



# Nanglerng community-driven transit oriented development

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E-Lerng + Openspace

# REPORT

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# Background

Nangloeng is an ancient community located in Bangkok's old town, with a rich history and cultural traditions. It is famous for its artists, traditional Thai dancing, the popular market and its food. It's a varied community in terms of occupations and income levels.

Most of the land in the old town of Bangkok belongs to the Crown Property Bureau (CPB). This is the case in Nangloeng as well, where people, although living there for generations, don't own the land but rent it from the CPB. The land surrounding the temple Wat Kae belongs to the temple and has been partly encroached by people (generally poorer) who are not paying rent.

Things are set to change in the near future because a new metro (MRT) line will pass by Nangloeng, and a new station will be built right on the edge of the community. This does not only imply that some buildings will be demolished and families evicted, but also that land prices will soar, paving the way for intensive real estate speculation. Indeed, if we have a look at the masterplan drafted by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, we can see that the area of Nangloeng is red, which means "intensive commercial development".

The new metro line is affecting many communities across Bangkok. In many cases people protested, and the State Railway Department (SRD) has been working on a "reduced-impact design" for the station. In Nangloeng, however, some people in the community are trying to negotiate with the landowner (CPB) and the MRT developer (SRD).

We are supporting them in developing a community-led masterplan for transit-oriented development that would benefit the community, because a new metro station is not only a threat, it can also represent a great asset. Our aim is to devise a masterplan that integrates the new



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[1] A metal plate on the ground in Lan Luang road indicating that the land belongs to the Crown Property Bureau.

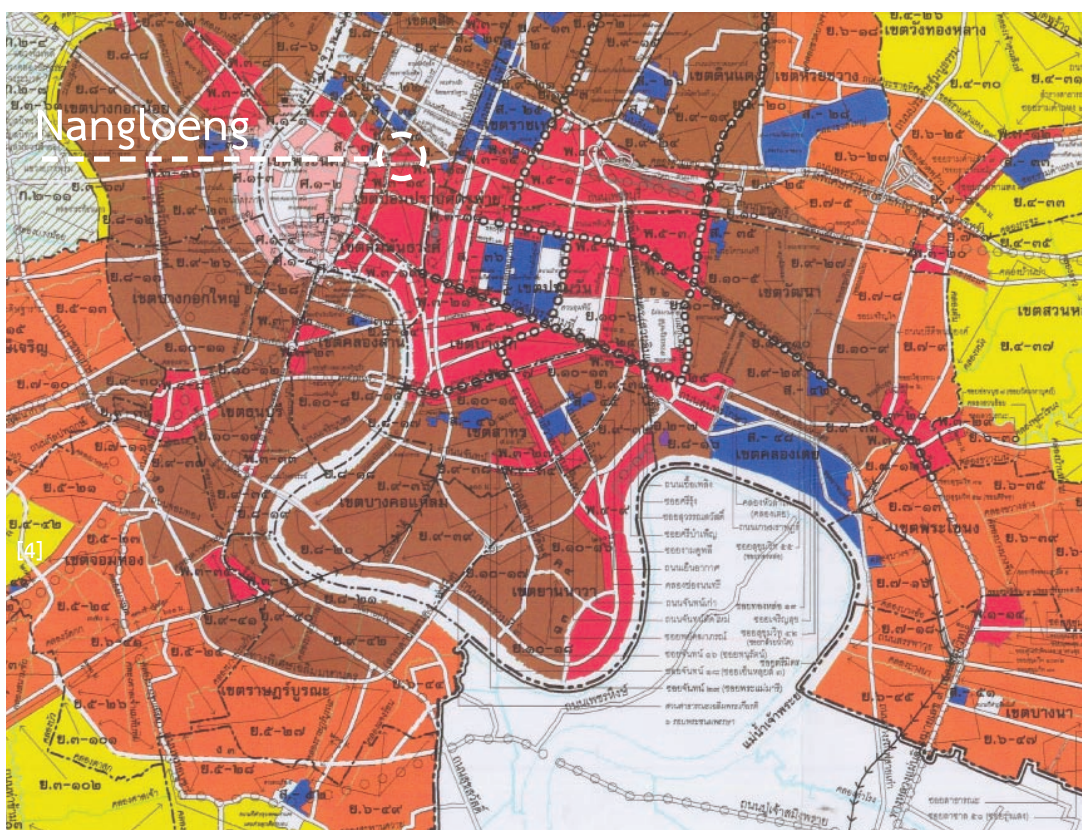
[2] A community member, whose house will be affected by the new metro station, discussing about the issue during a community meeting.



station within the community, not only physically – accomodating the evicted families within Nangloeng, designing the space around the station, etc – but also from the social and economic point of view.



[3] The proposed route of the MRT orange line.



[4] Bangkok zoning according to the masterplan.  
 Red = commerciale  
 Blue = government  
 Brown = high-density housing  
 Orange = mid-density  
 Yellow = low-density

## Who are we?

E-Lerng is a community-based art collective from Nanglerng, using art and culture as a tool for community mobilization and development to raise awareness in the community around poverty and marginality.

Openspace is a community architecture office based in Bangkok. We have been working with the community for the past 3 years, focusing on the restoration of the Dancing House as a museum and community space (the project is still ongoing, currently in phase 3).



# Urban Planning studio with Thammasat University

august-  
september  
2014

We linked to Thammasat University for a 4th year Urban Planning studio which took Nangloeng and the new metro station as case study. The brief for the studio was similar to what we are trying to develop: a community-driven masterplan for transit oriented development. However, because of the focus of the course, the students didn't go in depth into design details, but analyzed the context and made proposals from a planning perspective.

**Process:** after some introductory lectures, the students met community leaders, community members and E-Lerng+Openspace team, and visited the community in groups. Each group visited a different area and talked with different people. At the end of the day, all groups came together with to share what they experienced and how to move forward.

Subsequently the students, divided in 5 groups, went back to the community again by themselves to do some research, conduct interviews and mapping. In parallel, they analyzed the planning regulations, the legal framework and the MRT project.

They developed 5 masterplans, some covering the whole of Nangloeng and some just intervening on the area around the metro station. The plans were presented at Phrom Phrap Sattru Phai district headquarters, with representatives from the district, the community, and the CPB attending.



[5] Thammasat students visiting Nangloeng's old, run-down theatre, one of the cultural buildings of the community.

[6] The meeting with students at the end of the first day of field visit.

[7] The students' "transect walk" with maps.



**Outcomes:** the whole workshop, and the final presentation in particular, was a good occasion for discussing and building a good relationship among different stakeholders. Nangloeng community could show that they are not opposing development of the area altogether, but instead they claim to have a stake in such development.

However, as the students had no previous experience in community work and came from a top-down urban planning background, they only involved community people superficially, and as a result their masterplans didn't reflect the community needs or aspirations. Most people in the community accepted this, considering the studio just a university study project. But a few members got extremely upset seeing their house swept off the plan to make way for malls and skyscrapers, and started boycotting the community meetings which focused on the actual masterplan development. P'Deng, community leader, told us that it was better to wait a few weeks for things to calm down, so until now we had problems in engaging with the community.

Many people in Nangloeng are not concerned about the new MRT station. They think that as long as their houses are not affected by the station construction, then there's no need to worry. The students' projects were useful to raise awareness of the possible future developments in the area, the economic pressures, land speculation and the potential threat this represents to the community livelihood. So this could be good for triggering community participation around the issue.



[8, 9, 10] The presentation at Pom Prap Sattru Phai district office with community members and CPB representatives intervening.



# Processing information

september -  
december  
2014

So what can we do in the meanwhile, to prepare the ground for future community involvement, if we have to wait for them to work things out among themselves first?

We started a process of research and processing information to make it more legible through maps. There have been many studies focusing on Nangloeng and interventions planned for it, there is already plenty of information collected, but it's not so easy to access and read it. Pi Deng, community leader and part of our team, has her own "archive" which is a mess.

We started from there to produce "layered maps" highlighting different issues and can be overlaid to see connection between issues. We intend to use these documents both as starting point and base maps for the next workshops and as documentation to substantiate the future masterplan and to help the community negotiating.



[11] Invitation for the community meeting and mapping workshop. We already organized it and handed out the invitations, but we had to cancel last-minute as a conflict erupted within the community the evening before, concerning the students' high-rise projects and the future development of Nangloeng.



[12, 13] Browsing information in Pi Deng's archive beside Wat Kae temple.

## Main findings:

1. The map provided by the district is not reliable, maybe unaccurate or not up-to-date. However, there exists another map, made by Arsomsilp Institute, which is quite accurate, but it only covers Wat Kae Nangloeng, and only the houses on CPB land.

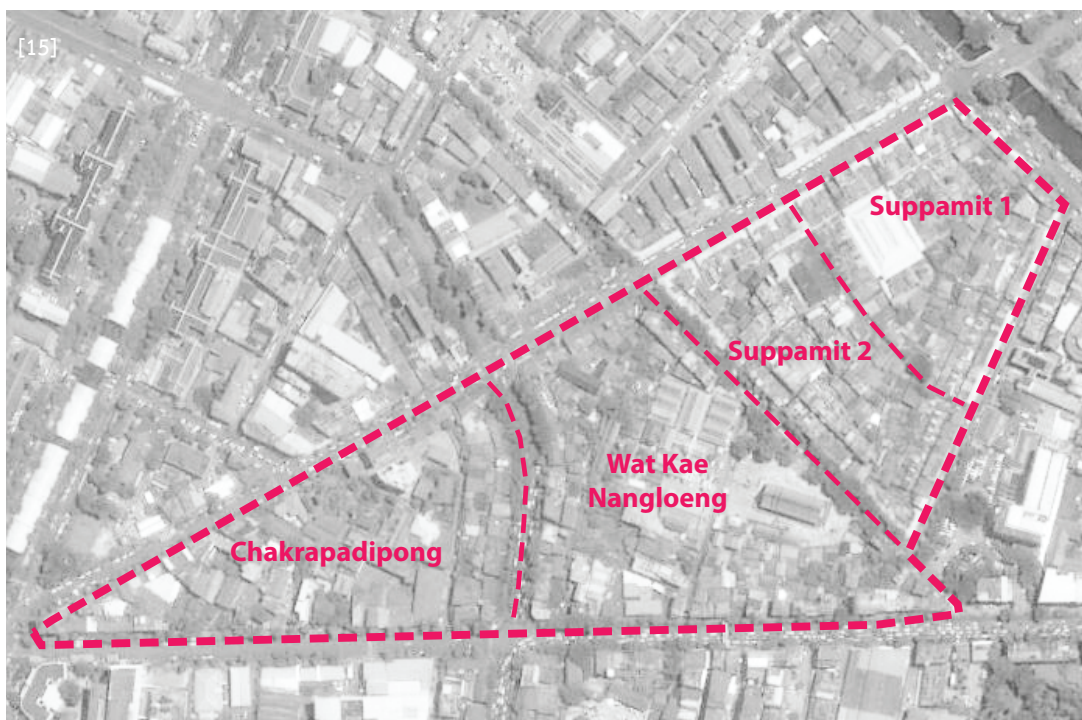
[14]



[14] The map provided by Phrom Phrap Sattru Phai district.

2. What we call “Nangloeng” is actually administratively divided into 4 distinct communities. One of them is called Wat Kae Nangloeng and is also registered with Baan Mankong, the government programme for community-driven upgrading. We decided to focus our work on this part of Nangloeng, because it’s where we have more contacts, there is community organization, and a good relation with the local CPB representatives (better than in neighbouring areas).

[15]



[15] The subdivision of Nangloeng into four administrative units called “community” (chuanchom). Each of them has a different CPB representative responsible for it. The central one, Wat Kae Nangloeng, is where we are focusing our work for now.

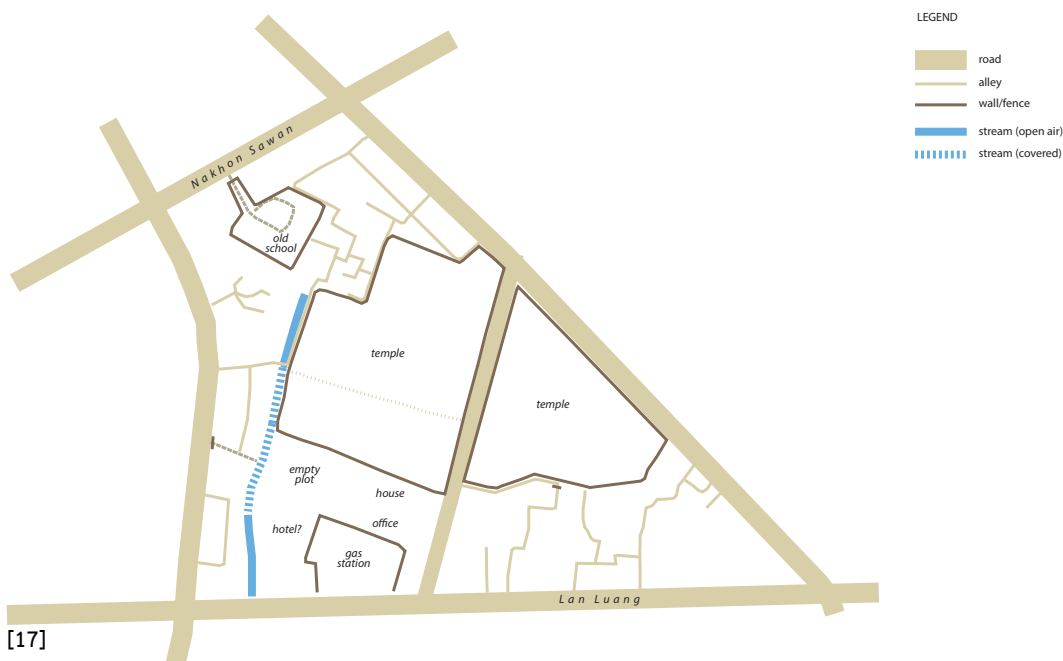


3. Most of the land belongs to the Crown Property Bureau; some plots are privately owned; the land around the temple belongs to the temple. We already knew this but now we traced the correct boundaries on the map after cross-checking between existing maps and on-site observations.

4. There is no reliable information about the people living on temple land: we just know that there are roughly 40 households living in 16 structures. People on temple land don't pay rent and are not registered, and they don't have a good relation with the temple. Recently, the monks built a concrete wall to prevent people from extending the settlement on temple land and this is still a contentious issue.

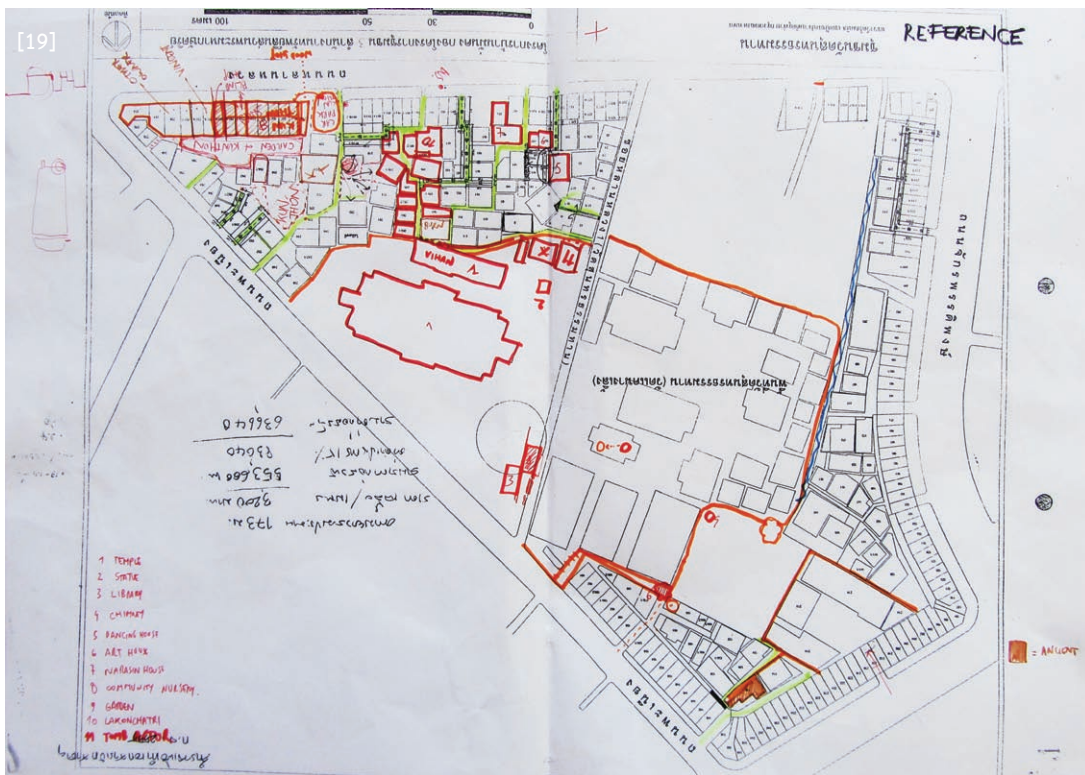


[16] Map of land ownership in Wat Kae Nangloeng community.



[17] Map of walkways and fences/walls/gates in Wat Kae Nangloeng community.





[18] Map showing landmarks and buildings of cultural value in Wat Kae Nangloeng community.



[19] Map showing the materials of each house (wood, concrete, mixed) and historical buildings.

5. Even if the legal owners of the land are the CPB and the temple, the space is subdivided between people in the community so that there are big landowners and families with only small plots.

# What next?

- **Meeting the CPB:** a big meeting between the community and the CPB is being organized for mid-December, to discuss the future development of the area, starting off from Thammasat students' proposals. Also lecturers from Thammasat University and Openspace team will attend. It will be very important to understand the CPB intentions and the real room for a community-driven masterplan.

- **Low-impact station design:** The State Railway Department will soon announce its revised plan for the station exits and which buildings and families will be affected.

- **Community workshops:** we hope we can be able to start going with our planned activities as soon as the community is ready. Despite the problems we experienced, we think the process we planned is still relevant, it only needs to adapt the timing. The first step will carry be a mapping workshop, aiming at:

- Mapping the “slum area” on temple land
- Showing which households have savings group as part of Baan Mankong
- Find empty plots and clarify “ownership”
- Highlight what is valuable to the community in physical and social terms
- Show which buildings will be affected by the demolitions