

# Planning system of Thailand : with emphasis on urban planning

**Citation for published version (APA):**

Meulen, van der, G. G. (1988). *Planning system of Thailand : with emphasis on urban planning*. (MANROP-serie; Vol. 148). Technische Universiteit Eindhoven.

**Document status and date:**

Published: 01/01/1988

**Document Version:**

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of Record (includes final page, issue and volume numbers)

**Please check the document version of this publication:**

- A submitted manuscript is the version of the article upon submission and before peer-review. There can be important differences between the submitted version and the official published version of record. People interested in the research are advised to contact the author for the final version of the publication, or visit the DOI to the publisher's website.
- The final author version and the galley proof are versions of the publication after peer review.
- The final published version features the final layout of the paper including the volume, issue and page numbers.

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**PLANNING SYSTEM OF THAILAND**  
with emphasis on urban planning

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## Preface

The real start to write this paper about the planning system in Thailand was a number of talks with representatives from the Department of Town and Country Planning in the Ministry of Interior of Thailand, and from the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Faculty of Architecture in Bangkok Chulalongkorn University.

This paper includes several topics of the Thai planning system. Infact, together they give a first glimpse of it.

Mrs. Suwattana, Mr.Chalerm and Mr. Lertwit explained many aspects of theory and practice of the Thai planning system. For their contributions I am much obliged.

Finally, it is important to state, I am responsible for the content of this paper, particularly concerning evaluations and conclusions.

George G. van der Meulen, Eindhoven, February 1988.

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## 1. Introduction

The planning system of a country, directly or indirectly, influences for a great deal how spatial developments will go, how they can be managed, and what spatial qualities can be attained.

A planning system contains several dimensions, namely:

- existing laws and regulations
- planning institutions and involved governmental bodies
- spatial subdivision relevant for institutions and plan preparations and executions
- existing plan types and their legal power
- legalizing procedures of spatial plans with power of law and related decisionmaking processes
- relation between planning issues and realizations
- general contents and features of involved spatial plans
- the experiences got from it during the time
- training and skilling issues in urban and regional planning

An impression, more or less extended, about these dimensions, can contribute to our knowledge and understanding about spatial developments, management and qualities.

Sometimes it is not so easy to get an adequate impression about the planning system in a country. This is also the case for urban and regional planning, decisionmaking and realization in the Kingdom of Thailand. For foreigners this is caused partly by language problems, but mainly the difficulty is lack of published comprehensive papers and textbooks about the Thai planning system. Also it is not easy to get all relevant information in talks with professionals and representatives in the planning field. A next problem is the fact that it is not easy to get written information about plans under process, undependant of the circumstance that they are available for involved

governmental planning institutions.

Less or even nothing is given free to public until it has attained a stage in which all involved officials have placed their signature and the documents are published.

Perhaps a final difficulty in this framework is the relative youth of the Planning Act of Thailand (1975) and the limited (complete) experience with that act until today. That does not mean that the activities in planning by professionals and by governments and their agencies have to be qualified as immature or unexperienced. In the contrary, a clear process of development of urban and regional planning can be observed during the last two to three decades. This process will be described in short, in a more or less theoretical way and in a more practice way for each level in the Thai planning system. In particular we will give attention to prepared and realized plans.

Of course, like everywhere, not all existing spatial plans are result of and derived from planning laws. Next to the official planning organizations one can find additional ones, generally located in certain (other) sectors. They produce other plans, sometimes with law-like effects, but anyway with steering effects in the (learning) process of spatial planning developments and decisionmaking. In a country like Thailand where about 70 % of its inhabitants is working in agriculture, it is understandable that this sector will play an influential, and sometimes own role in spatial decisionmaking.

Planning and realization are two different things. In

theory they should stand together. In practice this is often not the case. An important instrument to bring them together is a planning and/or building permit. A lot depends of how it is institutionalized.

A final very important influence may come forth from education and training, both of professionals like the public in general.

As soon as these topics have been discussed in this paper, we will evaluate the Thai planning system with the objective to put forward some suggestions for adaptations of two topics. One concerns the, in our opinion necessary, updates of the Thai Town Planning Act 1975. The other one concerns observed demands of adaptation and extensions with regards to the present situation in planning education and training, in as well as outside universities.

Some conclusions will finish our explanatory discussion of the Thai planning system of today.

## 2. History of urban and regional planning in Thailand

In the past spatial planning in Thailand has been started as an architectural occupation. That approach continued until 1960.

With the architectural discipline as a base for planning, attention has been paid for socio-economic developments in the physical planning process. Physical/structural planning is not a new issue for Thailand. For instance in the past there has been designed a plan for Ayutthia, the former capital city of the Kingdom of Thailand, at the community level. Attention in that plan has been focussed on the physical structure, however it was influenced by defence aspects and land use aspects got a subordinate priority.

1960 brought great changes.

(I). In that year Lichfield (Whiting, Bowne & Associates, an American Planning Consultant team) introduced his spatial plan for Bangkok Metropolitan Area, Greater Bangkok Plan 2533 (1990 A.D.), the first BMA masterplan. For its design very few data have been available, but the main focus was physical planning, and the result was a land use plan. "The Greater Bangkok Plan 2533 may be considered the first attempt at a comprehensive urban plan in Thailand, the first plan that sought to provide a framework within which specific physical plans could be developed. The consultants were asked to institutionalise planning as a continuing process in the metropolitan area and to this end they urged the creation of a Department of Town and Country



Planning. .... In 1971 the Department of Town and Country Planning published a 'Report on the First Revision of the Plan for the Metropolitan Area' which, as is suggested by the title, up-dates the Greater Bangkok Plan 2533 in the very changed condition of the metropolitan area after a decade of extensive development. Fundamentally, revision of the earlier plan stems from a very great difference in the anticipated population of the metropolitan area in 1990, 6.5 million in the revised plan as against 4.5 million in the original plan" (Sternstein 1976, p. 119).

In a study paper Bunnag summarises the history of urban planning in Thailand from a viewpoint at the national level:

"Urban planning in Thailand has been incorporated in the National Social and Economic Development Plan since 1972. Thailand has been committed to formal development planning since 1961 when the six year plan covering the period 1961-1966 was announced. The first plan was a collection of public development projects as related to overall economic development objectives, urban planning was not included. The Second Plan covering the years 1967-1971 was broadened to include the private sector and manpower aspects ..... The planning experience gained during the first two plan periods, increasing data availability and the more pervasive acceptance of development planning as a tool for development resulted in still further improvements in the preparation and formulation of the Third Plan.

The Third National Economic and Social Development Plan 1972-1976 incorporates both macro-planning aspects and sectoral programs and projects .... Two regional planning projects have been initiated for the Northeastern and Northern Regions in the Third Plan to promote economic growth within each region and slow down out migration from the regions.

The Fourth National Economic and Social Development Plan 1977-1981 expressed a government policy to promote growth of secondary cities and slow down Bangkok's growth and economic dominance. Regional cities to be developed were specified; Khon Kaen, Udon Thani, Nakhon Ratchasima and Ubon Ratchathani

were regional cities for Northeastern Region, Chiang Mai and Phitsanulok were regional cities for Northern Region, Songkhla and Phuket were regional cities for Southern Region, and Chon Buri was regional city for Eastern Region. Regional cities development policy including urban land use, basic infrastructure and services, and employment. The policy to slow down Bangkok growth including limitation of industrial investment within Bangkok, development of growth poles in suburban areas, limitation of basic services within Bangkok, decentralization of government offices outside Bangkok, and control of migration. However, the Fourth Plan also including plans for developments of Bangkok especially its environment, transportation, and basic infrastructure. The Fifth National Economic and Social Development Plan 1982-1986 .... is seriously pursuing the developments of alternative urban growth cities in two ways. Firstly, the government is pushing the first phase Regional Cities Development Project, as initiated in the Fourth Plan, for Chiang Mai, Khon Kaen, Songkhla-Hadyai, Chon Buri, and Nakhon Ratchasima, which are important regional centres and have good growth potentials .... Moreover, the Fifth Plan also specified ten secondary cities in different regions to be developed along with regional cities; Lampang, Chiang Rai, Ubon Ratchathani, Roi Et, Surin, Rayong, Chachoengsao, Kanchanaburi, Phetchanaburi, and Pattani. Secondly, the government is implementing a strategy to promote urban growth outside the primate city of Bangkok through the development of a 'corridor' of urban growth and economic base along the eastern seaboard provinces of Thailand .... For Bangkok Metropolitan urban development, the Fifth Plan promoting the development of Master Plan and Regional Plan to cover the built-up areas of Bangkok Metropolis and the regional cities of Samut Prakan, Pathum Thani, Nonthaburi, Nakhon Pathom, and Samut Sakhon. The Master Plan will specify agriculture areas surrounding the built-up areas with green areas in between to control the urban land use. Urban development is focused on a mass transportation system and other transportation means, the improvement of slums and the environment, and the improvement of basic infrastructure (Bunnag 1985, pp. 18-21).

table NESDB policies and development of city planning and Metropolis plans

NESDP	YEAR	General policies	YIAK	Development of city planning and Metropolitan plans
-	1952	-	1952	Town & Country Planning Act, 1952
	-	-	-	-
	1960	-	1960	submission of the "Litchfield Plan"
1st NESDP	1961	-raising of standard of living	-	drafting of Town & Country Planning Bill
	1962	-creation of basic economic & social infrastructure	-	
	1963	-	-	
	1964	*awareness of town & country planning	-	
	1965 1966	-	-	
2nd NESDP	1967	-emphasis on equitable distribution of income & social benefits	-	drafting of Town & Country Planning Bill
	1968	-	-	
	1969	-rural development	-	
	1970	*improvement of urban problems by developing of town Planning	-	
	1971	-	1971	revision of the "Litchfield Plan"
3rd NESDP	1972	-overcoming economic slowdown	-	Town & Country Planning Act, 1975 preparation of "BNCP" in accordance with the Act
	1973	-reducing growth through family planning	-	
	1974	-	-	
	1975	-more attention on urban & local government areas	-	
	1976	*promulgation of Town & Country Planning Act through National Assembly	1975 1976	
4th NESDP	1977	-decentralised urbanisation strategy	-	objections lodged in plan modifications
	1978	-regional growth centres	1978	
	1979	*emphasis on effective enforcement	1979	
	1980	-	-	
	1981	-	1981	
5th NESDP	1982	-regional growth centres	-	further modifications (current "BNCP")
	1983	-	1983	
	1984	-	-	
	1985 1986	-	1986	
6th NESDP	1987	-	1987	the plan under consideration
	-	-	-	-

Note : NESDP= National Economic & Social Development Plan  
 BNCP = Bangkok Metropolitan Comprehensive Plan  
 BMR = Bangkok Metropolitan Region ( Including Nonchaburi, Samutprakarn, Samutshaborn, Nakhonpathom and Pathumthani )  
 BMA = Bangkok Metropolitan Administration  
 \* = content relevant to city planning

See also the table at the previous page for a chronological overview and some features of these plans in a nutshell (source: Lertwit 1987). At this moment (1988) the Sixth National Plan is in force. Main issue of this guideline for the economic development for the next five year until 1990 is Thailand becoming a new industrial country. for urban and regional planning emphasis is laid upon continuation of the development of goals for regional plan strategies, and probably, because of initiatives from Escap, regional centre planning will be added.

(II). Another important change started at the moment in which the Thai Planning Act came into force in 1975. This act states that for all 124 municipalities in Thailand structure plans have to be developed and legalized.

(III). According to Manop (1987) Thailand has reached the third stage now. That means that priorities have to be shifted from production of plans to methodological development, improvement of the planning system to get more quality by using more techniques like potential surface analysis, threshold analysis, etc. Also more attention needs to be given to data collection, more and better data are necessary as a condition for adequate urban and regional planning.

### 3. Thai Planning Law

Thailand possess national, provincial, regional and municipal plans. In particular municipal planning got legal status for implementation according to law. This happened by the "Town Planning Act" in 2518 B.E. (1975 A.D.). It concerns a town planning act and it is only applicable to (new) towns. Outside towns agricultural regulations are dominant guidelines for planning.

The Town Planning Act puts forward

1. definitions for planning relevant concepts
2. composition of Town Planning Board
3. guidelines for survey for the preparation and making of a general plan or a specific plan
4. guidelines for the preparation of a general plan
5. procedural issues for the enforcement of a general plan
6. guidelines for the preparation and making of a specific plan
7. procedural issues for the enforcement of a specific plan
8. composition of the local executive board of town planning
9. rules for the demolition, removal or alteration of a building, including ones for financial compensation
10. procedural issues for appeal
11. some miscellaneous matters concerning exchange of information between officials at one side, and owner, occupant or caretaker at the other side; concerning carrying out a survey; concerning the competence of the members of the local executive board of town planning
12. arrangements for penalties in case of violence to well execution of this law.

As far as town planning is concerned it means "the preparation, making and implementation of a general plan and a specific plan in the area of a town and related areas, or in the country in order to build or develop a new town (remark: there is however no new town policy in

Thailand and probably this will be not the case in the future too) or a part thereof or to replace a damaged town or a part thereof for the purpose of providing or improving sanitation, amenity and convenience, orderliness, beauty, use of property, public safety, and social security, of improving economy, social affair, and environment, of preserving a place and an object of interest or value in the field of art, architecture, history, or antiquity, or of preserving natural resources, landscape of beauty or natural interest" (Town Planning Act 1975, pp. 228-229).

The Town Planning Act 1975 can only be enforced (by the power of that planning act) in case the specific plan to detail an involved general plan has been completed. If there is no specific plan, the penalties by the planning law are fruitless. In this situation, the building permission law must be used. Therefore the Town Planning Act cannot control anything by itself in that situation.

#### **4. Planning institutions**

In fact there are three extensive institutions at the national level and some minor ones at the changwat and municipal levels relevant for preparing urban and regional planning in Thailand:

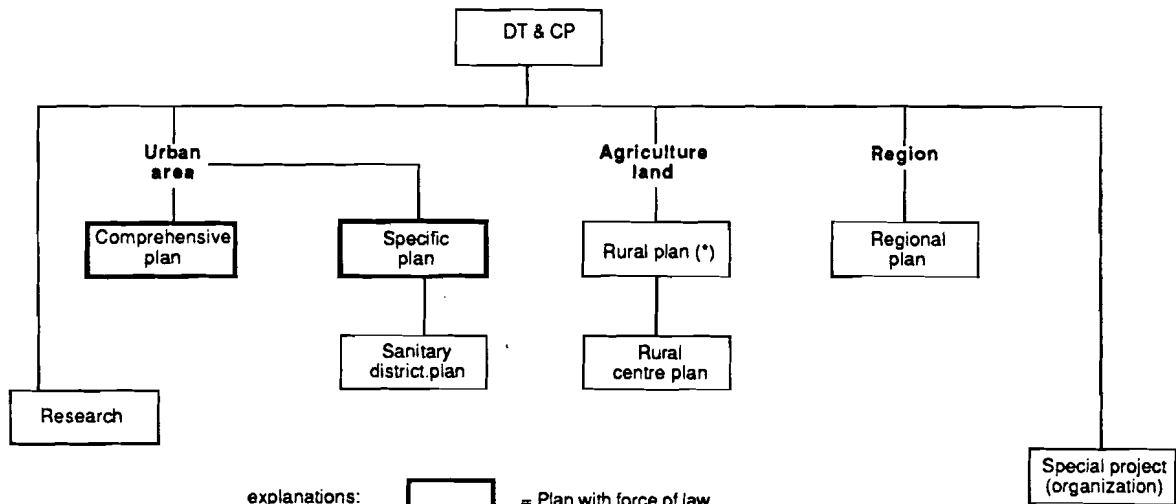
##### **1. NESDB, National Economic and Social Development Board**

Main task of this board is to take care for national social and economic developments. Periodically it works out a general scope for the future, laid down in goals and objectives for five year terms.

NESDB elaborates the National Economic and Social Developments Plans, firm guidelines for spatial plans at the provincial, regional and local levels.

##### **2. DTCP, Department of Town and Country Planning**

Founded in 2505 (1962 A.D.) to take care for the physical elaborations of the national plans as worked out by NESDB, including the basic national goals. DTCP works at the regional as well as the local level, as the next scheme will show:



explanations:



= Plan with force of law



= Plan without force of law (Intentions to put into new law exist)

\*

= Detailed and physical



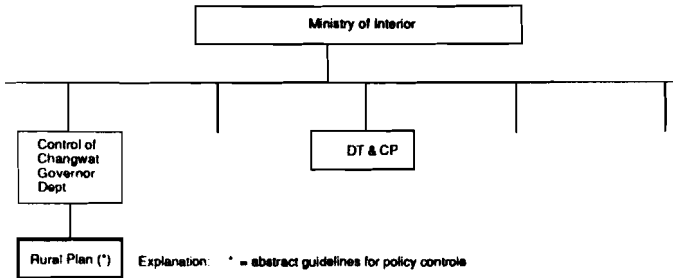
The Japanese are very interested to elaborate their "Land Readjustment" methodology in Thailand. In Japan this approach is laid down in a special act and is meant to readjust urban areas and to make them accessible by technical infrastructure. Because of that the Japanese did some preliminary studies in Thailand, among them one about the DTCP (Shinohara 1986).

From that it shows that DTCP counts eleven divisions, namely:

1. Office of the Secretary
2. Mapping Division
3. Research and Analysis Division
4. Legal Division
5. Public Relations and Training Division
6. Engineering Division
7. Programming & Evaluation Division
8. Regional Planning Division
9. Specific Planning Division
10. Comprehensive Planning Division
11. Rural Development Planning Division

### 3. Department for Control of Changwat Governor

This department like DTCP (see scheme below), is a subpart of the Ministry of Interior. Among others it prepares so-called rural plans, which are abstract guidelines for policy control.



#### 4. others

Under the law of 1975 it became possible for lower level governmental bodies like changwat and municipalities to develop their own plans. If these plans are ready and approved, they have the same status as the spatial plans prepared by DTCP.

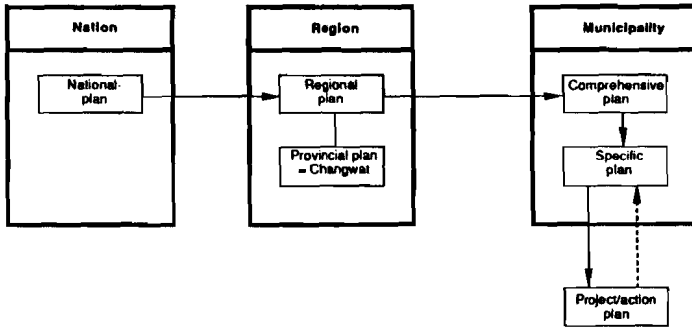
However this possibility will be usable only for quite a few of that agencies because of general lack of skilled humanware outside the ministerial offices and outside Bangkok Metropolitan Area.

## 5. Organizational levels, plan types, and planning process

In the Thai planning system three levels are distinguished,

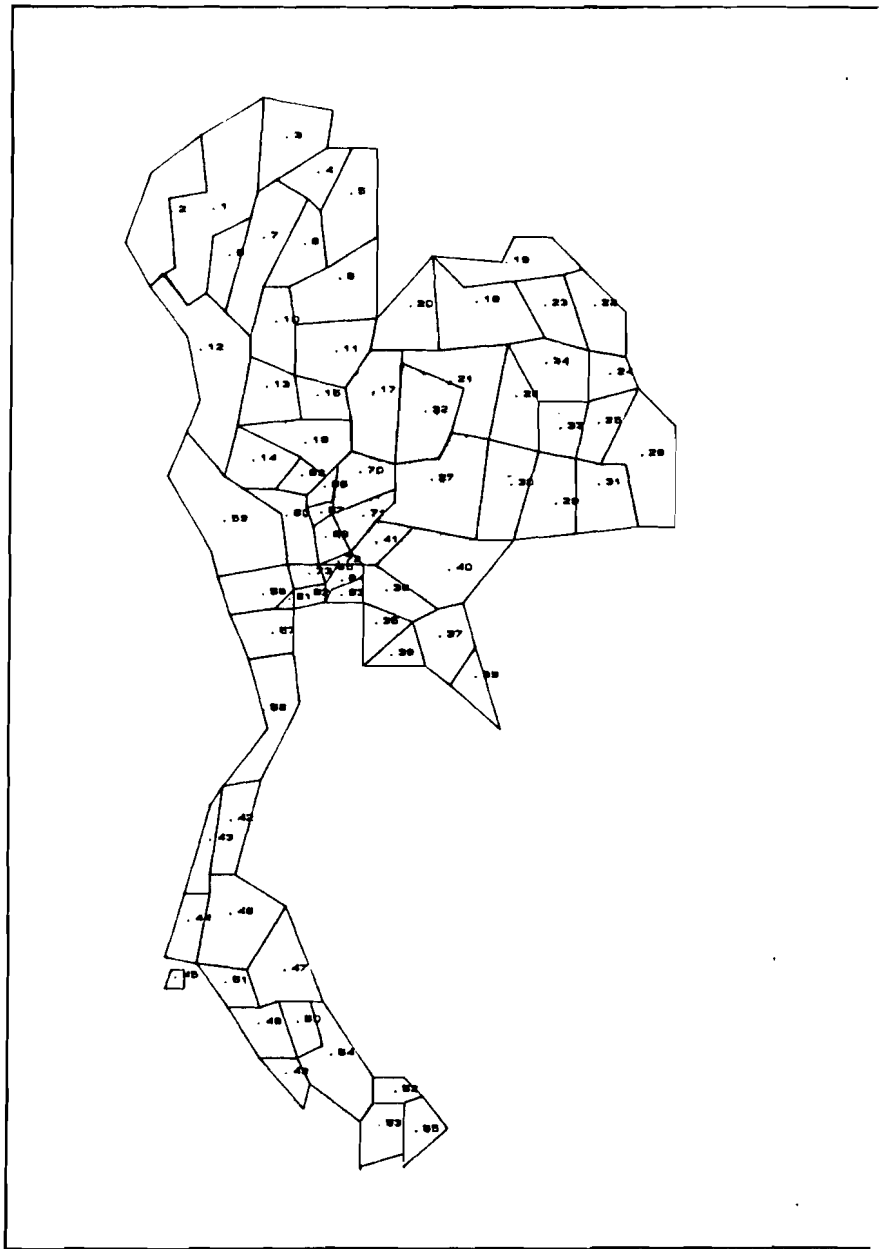
- namely:
1. national
  2. provincial/regional
  3. municipal/local.

In scheme:



Responsible for the national plans are 14 ministries, and it is managed by the Office of the Prime Minister. NESOB takes care for the preparations. The national plans (except the first one) are revised every five years. In terms of legal status the national plan is policy.

The national plan is a firm guideline for the design of the regional plans. Regional plans belong to the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior. DTCP takes care for the preparations. An example of a regional plan is that for Greater Bangkok Region. It is a plan for a period of five



# POLYGON MAP

Thailand Changwats

## LEGEND:

- 1 = Chiang Mai
- 2 = Chiangsaen
- 3 = Chiang Rai
- 4 = Phayao
- 5 = Nan
- 6 = Phrao
- 7 = Lamphun
- 8 = Lamphang
- 9 = Uttaradit
- 10 = Sukhothai
- 11 = Phitsanulok
- 12 = Tak
- 13 = Kamphaengpat
- 14 = Uthai Thani
- 15 = Phits
- 16 = Nakhonrasam
- 17 = Pathumthani
- 18 = Udonrathani
- 19 = Nakhon
- 20 = Loei
- 21 = Khonkaen
- 22 = Nakhonphanom
- 23 = Sakon Nakhon
- 24 = Mahasarakham
- 25 = Yasothon
- 26 = Ubonrathani
- 27 = Nakhon Phanom
- 28 = Mahasarakham
- 29 = Surin
- 30 = Buriram
- 31 = Sriachan
- 32 = Chaiyaphum
- 33 = Roi Et
- 34 = Kalasin
- 35 = Chonburi
- 36 = Chachoengsao
- 37 = Jambhuri
- 38 = Rayong
- 39 = Trat
- 40 = Prachinburi
- 41 = Nakhon Phanom
- 42 = Chumphon
- 43 = Nakhon
- 44 = Phangnga
- 45 = Phuket
- 46 = Suratthani
- 47 = Nakhon Phanom
- 48 = Trang
- 49 = Satun
- 50 = Pattalung
- 51 = Sakon
- 52 = Sangkhato
- 53 = Yala
- 54 = Pattani
- 55 = Narathiwat
- 56 = Prachinburi
- 57 = Phakburi
- 58 = Ratchaburi
- 59 = Kamphaeng
- 60 = Suphanburi
- 61 = Samutprakan
- 62 = Samutprakan
- 63 = Samutprakan
- 64 = Bangkok
- 65 = Pathumthani
- 66 = Ayutthaya
- 67 = Angthong
- 68 = Singburi
- 69 = Chait
- 70 = Lopburi
- 71 = Saraburi
- 72 = Nakhon Phanom
- 73 = Nakhon Phanom

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years, and it deals with aspects such as infrastructure, housing, finances, and flood protection at the regional level. The regional plan lacks any legal status.

The regional plan is guideline for the provincial or changwat plans. A changwat is a Thai province; there are 73 of them (see plotted map on the previous two pages). Responsible for that is the Changwat Governor. Regional plans and provincial plans may differ because of time lags in development. Both are designed by the regional planning division within DTCP. In fact, regional plans just concern research. In terms of legal status both concern policy too. Regional plans are meant for internal use within DTCP. They are a kind of preliminary suggestions for the development of each urban area, that is, it includes design elements with several criteria for classification of each function in the involved area.

The regional plan is also guideline for the spatial planning at the municipal level, in particular for the comprehensive plans. The municipality has to agree with the concerning regional plans; conflicts between them are not allowed. In the Town Planning Act (1975, p. 229) a comprehensive plan or "general plan" is defined as "a plan, policy, and project, including a measure of general control, to be used as guidance in the development and maintenance of a town and related areas, or of the country in the fields of use of property, communication and transport, public service, and environment, for the purpose

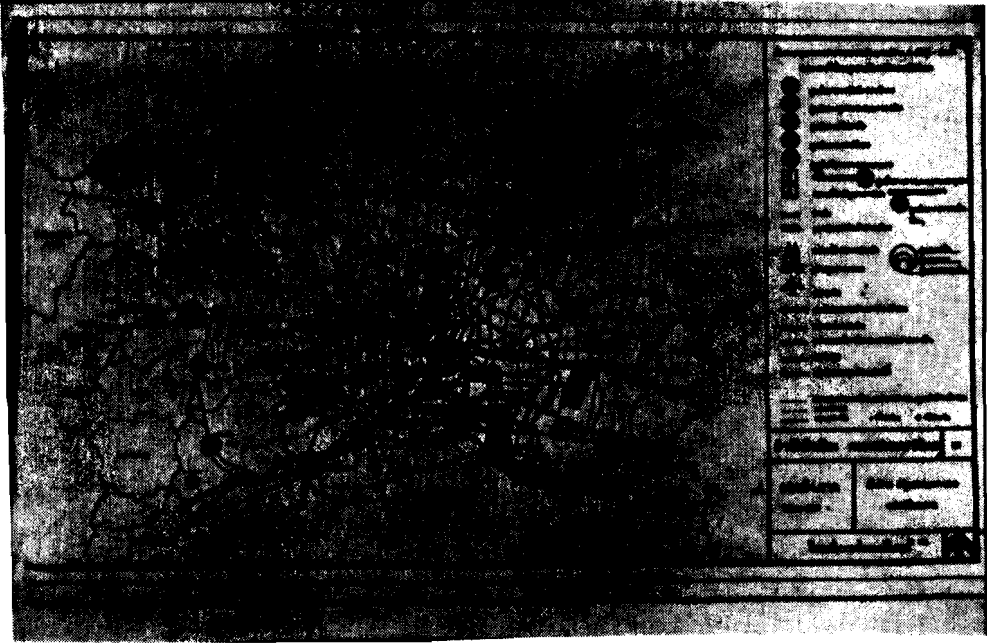
of achieving the objective of town planning". An example of a general plan is the (published) Plan for Nontaburi.

At its turn the specific plan follows the comprehensive plan. A "specific plan" is in that act (1975, p. 229) defined as "a plan and operation project for the development or maintenance of a specific area, or related affairs in a town and related areas, or in the country, for the benefit of town planning". An example of a specific plan is that for Lam Chabang in the Eastern Seaboard Area; another one is that for Chang Mai but this one is still under process.

Responsible for municipal planning is, of course, the municipality. Because generally they do not have a planning department, DTCP takes care for plan preparations. Sometimes the municipalities ask support from a consultant, in particular for the design of project plans and action plans.

Comprehensive and specific plans as soon as fully approved can be implemented as laws.

For every type of plan at the municipal level there are three times a public hearing during the legalization



Regional Plan of the Greater, Bangkok Area 2544





The First Comprehensive Plan of Bangkok  
: Development Plan 2533  
: Development Plan 2519

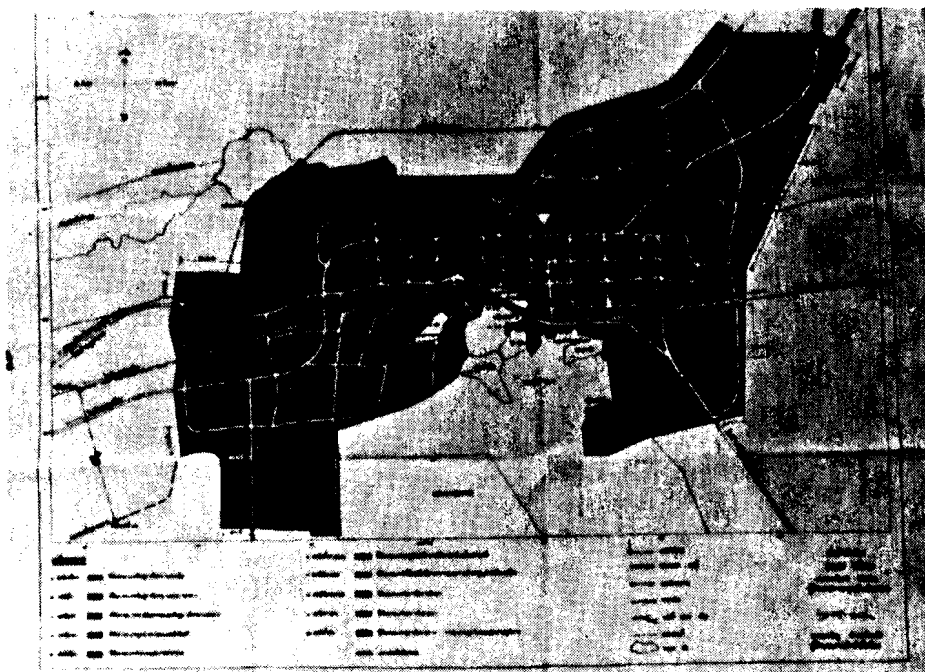
process of that plan. Announcement of public hearings takes place by publication in newspapers, by broadcasting, and by advertisements. Information is given by DTCP with leaflets, and explanations during presentations. Public hearing means discussing in public by 'mouth'.

The first one is to inform about the boundary of the plan. The second one concerns a first draft, and, the third time, after the plan has been approved by the Planning Board and next has been advertised to the public for 90 days as required, people can send their objections to DTCP during that period, however only for economically interested (owners of land) persons and institutions. Finally, the plan has to come in the meeting of the planning committee. The final approval of the (national) Planning Board concerns the review of the objections raised during that 90 days.

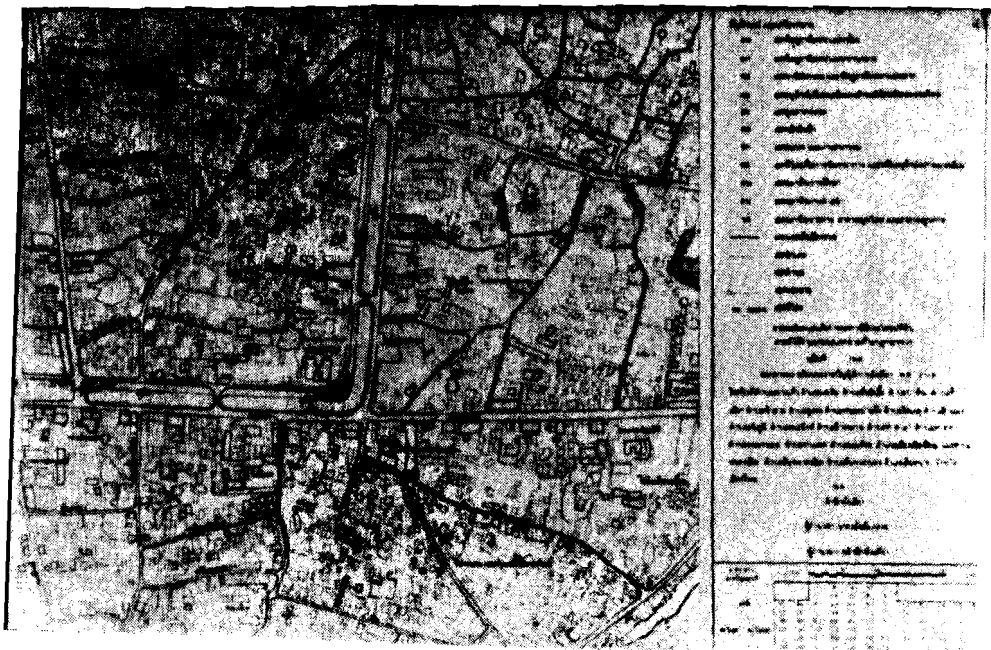
The Planning Board consists experts of DTCP and representatives of other ministries. If there exists no problem, the plan will be accepted by that committee, and the Minister of Interior will sign the plan and it is law if it passes Parliament (in case of a specific plan) or it will become a regulation (in case of a general plan).

Each plan is valid five years, and not longer. That means there is a final date, and after that there is no planning protection. Thus, the revised plan must be replaced in time for the continuity of control.

In the public participation process, people who are interested to look into the plans can do that locally in 'sala klang' (town hall), in the community office, or (sometimes) in public schools; also they can go to DTCP to get special explanation.



Comprehensive Plan of Nakorn Rachasima Province  
(Landuse plan)



Example of Detailed or Specific Plan produced by DTCP  
(Chiangmai Community)

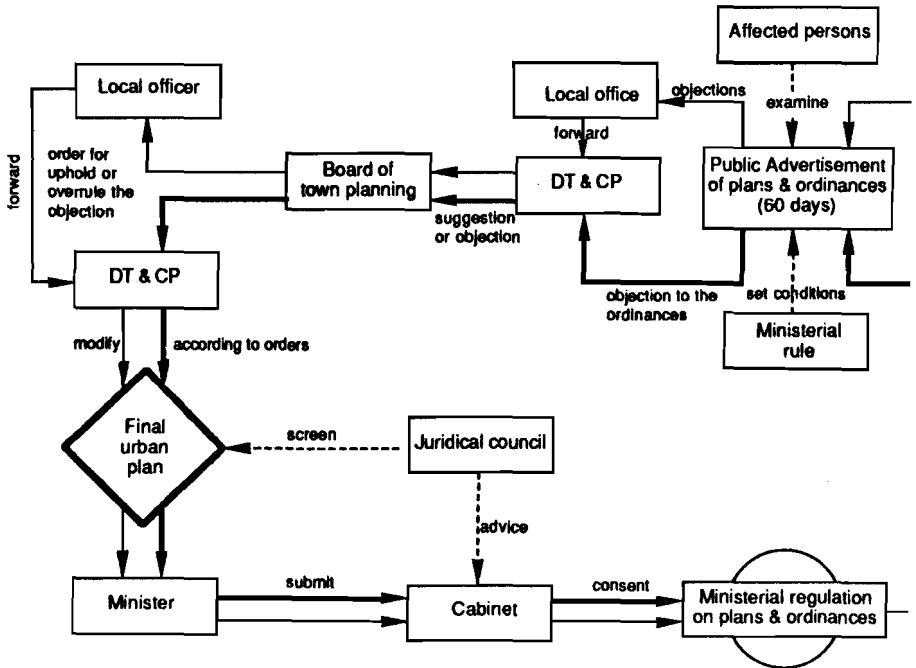
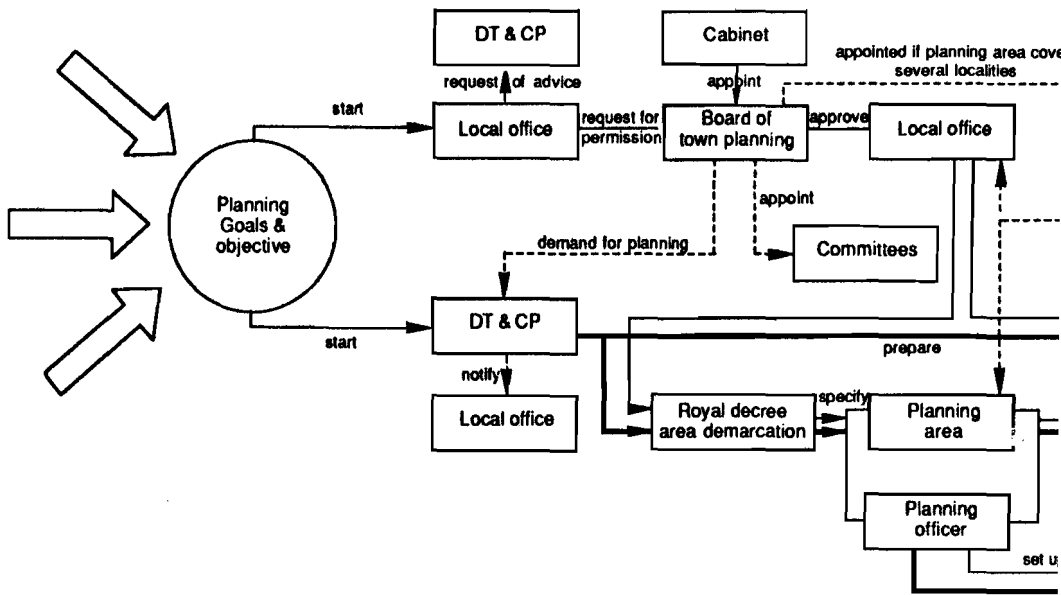
## 6. Plan preparation

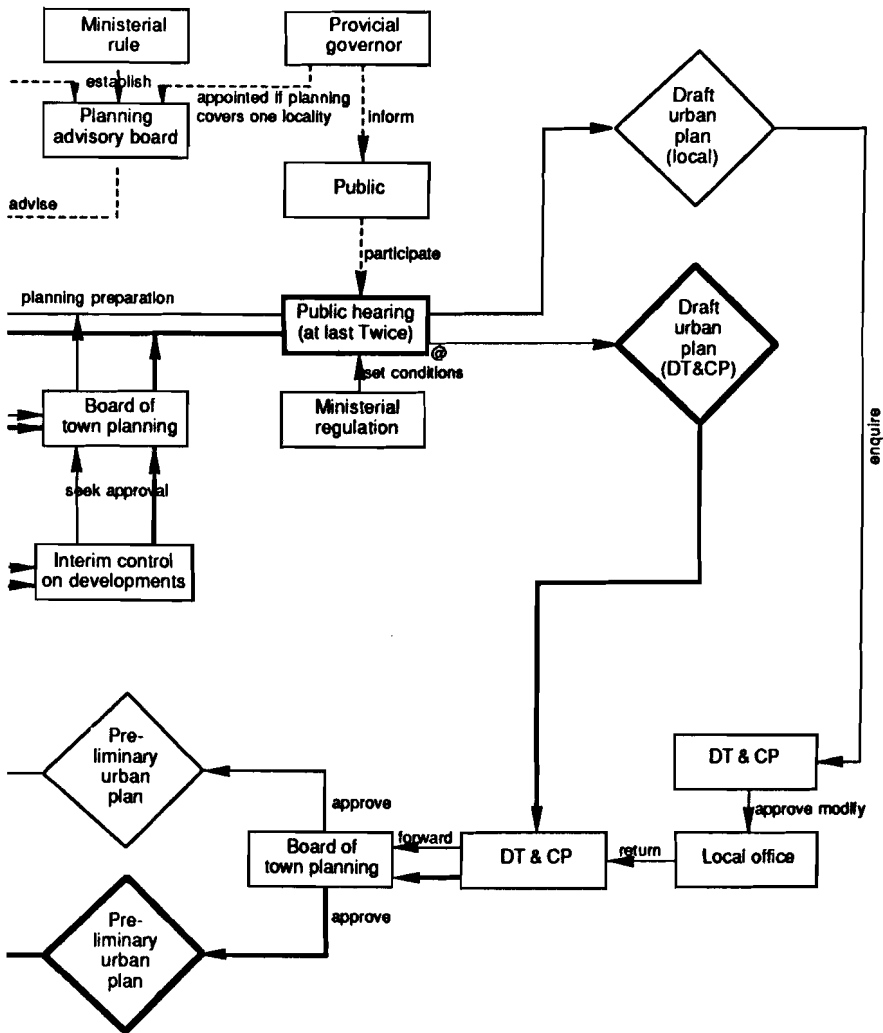
The time to prepare spatial plans differs according to the type of plan. In case of a comprehensive plan one needs 1.5 - 2 years; and for a specific plan probably more than 2 years.

Chapter 3 of the Town Planning Act describes the features of the preparation and making of a general (comprehensive) plan. Such a plan must consist of (1975, p. 235):

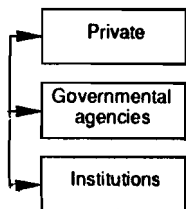
1. the purpose of the preparation and making of the general plan
2. a map showing the boundary of the general planning area
3. a plan made up in single or several copies, with prescriptions containing every or some of the following important matters:
  - a. a plan prescribing the use of property as classified
  - b. a plan showing open spaces
  - c. a plan showing communication and transport project
  - d. a plan showing public utility project
4. details accompanying the plans
5. policy, measure and method of implementation of the general plan.

The next page shows a comprehensive scheme concerning the preparation process of such a general plan, and the participating agencies, offices and decisionmakers. That scheme has been made by DTCP for own management affairs. Anyway, it shows the process according it has been laid down in the planning law. The scheme indicates that the planning process can be done by DTCP or by local planners, that means two lines can be followed.





**STEPS IN PREPARATION OF A  
GENERAL URBAN DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
as required by the  
TOWN & COUNTRY ENABLING ACT OF B.E. 2518  
step to be carried out by:**



- \_\_\_\_\_ Local office
- \_\_\_\_\_ department of town and country planning (DT & CP)
- others

The preparation and making of a specific plan is described in chapter 5 of the Thai Town Planning Act 1975. A specific plan consists of (pp.240-243):

1. the purpose of the preparation and making of the specific plan
2. a map showing the boundary of the specific plan
3. a town plan or an area plan made up in single or several copies, containing all or some of the following important matters:
  - a. a plan showing the prescription on the use of land classified into categories of activities with the boundary dividing land into categories and zones
  - b. a plan showing communication and transport project together with the details showing the limit and size of public ways
  - c. a plan showing the details of public utility project
  - d. a plan showing open spaces
  - e. a plan showing prescription on the level of land
  - f. a plan showing the area of the location of a place or object of interest or value in the field of art, architecture, history or antiquity to be conserved, maintained or repaired
  - g. a plan showing the area of natural resources, or of landscape of beauty or natural interest, including tree or group of trees, to be conserved or maintained
4. details and explanation accompanying the plans under 3. including the category and kind of the building the construction of which may or may not be permitted
5. prescription of what to be done or not to be done, in accordance with the purpose of the specific plan, in every or some of the following matters:
  - a. limit and size of accessory spaces
  - b. category, kind, size, and number of the buildings the construction of which may or may not be permitted
  - c. category, kind, size, number and description of dilapidated buildings or those in objectionable condition or are likely to cause danger to dwellers



or passers-by, demolition or removal of which is to be ordered by the local executive board of town planning

- d. use of the building, construction or alteration of which has been permitted, in a different way from that originally applied for, for which a permit from the local officer must be obtained
  - e. size and plot of the land to be permitted as the site of building for various uses specified in the specific plan, including the area of the land prescribed as free space for the specified uses
  - f. conservation, maintenance or repair of place or object of interest or value in the field of art, architecture, history or antiquity
  - g. preservation of open spaces
  - h. conservation or maintenance of tree or group of trees
  - i. demolition, removal or alteration of building
  - j. other matters, as may be necessary, in accordance with the objective of the specific plan
6. details specifying the land or other immovable property to be expropriated, together with the name of the legal owner or the legal occupier of the property, and the map showing the boundary of the land or other immovable property expropriated for the purpose of town planning in order to be used as public highway
  7. details specifying the land or other immovable property to be expropriated, together with the name of the legal owner or the legal occupier of the property, and the map showing the boundary of the land or other immovable property expropriated for other purposes of town planning
  8. details and map specifying the land or other immovable property which is domaine public, or that owned, occupied or maintained by the Ministry, Sub-Ministry, Department, Changwat, local administrative authority, or State organization, which is to be used as public highway or for other purposes of town planning
  9. other map, plan or detail as may be necessary.

After full approval of a general plan it becomes law with the status of a Ministerial Regulation (section 26, Town Planning Act 1975, p. 239); a specific plan shall be

## 7. Prepared and realized plans

According to DTCP there are 32 municipalities ready with comprehensive community plans now. This amount represents already enforced plans as has been registered in January 1988 (see also the table at the next page). These general plans concern towns and cities. .

Also ready but in process are 73 plans for the central cities of changwats.

The law requires the specific plan to be prepared by the municipality itself, however they can request a consultant, DTCP or a planning department of one of the universities to do that with the consent from the Planning Board. A specific plan will be screened by DTCP before it will be submitted for approval by the Planning Board. It concerns an important plan type because it shows details about the plot sizes and land use coverage ratios. For full approval it has to pass Parliament to get the status of an Act. That is it deals with legal rights and ownership.

Next there are about 700 districts. That are big villages with urban characteristics, which will become municipalities and thus will be added to the list of urban settlements. At the moment there are 40 sanitary guideline plans. These plans have been designed with the aim to give them to all kinds of institutions at different levels, for discussion. However authorities put them in the drawer, saying they are alright, but they lack approval. By the

**Table 2: Already enforced general or comprehensive plans in Thailand, specified for the year of final enforcement**

sequence number	name of plan (municipality)	year of enforcement
1	Rayong	1983
2	Pattaya	1983
3	Chiang Mai	1984
4	Khon Kaen	1984
5	Hat Yai	1985
6	Lampang	1985
7	Nakhon Sawan	1985
8	Phuket	1985
9	Nakhon Ratchasima	1986
10	Surat Thani	1986
11	Narathiwat	1986
12	Songkhla	1986
13	Udon Thani	1986
14	Mukdahan	1986
15	Ubon Ratchatani-Warin Chamrap	1986
16	Samut Songkhram	1986
17	Yasothon	1986
18	Ratchaburi	1986
19	Ayutthaya	1986
20	Nakhon Si Thammarat	1986
21	Phat Thalung	1986
22	Ban Pae (Rayong)	1986
23	Kanchanaburi	1987
24	Phang Nga	1987
25	Nakhon Nayok	1987
26	Pathum Thani	1987
27	Chachoengsao	1987
28	Chiang Rai	1987
29	Maha Sarakham	1987
30	Songkhla Deep Seaport (Songkhla)	1987
31	Lam Chabang (Chonburi)	1987
32	Phitsanulok	1987

Source: DTCP, Bangkok, Thailand, January 1988.

way, this feature seems to express the general approach in planning in Thailand. Mainly there is a system of laissez-faire. Several types of land development and construction depend of the preferences of the owners. In fact an approach which is the 'enemy of the spatial plan'.

There exist so-called sanitary district plans too. They are situated between comprehensive plans and rural plans. Mainly these sanitary plans put forward suggestions like one finds in a comprehensive plan, however they have no legal authority. These plans show a lot of details also, f.i. concerning the future location of facilities. They do not always contain a map with future land uses.

## 8. Other plans: rural plans

Rural development planning helps to solve specific problems in rural areas, like to upgrade the general living conditions, and to encourage coordination between government and all kinds of private organizations.

A rural plan is another development guideline, however without any legal authority. They are designed to identify (within a commune, 'tumbon', area which is the smallest administrative subdivision area within a province) the rural centers and their affiliated villages. Broad types of land use, agriculture and nature are identified. Also the network of feeder roads as well as the irrigation system are included in such a rural plan.

## 9. Some other features: finances

Cost-benefit analysis is not a subpart of spatial plans in Thailand until now. In the future it will be, however not for the comprehensive or general plan, it will be done as a subpart of specific plans.

Because there are no specific plans available in Thailand one can only guess what issues will be included in a cost-revenue calculation for the execution of a (plan) project. Probably they concern land acquisition and infrastructure at the costs side, and taxes as revenues.

Financial claims to landlords are very limited in case the government execute a spatial plan. It is only the government who pays for land acquisition and construction of infrastructure. Landlords pay later, indirectly by tax, in particular property tax.

## 10. Suggestions to update Thai Town Planning Act 1975

There are some topics in the Thai planning system that need attention, and for which adjustments have to be considered.

In the first place it is obvious that a lot of municipalities do not possess valid spatial plans like comprehensive plans; none of them has a legal specific plan. Probably this is caused by the insufficient number of skilled and trained planning professionals in Thailand at the moment. Another cause may be the fact that mainly at a centralised level spatial plans (even) for the municipalities are prepared.

To solve that quantitative problem a professional skilling and training scheme has to be promoted. Because of demands for executives in governmental agencies DTCP could be the organizer. In case main attention for that scheme is laid upon comprehensive and specific planning for municipalities a good step can be set in the direction of a decentralisation of planning tasks.

In the second place complaints can be heard about the broadness of statements in spatial plans. One wants more specifications, more clear statements because the present ones include too much interpretation freedom. In fact there is a desire to decrease the degree of flexibility.

In the third place there is a peculiar problem. Translation of a comprehensive plan into a specific plan has not been

executed until now, mainly because of problems of understanding, that is interpretation of the law.

In the plan there are no definitions in the prescriptions. This causes confusion. What is low density? What is industry? That makes it difficult for local executives. Interpretation takes place by other departments now, f.i. the Department of Industry; in practice it means they are free what to interpret. Several of the inherent problems of interpretation may be taken away for a great deal by the afore mentioned decentralization, that is implementation, plan execution and planning control should be handled primarily at the level of plan realization, the local municipal level.

A fourth problem is caused by the fact that the Town Planning Act works with a very rigid five years period in which a plan has legal status. At one hand comprehensive plans can not be changed during that time; at the other hand if there is no new approved plan at the end of the 5-years period there is no planning protection at all. Changes in the law are necessary. Changes in between must become possible, like that is already available in case of specific plans. A regulation for a transition period between present and next plan could take away the unwished situation in which there is no planning protection.

A fifth in fact confusing problem concerns the legal status of a comprehensive plan as well as that of a specific plan; both get legal status of law. So a comprehensive plan is



law which means that the lawyer (Thailand does not know an administrative lawyer for spatial planning matters) wants to read exactly from the plan map to make his decisions. But this plan is guideline also for the specific plan. This generates serious inconveniences. Change of law will be necessary; probably by giving a comprehensive plan a status or intended municipal guidelines of spatial policy.

A sixth one is the relatively disappointing result after more than 12 years in terms of plan production and legalization. Only 32 of 124 municipalities in Thailand have an approved comprehensive plan. Maybe the law should say something about terms within which certain plans have to be prepared, and what to do in case certain plans necessary for consideration of decisions to take, are not available. Of course, the planning authorities are aware of this problem. However, for the time being they concluded that completion of general plans for all Thai municipalities on short term is impossible. As soon as possible one will try to reach that stage, but with the object in view that it is better to have no plan at all than a bad one. Particularly, it is even more difficult to state an end date for the legalizing procedure because of the degree of centralization of Thailand.

A seventh one is the general desirability to decentralize the Thai planning system in terms of organization and management. For that the foundation of provincial and/or municipal "DTCP's" has to be considered. A shift in

decisionmaking power may go to provincial and municipal authorities simultaneously.

A final one may be the implementation or connection of health law and environmental law issues into the Town Planning Act and/or into spatial plans at the municipal level.

## 11. Plan execution and building permit

Building permits are issued on base of the Building Act of 2522 (1979 A.D.) The one who gives that permission is a local office, like BMA (Bangkok Metropolitan Authority) or municipality. The area for which a building permit is asked, must be within an urban area. Outside urban areas the Building Act has no jurisdiction. In that case one asks permission from the Changwat authorities. The Changwat Administration has the privelege to give such permissions.

Within the urban areas a specific plan should give the criteria for control. In general to check criteria for control from that type of plan suits within the regulations of the Building Act 1979.

Anyway, in case of a request for a building permit the authorities have to look to the comprehensive plan as long as there is no specific plan. But if there is, one has to look to the specific plan.

That is not without problems. Local officials do not know fully how to interpret the general plan at the moment a permit has to be issued. The general plan only controls land use and road network and that in two ways, namely as uses that are allowed, and as uses that are prohibited. Descriptions in the plans are ambiguous which makes a good interpretation for local officials difficult. Also there is a scale problem; the scale of a general plan is 1:10000 or 1:8000 (for a specific plan 1:1000 probably). In practice

however local officials allow almost everything, as far as it is not against the law.

## 12. Thai institutions for skilling and training in planning

The present situation in Thailand is that one finds three possibilities to study urban and regional planning at the university level, namely:

1. Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Faculty of Architecture, Bangkok Chulalongkorn University
2. Department of Urban Design and Planning, Faculty of Architecture, Bangkok Silpakorn University
3. course in Urban and Regional Planning, in Faculty of Architecture, King Mongkut Institute of Technology (KMIT)

The input degree to study in these departments is a bachelor degree, and in case of positive result one gets a degree of Master of Science in Planning. At this moment there is no opportunity to follow a Ph. D. course in Urban and Regional Planning in one of these Thai universities, however Chulalongkorn is applying for that. To get a Ph. D. in urban and regional planning one used to go to countries like U.S.A., United Kingdom, and Australia; also Germany and Poland are visited for that aim. The NIDA, National Institute for Development Administration, has a post graduate course from which one can obtain a Ph. D. in Urban Administration.

Other training institutes relevant for urban and regional planning are Human Settlements Division of the Asian Institute of Technology in Bangkok, Department of Human Settlements of the Leuven Catholic University, and the

dutch for developing countries specialised institutes like IHS (International Housing Studies) in Rotterdam, ISS (Institute for Social Studies) in The Hague, and ITC (International Training Centre) in Enschede.

Evaluating the present Thai skilling and training for urban and regional planning some statements can be put forward.

In the first place some adaptations in the present curriculae seem necessary. It concerns the present lack of general cost consciousness (estimation) with regard to plan implementation and realization, except of infrastructural elements for which a cost-benefit analysis is calculated. This is probably caused by lack of general experience in real planning situations at the side of the educators.

Also it concerns an obvious need to add technological issues to the courses. This seems very important to get higher effectivity from new employees who completed their study.

Next there is an obvious need to train local officials. They should be trained to get better knowledge about the purposes of planning, in particular concerning implementation as well as to set up information systems in their offices. Locally the present situation of spatial data management is very weak; spatial information systems do not exist at that level. As far as this kind of information is available it concerns maps developed by DTCP with infrastructural features. It is for that reason that locally rural plans show to be very welcome. They are

documentation for the local executives which they often use as a starting point to do locally other activities.

Within DTCP there used to be a training course for planners also. Invited professors from the Thai universities came to lecture about theoretical issues; professionals have been invited too for lectures about professional issues.

Continuation of such training courses on behalf of DTCP planners is seen as necessary without doubt. At one hand they are necessary because the senior executives of DTCP are more architectural skilled and probably still oriented as architect-designers; at the other hand the younger planners are more and more equipped with new methods and techniques, however still limited, in particular with regard of the use of computers and computerised tools.

### 13. Evaluation: theory and practice

The chance that urban and regional planning activities show up to be theory in stead of practice is not hypothetical.

Execution of plans is a stage (generally) next to plan preparation, design and decisionmaking and legalization. So it depends of executive agents who issue planning permits and/or building permits.

In many planning systems, and also in Thailand, plan realizations and executions take place at the municipal level. In Thailand it means in accordance to comprehensive plans and specific plans, because both become law in the final stage of the planning process under the 1975 Town Planning Act.

In three cases comprehensive plans reached the stage of revision. They concern that of Rayong, Patthaya and Chiang Mai. At this moment DTCP evaluates the working of this three plans by comparing the land use in the early stage of that plans by those after five years. As far as conclusions have been drawn already this evaluation does not show serious problems, "nothing seems to be happened against the law".

At the end of 1987 only 46 comprehensive plans have been developed by DTCP, and only 16 of them passed the three public hearings of the Thai planning process. Totally there are 124 municipalities.



Until now 6 comprehensive plans became law, that is they have been signed by the Minister of Interior.

In terms of law there is no specific plan available at all.

However everything goes on! Every office has to help itself. That means that each plan can go on, also if higher level plans including policies are not available. This is possible because of another act, namely the Building Act (which does not know any threshold in that sense).

Sometimes NESDB makes an Action Plan if there is a special need for that. For example if a port has to be developed NESDB has the privilege to make such a plan.

The same is applicable for changwat planning, and the resulting proposals can be implemented also in case the plan has passed the Division of Budget in the Ministry of Finance (Treasury).

Thailand is highly centralised which has strong effects in the ways planning goes. Sometimes plans are developed and executed directly by the Minister of Interior, or Industry; generally spoken the central government. Execution happens without any legal acceptance on the local level. Of course, usually there will be certain consultancy, and/or 'in-house', that is not in public, negotiations.

#### 14. Conclusions

In this paper some issues of Thai planning system have been described in short. A few suggestions have been given for updating the Thai Town Planning Act 1975.

NESDB and DTCP do a lot of work in the planning process, even for lower level governments. For a part a certain degree of decentralization of planning (preparation) tasks is desirable on behalf of an increasing effectivity of spatial planning at lower government levels. This may be reached by an enlargement of (the feeling of) responsibility concerning spatial development in their territories and by getting more understanding for the reality of specifications of that in spatial plans on base of which further decisions about realizations (planning permit, building permit) will take place.

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