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Abstract

Bangkok and the Bangkok Mega Region (BMR) have experienced rapid and compressed development, resulting in complex stratified features. In this study, the characteristics of the spatial restructuring of Bangkok, its driving force, and consequences for the urban lower class are analysed. Macro statistics and raw data for community profiles over two time periods were used, indicating various types of gentrification which might occur in the city. Recently, urban redevelopment projects have been activated, resulting in fierce competition over space. These changes should be understood in terms of the interacting dynamics related to changes in the position and role of Bangkok in a highly interconnected Asian economy, real estate turn in economic development, and the socioeconomic condition of the city. Urban development, aimed at Bangkok becoming a 'global city' that will attract global investors and the affluent class, is now intensifying, placing pressure on the informal economy and settlements which are likely to be displaced, as well as creating hindrances to the survival of the urban lower class.

Keywords

urban redevelopment; gentrification; urban lower class; megacity; Bangkok; Asia

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Introduction

With rapid economic development, Bangkok and the Bangkok Mega Region (BMR) have become global, or at least regional, hubs of production, finance, and consumption, attracting global investors and the affluent class, but at the same time exhibiting a continuous existence of informal settlements.

This paper analyses the characteristics of spatial restructuring in Bangkok and the recent spatial exclusion of the urban lower class in the city. Emerging cities such as Bangkok experience fast and 'compressed' development showing the phenomena and problems of both developed and developing cities simultaneously (Endo and Oizumi, 2020). Recently, the city has been investing heavily in urban redevelopment projects with an aspiration to become a 'global city' while also dealing with 'slum' problems, which are supposed to be a phenomenon of developing cities.

Over the past 10 years, new urban redevelopment projects have been launched throughout Bangkok. These are largely private-led projects that compete to invest in the 'tallest' buildings and 'biggest' shopping malls in Asia. The government is also actively involved in providing institutional incentives, developing infrastructure, and enforcing the 'beautification' of the city to welcome global investors and tourists. Indeed, the government has become a facilitator for the private sector and encourages business-related investments. Under these new urban dynamics, residential and working spaces of the urban lower class, which used to be concentrated in the inner city, are being increasingly pushed out. Competition over space has intensified, and displacement often occurs as a result of prioritising the needs of the affluent class and global actors.

Displacement itself is, however, not new, as it took place earlier, especially during the 1960s to the 1980s in the course of modernisation and urbanisation. The targets of eviction

were mainly limited to squatters and the so-called slum communities of Bangkok during this early stage. Then, forced eviction with violence, once frequent, became rare in Bangkok in the 1990s, along with the increased awareness of right to live in the international debate in development (Endo, 2014; Yap and Leeruttanawisut, 2016). In the 2010s, however, we observed the reactivation of relocation and, in some instances, eviction. This affected not only residents in informal settlements but also street vendors; restrictions on areas where selling is permitted have also been officially strengthened since 2014 (Chaitawat, 2017; Angsuthonsombat and Samantrakulu, 2019). Adding to that, the targets of relocation are no longer limited to typical 'slum' communities but have expanded to include traditional communities in the inner city, such as Chinatown, a famous tourist destination called Khaosan Road, and the old city centre, Rattanakosin. Many, including the media, have begun to pay attention to these new and potential displacement plans on a larger scale from the viewpoint of protecting cultural and historical sites. The term 'gentrification' has begun to appear in articles describing the replacement plan and community transformation of these areas.

Why did displacement become active again in the 2010s? What is the driving force behind it and how does it differ from the early stages of modernisation? How has the space in Bangkok been restructured, and what are the actual impacts on the lower classes? To answer these questions, I suggest that we understand how the following three dynamics interact by considering both exogenous factors and Bangkok's context. The first is how the expected urban functions and the role of emerging megacities such as Bangkok have changed in macroeconomic strategies in the globalising era. The second is how, from regional and city perspectives, strategies as well as the driving forces of urban development have changed. The megacity was formed as a tool and base for industrialisation in the initial stages, but has been transformed into a control and service centre for industries. In addition, mega-urban redevelopment projects have become targets for value creation and economic profit (Shatkin,

2017; Shin, 2018; 2020). Third, stratification within the city calls for the consideration of which actors are involved, whose needs are prioritised, and who will and who will not benefit. Urban dynamics cannot be understood without considering these three dimensions. In other words, spatial restructuring is the result of the interacting dynamics of change in global and Asian economies, the position and role of Bangkok in growth strategies, and the consequences of these dynamics for local residents and communities.

Despite the increasing interest in inequality and gentrification in Asia, many studies on inequality, especially in economics, still focus on inter-regional disparities and the urban-rural divide. Few comprehensive studies have been conducted on intra-urban inequality. Urban inequality, as calculated using the Gini coefficient, however, has been increasing for over a decade in Thailand[1]. In this regard, using national statistics and raw data of communities in Bangkok, this study attempts to capture the characteristics of spatial restructuring and inequality from the perspective of the lower class. To understand macro trends, statistical data from the National Statistical Office (NSO) and Real Estate Information Center (REIC) under the Government Housing Bank were used for analysis. The locational analysis of communities in Bangkok uses raw community profile data obtained from the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA). The BMA and district offices conduct surveys of registered communities every year to update the residents and housing profiles. The information from qualitative interviews with the residents in two communities which have been my long-term research sites for 20 years, as well as government institutions and NGOs, are also used to clarify the actual situation on the ground.

[1] The Gini coefficient is a widely used measure of economic inequality, reflecting the distributions of income and consumption (expenditures). It takes a value from 0 to 1, with greater inequality indicated by values closer to 1. Regarding Thailand, inequality in Bangkok began to increase from the mid-2000s. The Gini coefficient started to exceed the national average during the same period. In detail, Bangkok's Gini coefficient rose to 0.51 in 2011, whereas the Gini coefficient at the national level has started to ease slightly (0.48) (NESDB, 2015). In recent years, however, it is showing a fluctuating trend. From the mid-2010s, inequality both nationally and in Bangkok has gradually declined.

The rest of the paper has four sections before reaching its conclusion. The first section reviews theoretical and empirical approaches to understanding recent urban dynamics and gentrification in the Global South by focusing on the three dimensions mentioned above. The second section clarifies the characteristics and background of Bangkok's accelerated urban restructuring and displacement. The third section clarifies the characteristics of residential space restructuring and suggests potential impacts on the lower class. The fourth section uses the raw data of community registration profiles and case studies to further investigate the actual impacts.

Asian Megacities in the 21st Century

Emergence and development of Asian megacities and megaregions

East and Southeast Asian cities have experienced rapid and compressed development (Goto, Endo and Ito, 2020; Shin, Zhao and Koh, 2020; Whittaker et al., 2020). As globalisation progressed, Asian megacities first emerged as export-oriented production centres of the world with specialised industrial clusters on their outskirts, and more recently have become major nodes in global value chains (GVCs), connecting and agglomerating the fragmented processes and functions that are highly dispersed geographically across borders (Endo and Oizumi, 2020, p. 252; also see Choe and Roberts, 2011; Scott, 2001; and Yeung, 2002). Megacities are now not only production centres, but also service centres coordinating complex networks of economic activities. Thus, the development pattern as well as changes in Asian megacities should be understood as an interacting dynamism of exogenous factors which drive the growth of the Asian economy and domestic factors such as urban socioeconomic conditions.

The rapid and 'compressed' development of Asia raised East and Southeast Asia to the

position of the growth centre of the world in the 21st century. In fact, the driving forces of the Asian economy are networks, not of countries, but of these megacities and regions[2], which are connected to globalised production networks (Florida, Gulten and Mellander 2008; Endo and Oizumi, 2020). Thus, economic concentration in the city is prominent. Douglass (1995), for example, highlighted the characteristics of Southeast Asian cities as follows: First, 'polarisation of development in megacities' (pp. 48–50), mainly in the capital city, and second, the emergence of mega-urban regions on the outskirts of these megacities. The economic concentration in megacities and regions remains high in both East and Southeast Asia. For example, in 2010, approximately 20% to 30% and 30% to 65% of GDP were concentrated in megacities and regions, respectively (IDE-JETRO 2015, Endo and Oizumi, 2020)[3].

Two-step compressed development of Asian megacities

It is important to understand that the features of 'compressed' development, either in terms of the development of Asian countries or megacities, have been changing over time. In the 20th century, private-led investment and directives of the developmentalist state enabled the rapid economic transformation of East and Southeast Asian countries (Suehiro 2008; Asian Development Bank, 2020; Goto, Endo and Ito, 2020). Each country had a comparative advantage in specific industries, and the export of specialised products generated highly connected intra-regional trade patterns in Asia. The 'compressed' development in this context

[2] Mega cities are defined by United Nations (UN) as those cities with more than 10 million inhabitants (see World Urbanization Prospects). Megaregions are formed with industrial clusters expanded to surrounding areas of these megacities.

[3] For example, Tokyo and its metropolitan area (Tokyo, Kanagawa, Chiba, and Saitama) produced 18.4% and 32.4% of Japan's GDP, respectively, in 2010; Beijing alone accounted for 3.5% of China's GDP, while the Yangtze River Delta mega-regions (Shanghai, Jiangsu Province, and Zhejiang Province) produced 21.5% of GDP. Similarly, shares for Seoul and its mega-region were 23.2% and 47.8%, respectively, of the Republic of Korea's GDP; those for Bangkok and its mega-regions were 29.1% and 66.2%, respectively, of Thailand's; and those for Manila and its mega-regions were 23.5% and 51.1%, respectively, of the GDP of the Philippines (IDE-JETRO 2015, Endo and Oizumi, 2020).

referred to the rapid, time-compressed catching up of the industrial transformation of late-comer countries (Watanabe, 1986; Whittaker et al., 2020). The state also played an active role in prioritising urban area and investing in infrastructure and industrial estates to support industrialisation (Asian Development Bank, 2020). The 'developmentalist city' of East Asia appeared at specific timing of this industrialisation and development stage (Doucette and Park, 2019). The 'fast urbanism' of Asian economies was possible as a conjuncture of a specific form of governance by the developmental states, welfare policies, and macroeconomic conditions, and was enabled in specific historical-geographical conjunctures (Shin, Zhao and Koh, 2020).

In the 21st century, however, the international division of labour has increasingly taken place within industries, marked by a shift to process- or task-based divisions (Goto and Oizumi, 2020, p. 37). As ICT and new production technologies have developed, the cost of the fragmentation of production processes has reduced. Different production processes are distributed across borders, according to their competitiveness. Megacities are not only production centres of industrialisation, but have also become nodes of GVCs. Industrial clusters with similar processes and functions were concentrated in the same location, and urban networks became tighter and more complex.

This has caused qualitative changes in the compressed development of Asia. As the economy grows, for upper-/middle-income countries[4] the main economic policy target has shifted from 'catching up' with advanced industrial countries to avoiding the middle-income trap (Yusef et al., 2003; Gill and Kharas, 2007; Kholi et al., 2012) by climbing up ladders and grabbing knowledge-intensive functions (for example, research and design, product design, and marketing), thereby adding higher value in GVCs (Goto, Endo and Ito, 2020)[5]. Megacities

[4] Thus far, only newly industrializing economies (NIEs), which include Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, have succeeded in upgrading themselves to higher income countries according to World Bank criteria. China and Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia are upper-middle income countries under the World Bank's definition.

[5] This no longer concerns only about the speed of catching up, but also 'out-of-sequence' sectoral change

are also becoming service and innovation centres that connect multiple functions.

How are these qualitative changes in compressed development reflected in urban development policies? With the aim of transforming from an assembly-based production centre to a regional hub, not only early comers such as Singapore, where the aspiration to become a global city appeared as early as the 1970s (Yeung, 2002), but also emerging cities such as Shanghai, Bangkok, and Jakarta are now trying to grasp the regional management functions in GVCs. Another important change is that, throughout this two-step 'compressed' development, endogenous growth factors increased their influence on regional economies within territorial borders. Decisions on the locations of specific production processes for various types of manufacturing are often made by multinational firms as part of their GVC management (Coe et al., 2004; Humphrey and Schmitz, 2004; Gereffi, Humphrey and Sturgeon, 2005; Goto, Endo and Ito, 2020). Coe et al. (2004) point out that regional development in the era of deepening global production networks depends on the ability of 'strategic coupling' mechanisms among the needs of trans-local actors coordinating GVCs to facilitate the process of value creation, enhancement, and capture (also see Scott and Storper, 2003, and World Bank, 2020).

Because of this unique position of the Asian megacities in economic development, many Asian countries are expanding their economic strategies, which range from strengthening the industrial competitiveness of specific manufacturing sectors to focusing more on the competition, to make their cities more 'global', more attractive for investors, and more economically competitive.

(Whittaker et al., 2020) and 'leap frogging' (Goto, Endo and Ito, 2020, pp. 252–253) development becoming possible and inducing fierce competition for both multinational and domestic capital.

The real estate turn of Asian megacities

As cities become focal points of articulation in the new global economy, significant changes occur in the internal structure of cities as well as the spatial patterns of human settlements (Yueng, 2002). Real estate and financial institutions have found new business opportunities in response to the expanding demand for high-rise office buildings in the management, financial, and service industries, as well as for expatriate residents. Property-led development and speculative investments have rapidly transformed the built environment of the cities (for example, for the case of Seoul, see Shin, 2020). Adding to supply side changes, as Asia became richer and its purchasing power increased, developers and governments found further business opportunities in urban redevelopment. Megacities are not only a tool and a base for industrialisation but have also become the object of the creation of a new economic surplus. The rise of neoliberal market-friendly and consumption-oriented processes of urban development has gradually become more influential (Doucette and Park, 2018). Real estate has become the main source of not only public finance and business profits but also asset accumulation for individuals (Shin, 2018). Urban real estate megaprojects, including office complexes, shopping malls, high-rise condominiums, transportation, and highways, are aggressively changing the urban landscape of Asian cities to facilitate the circulation and accumulation of capital. Domestic and global surplus capital flows into mega real estate projects. This 'real estate turn' (Shatkin, 2017) of the 21st century can be observed widely in many Asian megacities. In addition to high-rise condominiums, gated communities for the middle class have appeared in the suburbs of many cities[6] (for example, see Askew, 2002, for

[6] Under the developmental state in the 20th century, countries such as Japan and Singapore implemented public housing schemes for wage workers (Suehiro, 2008), but this type of life-related infrastructure was left to the market in other Southeast Asian countries. The shortage of affordable housing for the poor has been one of crucial urban problems, but at the same time, the middle class was also dissatisfied with the shortage of well-equipped infrastructure. Private-led projects to construct gated communities, therefore, invested in both housing and amenities.

Bangkok and Ortega, 2016, for Manila). It is important to note, however, that displacement and gentrification are now widely observed in many cities along with these projects but are often disregarded by policymakers.

The difficulties and dilemmas of urban management in the globalising era reflect a conflict between policies to strengthen urban competitiveness and decrease inequality, since the former tends to prioritise the needs of global investors, while the latter tends to require the regulation of speculative development to protect the well-being of local residents (Endo and Oizumi, 2020). To make cities more liveable and sustainable for different classes, we need to understand the highly complex dynamics of the interactions of the global and urban economy, as well as the local context, by locating gentrification in broader urban processes and also in the context of uneven development (Shin, 2018). The following section examines the characteristics and background of Bangkok's urban restructuring process.

The Making of Bangkok as a 'Global City'

From production centre to a 'global city'

Bangkok has been transformed from a production centre to a service centre in a similar way to other cities. Bangkok is the only megacity in Thailand, with a population of approximately 10 million (approximately 15% of the national population) in 1% of the country's land area. According to national Gross Provincial Product (GPP) statistics, 45.3% of manufacturing output was concentrated in Bangkok in 1985, but the share decreased over time as follows: 19.4% (1995), 15.3% (2013), and 14.5% (2019) (calculated from NESDC/NESDB for each year). The industrial base for manufacturing, however, shifted to the outskirts of Bangkok, first to the surrounding five provinces (Samut Prakan, Pathum Thani, Samut Sakhon, Nakhon

Pathom, and Nonthaburi), and, more recently, to an additional six neighbouring provinces (Chon Buri, Chachoengsao, Rayong, Prachin Buri, Saraburi, and Phra Nakhon Sri Ayutthaya). Despite the government's long-term policy of providing intensive investment in provinces in other regions, both multinational companies and domestic conglomerates prefer to remain close to Bangkok. Approximately 80% of industrial estates are located in the BMR[7] and continued to produce approximately 80% of the GPP in manufacturing in the 2010s (Endo, 2016).

Table 1 Policy agenda of Thailand

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Period</th><th>Economic agenda</th><th>Role/function of Bangkok</th><th>Social agenda</th></tr>
<tr><td>Until 1990s</td><td>Post war~1990s</td><td>Catch-up industrization</td><td>Production center</td><td>Poverty</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">2000s~</td><td>2000s~</td><td rowspan="2">Middle income trap, Climing up ladder in global value chain</td><td>Hub of global connectivity and industrial cluster</td><td rowspan="2">Inequality</td></tr>
<tr><td>Around 2015~recent</td><td>Financial and service center, (Aiming to be) global city</td></tr>
</table>

Source: Made by author.

As for the service sector, Bangkok alone produced almost half (48.9%) of the GPP in 2019. Interestingly, several service industries show a high ratio of GPP for Bangkok, suggesting that urban functions are still concentrated in Bangkok. For example, professional services for economic activities and society such as 'professional, scientific and technical services' (85.5%), 'information and communication' (74.3%), and 'administrative and support services activities' (58.4%) as well as services for urban consumption such as 'accommodation and food service activities' (55.5%) and 'arts, entertainment and recreation' (64.4%) show a higher ratio than the Bangkok average for the service sector as a whole. Regarding 'finance and insurance activities', 60.0% were conducted in Bangkok (calculated from NESDC, 2019). The share of 'real estate, renting and business activities' has increased over time, from 55.4%

[7] Bangkok and the surrounding 11 provinces mentioned above. Thailand has a total of 77 provinces.

(1995) to 56.6% (2013) for Bangkok and 68.7% (1995) to 77.7% (2013) for the BMR (Endo, 2016). However, we could not analyse the changes after 2014 in a time series because of changes in the statistical categories. Nevertheless, in the new definition of 'real estate activities' in the 2019 edition, one-third of the GPP of the whole country is produced in Bangkok[8].

Table 1 shows the shifts in the policy agenda over time. Following the footsteps of the economic success of NIEs, Thailand went through rapid and compressed development with an increase in FDI. For example, Thailand became the centre of Southeast Asia's automotive industry, with major clusters located in the BMR (Coe et al., 2004; Endo and Oizumi, 2020). Recently, the government has been trying hard to attract knowledge-intensive functions as well as high-tech industries. One of the symbolic gear changes was the revision of incentive policies for industrial investments outside the BMR, with the policy orientation shifting from reducing inter-regional inequality to prioritising investment in Bangkok and the BMR. In 2015, former Deputy Prime Minister Somkid emphasised the importance of focusing on Bangkok and the BMR and strengthening their management functions and economic competitiveness to upgrade the country's position as a regional hub in the global economy (Endo, 2016; Endo and Oizumi, 2020). Such an emphasis was a response to Thailand's weak economy: Despite being a GVC production hub, Thailand nonetheless faced a lower growth rate during the 2010s than the ASEAN average. To return to the growth track, policymakers strongly believed that Thailand should upgrade and grab higher value-added functions in GVCs. Therefore, Bangkok has once again become a key area in economic development strategies.

The shift in strategies for the macroeconomy provided a tailwind for developers and

[8] The category of 'real estate, renting and business activities' has been divided and incorporated into five new service categories set up in the 2019 edition of GPP. In 2013 edition, 'real estate, renting and business activities' in 2013 was 502.7 billion baht for Bangkok (56.6% of the whole country), but according to the revised category of the narrow definition of 'real estate activities' in the 2019 edition, it accounts for only 74.8 billion baht in 2013 (23.4% of whole country). In 2019 edition, the remaining values are divided up and counted in five new categories. Data up to 2013 and from 2014 onwards are thus not comparable. However, this increase of categories indicates a growing trend in the real estate and related industries.

other actors actively promoting and seeking business opportunities in real estate projects. The aspiration to be a 'global city' brought Bangkok into global urban competition. To attract the management functions of multinational firms and global investors, the city must compete not only with emerging cities such as Shanghai, Jakarta, and Manila but also with advanced cities such as Tokyo, Hong Kong, and Singapore in Asia. The Bangkok Metropolitan Authority (BMA) launched city beautification policies, including the construction of a riverside walk along the Chao Phraya River, with the eviction of vendors and communities during the same period (Chaitawat, 2017; Huabcharoen and Ellsmore, 2017; Angsuthonsombat and Samantrakulu 2019). However, the shortage of housing for the lower class and the lack of sufficient infrastructure remain unsolved (Yap and Leeruttanawisut 2016; Marohabutr, 2019; Endo and Oizumi 2020). Thus, accelerated urban redevelopment has added new problems to long-existing urban problems, causing tensions among different actors.

The urban restructuring of Bangkok in the 2010s

The new characteristics of urban restructuring, especially in the 2010s, are as follows. First, private enterprises competitively launched new construction plans for the 'highest' building, the 'largest' shopping floor, and so on, with the aspiration of becoming a global city. The scale of projects became much larger, and the heights of buildings were much higher than those in the earlier stages[9]. For example, the tallest building was the Biyoke Tower (309 metres), which was completed in 1997. In the 2000s, several more buildings with heights exceeding 200 meters were built; however, Biyoke was still the tallest building in Bangkok. In the 2010s, however,

[9] Historically, the first phase of urban restructuring was from the late 1980s to the early 1990s. Along with the increase in density, the number of high-rise buildings rapidly increased in the early 1990s. With land price increases and deregulation in urban planning, the focus of housing developers also shifted from town housing to condominiums. During the period 1989–1993, new condominiums for office and residential use registered almost 20,000 units as an annual average. In contrast, the corresponding figure was only 596 units in 1981 and 5,017 units in 1983 (Shigetomi, 1998, pp. 112–113).

many developers announced construction plans for the 'highest' building in Bangkok, some of which have been completed and some are still under construction. To name a few, King Power Mahanakhon was opened in 2016 (314 metres), Iconsiam, on the riverside, in 2018 (318 metres), and Landmark Waterfront in 2018 (305 metres). Competition has not yet stopped. In 2014, a private developer, G Land, announced a plan to construct a 615-meter (125-floor) high-rise building named 'The Super Tower', the tallest building in Asia, by 2019[10]. G Land merged with another company in 2018, and its construction plan is under revision but has not yet been suspended. The actual record will soon be revised by the Thai conglomerate TCC Assets, whose city-centre 'One Bangkok' is the largest real estate project in the history of Thailand, with a budget of 120 billion baht[11]. The main building, with a height of 436 metres, is expected to open by 2022. In addition to height, companies compete endlessly in terms of size. Shopping malls compete for the largest floor areas, in both the inner city and suburbs. For example, Asiantech (2012) and Iconsiam (2018) opened malls on the riverside, the latter of which has a shopping floor area of approximately 520,000 m^2, the largest in Bangkok. The total shopping floor area of Bangkok already exceeds that of Tokyo, although Bangkok's land area is 70% of that of Tokyo[12]. Not only were there private-led projects, but the government also joined this competition. The new central station, Bangsue, for the state railway, was presented as a hub connecting ASEAN. The main station building has the largest width (660 meters) in the ASEAN (Endo, 2021). In these projects, terms such as 'super', 'mega', 'grand', and 'icon' are often used, and the promotion of these projects uses terms such as 'world class' and 'global' in their advertisements.

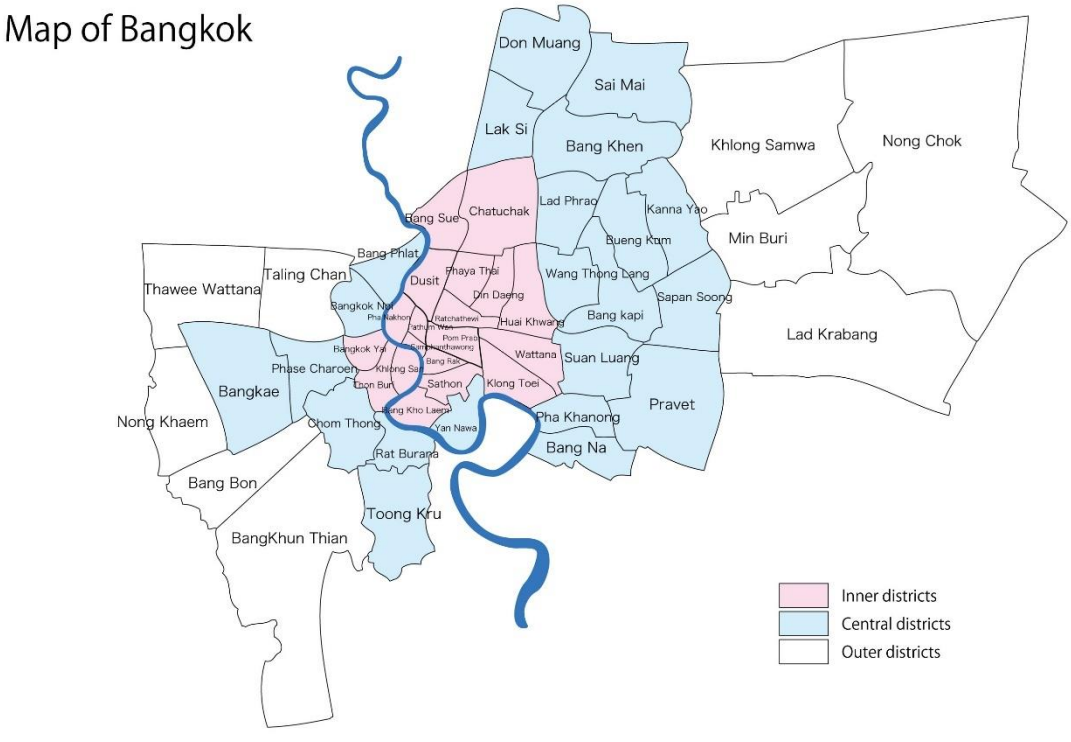
[10] The official promotion video is available at YouTube. https://youtu.be/Q3uNfFVDvYE

[11] Official website: https://onebangkok.com/#info-lightbox; see also Nikkei Asia (2019).

[12] According to Colliers (2019), Bangkok's total sales floor (shopping malls, hypermarts, and department stores) was 6.5 million m^2 in 2019. In contrast, according to Tokyo Metropolitan Government data, the total floor space of department stores and wholesale supermarkets is 1.5 million m^2 (Endo, 2021). Adjusting for data criteria differences, Bangkok's shopping floor area is 30% larger than that of Tokyo (estimate by Nikkei Newspaper, 2018).

The second characteristic is the increase in mega-real estate projects with mixed use. Bangkok is witnessing an increasing trend of building mega real estate projects, office complex clusters, high-end condominiums, shopping centres, and luxury hotels, a trend shared with other Asian cities (see Shatkin, 2017). For example, 'One Bangkok', mentioned above, is a project with five office buildings, five hotels, three condominiums, a shopping centre, and cultural facilities covering 16 hectares in the Sathorn District (see Map), the financial centre of the city. However, we can find a similar project just on the other corner of Lumpini Park in the same district. The developer, Dusit Tani, is now renovating its hotel and constructing a Dusit Central Park with an office building and two condominiums. In addition, the Port Authority announced a mega real estate project through a private-public partnership (PPP) in the adjacent

Figure 1. Map of Bangkok



Source: Map is from BMA, edited by the author.
Note: The map uses the official administrative divisions of Bangkok, consisting of the inner city, intermediate (central), and city fringe (outer) districts as of 1996 for comparison purposes. Although there were 38 districts at that time, by 2006 the number of districts had increased to 50 due to redistricting. Districts reflect the divisions as of 2021.

district, Klong Toey, aiming for a launch in 2022, with a high-rise smart community of 28 floors,

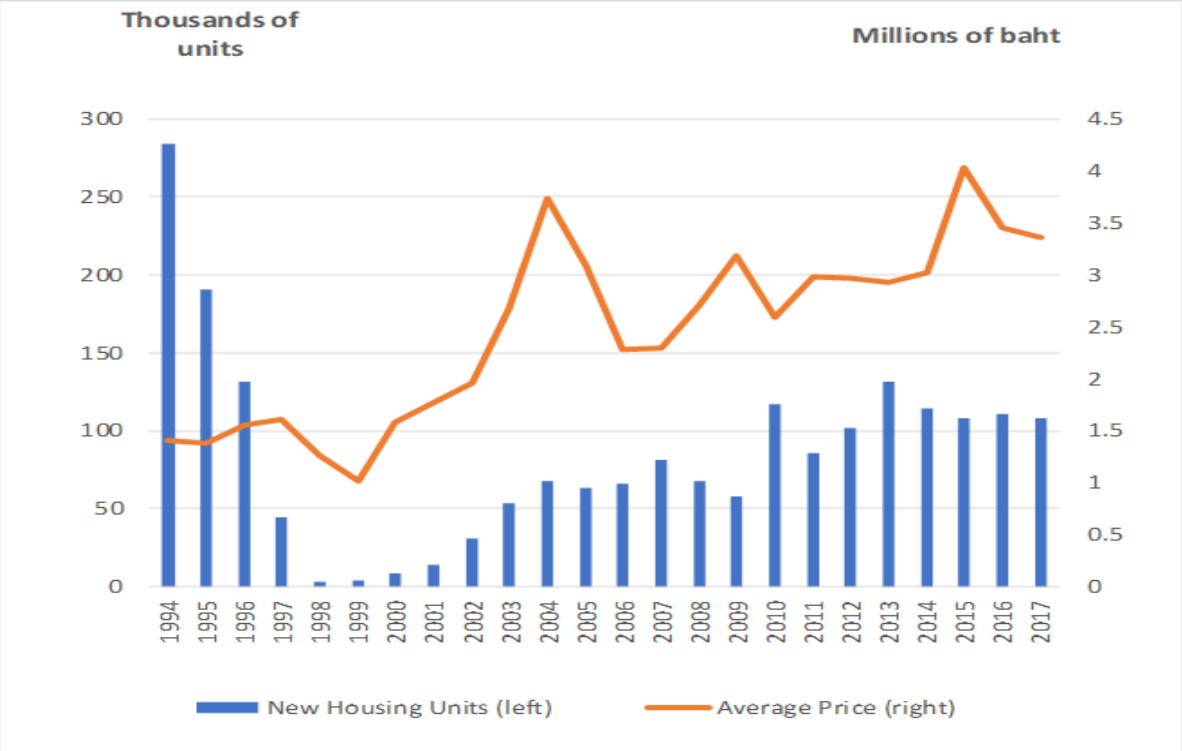
office buildings, condominiums, shopping centres, and hotels. This project is controversial because 24 lower class communities housing more than 90,000 residents are planned for relocation. Even the Iconsiam and Bangsue Station projects include most of these components, the latter introducing a smart city plan with a mixed-use complex through a PPP initiative, learning from Japan's experience. The master plan of the Bangsue Station project was drawn up with support from the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA). It is important to note that these projects are based on the premise of continuous economic growth, further advancement of globalisation, and expansion of external demand. The future prediction of shopping centre utilisation relies on statistics prior to COVID-19, which assumes that 40 million international tourists visit Thailand every year. Regarding residential development, One Bangkok's target for condominium sales, for example, assumes that 30% will be bought by foreign buyers (NNA ASIA, 2019), whose actual sale for foreign buyers was as yet 10% in 2019 (calculated from the REIC database), as we will see later.

The third characteristic is the change in residential patterns in Bangkok. The housing market in Bangkok for the affluent class has grown, while the shortage of affordable housing for the lower class remains an issue (Endo, 2014; Yap and Leeruttanawisut, 2016; Marohabutr 2019). The driving force was a mixture of supply- and demand-side factors. Because of the increase in density in the inner city, residential development in the suburbs was activated in the 1990s, leading to an inflow of the middle class, who purchased and owned housing there (Shigetomi, 1998; Askew, 2002). Simultaneously, the supply of luxury condominiums increased in the inner city, which was mainly occupied by the upper class and expats (Askew, 2002). However, in recent decades, a return of the middle class to the inner city has been observed. A typical pattern is that an individual buys a condominium unit in the inner city or near a Skytrain (Bangkok Mass Transit System: BTS) station with access to the city centre, spending weekdays there, and returning to the house in the suburbs on weekends (Moore, 2018).

This is caused by mixed factors such as worsening traffic jams and congestion, the exploration of new lifestyles, and the rise in the purchasing power of the middle class.

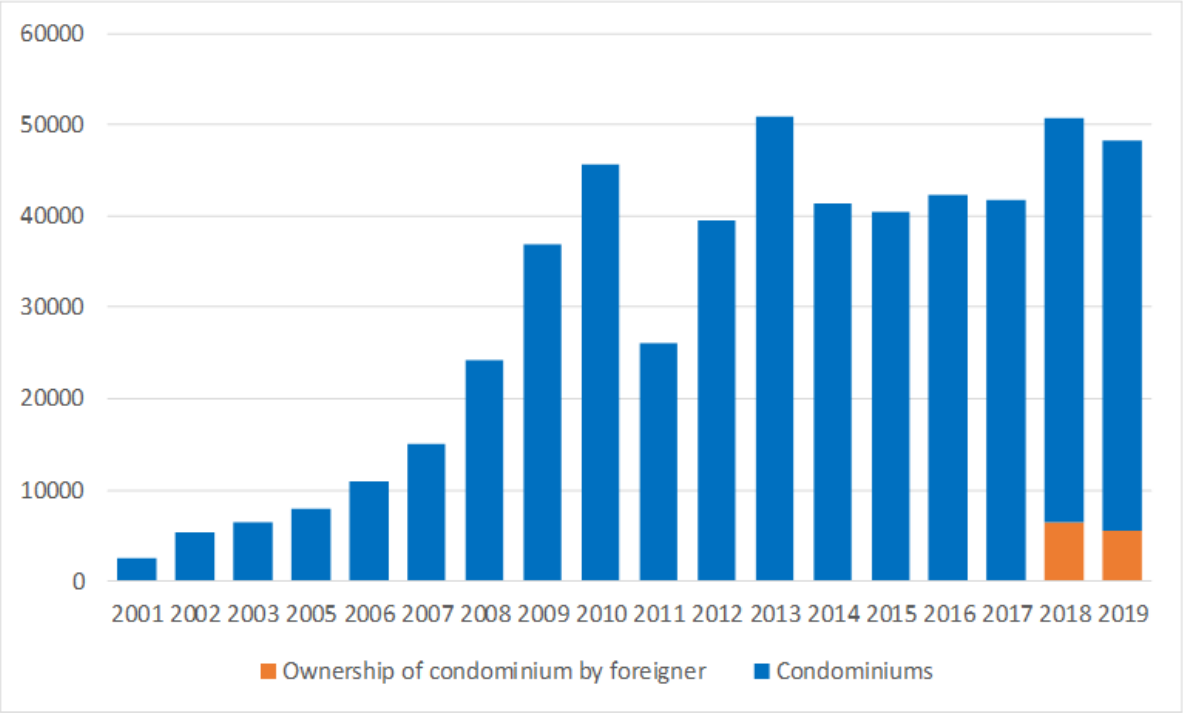
Figure 2 shows the average housing prices and the number of housing units provided in Bangkok. The number of housing units provided before the 1997 Asian financial crisis was larger than in the last two decades. The government, concerned about oversupply and speculative investment, attempted to regulate the market before the 1997 crisis (Shigetomi, 1998). After the Asian financial crisis, the market first shrank but then started to bounce back again in the 2000s. The total number of new housing units constructed each year in the 2000–10s is smaller than that in the 1990s, but the average price of each unit is much higher. This indicates that the housing market's target shifted towards a richer segment. Another outstanding feature is the change in residential type. Condominiums have become a new residential choice

Figure 2. Launching of new housing units and average price in BMR



Source: Agency for Real Estate Affairs (2017).

Figure 3. Newly completed condominiums (2001-2019)



Source: REIC (Annual year book, each year, data base).

for the middle and upper classes. Figure 3 shows the number of newly completed condominium units between 2001 and 2019. This increased, especially in the 2010s. The ratio of foreign buyers is available in the database for 2018 and 2019 and is approximately 10%, which 74% were from China in 2019 (calculated from the REIC database). According to the Housing Survey (NSO, 1996), only 1.9% of Bangkok's residents lived in 'apartment, flat and condominium' in 1996, while 80.7% lived in detached houses. This proportion increased to 16.0% in 2000 and to 31.3% in 2010 (due to the increase, the category has been divided into two: 'condominium, mansion' (9.3%) and 'flat, apartment, hostel' (22.0%), in the Population and Housing Census). In the meantime, 'detached house' decreased to 30.2% in 2010 (NSO, 1996, 2001, 2012).

The private housing market has traditionally failed to provide a sufficient supply of affordable housing to the lower class (Endo, 2014, p. 148; Pornchokchai, 1992; Yap, 1992; see also JICA, 2013). According to an estimate by the Kashikorn Research Center in 2004, 26% of

all households in Bangkok, whose monthly household income was below 10,000 baht, were considered not to have sufficient purchasing power to buy residences in the private housing market (Endo, 2014, p. 149).

The mega real estate project boom in Thailand reflects a shift in development strategies in the country, as well as the global trend of expansion in speculative urban redevelopment. Demand-side changes, which reflect the expansion of the middle and upper classes both inside and outside the country, have accelerated these trends. The reactivation of displacement is one of the major consequences of these changes. What will happen to the local residents, especially the lower-income class? The following two sections examine the impact on the lower class.

Restructuring of Residential Areas and the Urban Lower Class

At an early stage of urbanisation, Bangkok experienced rapid growth of new self-built informal settlements as the urban population grew, since there was an absolute shortage of affordable housing in the private housing market. The majority of rural migrants, therefore, settled next to railroad tracks, on wetlands next to canals, and on other types of lands such as temple grounds and vacant private land, creating newly burgeoning ‘slum’ communities (Endo, 2014, p. 40). According to the study of 1,020 slums conducted in 1985 by Pornchokchai (1985), of all the ‘slums’ in Bangkok, 50% were concentrated within a 6.5 km radius and 75% percent within an 8.9 km radius of the city centre. In contrast, the middle class moved into the suburbs for better environmental conditions in the late 1980s and the 1990s (Askew, 2002; Endo, 2014). However, more recently, a reverse inflow of the affluent class to the inner city was observed, as mentioned in the previous section (Moore, 2018). In addition, the extension of mass transportation from the inner city to the east, north, and west sides of Bangkok has expanded

residential options for richer groups in society, who are looking for convenient access to the city centre[13]. These changes have resulted in an increase in pressure to push the urban lower class out to the outskirts of the city.

Along with accelerated urban redevelopment, the study of gentrification[14] increased in the 2010s. As explained in the introduction, the targets of relocation have expanded from informal settlements to wider types of communities. We can distinguish two different types of displacements from previous research.

The first is direct displacement or relocation, including potential threats (if not yet eviction) from urban redevelopment projects. A few subtypes differ in detail. One is the direct displacement or relocation associated with real estate megaprojects. The government usually becomes directly involved in the displacement process because of its active role in formulating projects. For example, the renovation project for the Makkasan Railway Station (in Ratchathewi District) involved the eviction of communities along the railway line (Bangkok Post, 2020). The new project proposal at Klong Toey, introduced in the previous section, plans to relocate almost 90,000 residents to the area. The second subtype is the city beautification project as well as the development of sightseeing sites. These are part of making Bangkok an attractive global destination. Building a walkway along the Chao Phraya River required the eviction of communities along the river and canals (see Huabcharoen and Ellsmore, 2017, for a case study of gentrification around the older city centre by the riverside). The eviction of the Mahakan Fort community in the old city centre, Rattanakosin, became the object of protests not only by residents but also by wider society for the purpose of heritage protection, and the case was brought to court (Bangkok Post, 2016; 2018a; 2018b; also see Kiang, Boontharm and

[13] BTS first opened in 1999 and the subway in 2004. Operation was mainly limited to the 'inner-east' of the city (see Map on p. 16) but construction of extension lines began in the early 2010s.

[14] Although the definition of gentrification differs among authors, this paper uses 'gentrification' as an urban process which Shin (2018) explains as follows: 'Gentrification is the class remake of urban space, entailing the exacerbation of urban socio-spatial injustice by the speculative desire to exploit the land rent gap and create an exclusive space that bars the poor and the marginalized from claiming their right to the city' (ibid., p. 15).

Nakhasit, 2010, for a case study of Rattanakosin and its transformation). The third subtype comprises commercial development projects and renovation plans, which include the construction of high-rise commercial buildings. They are now targeting old and traditional communities such as Chinatown and Khaosan Street. These communities are not necessarily residential areas for the urban lower class, but some of the original residents are now afraid of rent increases and gentrification. The tension between developers and local communities often becomes a subject of public and research interest because of the fear that eviction will not only damage the economic life of local residents but also the uniqueness of local everyday life and the neighbourhood's cultural identity (Huabcharoen 2017; Boonchaiyapruek, 2017).

The second is the direct or indirect displacement caused by individual private investments that are accelerated by the restructuring of urban spaces. For example, private developers are actively constructing new condominiums along the extended BTS lines. The construction and extension of the mass transit network has led to the expansion of urban development potential and the variety of residential area locations for affluent classes (JICA, 2013). Consequently, not only the higher class and expats but also the middle class are re-appropriating the inner city and returning to the centre (Boonchaiyapruek, 2017). Often, these private-led projects involve the displacement or relocation of existing communities. Moore (2018) conducted case studies of two communities in the Klong San District on the west side of the Chao Phraya River which had been forced to relocate. He showed that there was significant landscape change, and the displacement of communities occurred in an area in close proximity to mass transit. As a new line extended to the west side of the river, he showed that 29 new condominiums were completed between 2005 and 2014 (Moore, 2018, p. 79) along the Taksin-Wongwian Yai BTS Line. The west side of the river has become a new residential option for those working in the inner city. Indirect displacement is also in process around these transit-oriented development areas (Margono, Zuraida and Abadi, 2020). For example, my long-term

research site (since 2003) located in Bangna District (located in the central-east area on the Map on p.16) experienced a fire which burned down 90% of the housing in 2016. Private landlords then decided to cease leasing land and did not allow residents of many decades to build new houses again. The landlords did not yet have an actual construction plan but wanted to keep the land free for future investment. The BTS station Bangna opened in 2011, and mega commercial complexes such as Mega Bangna were opened in 2012. Bangna District was seen as a suburb until 2010, but since then has been passing through a real estate boom for the construction of condominiums (the photos show fences built at the site after the fire). Finally, the land was sold to private developer, and the remaining houses were evicted in 2021. Whether through direct or indirect displacement, these types of individual projects usually take place quietly and are not seen by the public.

Figure 4. Fences built in the community in Bagna District after a fire

Source: Taken by author, in August 2017 (top) and March 2022 (bottom).

The 'backlash' of relocation and eviction become visual in the backdrop to these urban changes. The number of communities and locations in Bangkok have changed dynamically over time. In the early 2000s, two trends were observed. The first was the continued relocation of communities to the city edges as a result of increasing eviction and relocation pressure. The second trend was the increasing density of the inner-city communities. Despite the increasing difficulties in forming new informal settlements in the inner city, many people who were initially moved found themselves unable to adapt to life on the city fringe and began to return to the inner city to enter existing communities (Endo, 2014, pp. 43-46; also see Yap and Leeruttanawisut, 2016). Although the overall trend of informal settlements is not easy to capture accurately, the final section uses community profiles to examine the characteristics of community relocations and determine whether new trends have emerged in recent years.

Characteristics of Community Relocations

Definition of communities in Bangkok

'Slum' policies, either involving eviction from the 1960s or upgrading living condition from the late 1980s, were the core of community policy for many years. Communities in Bangkok, thus defined by the government at the initial stage, mainly referred to informal settlements. The Department of Community Development of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA, established in 1993) launched an official registration system that categorised communities (*chumchon*) into five categories (Endo, 2014, p. 41): (1) congested communities, (2) suburban communities, (3) distributive village communities, (4) flat communities, and (5) urban communities[15].

[15] Official definition is as follows: (1) Congested communities (*Chumchon eeat*): Congested housing and

It is difficult to accurately estimate the population of residential spaces for the urban lower classes. In the case of the first category of 'congested communities' (Category 1), which officially includes 'slums' by government definition, is the residential space for the urban lower class. Additionally, 'urban communities' (Category 5) are highly likely to be residential space for the lower class, given that some town house and inner-city residential areas that existed before the 1950s have been transformed into relatively congested area (See Footnote 15). More recently, if the density of a 'congested community' decrease, the category might be changed to 'urban community'. Most of these are self-built communities. Broadly, we can also include 'flat (in blocks of flats) communities' (Category 4) and 'suburban communities' (Category 2) as residential spaces for the lower class, since the former is public housing for low-income people built by the National Housing Authority (NHA) and the latter were mainly those formed in the process of relocating residents out of inner city 'slum' communities. In contrast, 'distributive village communities' (Category 3) are housing areas developed through private-led initiatives and can be regarded as middle-class residential areas. These include the gated communities. They were registered with the BMA because of the need for public service provision and infrastructure. The category of (6) 'high-rise (*akhan sung*)' has been added to the BMA statistics since 2015. It includes flats, condominiums, apartments, and high-rise buildings, except NHA flats.

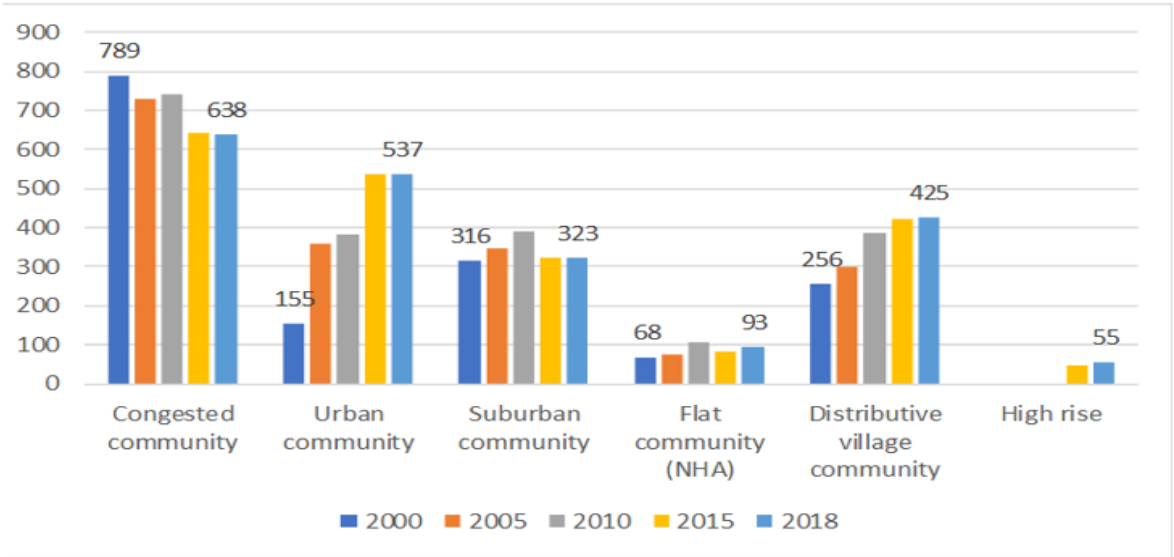
buildings which are in disorderly and dilapidated states and at least 15 houses per rai (1,600 m.sq).
(2) Suburban communities (*Chumchon chaanmuang*): Communities located on the outskirt districts of the city; housing is not congested but there is a lack of community planning such as drainage system for flood prevention.
(3) Distributive village communities (*Chumchon baanchatsan*): Residential lots managed by the private sector in the Bangkok area which have various styles of housing, such as single house, town house, commercial building, or duplex.
(4) Flat communities (*Chumchon kheha*): Public housing operated by the National Housing Authority; the BMA is responsible for the basic infrastructure of the community.
(5) Urban communities (*Chumchon muang*): Communities that are less congested than congested communities (houses less than 15 houses in 1 Rai) but more congested than suburban communities.

The trend of changes in the number and location of communities

Figure 5 shows changes in the number of registered communities. First, the number of 'congested communities' has been decreasing while that of 'urban communities' has increased. As will be explained later, some communities have been recategorised from congested to urban community. Self-built communities of the lower class thus remain relatively large in number if we combine both categories. Another important trend is the increase in the number of middle-class residential communities. The number of 'distributive village communities' has increased from 256 to 425 between 2000 and 2018, respectively. Moreover,

as land has become scarce, 'high-rise' has also become a new option for housing types[16].

Figure 5. Registered communities in BMA



Source: Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), Stastistical yearbook (in Thai).

[16] It is important to note that although community designations in some countries, for example in Japan, generally correspond to small, official administrative units and neighbourhood associations, in Bangkok, communities are registration-based and are not the smallest official administrative units covering the entire city, but rather exist as distinct neighbourhoods within the city (Endo, 2014, p. 39). According to BMA (2018) statistics, residents who live in registered communities account for 35.4% of Bangkok's total population. Despite the inflow and outflow of population, the community in Tokyo is usually static and changes regarding borders and areas, if any, occur from administrative needs from the top. In contrast, communities in Bangkok exhibit a much more dynamic movement, showing the continuous restructuring of appearance and disappearance over time.

Table 2 shows changes in the number of communities by location between 2001 and 2015 in Bangkok. It is calculated from the raw data on community statistics obtained from BMA. The area is divided into six zones – inner city east and west, central east and west, and outer city east and west (outskirts) – according to whether they are east or west of the Chao Phraya River (see Map on p.16). First, it shows that the increase in the total number of communities in Bangkok is caused by an increase in private sector middle-income class communities ('distributive village communities') and also 'urban communities'. The number of 'distributive village communities' has greatly increased from 243 to 420. In contrast, 'congested communities' decreased in number while the number of 'urban communities' has increased. As will be explained later, the reason for this is a partly due to the existing communities switching category from, for example, congested to urban community. By looking at community profile in detail, the category change between 'congested' to 'urban' shows

Table 2 Communities of Bangkok by category and location Unit: Number of community/(Ratio)

2001	Congested community	Urban community	Suburban community	Flat community (NHA)	Distributive village community	High rise	Total (by area)	Total
Inner east	260	97	0	8	21	–	508	386 (24.1)
Inner west	109	12	0	0	1	–		122 (7.6)
Central east	199	50	60	38	160	–	756	507 (31.6)
Central west	207	8	17	1	16	–		249 (15.5)
Outer east	1	0	155	18	24	–	340	198 (12.3)
Outer west	20	1	95	5	21	–		142 (8.9)
Total	796 (49.2)	168 (10.5)	327 (20.4)	70 (4.4)	243 (15.1)	–	1,604 (100.0)	
2015								
Inner east	242	131	0	11	24	26	522	434 (21.1)
Inner west	109	9	0	0	0	0		118 (5.7)
Central east	148	184	39	45	273	18	1005	707 (34.4)
Central west	130	128	15	3	21	1		298 (14.5)
Outer east	2	24	197	20	62	0	500	305 (14.8)
Outer west	13	61	74	5	40	2		195 (9.5)
Total	644 (31.3)	537 (26.8)	325 (15.8)	84 (4.1)	420 (20.4)	47 (2.3)	2,057 (100.0)	

Source: Calculated by author, from community statistics of BMA (raw data).

several patterns. Examples are: (1) housing condition upgraded by the Baan Mankhong Project[17] at original sites, (2) decrease of density due to outflow of residents, and (3) reduction in area caused by partial relocation and eviction of communities. However, there are some communities which show an increase in population and number of housing units (and therefore estimated density) but whose category has switched to 'urban community'. For precise tabulation, it is necessary to investigate each separate case. Regarding the residential areas of the urban lower class, we can say that the total number of 'suburban communities' and 'flat (NHA) communities' are more or less constant, the majority still living in self-built type communities, either as congested or urban (59.7% and 58.1% in 2015, respectively).

The locations also show some changes. Historically, the main business function used to be concentrated in the 'inner east'. As mentioned earlier, the first outflow of the middle class from the inner city was mainly to the central-east area, where 'distributive village communities' were built rapidly. Meanwhile, there were agricultural land and buffer zones for floods on the outer-east and west sides of the Chao Phraya River. However, along with the extension of mass transit and commercial development, the location of residential areas began to change. The data indicate that the first change was the expansion of residential areas to the outskirts, to both the central and outer areas. From the increase in the number of 'urban communities' in the central area, we can assume that not only the middle class but also the urban lower class are gradually moving away from the inner city. However, the majority were still concentrated in the inner and central areas of the city. This is due to the proximity of workplaces and residences, since the lower class tends to prefer to live near their workplaces to minimise transportation costs. The second trend is an increase in the number of communities on the west side of the Chao Phraya River, especially in the central and outer-west areas. The BTS station Lak Song, opened

[17] Housing projects organized by the Community Development Organization Institute (CODI), which supports house building with risk-sharing systems organized by forming saving groups and cooperative community networks.

in 2019, is located in the Bangkae District in the central-west; therefore, the trend might have strengthened even more recently. It is interesting to note that high-rise buildings exist mainly in the inner and central-east areas. These are the most developed areas and are therefore subject to the densification of buildings.

In terms of size and density, a comparison of the communities revealed some interesting trends. Table 3 shows that the size (median) of the 'congested communities' in Bangkok was reduced from 11.0 rai in 2001 to 10.0 in 2015 (1 rai is a Thai unit of area which equals 0.16 hectare), and the 'congested communities' became the smallest among all community categories in 2015. By contrast, 'suburban communities', which are mainly located in outer areas, are much larger in size. The average density also shows that the suburban areas had the lowest density (1.4 persons per rai) and 'congested communities' had the highest (53.4 persons per rai) in 2015. High density is an extremely prominent feature of 'congested communities', considering that their residential arrangements are usually low-rise, self-built housing. This is even higher than that for flat (NHA) and high-rise communities, which are areas with high-rise buildings. Instead, 'distributive village communities' enjoy a moderate density.

Table 3 Size (median) and density of community by category in Bangkok

Community category	2001					2015				
	Area (rai)	Population	Households	Houses	Density	Area (rai)	Population	Households	Houses	Density
Congested	11.0	624	160	118	41.5	10.0	690	160	132	53.4
Distributive village	30.0	740	186	179	18.9	26.0	750	215	218	23.0
Sub-urban	38.0	412	87	76	3.3	130.0	576	129	117	1.4
Urban	7.5	591	150	120	38.5	19.0	681	162	145	22.1
Flat (NHA)	6.9	578	182	157	44.0	13.0	806	312	240	48.0
High rise	-	-	-	-	-	12.0	715	266	253	44.2
Total	15.0	571	147	113	17.0	20.0	669	168	150	9.5

Source: Caluculated from community statistics (raw data) by author.

Note: Data shown are median. However, 'density' is caluculated by using average of community's area and population for each category.
Area is based on Thai unit (rai). 1 rai is 1,600 ㎡.

Table 4 Size (median) and density for congested community and urban community by location in Bangkok

Community category	2001					2015				
	Area (rai)	Population	Households	Houses	Density	Area (rai)	Population	Households	Houses	Density
Inner east	6.0	670	169	115	83.7	7.0	717	135	170	64.1
Inner west	12.0	670	166	128	58.5	11.0	658	150	167	67.5
Central east	15.0	591	145	112	20.5	15.5	673	142	160	19.9
Central west	15.0	634	170	125	37.4	20.0	713	142	158	43.1
Outer east	15.0	324	102	53	21.6	38.5	981	237	243	8.9
Outer west	25.0	468	95	75	14.0	27.5	513	114	136	14.8
Total	10.0	620	160	118	41.0	13.0	681	140	160	31.8

Source: Caluculated from community statistics (raw data) by author.

Note: Data shown are median except density. 'Density' is calucuated from average of area and popuation.

Area is based on Thai unit (rai). 1 rai is 1,600 ㎡.

Table 4 shows changes in size of congested and urban communities. The size of communities (median) in the inner city is the smallest and gradually expands towards the central and outer areas. Density on the east side has either shown a decline or remained constant. The communities in the inner-east show a decline in density while the inner-west and central-west areas show an increase. In other words, these simple comparisons of density suggest that expansion of residential areas towards the relatively outer areas (outskirts) of the city and also to the west side of the Chao Phraya River is taking place.

This rough sketch from community statistics implies that the restructuring of residential areas is accelerating under the influence of the activation of redevelopment projects and the extension of mass transit in the city. Competition over space among the urban lower class for their daily lives and other actors may have intensified not only in the inner city, but also in wider urban areas. Further analyses of the dynamics of community spatial arrangements as well as case studies are needed to understand how spatial inequality has been reorganised. Before concluding, let us briefly look at examples of two districts, Sathorn (inner east) and Bangna (central east), which are two research sites that I have studied for the last 20 years (see Endo, 2014).

The cases of Sathorn and Bangna Districts

Sathorn District is the financial centre and site of ongoing mega real estate projects, 'One Bangkok' and 'Dusit Central Park', mentioned earlier. These two projects, among other redevelopment projects, are transforming this area. By using the community profile used for previous tables, it is found that there were 18 'congested communities' and six 'distributive village communities' registered in Sathorn District as of 2001. The former had decreased to eight and the latter had remained constant by 2015. However, 11 'urban communities' and one 'high-rise community' also appeared in the list of registered communities. Regarding 'congested communities', two witnessed a decrease in community area by 2015 due to partial relocation. One community with a population of approximately 300 disappeared from the 2015 list, which implies eviction or relocation during this period. The population size for most 'congested communities' has been constant, but two of them show a decrease and one an increase. For reference, the adjacent Klong Toey District also showed a possible eviction or relocation of two communities with a total population of 1,610 by 2015. For 'urban communities' in Sathorn District, two of them were newly registered in the 2015 list and nine saw changes in category from 'congested community' to 'urban community'. Among these nine communities, three communities showed a decline in population size with no changes in the size of the community area, which indicates that a decline in density is the reason for the category changes. However, there are also three communities in which the population has increased compared to 2001. Therefore, the criteria for category changes are not clear from the list alone. One high-rise building, a new addition to the 2015 list, is the flat estate Ua Thorn for lower class people, which was constructed under a housing project promoted by former Prime Minister Thaksin. My research site, a former 'congested community', was divided into two communities, one of which changed category to high-rise after the completion of a five-storey

block of flats in 2009.

The emerging residential area of Bangna District appears to be undergoing an even more dynamic spatial transformation. In 2001, there were 16 ‘congested communities’, 17 ‘urban communities’, and three ‘distributive village communities’ registered at the district office. By 2015, the ‘distributive village communities’ had increased to six, and three new communities belonging to the other three categories (one for each of the suburban, NHA flat, and high-rise categories) appeared. In contrast, the number of ‘congested communities’ decreased to 11, whereas ‘urban communities’ increased by only one to reach 18. However, a closer look shows drastic changes in the list for congested communities and urban communities. Two ‘congested communities’ (with a population of about 1,200) and four ‘urban communities’ (with a population of about 1,900) disappeared from the lists. One congested community and three urban communities appeared in different locations. Four congested communities and two urban communities changed their categories to urban and distributive village communities. In the case of the transformation from urban to distributive village communities, it is difficult to distinguish whether the original community has been upgraded or whether gentrification took place by relocating the original residents to conduct redevelopment by a private developer. In addition to these changes, my long-term research site, by category a congested community, disappeared from the list after the 2016 fire.

To understand what has actually happened in these communities, it is necessary to conduct a detailed survey of each case. To clarify the actual features of spatial restructuring and gentrification, especially the impact on the urban lower class, who were pushed out from their original residential area, field surveys are also needed. Nevertheless, this overview of community profiles implies that the redevelopment wave has reached and is progressing towards the central and outer areas of the city; therefore, districts such as Bangna in the central-east area have become one of the frontiers of spatial restructuring and gentrification.

Conclusion

The rapid and compressed development of the economy, as well as of Bangkok itself, has created a complex stratification in the city. Entering competition to become a global city, Bangkok has been passing through rapid spatial restructuring to attract global investors and tourists. During the 2010s, this trend accelerated due to the conjoining of different factors: changes in macroeconomic growth strategy to bring Thailand, and therefore Bangkok, to the position of a control hub centre of GVCs; a real estate turn in urban development with increasing megaprojects initiated both by multinational and domestic capital; and the growth of the middle and upper classes and their purchasing power. Amid these dynamics, the demand of external actors is often prioritised, and the needs of the urban lower class are often not taken into account. An overview of macro data and changes in community location indicates that various types of gentrifications are now in progress in the city. Indeed, there is a housing scheme for the lower class created by the government, Baan Mankhong, which helps upgrade the living conditions of congested communities or support relocation. However, eviction and pressure for relocation are rising rapidly and sometimes occur quietly; therefore, these housing schemes cannot sufficiently cover communities in need. New project plans have been announced endlessly, and spatial restructuring might have progressed further in recent years. Field surveys are required to understand how urban restructuring influences the production and reproduction of the urban lower class, how competition over spaces intensifies as well as whose benefits are prioritized among external actors, affluents, and lower-class residents. If the urban lower class is increasingly excluded from their original communities, not only are the physical spaces of their residences destroyed but also the functions of communities which enable residents to absorb shocks from crises and ameliorate the difficulties they face in their urban life will be disrupted, thus limiting their survival strategies in this highly stratified megacity.

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