

Student Research Fellows

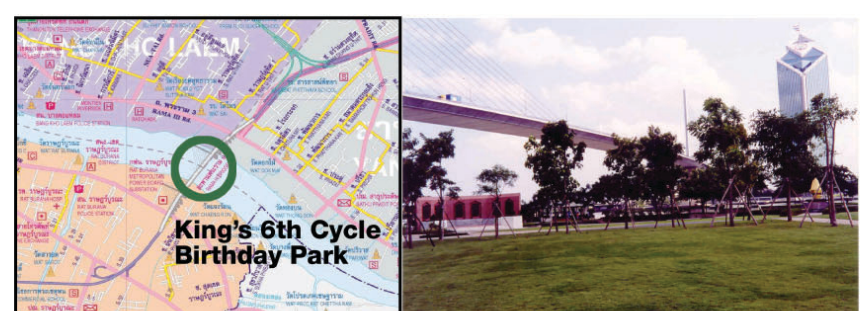
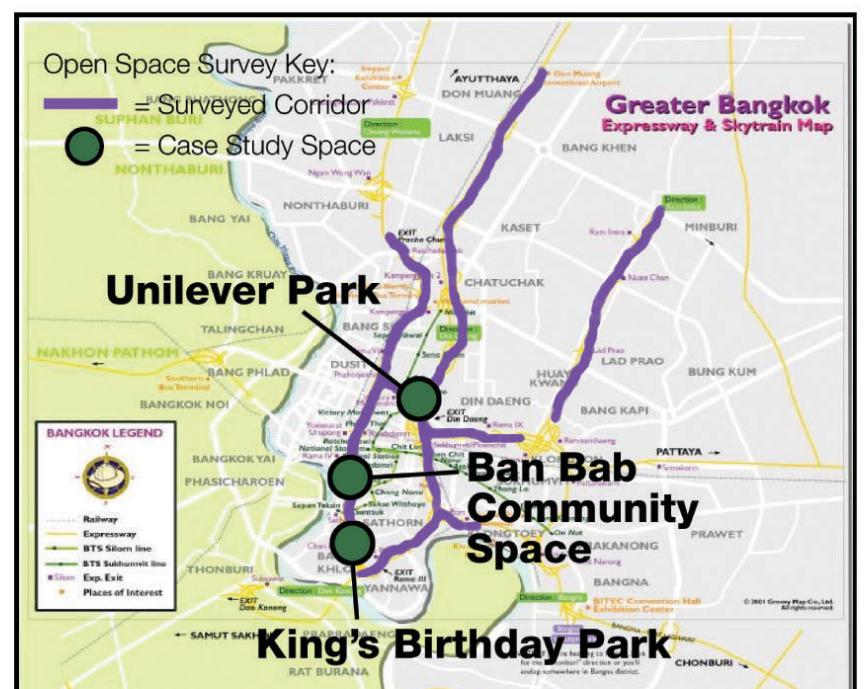
Partnerships to Create Successful Urban Open Spaces in Bangkok, Thailand

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Problem Investigated:

What tools create successful urban open spaces in Bangkok

For the first time in modern history nearly half of the world's population lives in cities while Southeast and South Asian urban areas could see population increases of 250% by 2025 (GEO 2000, UNEP). Expansion of city streets, expressway networks and the infill of buildings consume open urban lands creating air and water pollution, overcrowded settlements which exacerbate social, psychological and respiratory problems, traffic and noise congestion. Open spaces within the urban core can alleviate these challenges.



Method of Inquiry:

Nearly 20 spaces beneath central Bangkok's elevated expressway network were surveyed and interviews were conducted with space users, managers and regulators during a May thru August 2002 internship with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia Pacific (UNESCAP). Three of the spaces surveyed were deemed 'successful' when tested against the following criteria for a successful urban open space:

1. Encourages social exchange and interaction.
2. Enables positive experiential interaction with the natural world.
3. Provides for passive and active recreation.
4. Retains a strong sense of place.
5. Promotes urban ecosystem and human health benefits.
6. Accessible to the constituent community.
7. Enables multiple sector activities.

Findings:

Analysis of the three successful open spaces beneath and adjacent to elevated expressway infrastructure revealed that each was formed by a partnership among the corporate, governmental and community sectors. In addition, each of the partnerships share four key features that significantly contributed in the effective creation of the successful open spaces:

1. Secured land control by a landowner.
2. Clearly defined authority and power.
3. Provides for passive and active recreation.
3. A political champion.
4. Resources provided by each partner.

Strengthened tenure security, participatory planning process including public land allocation hearings, and longer-term resource commitments may enhance the success of the three partnerships and catalyze future open space partnerships in Bangkok.

