, 1992: 96-7). As for the traditional agricultural household, however, it is clearly declining in importance as the agricultural area reduces in the fringe areas of the BMA (See Table 4).

**Table 4 : Agricultural Households as a Percentage of all Households, Outer Kets, BMA.**

<b>Ket</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>
Bang Khun Thian	10.5	7.2
Lat Krabang	19.7	6.8
Minburi	34.3	9.7
Nong Chock	51.1	27.0
Nong Khaem	14.1	5.4
Phasi Charoen	8.3	3.4
Talingchan	33.2	11.2

Source: NSO, *Population and Housing Census, Bangkok Metropolis*, 1980, 1990

## **TRAFFIC PROBLEMS AND TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE**

From the late 1980s, towards the end of the Sixth Plan period, more effort than ever before was put into planning for future urban infrastructure provision by the state. By 1990, some five years of prosperity fuelled by impressive rates of direct foreign investment, had born fruit in intense land development. Higher incomes among urban dwellers enabled developer housing projects to boom, while private car ownership reached new heights. On the macro-scale, government policy stressed privatization and the harnessing of private sector capital in public works. More than ever, attention was drawn to developing a workable traffic management system. During the Sixth Plan period investment in transport has amounted to about 30 billion Baht, mainly by the public sector. In the Seventh Plan period, beginning in 1991, such investment was expected to rise to 200 billion, with half from private concessionaires, mainly those involved in mega-projects such as expressways and mass transit schemes. The objective was to remove Bangkok's dependence on private transport, develop infrastructure to support economic expansion, promote more efficient land utilization in the growing outer areas and alleviate environmental degradation (Halcrow, Fox and Associates, 1991:6). The component parts of this strategy included the mass transit and expressway projects now familiar to Bangkokians, including the Skytrain and Hopewell systems. These systems aim to straddle Bangkok with elevated rail and transport routes south of the Chao Phraya River to Rangsit and Lad Pao in the north, and west-east from Talingchun to Prakhanong and Hua Mark, linking inner commercial areas with suburban districts and secondary commercial precincts. Studies warned that the mega-projects of private

contractors would only compound Bangkok's problems unless they were coordinated and integrated, and this has proved to be correct (Ibid: 53-55; TDRI, 1991: 107). Conflicts over administering elements of the new system have already arisen between private firms and public agencies, most notably between the Expressway and Rapid Transit Authority and the Bangkok Expressway Co. over the operation and completion of the second stage expressway system (*Bangkok Post*, 31 Oct. 1993).

By 1996 the first phase of the Hopewell scheme and the Skytrain Project are expected to be completed. In the meantime a team of American consultants commissioned by the BMA came to much the same conclusion as the Seventh Plan transport consultants in stressing the desperate need for integration of planning and all systems of urban management (MIT Consultants Team, 1993a: 11-12). Meanwhile the BMA proposal for an underground system to break the gridlock has apparently been slowed, both through rivalry as to which agency will control the project, and uncertainty about whether underground land needs to be purchased or not. In this atmosphere of crisis, independently conceived schemes by agencies to solve the problem also threaten to disrupt longer-term projects for urban development. For example the BMA has cherished a scheme for eventually upgrading the banks of the Chao Phraya River for public recreation and tourism, but recently the Highways Department announced a scheme to build major roadways along both sides of the river to ease urban traffic flow.

Publicly acknowledged as a "national crisis" (EIT, 1993), Bangkok's transport crisis overshadows and subsumes the issues of urban spatial development and environment. It highlights the power of the private sector in shaping the environment and the concomitant weakness of the state in regulating development. For example, the reluctance of private developers to provide adequate minor access roads in the urban fringe areas puts increasing traffic pressure on main road systems funded by government, thus perpetuating ribbon development and wasting land resources. It exacerbates congestion along main routes, which in turn increases travel times. The proposed solution - more regulation of housing and industrial development to incorporate road-access provision - was a commonsense proposal but in the light of the evidence may not be workable given the continuing lack of implementation powers for planning authorities (TDRI 1991: 32-33). It is thus hardly surprising that chronic traffic problems and infrastructure inadequacies have been cited as factors behind overseas investors' decisions to direct their funds to other Asian markets.



## CONCLUSION

We have noted that studies of land use and economic activity in Bangkok are many, yet we lack a treatment of social-economic relations and physical environments at a meaningful spatial level with which to present an adequate composite picture. Within the BMA area the lack of basic occupational data at the *ket* or *kwaeng* (municipal sub-district) level in the published census material prevents easy comparison of basic indicators of socio-economic change in the city. The pace of change in the various activity areas of Bangkok is clearly not the same. We can group areas according to function, age or location and I have already provided some examples. The functional and spatial configuration of Bangkok expresses the forces which are at present dominant in its transformation, in its function both as a site of activities and of profit generation, work and administration.

In the shaping of Bangkok, whether seen as a product of various demands and needs at national, regional or local level, a number of characteristics are clear 1) the market has been the dominant force in the configuration and the production of the city's increasingly intolerable environment 2) through the process of economic modernization, population and spatial change the city has become less and less the environment of "place communities", that is: places where established groups of long-standing occupy an historical territory and establish strong bonds 3) that as a place for living, Bangkok has become less and less tolerable in terms of the maintenance of basic environmental qualities necessary for acceptable and healthy lives of its people 4) that persisting and high levels of rural-urban income disparity have and will continue to ensure continuing rural-urban migration, with a wide range of consequences.

We need not dwell too much on the familiar lament that Bangkok has become a place of selfish strangers - unfavourable contrasts between city and country dwellers were being drawn over a hundred years ago. There is now no room for nostalgia about the lost world of the placid canals and the pleasant, quiet, tree-lined streets of old *Krung Thep*. As in the west, modern urbanization helped to destroy neighbourhood-based economic activities and local-oriented networks and relationships which could not coexist with new economic patterns. In the city, as in the Thai countryside, the space and resources allowing for people to adapt to changing conditions (whether internally or externally induced) have been markedly reduced - take the obvious case of the results of more intense competition for scarce urban land resources. Some fifty years ago a range of spaces and tolerances allowed groups and activities to co-exist in Bangkok, but such characteristics have no place in a modern urban

society where profit and land are of paramount importance. The conditions which formerly allowed for coexistence without management or intervention are well and truly past.

### **"Community" - Illusion or Basis for Action?**

It is significant that the term so important in the rhetoric of reform movements, and adopted for use by grass-roots development organizations in the Thai countryside - *chumchon*, or "community" - should now find its way into the terminology of urban activists and planners (See for example *Chumchon Thai*, 1993). Clearly at first applying only to the people of the slums and their neighbourhoods, the term now, as in the west, is used very much to evoke the moral presence of ordinary people who are the victims of state or market pressures. We need to admit, of course that the term "community" can easily misrepresent, but no more or less than other concepts, such as "national interests". The issues bound up in rural development and resource conservation in Thailand are ideological: necessarily since they involve competing goals and aspirations of socio-economic sectors. With respect to the character of change and conflict in Bangkok there is also the possibility that urban reform will become more ideological. In the past, protest movements have emerged in Bangkok over public transport fares, eviction pressures and displacement (eg. of vendors); with few exceptions, they have not given rise to permanent organizational expressions: they die away when the immediate problem disappears. The case of Klong Toey slum organizations is a conspicuous exception. The stress on community mobilization, so familiar in the west, has not been a tradition in Bangkok, where people manage their most important affairs through informal networks if they do not have the power to assert themselves directly. However, with middle-class activists in the NGOs and various academics becoming more conspicuous and vocal in debates on urban questions, issues of access for poor and disadvantaged groups in the city have become far more public in recent times. The urban intelligentsia may play a crucial role in the forging of a new idiom in urban debates. Take for example the debate over the last few years on the future of the 150-year-old Ban Khrua Moslem community, threatened by displacement through the planned construction of a highway by-pass along Klong Saen Saeb (*Bangkok Post*, 23 Jan., 2 Feb. 1993).

In Thailand, and in the Bangkok region, we are weekly given examples of problems impacting upon urban dwellers: problems involving health and safety, pollution, exploitation, avoidance of regulations, corruption and like matters. Recent statements of regional and world organizations have stressed the importance of decentralization and community

'empowerment': just what that may mean for urban dwellers in Bangkok is unclear (ESCAP 1993a, 1993b). A major theme in discussion on political change has been the emergence of the urban middle class in Thailand. It seems ironic that this group, whose expansion and aspirations have played such a crucial role in the shaping of Bangkok, should not provide a viable base for effective urban protest. Has suburban life exacerbated alienation and lethargy within the middle class, or are its efforts dissipated at other, extra-local levels of politics and protest? As consumers at the household and urban level the middle class seem to have been particularly subject to various forms of exploitation (See *Bangkok Post*, 4 Nov., 1993). Just as recent industrial accidents have pointed to the inadequacies of the state's regulatory framework in a context of rapid industrial growth, so too the high level of fraud and misrepresentation among housing providers highlights the lack of adequate consumer protection in an era of high growth. A current study of perceptions of key urban issues and experiences in Bangkok (Anuchat and Ross, 1992) confirms the severe disillusion of people in different settlement types and social groups across the city with Bangkok's traffic and environmental problems. The suggestion is for placing a degree of responsibility in the hands of local communities to manage their environments. Again the slum community model is probably being used, which presumes high levels of interaction between neighbourhood members and the means for mobilization and leadership, and we can see the success of this in examples of credit and housing cooperatives in some slum settlements (Jensen, 1989). However, this may be totally inapplicable to some groups in Bangkok. 'Community' needs to be applied to more than only slum dwellers: many groups sharing and using spaces and resources at local levels are involved in the maintenance of urban life. Regardless of the differences and needs of various groups, whether in apartment blocks, shophouse precincts, poor settlements or mubanjatsan, there is a need for administrators to be responsive at the local level, and for there to be more emphasis on local level planning in the urban areas; for it is here where basic planning and building guidelines are avoided, to everyone's cost. Partial decentralization is now a reality in rural administration; but whether the same principal can be realistically applied in urban districts is another matter.

### **Urban Reform: New Policies or New Ethics?**

On reflection, the future for people in Bangkok rests as much with an ideological, or ethical change as it does with an administrative one. That is to say, if urban life is to mean more than just survival over the next decades (except for the very rich who can insulate themselves from the worst aspects of urban degeneration) some key changes need to occur in

the attitudes of administrators and urban dwellers alike. If state policy-making retains the same features in the future, then people will continue to be victims of major and minor projects impacting negatively on their working and living environments. In turn, if the private sector is able to continue to flaunt a variety of rules and regulations through whatever means (and payment of corrupt officials is a key issue) then chaos will continue to govern urban development. If ordinary people continue to accept unacceptable conditions until they reach a point of maximum damage, and are unable to voice grievances through institutionalized and responsive, reliable appeal and consultative mechanisms, then the same power structure which sustains the existing system will prevail, albeit punctuated by occasional confrontation and conflicts.

At the higher administrative levels, inherited bureaucratic structures and attitudes which encourage competition need to be either transformed or by-passed in favour of more constructive and decisive mechanisms. Much of modern western urban planning was based, however wrongheaded and simplistically in its early stages, on a reformist and liberal social premise of human improvement. But in Thailand, while commitment to development with equity is well established among individuals in key academic and bureaucratic positions, the dominant bureaucratic culture is not based on a reformist social premise; this is a major issue in the question of directions and management of change in the urban arena. If the "bureaucratic polity" of self-serving and competing government sectors is not transformed, then market forces and large property owners will determine the future shape of Bangkok by default, with planning lagging far behind. It is interesting to note that one of the most constructive forces for urban initiatives has been HRH. King Bumiphol Aduladej. At the present time the power and prestige of the monarchy is the only force capable of cutting through the hesitation, procrastination and competition among agencies which have stifled crucial reforms. Witness the recent proposals of the Thai monarch with regard to solving traffic problems and how they have mobilized action among bureaucrats. That this traditional influence operates for the general good is laudable and the great good fortune of the Thai people; but that a general reformist ethic within the population as a whole cannot act as a complementary support for these Royal initiatives - and in the process probably make them less necessary as emergency measures- is a great disadvantage for Bangkok.

### **The Future: Managing Coexistence**

In the context of continuing urban growth it is likely that activities in the urban arena will be subject to greater corporate surveillance, regulation and intervention on the side of government and management, while a corresponding corporate pattern of representation among groups in the population may emerge, on the basis, for example, of labour organizations. A number of pressures are building to make issues such as health and safety major elements in the labour movement's agenda: this partly depends on external pressures from the International Labour Organization and foreign governments and reform foundations, but also stems from recent examples of the disastrous consequences (the Nakhon Pathom toy factory fire and numerous instances of shophouse factory fires) for ordinary working people when basic requirements are overlooked by employers. On the other hand, there are signs that in the area of community planning a more flexible administrative approach is developing - for example, at the present time the DTCP is piloting a number of land re-adjustment projects, while the Crown Property Bureau is undertaking work in assessing problems and prospects for the nearly one hundred communities occupying its land in Bangkok and developing a variety of programs for encouraging community self-management in informal settlements (Bureau of Crown property, 1991).

At a whole range of levels, the coexistence of various activities and functions combining to constitute the systems of Bangkok will come within the purview of management systems. This will be necessary, first to maintain a level of urban and economic growth which is environmentally sustainable, but also to ensure that such growth does not generate destructive conflicts between economic needs and the basic needs of people to live safe and rewarding lives. The much-lauded Thai love of independence, preference for informal and personal controls and casual flaunting of regulations will, in the urban context, have to be curbed in order to ensure that the environment supports a maximum level of coexistence and a maximum level of self-determination and access at the same time. This may seem contradictory: it is in fact only paradoxical, and the only workable goal. My point here is that some of that independence which Thai people have traditionally valued in their way of life will have to be sacrificed in order to maintain the essence of that life in the urban environment. There is just no room for people to exercise their self-interest with the generous indifference to others that they have shown in former times in everyday life. Adaptability and avoidance of overt conflicts have been the enviable characteristics of Thai society, yet such qualities are now being challenged as never before in the urban arena. Coexistence must now be regulated.

Nor can self-interest and competition at higher levels of administration be accepted. These old patterns are already changing, introduced in most concerted fashion by the government of Anand Panyarachun from 1991 in the removal of key military elements from state enterprises.

Ultimately, the quality of urban life in the future will reflect conditions and structural and attitudinal changes (or non-changes) in Thai society generally. Social problems at the national-level become urban problems when they reach high levels of concentration; the distribution of social assets and benefits in the city will express wider patterns of inequality at the national level in spatial and environmental terms. These will arise from broader processes - demographic changes for example, or trends in administrative change. It is to be hoped that the future physical and spatial shaping of the city will, as the most optimistic plans declare, achieve a sustainable balance between economic and social benefits. That will depend on the relative roles of the state, market and people. Whether the state acts as a mediator or initiator of conflicts, and whether people play a more positive role or remain victims in the process of the structuring of urban space, are crucial questions for the future of Bangkok.

## **TWO SCENARIOS FOR FUTURE CHANGE**

The following reflections on the future of Bangkok as an environment are based on the premise that the coexistence of essential urban activities and the well-being of people are desirable states. That this very simple and basic requirement should become a key issue for mobilization and concerted policy in respect of Bangkok is an indication of how debilitating and negative the existing direction of urbanization has been. The above review has highlighted the essentials of the process and the forces shaping the city; I here propose two scenarios of change over the following two decades to the year 2010 and beyond: they are not policy proposals, rather they depict the probable outcomes of trends I have already discussed, outcomes which will depend on the relative influences and orientations of the three agents involved in the process of urban change.

SCENARIO 1 (Optimistic)	SCENARIO 2 (Pessimistic)
<b>Policy and Management Framework</b>	
<p>1. Commitment at all levels of government and urban administration to a reform ethic favouring positive co-existence of groups and activities, focussing on public health safety, livelihood and well-being of urban dwellers of all levels and tenures and settlements</p>	<p>1. Administrative lethargy. Continuance of band-aid approach to the tackling of urban problems.</p>
<p>2. Positive policy initiatives responding to local level government and community inputs.</p>	<p>2. Allowing market processes to guide development, followed with belated and heavy-handed central gov't pressures on communities as well as unco-ordinated urban infrastructure projects.</p>
<p>3. Harnessing of private investment for public good. Devlp't of policies to reduce subdivision of valued areas.</p>	<p>3. Continuance of trend towards agricultural decline on urban fringes.</p>
<p>4. Creative methods of raising urban revenues in order to fund enhanced urban services.</p>	<p>4. Reliance on old urban revenue sources resulting in further decline of urban services.</p>
<p>5. Conversion of redundant public-owned facilities to community facilities (e.g. parks)</p>	<p>5. Conversion of redundant public land for exclusive private sector benefits.</p>
<p>6. Development of mechanisms for governance and consultation at local levels as an institutionalized process.</p>	<p>6. Reliance on ad hoc consultative processes as problems arise in relation to communities.</p>

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SCENARIO 1 (Optimistic)	SCENARIO 2 (Pessimistic)
<p>7. Encouragement of flexible methods of allowing communities to co-exist with other land-uses whenever possible. Ensuring adequate physical access to services and facilities through developing and enforcing regulations concerning provision of secondary access roads etc.</p>	<p>7. Allowing continuing power of land owners to determine landuses and to rely on the state to provide all key infrastructure.</p>
<p>8. Enforcement of principle of responsibility in environmental management for private sector and communities alike.</p>	<p>8. Persistence of present situation allowing groups and individuals to displace responsibilities for environmental management.</p>
<p>9. Enhancement of powers for monitoring and management of vehicle pollution, industrial effluent and other waste generated by commercial activities.</p>	<p>9. Inadequate management of pollutants. Continuing degradation of the environment. Serious decline in health of urban people.</p>
<p>10. Establishment of powers for land-use controls and zoning at local levels together with consistent enforcement by local officials.</p>	<p>10. Persistence of the contradiction between general urban land-use plans and weakness of enforcement and close management through integrated local plans at ket and transport-corridor levels. Persistence of corruption at middle and lower levels of urban administration.</p>

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SCENARIO 1	SCENARIO 2
<b>Socio-spatial Framework</b>	
1. Retention of viable communities in inner- and middle-ring areas following compromise and mediation via NGOs/administration.	1. Degeneration of low-income inner and middle-ring settlements through lack of support.
2. Encouragement of sustainable coexistence between communities of different economic bases on the urban fringe.	2. Expansion of unregulated settlement, with the effect of increasing land prices, reducing agricultural land and livelihood.
3. Increases in levels of safety, health and amenity in workplaces and rental and employer-provided accommodation	3. Increasing frequency of accident and ill-health in the urban work-force and among households, particularly rural-urban migrations.
4. Increasing power and confidence of households to resist exploitation and manipulation by developers and land owners over problems of housing provision and building standards etc.	4. Continuing high levels of exploitation of new households and home-buyers, through manipulation and false advertising.
5. Reduction of intra-urban travel times, enabling more leisure time; enhanced well-being, particularly of groups who use public transport.	5. Increasing strain on relationships between members of families and households as well as individuals, imposed by long travelling times between residence and workplaces.

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<b>SCENARIO 1 (Optimistic)</b>	<b>SCENARIO 2 (Pessimistic)</b>
6. Increasing levels of understanding, confidence and tolerance within the urban community, laying the foundation for higher levels of participation in positive urban decisionmaking by different groups.	6. Increasing levels of disillusionment with urban government, withdrawal from political participation options: reliance on expedient and extra-legal means to achieve aims and/or survival, providing the basis for the continued dominance in the urban growth process of property interests and vested power groups.

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