

**PARTNERSHIPS TO CREATE SUCCESSFUL URBAN OPEN SPACES  
IN BANGKOK, THAILAND**



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## ***I. Introduction***

### ***i. Executive Summary***

*Partnerships for Successful Urban Open Spaces* identifies the characteristics of successful urban open spaces, looks for such spaces in Bangkok, Thailand, finds that several of the spaces are partnerships, and then asks what makes those partnerships successful. The author determines four key features that significantly contributed to each partnership's effectiveness in the creation of successful urban open spaces such as 1) Secured land control by a landowner, 2) A top-down land allocation process, 3) A political champion, and, 4) Resources provided by each partner. These findings provide guidance for officers of public agencies, communities and corporations whom seek to partner with the private, government and, community sectors to create successful open spaces.

Corridors of publicly, owned land beneath the elevated expressways of central Bangkok were surveyed for examples of successful urban open spaces. These expressway urban spaces or urban voids, created through expropriation for expressway construction, offer Bangkok and other cities an opportunity to enhance urban life by creating vibrant community and neighborhood places for urbanites to socialize, exercise, escape from the noise, heat and pollution of urban centers and explore plants, birds and trees. Expressway urban voids from Bangkok to New York can be defined as publicly-owned, physically, open spaces uncovered by buildings which are adjacent to or underneath elevated expressway infrastructure and characterized by flexibly-defined governance and management mechanisms due to overlapping levels of governmental jurisdiction.

The paper explores three Bangkok urban voids, which were converted into successful urban open spaces through municipal government/community, municipal government/business and municipal government/state-enterprise partnerships. The paper demonstrates each case's success as an urban open space by testing the space's characteristics against a seven part criteria for defining a successful urban open space. The subsequent analysis of these three partnerships identifies four key features shared by each partnership which significantly contributed to each partnership's effectiveness in the creation of successful urban open spaces.

While these key features do not guarantee a successful partnership they have significantly contributed to the formation of successful urban open space partnerships. The absence of a respective key feature from each respective case would likely inhibit the partnership's formation and prevent the creation of a successful urban open space. Further research could be done to determine if all successful urban open spaces were partnerships and if all the unsuccessful urban open spaces were not partnerships. Strengthened tenure security, participatory planning process including public land allocation hearings, and longer-term resource commitments are three features which may enhance the success of the three partnerships and catalyze future open space partnerships.

ii. Yale/UN ESCAP Research Partnership

*Background:*

For the first time in modern history nearly half of the world's population lives in cities rather than in rural areas. By 2025, the population of urban areas is expected to double while Southeast and South Asian urban areas could see population increases of 250%. (GEO 2000, UNEP). The impacts of this exploding population in the urban footprint includes the encroachment and consumption of agricultural and forest lands creating urban air and water pollution, overcrowded settlements which exacerbate social, psychological and respiratory problems, traffic and noise congestion and reduce recreational space.

Urban open spaces on the urban periphery and in the urban core can mitigate these environmental challenges. Open spaces can protect the quality and supply of drinking water, improve air quality, stabilize human-settled hillsides, enable floodwater drainage, conserve flora, fauna and biodiversity habitat and provide recreational space for alleviating physical and psychological dangers of overcrowded settlements. Bangkok, Thailand is a rapidly urbanizing city with a population that has grown from 1.3 million people in 1950 to 7.3 million people in 2000 (UN Population Division).

The fast-paced construction of city streets, apartments, office towers and neighborhoods has rapidly consumed Bangkok's land, leaving few parcels of open space. In addition, the rapid growth of automobile usage has stimulated a large-scale expansion of the metropolitan expressway network. These elevated expressways create extensive ribbons of urban voids that wind through Bangkok's neighborhoods, retail and office areas, offering significant potential to serve urban residents as vibrant parks, vegetable markets, sport courts, community gardens and playgrounds which can enrich daily life and make the city more livable.

*Research Partnership:*

The Bangkok Urban Open Spaces Project required its own partnership between Yale University and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to achieve the researcher's goals. This research project satisfies requirements for a summer research/internship experience and an independent project course for the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Master of Environmental Management degree. Primary advisors for the project were Bradford Gentry of Yale University and Dr. Yap Kioe Sheng from the Poverty Reduction Section (PRS), UN ESCAP in Bangkok. Jorge Carillo-Rodriguez and Aliani Adnan from PRS, provided invaluable guidance during my research on the ground in Bangkok from May 25-August 5, 2002.

The PRS office was a key feature of my research partnership. My summer 2002 affiliation with the UN significantly enabled access for conversations and interviews with officials at middle and senior levels within the Bangkok Municipal Authority (BMA),

District Offices and the Expressway and Rapid Transit Authority of Thailand (ETA). Research analysis, survey of literature and write-up of findings were conducted from September through December 2002 in New Haven, CT.

*Protection of Sources:*

The majority of information collected, presented and analyzed in the paper is from primary sources obtained through interviews and conversations. In many cases, officials' identities have been protected. The researcher's interest is to protect the individuals' privacy and sensitivity of the information disclosed while observing scholarly integrity in the utilization of their information.

**II. Defining "Success": Urban Voids and Urban Open Spaces**

This section identifies factors that characterize successful urban open spaces. The Bangkok study surveyed more than 20 expressway urban voids in search of "successful" spaces. In order to measure the "success" of each urban void, urban park/public spaces literature was reviewed to determine seven characteristics of a "successful" urban void. Time delays, language difficulties and inhibited access to key officials limited the amount of information that could be collected and analyzed for two of the open spaces. The study was able to gather enough information on three of the successful open space cases.

**i. What is an Urban Void**

The spaces explored by this study were previously urban voids. Urban voids are defined by Perera (1994):

"Urban voids" unutilized, under-utilized or abandoned land and premises which exist in urban areas due to outdated or defunct uses. Urban voids can even be created by identifying dilapidated premises which has potential to redevelop for new urban functions. The term should not be confused with open areas such as parks or side-walks which have specific functions assigned to them.

Aruninta (2002) defines urban voids as the convertible vacant, unutilized, under-utilized, improper utilized, ruined, lacking of aesthetic experiences, and lacking of identity piece of land.

Keller (1994) writes of New York City's urban voids created by elevated expressways: Raised highway through industrial, dwelling or void zones creates a field of potential underneath. The void space in the city is formally empty but often programmatically activated, based on the overlapping fields of influence of disparate programs which cross over each other in the void. Derelict zones thus become sites of performance, based on fragments of architecture and infrastructure, and their proximity to urban transport and dwelling areas...there is a confluence of highly local forces, such as the immediately proximate dwelling zones, or industry, or sanitation, with the regional fields of influence that the highway itself brings to bear on the site.

The 20 urban voids surveyed for this study are located under and adjacent to Bangkok's elevated expressway Right of Way (ROW), owned by the Expressway and Transit Authority of Thailand (ETA). Expressway 'urban voids' are defined in this study as *publicly-owned, physically, open spaces uncovered by buildings which are adjacent to*

*or underneath elevated expressway infrastructure and characterized by flexibly-defined governance and management mechanisms due to overlapping levels of governmental jurisdiction.*

ii. What is a Successful Space

The Project for Public Spaces suggests that a successful space has four key qualities: “The space is accessible; people are engaged in activities there; the space is comfortable and has a good image; it is a sociable place, one where people meet each other and take people when they come to visit.”

Kent and Madden (1998) of the Project for Public Spaces and the Urban Parks Institute respectively push the notion of a “successful” urban park beyond physical and community qualities. They claim, “If urban parks can evolve from their current, primarily recreational role, into a new role as a catalyst for community development and enhancement, parks will be an essential component in transforming and enriching our cities...Most important of all is sociability, the park should be a place to meet other people an integral part of community life.”

Lennard (1987) suggests that the design of successful urban spaces shall promote social life and a sense of well-being. T. Smith et al (1997) creates a list of quality and needs principles for urban communities, claiming that livability represents the basic qualities that must exist for a community to be successful, consisting of survival, personal health and development, environmental health, comfort, safety and security.

Steve Coleman, Executive Director of Washington Parks and People writes that there are some ‘invisible landscapes’ which are critical to the success of park revitalization such as sustainability and livability, stewardship and stakeholdership, community, learning and enrichment.

iii. Seven Characteristics for a Successful Urban Open Space

A successful urban void is defined in this study as a successful urban open space. A successful urban open space enriches urban life for city residents by generally satisfying at least five of the following qualities:

1. **Encourages social exchange/interaction:** The space is a welcoming, friendly space with options for sociability and interpersonal connections.
2. **Enables positive experiential interaction with the natural world:** encourages sense of emotional and psychological peace through interaction with vegetation, water and animal life.
3. **Provides for passive and active recreation:** The space offers activities and uses for different ages, groups/individuals at different times of day.
4. **Retains a strong sense of place:** The space promotes a feeling of community and connection to neighborhood, district, city; sense of cleanliness, safety and comfort, history and importance of place.

5. **Promotes urban ecological/human health benefits:** Local flood control, air and water quality improvements and urban heat island reduction.
6. **Accessible to the constituent community:** Convenient to public transit, adjacent to neighborhoods, ease of entrance and exit, distance from dangerous pedestrian roads and auto traffic.
7. **Enables multiple sector activities:** The space allows recreation and income generation which can appeal to a broader urban audience, generate more value and create a more inviting urban open space.

*Five Urban Voids Emerge as the Most Successful Urban Spaces:*

Nearly 20 urban voids beneath central Bangkok's elevated expressway network were surveyed. Five urban voids considered the most successful spaces were compared to the "successful" space criteria. The five most successful spaces are listed with the common name in parentheses.

1. Din Daeng Expressway Interchange Open Space (Din Daeng Open Space), Central Bangkok
2. Suan Rom Mai Unilever Mor Leng Park (Unilever Park), Ratchatewi District, Bangkok
3. Public Park for H.M. the King's 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Birthday (King's 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Park), Bangkok and Thonburi
4. Ban Bab Community Space (Ban Bab), Sathorn District, Bangkok.
5. Viphavadi-Rangsit Forest Park (Viphavadi-Rangsit), Chatuchak District, Bangkok

**III. *Three Successful Urban Open Spaces in Bangkok***

This section presents the three cases and their results against the seven characteristics of successful urban open spaces. Descriptions of each space's management structures reveal that each of the three successful spaces was created through a partnership.

Research limitations due to few available documents, language translations, English-Thai-English interview translations and oral case histories for all three cases represent the researcher's best efforts toward accurate data. The majority of data was collected through personal interviews with BMA, District Office and ETA officials at various bureaucratic levels as well as site visits, community and space user conversations. The goals/motivations of each participant were not explicitly stated by all partners. The researcher has attempted to accurately identify each partner's interests.

i. Case 1: Unilever Mor Leng Park



Goldberg. 2002

*Overview of Unilever Park:*

Unilever Thai Holdings Ltd. collaborated with the Bangkok Municipal Authority (BMA) and Ratchatewi District to establish a four square acre open space in central Bangkok. The space is called Unilever Mor Leng Park, named after the community adjacent to the park, Mor Leng. The park is located beneath a series of elevated expressway flyovers, bordered by Makassan swamp and the Mor Leng community. The land is owned by the Expressway Transit Authority of Thailand (ETA), obtained through expressway land expropriation in the 1980's. Unilever Mor Leng Park is one of 13 Unilever community pocket parks initiated in 1996 throughout Bangkok.

*Goals/Motivations of the Partners:*

The Unilever partnership between Unilever and the BMA was generally driven by the common goal of "greening" Bangkok.

- a) Unilever Co.:
  - To increase the amount of greenery in Bangkok in highly populated areas enabling more recreation opportunities.
  - To strengthen relations between Unilever and BMA
  - To demonstrate commitment to the community so as to enhance the public's image about Unilever and ultimately improve Unilever's bottom line
  - To minimize land acquisition costs by securing BMA and ETA land holdings.
- b) Bangkok Municipal Authority (BMA):
  - To implement the BMA Governor's policy calling for an increase in the amount of greenspace in Bangkok.



- To increase the use of ETA land for Bangkok social benefits.
- c) Expressway Transit Authority of Thailand (ETA):
- To minimize its land maintenance costs.
  - To strengthen its public image as an enterprise which cleanly maintains land, an image which counters numerous garbage-strewn ETA lands throughout the city.
- d) Ratchatewi District Office (RDO):
- To satisfy BMA greening policy by maintaining district greenspace areas.

*Partnership Structure:*

Unilever spent approximately three million baht, funding and managing the park's design, construction and first year of maintenance. Park maintenance was ceded to the Ratchatewi District Office. The BMA is ultimately responsible for the park's maintenance if the District Office is unable to adequately maintain the space, however funding for daily maintenance and improvements to the park are secured by the District Office from the BMA. The ETA has granted the BMA usage of the space for an unspecified period of time. The ETA can revoke BMA's usage rights at any point in time and use the park space for transportation infrastructure needs. The Unilever Park officially opened in February 1997.

Unilever Park's is deemed a successful urban open space. It satisfies at least five of the seven characteristics for a successful urban open space identified in Section II.

1. Encourages social exchange/interaction: **YES**
  - ✓ Social exchange/interaction can occur on the sport courts, the playground and at the picnic tables and benches
2. Enables positive experiential interaction with the natural world: **YES**
  - ✓ More than 20 different tree and shrub species planted in this densely vegetative park offer the experience of a vegetative wilderness within the urban context as the highways cross the sky above.
3. Provides for passive and active recreation: **YES**
  - ✓ The park's paved sports court offers space for basketball, football and other ball games. The leafy park offers walkers, meditators and other passive recreationists space for their activities.
4. Retains a strong sense of place and connection to neighborhood, district and/or city community: **YES**
  - ✓ The park is nestled within Soi Ratchataphan (Mor Leng) community, bordered by the swamp on the opposite side of the houses. Its location towards the end of the soi (street) creates an atmosphere of minimal traffic with a fairly strong sense of community.

- ✓ Victory Monument, a hub of transportation, pedestrian and market activity in central Bangkok, is a few kilometers from the park, yet the park's secluded location provides a strong sense of peace and calm with the urban context of elevated expressway ramps and flyovers.
  - ✓ The majority of the park is fairly well-maintained, however the playground equipment and courts are showing some signs of deterioration. Also, the black, still water of the Makassan Swamp within the elevated expressway corridors provides an unpleasant border to the park on the side opposite the residential structure border. The swamp appears to serve as a natural wetland, stormwater and runoff collection pool and a receptacle for solid waste. Perhaps a thicker vegetative barrier on the swamp's edge would enhance the park's wilderness atmosphere as well as provide added urban runoff and sediment retention control for the park's riparian edge. However, the light conditions beneath the expressway ramp limit vegetative growth.
5. Accessible to the constituent community: **YES**
- ✓ The tree-lined park with free-flowing paths and gaps between trees links the minimal, auto traffic community and houses with the park. The amorphous boundary between the park and the front yards of adjacent buildings physically links the park with the community. The single road which connects to the park has minimal auto traffic and is fairly deep within the community off the main road.
6. Promotes urban ecological benefits: **YES**
- ✓ The tree, shrub and grass growth and impervious surfaces create local urban heat island temperature reduction, groundwater retention and flood control.
7. Enables multiple sector activities: **NO**
- ✗ The park's location within a residential community provides minimal opportunity for economic activities apart from a food/drinks vendor. Occasional Unilever product fairs attract additional park visitors and vendors.

ii. Case 2: King's 6th Cycle Park



*Overview of King's 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Park:*

This park which honors His Majesty the King's 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle (6<sup>th</sup> 12 year cycle or 72<sup>nd</sup> birthday) is situated on ETA owned land beneath and adjacent to the Rama IX Bridge. The park spans eight hectares of land on both sides of the Chao Praya River and is designed to serve the adjacent public within three to eight kilometers.

*Goals/Motivations of the Partners:*

The King's 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Park was driven by civic culture as the minister champion saw an opportunity to increase the amount of public open space for recreation.

- a) The ETA Governor and ETA:
  - To enhance relations with the BMA as the BMA maintains numerous ETA land as parks, parking areas and sport parks.
  - The partnership is a minimal risk, minimal cost land management arrangement for the ETA as its former vacant urban void has been converted into a successful urban open space.
  - The ETA is proud to claim the park as one of the ways they return benefits to the Bangkok people. Land expropriation for the expressway throughout central Bangkok gave many Bangkok citizens a negative impression of the ETA.
  
- b) The BMA Governor and BMA:
  - To increase the amount of greenspace in Bangkok
  - To develop more cooperative relations with the ETA as the BMA regularly seeks to gain usage rights to ETA land within Bangkok.
  - The park provided a feather in the Governor's cap as it complemented his campaign to increase the amount of Bangkok's greenspace.

*Partnership Structure:*

ETA gave permission to the BMA to design, construct and maintain the land. It is not clear if in addition to donating use of the land, the ETA provided funding for BMA's duties. The ETA can revoke BMA's usage rights at any point in time and use the park space for transportation infrastructure needs. The park began operation in 2001 and welcomes hundreds of users every week.

The park satisfies at least five of the seven characteristics for a successful urban open space:

1. Encourages social exchange/interaction: **YES**
  - ✓ The riverfront paths, shaded benches and riverfront pavilion collectively encourage minimal interaction among strollers, picnickers and passive recreationists.
  
2. Enables positive experiential interaction with the natural world: **YES**

- ✓ The pavilion, riverfront promenade and rocky riparian zone offer Bangkok residents access to one of the few riverside open spaces where they can experience cool river breezes, expansive views and access to explore the wide, rocky, tidal and flood plain riparian zone between the park and the river.
  - ✓ In addition, the park's constructed concrete tidal inlet channel with concrete steps leading into the channel enables visitors the chance to interact with the Chao Praya's tidal macrophytic and algal communities.
3. Provides for passive and active recreation: **YES**
- ✓ Bridge-covered sport courts enable basketball, football and other court sports on both sides of the river. The fierce sun and frequent rains are shaded and blocked from above by the Rama IX Bridge making active recreation more feasible.
  - ✓ The interconnected concrete paths enable walking, running and bicycling while shaded benches, grassy slopes and short trees encourage more passive recreation.
4. Retains a strong sense of place and connection to neighborhood, district and/or city community: **NO**
- × The park lacks a sense of place within the broader urban context. It is most visibly anchored by the massive, imposing Rama IX bridge which opposes any sense of human dimension. The expansive river border to the East, towering apartments to the south and a border of trees to the west along the Rama III road creates a feeling of isolation and separation from Bangkok.
  - × Each park has one entrance/exit which suggests that these spaces do not allow and encourage multiple linkages between the space and the adjacent communities. This sense of disconnectedness from Bangkok sharpens the divide between a pleasant natural space and the dirty, densely-built urban environment as one is forced to exit the space through gates at the abrupt juncture with the four lanes of auto and bus traffic on Rama III road.
  - × Recreation spaces beneath the bridge, adjacent to a massive vacant lot enhance the sense of alienation and distance from human dimension.
  - × Saplings are small and too few. Too many concrete paths and concrete spaces
  - × Tidal channel suffers from fluctuating water levels which create high algal productivity and a fairly unpleasant aesthetic without higher water levels.
5. Promotes urban ecological benefits: **YES**
- ✓ Porous grass surface with some saplings enables groundwater infiltration and promotes reduced runoff capacity and velocity entering the Chao Praya River.
  - ✓ The five to six hectares of vegetative groundcover will help to mitigate local effects of urban heat island effect as the vegetation will more slowly radiate daily solar gain than the surrounding dense concentrations of paved and built surfaces covering vegetation and soil.

6. Accessible to the constituent community: **YES**
- ✓ The parks are located in a predominantly industrial area ten kilometers from central Bangkok. Factories operated Monday through Saturday surround the park and empty thousands of workers and their families living near the factories, into the parks on Sunday.
  - ✓ Monday through Saturday, the park attracts a few hundred people each day who arrive primarily by bus and car.
7. Enables multiple sector activities in and around the park: **NO**
- × The parks' location adjacent to the river, the bridge and the auto-infested Rama III road provide limited opportunity for market and commercial activities to border the park. One elevated restaurant constructed on private land overlooks the park while a few food/drink vendors hover near the park's entrance. Apartment/condo tower values at the southern border of the park likely experience hedonic price valuation increases due to their location adjacent to the park.

iii. Case 3: Ban Bab Community Space



Goldberg. 2002

*Overview of Ban Bab Community Space:*

The Ban Bab community of approximately 150 families is a collection of narrow streets, apartments and houses bordered by two major roads in Sathorn District, Central Bangkok. The elevated expressway crosses above the center of the community, covering a 75-foot wide corridor the length of the community. The ETA-owned right of way forms a community open space of approximately two square acres located in the center of the Ban Bab community, with houses and shops lining the space's edge. The

construction of the elevated expressway in the 1980's, cut through the center of the Ban Bab community and cleared houses and shops.

*Goals/Motivations of the Partners:*

- a) Ban Bab community:
  - To regain control over a patch of open space taken from the community by the ETA and its construction of the elevated expressway in the 1980's.
- b) Local Sub-District Councilor:
  - To solidify electoral support through meeting the funding and government services needs of his sub-district which includes the Ban Bab community.
- c) Social Welfare Department:
  - To strengthen Bangkok's communities by increasing the amount of fitness activities as directed by the BMA Governor's policy.
  - A large BMA sports park sponsorship sign facing the highly-traveled adjacent road benefits the BMA by showcasing a successful example of government-community relations.
- d) ETA:
  - The partnership is a minimal risk, minimal cost land management arrangement.
  - The ETA also receives public relations benefits as it demonstrates itself as a government agency willing to cooperate and share use of government-owned land.

*Partnership Structure:*

Primarily, the community now enjoys use and management of a centrally located community gathering space through ETA permission via the BMA. The community maintains the ETA's land. This multi-use space functions as a playground and sports court for kids, festival and party space for holidays, and parking area for community members. The community's local sub-district councilor secured playground funding and equipment supply from the District Office and BMA Agencies. The community assisted in the assembly and construction of the facilities. A Ban Bab informal community board makes decisions and operates the space's locked gate concerning who can park cars in the space and when should the space be used for festivals.

The park satisfies at least five of the seven characteristics for a successful urban open space:

1. Encourages social exchange/interaction: **YES**
  - ✓ Neighbors of all ages mix in this central community space. They set up chairs on the edge of the open space to socialize with friends, while facing the space.
  - ✓ Youth and their parents interact in the playground as kids climb on the elements and the parents chat while supervising their kids.

2. Enables positive experiential interaction with the natural world: **NO**
  - × The entire space is a hardscape with no vegetation. An adjacent street park and its trees boxed by cement walls are the only opportunity for interaction with natural elements.
3. Provides for passive and active recreation: **YES**
  - ✓ A netted sport court is regularly filled with neighborhood football, basketball and other ball games.
  - ✓ The two square acre space provides space for strolling from the playground to the courts and along the perimeter of the space.
4. Retains a strong sense of place and connection to neighborhood, district and/or city community: **YES**
  - ✓ The space is the heart of the community, separated from major traffic arteries by apartments and houses. Shop fronts, apartments and houses face the space from the perimeter on three sides providing nonstop “eyes” on the space. Constant flow of residents of all ages through the space enhances this “community space” sense.
  - ✓ Significant activity in the middle of a weekday with kids playing and people of all ages walking in and around the space.
  - ✓ The space appears well-organized and clean.
5. Promotes urban ecological benefits: **NO**
  - × Impervious surfaces dominate the entire space. An adjacent park and plant nursery operation as well as community desires for plants suggest that the space could be changed to include greater urban ecological benefits as well as provide some experiential interaction with vegetation.
6. Accessible to the constituent community: **YES**
  - ✓ The Right of Way expressway expropriation split the community in half and this space is the link between the two halves. It is highly accessible and integrated into the constituent community.
  - ✓ The space is located in the heart of the Ban Bab community. Its size and management regime suggest it is solely for the use of this community.
7. Enables multiple sector activities: **YES**
  - ✓ The space’s location in the center of the community enables its edges to support small market activity. A few restaurants, food shops and small goods vendors operate adjacent to the space.

iv. All Three Successes are Partnerships

The three urban voids which satisfied the study’s definition of a successful urban open space were all created through different types of partnerships or collaborations.

Unilever Park is partnership between Unilever Co. and the BMA (corporation with municipal government).

King's 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Park is a partnership between the BMA and a state enterprise of the central Thai government called the Expressway and Rapid Transit Authority of Thailand (ETA) (state enterprise with municipal government).

Ban Bab Community space is a partnership between the community and the Bangkok Municipal Authority (BMA) (community with municipal government).

“Partnerships” appear to be a common factor which enabled the creation of each successful space involving the collaboration of multiple stakeholders and resources across different political jurisdictions and sectors.

This paper attempts to identify features which made the partnership successful. Further research could be done to determine if all “successful” urban voids were partnerships and if all the unsuccessful urban voids were not.

#### ***IV. Key Features for Creating Successful Partnerships***

Each of these three successful spaces has a successful partnership at its core. Section IV begins with a discussion of how “success” can be defined for urban open space partnerships. Six key features are identified from the three cases. The key features significantly contribute to the partnership’s formation and enable the creation of successful urban open spaces. The absence of a respective key feature from each respective case would likely inhibit the partnership’s formation and prevent the creation of a successful urban open space.

##### ***i. Successful Urban Open Spaces are created by Successful Partnerships***

How can one define *success* when considering a successful partnership? What features made it possible for the partnership to achieve success?

Simmons (2001) claims that partnership success is defined by components of the partnership such as long-term planning, communication with the community and the enforcement of project goals.

Alternatively, Caplan and Jones suggest that the effectiveness of the partnership must incorporate the definitions of success of each partner (Caplan and Jones, 2001). Gentry (2002a) stresses that each partner must see its own, selfish agenda advanced in order to achieve success. Martin Rosen, former Director of the Trust for Public Land for 20 years writes that “a successful park is more than an island of greenspace marooned in the concrete for the city.” Rosen claims that successful park efforts share two or more of the following characteristics:



- A formal planning and visioning process involving a broad spectrum of public and private stakeholders;
- Catalytic leadership from the public and private sectors
- A strong connection between parks and open space and broader goals such as community identity, neighborhood renewal, etc.
- A mix of private and public funding, with public funds often coming from state or local sources
- The advice and assistance of nonprofit partners such as academics; urban planning groups; local civic, community gardening, etc.

Rosen further recognizes the complexity of assembling urban parkland due to the involvement of various stakeholders, multiple jurisdictions and complex ownership patterns. Rosen writes, “Rarely do city park departments have the staff or financial resources to take on assemblages...Completion of these new parks often requires interdepartmental teams within a public agency and the support of nonprofit and for-profit development partners (Rosen).”

Partnership for Parks, a comprehensive analysis of partnership features suggests that partnerships are successful if they achieve their common goal. Instead, Gentry (2002b) asserts that “success” is dependent on the overlapping goals of the partners, rather than the common goals suggesting partners should not be asked to change their goals, but should be encouraged to look for mutual interests

The Unilever partnership between Unilever and the BMA was driven by the common goal of civic engagement in Bangkok. The greening agenda priority of the BMA governor overlapped with Unilever’s dual goals to both enhance its image in Thailand as a corporate citizen and to derive marketplace benefits from heightened advertising presence throughout the city. The mutual interests enabled the partnership to use civic engagement through park development in Bangkok as its primary driver. The Kings 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Park partnership between the ETA and BMA was also driven by civic engagement as the partners sought an opportunity to increase the amount of public benefit and used park creation as the means. The Ban Bab Community Space partnership between the BMA and the Ban Bab community was driven by community-building as the BMA’s public agencies and the community collectively sought the improvement of the community’s quality of life.

*In these three cases, partnerships worked as a tool for creating successful spaces. Why was that the case? What were the features of the partnerships that enabled them to achieve the partnerships’ goals?*

ii. Four Key Features of Successful Partnerships

The following four key features shared by all the partnerships significantly contributed to each partnership’s effectiveness in the creation of successful urban open spaces. The absence of a respective key feature from each respective case would likely

inhibit the partnership's formation and prevent the creation of a successful urban open space.

*Four key features shared by the three successful urban open space partnerships are:*

- 1. Secured Land Control with Legal and Political Authority by a Landowner**
- 2. Top-Down Land Allocation Process**
- 3. Political Champion**
- 4. Resources Provided by each Partner**

### **1. Secured Land Control with Legal and Political Authority by a Landowner**

The ETA (*Expressway and Rapid Transit Authority of Thailand*) operating as a state enterprise which has asserted its legal and political authority to own, control and manage urban lands is a key feature which most significantly enabled the creation of all three successful spaces. ETA's active land control enables its lands to be legally and politically defended against other uses. In addition, the ETA lands were restricted from structural development due to ETA regulations which led the ETA to determine open space as a best use.

The ETA gains political and economic benefits from these minimal risk, minimal cost land management arrangements. In each case, ETA retains ownership of the land, but a partner maintains and manages the space. The ETA's valuable central Bangkok land holdings give it the upper hand to negotiate land arrangements with the BMA. Economically, the ETA benefits from BMA land allocations as the BMA maintains most of the land for street landscaping, roadways and parking lots. Site maintenance, security and cleanliness is transferred from the ETA to the BMA and its taxpayers.

The ETA is a state enterprise which provides, maintains and conducts all operations in relation to the expressways and is further empowered to expropriate, own and manage lands as a state enterprise (Aruninta, 2001). The ETA has the right to give permission for land uses in the Right of Way (ROW), the area adjacent to and underneath the expressway. It is restricted from approving any land uses for the ROW which could be harmful to the function and structure of the expressway (Cherasak, personal).

Each site was an urban void available to the BMA for use as greenspace and recreational space at no rental/lease fee. If the ETA land was not effectively secured and controlled by a land owner and did not have conditions restricting development of structures then the land would less likely be available for use as open space. Competing land interests in the absence of one owner and in the absence of legal and political authority would likely discourage the creation of a partnership. In addition, the real estate values of each space in the absence of ETA ownership and control would likely price the spaces out of reach of most open space partnerships. Thus, the absence of publicly-owned, secured, controlled land which was available at no charge for open space usage would likely have prevented the formation of each partnership.

*The King's 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Birthday Park's* success relies significantly on this key feature. The availability of state-owned land, restricted from structural development and without a plan for its use enabled the Deputy Minister of the Interior to champion the site's conversion into a BMA park. The King's 6th Cycle Park would not likely have been constructed without this key feature of ETA-owned, secured, controlled land as the land had already been paid for by expressway expropriation, construction and operation bonds and revenues. Since it was already under ownership and management by a state agency, the context for a partnership with the BMA was enabled.

*The Unilever Mor Leng Park* was significantly enabled by the availability of ETA land. This key feature enabled the partnership to succeed as funding was directed toward the park's construction instead of the purchase of the four square acre parcel adjacent to a middle class residential neighborhood. The site was expropriated by the ETA in order to construct elevated expressway flyovers ranging from 40 to 100 m. above the ground. It had previously been used as a construction staging area before becoming an urban void adjacent to a wetland. The lack of use on the site, as it was an urban void owned by the ETA, enabled it to be identified by Ratchatewi District Officers to the BMA Parks Department as one of the less developed parcels within their district available for greening.

*The Ban Bab community* lost three square acres of houses and shops located within the center of the community to expropriation for the expressway. The completed expressway hovered over an urban void where houses and shops used to stand. As one Ban Bab community leader explained, "We wanted our space returned to us...we were the only users before and after construction." The land was available from the ETA at no cost as it had already been expropriated, cleared and could not be built upon. The ETA welcomed the community's management of the space as it provided site maintenance savings to the ETA.

## **2. Top-Down Land Allocation Process**

This key feature describes the BMA and ETA Governors' powers which control the urban void allocation process for ETA-owned land. The lack of a transparent, multi-levelled land allocation process has enabled the BMA Governor to effectively negotiate with the ETA Governor for usage rights to all three spaces. These two Governors appear to command significant political and institutional power such that research interviews with BMA and ETA officials repeatedly revealed that the Governors' "policies" or "mandates" were the driving force behind all land allocation plans of their respective institutions.

The substitution of this top-down process for a more rigidly-defined, multi-levelled land use planning process similar to many US public agencies such as the US Forest Service, which involves lengthy site assessments, approvals and public comment periods would have likely frustrated the proposal enacted by three powerful political actors and inhibited the partnership's successful space creation (Fenimore et al, 2002). Ultimately, the absence of a multi-levelled, highly bureaucratic mechanism for allocation

of ETA-owned land within Bangkok enabled the well-connected political actors to drive the partnership process and create a successful urban open space. However, this top-down process would greatly inhibit a participatory land use visioning process.

*The successful creation of the King's 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Birthday Park* significantly benefited from the top-down, undefined ETA land allocation process. The Former Deputy Minister of the Interior who retained a seat upon the ETA's advisory board championed the idea of creating a park on available ETA land beneath the Rama IX Bridge. The ETA's undefined land allocation process enabled the Deputy to convene the ETA and BMA Governors and initiate the creation of the King's 6th Cycle Park. The absence of a top-down allocation process with power concentrated in the hands of two leaders would significantly inhibit the creation of the King's 6th Cycle Park.

*The Unilever Mor Leng case* utilized the top-down ETA land allocation process as a key element which enabled this partnership to convert an urban void into a successful urban space within the time-sensitive needs of a one year Unilever public relations campaign. The top-down land allocation process appears to have also significantly enabled success by the Unilever partnership due to its reliance on two key decision-makers, the ETA and BMA Governors. It appears that Unilever proposed its 10 million baht greenspace creation plan to the BMA Governor in 1995, requesting spaces in districts across Bangkok. The BMA Governor received permission from the ETA Governor for development of one Unilever park at Mor Leng. The BMA Governor instructed the Ratchatewi District Office to maintain the space upon completion of the park's construction by Unilever. The author speculates that Unilever sought increased favor with the former and future Governors of Bangkok and thus Unilever championed one of the Governor's leading issues, urban greening. Unilever worked directly with the BMA Governor to establish the parks.

The top-down process also enabled Unilever to secure the space from the ETA for free via the BMA Governor's access to the ETA Governor. The ETA rents urban voids for advertising space, even charging the advertiser a per post fee for any signs while Unilever enjoys the park's name rights, a permanent park sign and park access for product marketing fairs. Unilever's community development program called "Sharing Dreams" in 2002 consisted of product demonstration fairs at each of its Unilever parks, public spaces which Unilever used for marketing its products. The top-down process enabled Unilever to work through the BMA Governor which improved Unilever's relations with a powerful political office, secured free advertising space and enhanced its public image.

*Ban Bab Community Space:* Unlike the Unilever Park and the King's 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Birthday Park, the Ban Bab community partnership relied on a bottom-up approach to initiate the open space's creation. A local BMA sub-district councilor advanced the community's needs to the Sathorn District office which submitted the request to the urban void allocation negotiations between the ETA and BMA Governors whom ultimately granted permission. The absence of these top-down negotiations would have likely inhibited the successful creation of the partnership. The top-down allocation process appears to have

served as the only negotiation between the ETA and BMA governors regarding ETA land use in Bangkok. The absence of these negotiations would have left the local sub-district councilor with no established land allocation mechanism between the BMA and the ETA, greatly obfuscating any attempt to obtain space usage rights for the Ban Bab community.

### 3. Political Champion

This key feature describes the role of an elected or politically appointed official to “champion” or carry a partnership’s goals through formal and informally established institutional channels. Political champions significantly contributed to the success of all three space partnerships. Numerous initiatives have demonstrated that highly visible mayoral and city manager support became an important assurance that the public agency would deliver on its promises (Urban Parks Institute, Partnership). The absence of a well-connected political champion would have certainly prevented the Ban Bab community from achieving the efficient, constituent-driven bureaucratic response. A Ban Bab community leader said that the local sub-district councilor worked closely with the community. She said she would not even have known to contact anyone about the community’s demands, had she not known him.

*Ban Bab Community Space* relied on a political champion. A local Bangkok sub-district councilor familiar with community members supported their space and equipment needs by securing community control of the space and providing budgetary support for playground equipment. His political and budgetary support which secured BMA Governor and ETA Governor permission for District space management, enabled additional financial support from the BMA’s Social Welfare Department for sports court netting. The District handed over control of the space to the Ban Bab community. The local councilor secured funds from the District to construct a fenced and paved parking area, accessible through a locked gate. The community’s space management committee keeps the key, routinely locking the gate to keep unwelcome users from parking inside the area. The support of local political leaders as a key factor in the success of urban forestry/urban community development is widely supported by the literature (FAO, URI, Rosen)

*King’s 6th Cycle Birthday Park* relied on political champions. The former Deputy Minister of the Interior, former BMA Governor and ETA Governor appear to have championed the creation of the King’s 6th Cycle Park. According to a high ranking BMA official, the Ministry of the Interior from the central government, retains significant political influence over the BMA and the ETA through a political hierarchy. The Ministry of the Interior is apparently empowered to dismiss the BMA Governor under extreme circumstances. The Ministry also has a seat on the advisory board of the state-enterprise ETA while the ETA Governor is appointed by the central government, led by the Prime Minister. Despite maintaining direct structural supervision over ETA activities, the Deputy Minister of the Interior held a seat on the ETA Board and initiated the creation of the King’s 6th Cycle Park, a partnership between the ETA and the BMA.

It is evident that the Deputy was the key to this partnership's formation. Without his ability to pull the BMA and ETA Governors together, the partnership would not have happened and the successful urban open space would not have been created.

*Unilever Mor Leng Park:* Former BMA Governor Dr. Bhichit Rattakul was a political champion who enabled the Unilever park to be created during his term of service (1996-2000). Dr. Bhichit promoted a city-wide greening throughout his campaign for Governor in 1996-1997 which was institutionalized upon election in the BMA's Fifth Development Plan (1997-2001), the document which declares the BMA's administrative priorities determined primarily by the BMA Governor. In addition to administrative priority in the Fifth Plan, and increased Parks Department resources the Governor also worked closely with the City Plan Department to produce a master plan and land management guidelines for spaces beneath the expressways. These greening efforts championed by the Governor presented a welcome environment for Unilever's park proposal in 1997. The Governor championed Unilever's plans through negotiations with the ETA and site selections in Bangkok districts. The absence of a political champion with significant authority to allocate city-wide resources and negotiate land usage with a state enterprise would greatly inhibit the formation of the Unilever Park partnership.

#### **4. Resources Provided by each Partner**

Each partner needs to contribute some resources to the partnership as partnership gains will most likely be achieved through each partners' risk of resources invested. The combinations of public agency, private sector and community resources contributed by the partners provided resources in different types and amount and over different periods of time which significantly contributed to the creation of successful partnerships.

Public agencies bring an infrastructure of stable staff, management systems and budgeting procedures which allow them to plan and implement projects (Urban Parks Institute, Partnerships). In turn, the public agency is answerable to taxpayers for its resources used so it must justify its spending. The literature supports the importance of public agencies as facilitators of community development. The agencies must develop a culture which is inclusive of the community and centers their attention on the community as a client and their recreational needs (Foley, 1991). Additionally, programs which are created with city agencies benefit from greater resources than a community can amass as well as administrative assistance for securing resources (Krohe, 1990). The Thailand Environment Institute's analysis of community urban forestry programs claims that consistent government officer support of the project is needed. The community needs to act as key players in their own project development in order to receive significant benefits. Government should only be as a facilitator/supporter (TEI).

The parks partnerships literature does affirm that the private partner's financial resources are a key feature which can create more budget capacity and entrepreneurial opportunities which may not be affordable to public agencies (Harnik, 2000, Younger). The BMA was likely willing to work with Unilever because the Ratchatewi District Office and the BMA Parks Division did not have the funds to convert a four acre urban

void into a park, however, they did have the budget to maintain the space. Likewise, Unilever was eager to work with the BMA and its Governor as it provided an opportunity to enhance BMA/Unilever relations through overlapping civic engagement goals.

Unilever's willingness to contribute financial resources toward the creation of the Unilever Park partnership proved to be a key feature which enabled the establishment of a successful partnership. In addition, a senior official in the Ratchatewi District Office confirmed that the Office would not likely have approached the private sector seeking a funding partnership claiming that it's not the role of the government office to solicit private sector funds for public sector projects. Interestingly, given the successful example of shared resources demonstrated by the Unilever park partnership and its ability to serve as a model for further open space creation partnerships, the District Office official maintains that it is simply not the role of a government office to solicit private sector funding assistance.

BMA's willingness to place its financial and institutional resources of value at risk by devoting taxpayer money toward park maintenance is commonly a significant feature of parks partnerships (Foster, 2002). This concept of private money used for public parks partnerships is considered a widely used motivation for private partners because their financial investment can leverage other contributions (Endicott, 2002). Unilever's financing of the park's creation is a key feature further supported by parks sponsorship literature as Bartram explains, "what really gets a sponsor's attention is the ability of a sponsored property to directly deliver the capability to create business... park events are a great way to drive traffic and bring in people (Bartram, 1998). It's no surprise that Unilever's 2002 Sharing Dreams Campaign held in Unilever Parks throughout the city, offered city resident's free cooking, marketing and promotional tips while heavily pushing Unilever cooking products.

Unilever Park also required the significant institutional capabilities of the BMA's Parks Department and Ratchatewi District Office's (RDO) Parks Program. Unilever's partnership limited its time commitment and financial contributions as Unilever supported infrastructure development instead of a longer term service. Given the limited time period and financial cap, Unilever required institutional support to continue operation and maintenance of the park after Unilever's park construction. The existence of both the Ratchatewi District Office (RDO) and the BMA's Public Parks Division provided a significant amount of assurance that Unilever's investment would provide returns beyond 1996. The RDO was charged with operation and maintenance of the park upon completion by Unilever. If the RDO's parks department is unable to adequately maintain the park, it can turn over park operations and maintenance to the BMA. Since Unilever was only willing to make a one-time financial investment though park construction and not provide long-term park maintenance, the partnership and successful urban open space would not likely have been constructed in the absence of the BMA's park maintenance capabilities.

*King's 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Birthday Park:* The BMA and Ratchatewi District Office's existing institutional structure for park maintenance was a key element contributing to the

partnership's success. The ETA's interest through the partnership was to create an urban greenspace which would proudly demonstrate ETA's commitment to the Bangkok community, as seen from the bridge above. The BMA Parks Department provided the necessary park design, construction and maintenance services and retained management of the park. The ETA benefited from BMA's Parks Department's ability to provide ongoing maintenance operations. The partnership would not have succeeded without the BMA's sizable Parks Department's human resource capacity and budgetary support for park maintenance. The ETA did not have its own park design, construction and management capacity necessary for development of the Rama IX Bridge park. The BMA's resources critically enabled the partnership to succeed.

*Ban Bab Community space* utilized the financial and administrative support of BMA's agencies to significantly contribute to the success of the partnership. The playground and sports equipment provided by the BMA's Department of Social Welfare and the Sathorn District Office formed the foundation of the community space. The agencies willingness to listen to their clients, the community needs, enabled the BMA to use its financial and administrative resources to supply the community with playground and sports equipment. The equipment provides the core element of the space, mixing kids and adults, boys and girls in the same central space, strengthening the community's sense of unity and control over this vital urban open space.

Literature on park partnerships claims that public agencies can be prone to a slow pace of work and bureaucratic inertia, particularly in the area of procurement (Partnership for Parks, 199\_). While the rate of agency financial and procurement support for the equipment took time, the playground and sports equipment is a significant factor for the space's success. Without the BMA's support for the sports and playground equipment, the space would be much less successful. Thus, the public agency's resources brought to the partnership significantly enabled the creation of a successful urban open space.

## ***V. The Way Forward***

This final section identifies considerations for enhancing successful urban open spaces in Bangkok including design characteristics as well as features which could enable continued success for existing open space partnerships and catalyze future open space partnerships.

### ***i. Considerations for enhancing urban open spaces***

The following four characteristics of successful urban spaces were characteristics absent in some of the successful spaces. Space design recommendations for enhancing the four characteristics follow:

#### *Promotion of ecological/human health benefits:*

1. Maintain areas of porous ground with diverse vegetative cover of varying heights and thickness combining grass, shrubs, saplings, gardens and trees. Local and city-wide benefits include:



- Reduced ground temperatures and urban heat island effect → cooler temperatures
  - Improved air quality → reduced respiratory and asthma distress through ozone and particulate matter removal
  - Reduced flooding which spreads food and water contaminants
  - Reduced stormwater runoff velocity and contaminant transport into water systems
  - Increased habitat for birdlife, aquatic species → enhanced human enjoyment
  - Porous ground cover will enable increased groundwater/aquifer recharge
  - Noise reduction due to vegetative sound buffering and muffling
2. Expose the riparian zone along waterways. Benefits include:
- Increased bird and fish species feed and nursery habitat
  - Improved water quality through vegetative filtering and nutrient uptake of runoff
  - Increased fish populations → more locally available fish
  - Reduced stormwater runoff velocity and lowered peak flow

*Enable positive experiential interaction with the natural world:*

1. Increased amounts of flowers, shrubs, grasses and trees scattered throughout the space will provide a range of positive experiential escapes for urban citizens from the concrete, glass and steel materials which dominate the urban environment.
2. Green, thickly vegetated areas and vegetable gardens can provide spiritual, educational, psychological and intellectual enrichment.
3. Wild urban play spaces will allow children to experience the magic of nature enhancing their creativity and knowledge of human/natural systems.

*Retains a strong sense of place and connection to neighborhood, district and/or city community:*

1. A successful urban open space should be easy for the constituent community to access. If the park is located next to a neighborhood, ensure that there are numerous footpaths and bicycle paths for neighborhood access.
2. Minimize the impact of vehicles by distancing roads and parking areas from the space, hiding these areas with vegetation.
3. Involve the users in design of new recreation areas, seating areas, paths and landscaping. The Thailand Environment Insititute's urban greening model can be used.

*Enable multiple sector activities in and around the space:*

1. Develop relationships between the surrounding retail and activities going on in the space to enhance the sense of place and income generation (Project for Public Spaces, Eleven).

2. Urban agriculture and vegetable gardens can provide income generation, diversity of uses and an improved quality of life.
3. Events and festivals sponsored by local businesses can generate income, attract visitors and possibly leverage more funds for space improvements.

Key features which may enhance Bangkok's urban open space partnerships as well as initiate successful partnerships for urban voids will be discussed in the following section.

ii. Features which could enable continued success for existing open space partnerships and catalyze future open space partnerships

*Strengthened Tenure Security:*

*ETA's ability to reclaim usage rights for all three successful urban spaces remains an ever-present risk faced by ETA urban void land use partnerships. Greater tenure security between the ETA and its BMA/community/private sector partners could likely increase the amount of longer-term site investment and resource commitments by all partners. However, greater tenure security may also increase the real estate development value of the sites, thus making open space creation a less attractive option on sites which do allow the construction of structures.*

Currently, the ETA enjoys the benefits of land maintenance at minimal cost while retaining the right to take back the land at their discretion. The Ban Bab community and the Unilever Park partnerships each face the risks of losing their usage rights if ETA decides to re-take control of the spaces. The King's 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Birthday Park is also on ETA land, yet the ETA/BMA partnership appears much less threatened by ETA retractment as the park has become ETA's symbol of civic responsibility according to senior ETA Officials.

The ETA has shown a willingness to exercise its ownership power and reclaim the land use rights it granted to the BMA. As one high ranking ETA official remarked, "The ETA can give land rights to anyone and doesn't take back rights, unless it's for business or central government policy." Legally, it appears that the ETA can regain control over the land according to the 1987 Expropriation of Immovable Property Act). Numerous BMA officials, district officials and ETA officials similarly explained that ETA can rightfully revoke any urban void land uses in the right of way at any time.

Rising property values in the 1990's and increased demand for low-income housing forced the tenure security questions to be resolved for New York City's community gardens. Hundreds of New York City's community gardens currently face destruction as the city revoked rights which were formerly granted to garden users in early 1970's (Gupta, 2001).

Records of ETA land control history were somewhat difficult to obtain due to language barriers and institutional protocol. All the ETA's lease contracts at one urban void location, Soi Zero in Central Bangkok, have been terminated by the ETA according to a senior ETA official. The site has been rented and occupied since the early 1990's, serving as a collection of bars, nightclubs and retail shops. The ETA has terminated the leases and will not grant renewed leases because the structures violate ETA Right of Way rules which prohibit structures built beneath the elevated expressway. An urban void located near the high volume commuter hub of Victory Monument previously utilized by van drivers who operated for years without ETA's intrusion. In mid July, 2002 ETA enforced its ownership rights by announcing that the vans should be removed from ETA land or else ETA would clear the vans. The site was closed to the vans by ETA within three weeks. Informal car parks and vendors using a vacant space nearby were cleared by the ETA as parking lots were constructed by the ETA, paid for by the ETA and donated to an undisclosed central government Ministry for free.

*Participatory Planning Process including Public Land Allocation Hearings:*

*Public hearings for allocating usage rights to expressway lands would likely enable increased transparency of the identification of available open spaces and usage approval from the ETA. This participatory process could stimulate opportunities for partnerships and resource contributions from the private and community sectors due to greater awareness, publicity and participation in the land allocation process.*

The top-down land allocation process limits the initiation of open space partnerships to actors with BMA and ETA political linkages such as BMA and national government officials and actors with notable financial resources such as Unilever. A more public process would ease the ability of less connected actors such as the Ban Bab community group and other local and community representatives to access the land allocation process and secure usage rights for nearby urban voids. In addition, a publicized, more participatory process could create new partnership opportunities for corporate, community and public agency actors.

Furthermore, public hearings within a participatory planning framework could create more successful urban open spaces through greater community involvement. A participatory open space planning process for the expressway lands could be modeled after the Thailand Environment Institute's (TEI) "Community Environmental and Poverty Reduction in South East Asia: Urban Greening Project." The TEI programs demonstrate that community working groups can develop partnerships among local and city-wide public agencies to create successful spaces.

*Longer-term Commitment of Funding and Resource Support:*

*Although the Unilever and Ban Bab partnerships succeeded by using their available resources, the partnerships could significantly benefit from a longer-term commitment of resources or else the initial economic and social gains accrued by all the partners could be lost.*

Currently, the Unilever Park's condition is deteriorating as park maintenance crews are not able to adequately support the park due to budget shortages. Although Unilever supported the park's construction and first year of maintenance, the responsibilities were transferred to the district park's office whose budget fluctuates within the dynamic political environment.

Unilever's initial public relations gains from park construction will be weakened as Unilever's parks deteriorate from reduced maintenance capabilities. A longer-term commitment by Unilever to financially support park maintenance would maximize Unilever and BMA's political and economic benefits from the partnership as the parks would remain vibrant and successful urban open spaces. In addition, the longer-term commitment would disentangle the park's maintenance and upkeep from the annual political budget battles, ensuring more consistent benefits to the public.

The Ban Bab community benefited from the resources shared by the local sub-district councilor and the BMA. The community is appreciative of the help they received when the space was created. However, the playground equipment is rusting, the sports equipment is wearing and the community would like to soften the hardscape concrete community space with some BMA landscaping. The community feels abandoned as the political champion is no longer in office and the BMA agencies are no longer reaching out to the community. The community would like assistance from the BMA, however, without the political champion's assistance, they do not know where to turn.

The partnership could significantly benefit from a longer-term commitment of resources. The initial efforts involved by all the partners could be lost. The community would be more effectively served by an initial, longer-term commitment of service support by the BMA. The BMA could more cost effectively allocate its budgetary and administrative services through longer-term, more consistent commitments to open space enhancement.

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