

Preface

It is now recognized that transport policies and plans produced through the traditional top-down approach tend to over-emphasize the supply-side traffic engineering solutions, while ignoring the importance and cost effectiveness of demand management and other approaches which are more participatory in nature. There have been numerous studies on the well-known traffic and transportation problems of Bangkok. Some of them were quite comprehensive in nature and others more focussed on some specific problems. However, all of them had something in common – they were based on the traditional top-down approach and the proposed solutions reflected largely professional points of view. The policy prescriptions of these studies lacked general public support and authorities failed to implement many of the crucial “hard” choices. As a result, despite many efforts made in the past, the severity of the problems still exists. In contrast to the limitations of the traditional approach, lessons drawn from many places around the world suggest that a “bottom-up” participatory approach is more likely to win public support especially when the questions of difficult policy choices and public actions arise. Encouraged by its success, participatory approaches to planning and development have been institutionalised in many countries with applications in different fields of development.

Considering the potentials for success of a participatory approach, particularly for policy choices involving harder issues, the Rattanakosin Project was conceived as a pilot project aimed at 1) making specific contributions to the overall solutions of the traffic and transportation problems in the area, and 2) to share the lessons learned about this approach with other countries in the region. The pilot project was executed by the United Nation’s Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP) in cooperation with Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) and with financial and technical support from the Royal Netherlands Government. In the course of undertaking the project a number of important lessons have been learned, at least two of which deserve detailed consideration.

First, the merits of participatory approaches have been recognized by stakeholders and consideration needs to be given to introducing them as effective approaches to all future planning exercises in Bangkok. However, this would require institutional development in many areas ranging from the organization of the participatory process itself, to changes in the functional structure of BMA to facilitate practicing of these approaches. Second, professional expertise has developed within the project team in analysing and structuring the views and suggestions of stakeholders to develop an integrated and comprehensive package of actions, which can be shared by other cities in the region.

After an introductory section, the report, therefore, has been organized in two main parts, namely, institutional development and “technical” actions, both of which are based on views expressed by the project’s stakeholders. The first part concerns actions to institutionalise participatory approaches to planning and development in BMA. It outlines various issues related to institutional development that would be required to address the successful introduction of participatory approaches in the planning process. The first part also reviews the standing of participatory approaches in general within the broader contexts of constitutional provisions and the on-going reorganization of local government functions in Thailand. The second part of the report deals with specific actions for consideration that could be undertaken to address some of the major issues and problems mainly related to

traffic and transportation in Rattanakosin. This part contains twelve integrated action plans to deal with the identified major issues in transportation in a comprehensive and integrated manner.

Generous support and cooperation have been received from the Royal Netherlands Government and the concerned stakeholders without which it would not have been possible to undertake and complete the project. Mention must be made of the stakeholders who happened to be the kingpins of this project. Their whole-hearted support, deep interest, and untiring participation in long workshops testify people's confidence in participatory approaches and also their willingness to get involved in the planning and decision-making process. With their support, it should be much easier for the authorities to consider implementation of the "hard" choices and thereby could go a long way towards sustainable development in Rattanakosin.

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