

A CASE STUDY ON BANGKOK'S BTS SKYTRAIN SYSTEM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE WHEEL CHAIR USERS AND OTHER DIFFERENTLY-ABLED PEOPLE

Yifan Zhang

Room C55, Pitak Court, Sathorn Soi 1,
South Sathorn Road, Thung Mahamek,
Sathorn, Bangkok10120, Thailand.
zyf_2006_2006@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

Wheel chair users and the other differently-abled people are essential parts of our societies, they are making contributions to the society the same as you and me, however, their rights are often ignored by the mainstreams of the society. In various developing countries take Thailand for example, the situation can be even worse. The recent arguments on the wheel chair users and the other differently-abled people pushed this topic in the teeth of the storm. The BTS skytrain system is the first overhead railway in whole of Thailand. Since the opening day on December 5th 1999 until now it helped the city on its embarrassing traffic congestion, however, as time went by, some underlying problems came to the surface. Recently the issue of constructing a lift in every BTS skytrain station to improve their accessibility was raised again to the forefront. Mr Supornthum Mongkolsawadi, the director of Pattaya based Redemptorist Foundation for People with Disability, argued that many BTS stations do not have elevators. Moreover, there is only one lift for each station which has many exits and it is unjust to claim that there is no demand to provide transport equity for people with physical challenges because not many of them would use the BTS. In January 21st, 2015, the Supreme Administrative Court's ruling was read by the central administrative court announced that the BMA (Bangkok Metropolitan Administration) as a real operator behind the scene must build the lifting facilities for the needy groups within time limitation even through the contact with the BTS company is still functioning. After a long campaign from 1996 to 2015, the disabled group whom also represent many other need groups finally won the case.

Key words: Bangkok, Urban development, Bangkok's BTS skytrain system, Wheelchair users, Differently-abled people, Social Welfare and equality.

Introduction

The definition of urbanization in terms of Thailand

What is the definition of urbanization? The idea of urbanization has different meaning in various circumstances. It's obvious that the definition of urbanization 2000 years ago and today are far from each other. Similarly, how to define urbanization is also different from country to country, the concept in Thailand can be quite different from what it is in European countries. However, some scholars have tried to personalize the image of urbanization. Mr Hope Tisdale, from the University of North Carolina, argued for his idea of urbanization in his paper 'The Process of Urbanization', saying that: "Urbanization is a process of population concentration. It proceeds in two ways: the multiplication of points of concentration. It may occasionally or in some areas stop or actually recede, but the tendency is inherent in society for it to proceed until it is inhabited by adverse conditions."¹

Furthermore, Professor Qingling Zhang from Yale University, School of Forestry and Environmental Studies raised the idea that the process of urbanization is simultaneously a demographic, economic, and land-use change phenomenon, urbanization at regional scales is growing in importance for economics, policy, land use planning, and conservation.²

We could easily find many perspectives to explain and to understand the definition of Urbanization. It's not necessary to be an academic or economic expert to understand the situation. Because urbanization is so near to us, we human beings have a very delicate inter-relationship with the urbanization process. On one hand we are the molecules of the urbanization process, but on the other hand urbanization changes and reshapes our lives continuously. In the eyes of street vendors, urbanization means more customers and more competition, while from the children's points of view, urbanization could be connected to bottled water, since many children who live with their parents in the cities don't actually know where the water comes from and what are the functions of the rivers.

¹ Tisdale Hope. University of North Carolina. The process of urbanization[J]. Social Forces, 1942: 311-316.

² Qingling Zhang, Yale University, Mapping Urbanization dynamics at regional and global scales using multi-temporal DMSP/OLS nighttime light data [J]. Remote Sensing of Environment,2011: 2320-2329.

I argue that urbanization is not only the evolution of human settlements but also the evolution of each individual. Every individual being is a special creature, no matter what their individual differences are, and each person is born to enjoy and explore their lives. In our society, we may easily notice that fast-urbanization somehow ignores the needs of some society members so that many of their basic need are not provided for and satisfied, which exposes the shortcomings of urbanization and how materialistic the society it is. In many developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, the size of cities keep expanding, more and more buildings have been built to house the rising urban population but the designers somehow ignored the needs of the population, for example, the street doesn't have any sidewalks for the blind, the metro and skytrain don't meet the needs of accessibility for the people who are in need. Furthermore, for example in Thailand the sidewalk space is rather narrow, sometime it could be even hard for fit pedestrians to walk on in a straight line, but on the other hand the space on the sidewalk was allowed to take away by vendors, it leads pedestrians to walk on the road which is only reserved for these vehicles..

URBANIZATION PROCESS IN THAILAND

Thailand is different from the other newly merged industrialized nation and regions such as South Korea and Taiwan. It still has more than 60% of the whole population engaged in agricultural sect of the economy, low level of urbanization and the only big city in the country is Bangkok. Doctor Krongkaew M from Thailand argued that the growth of Bangkok is the fueling of the whole Thailand³.

On the regional level, Bangkok is one of the main big cities in Southeast Asia, for the size and population. It closely follows after Jakarta and Manila, ranking as the third largest city within the region. In Thailand, Bangkok is also special. Thai people call Bangkok 'Krungthep Maha Nakhon', literally meaning 'Bangkok, the grand city'. Across the nation, Bangkok is the only real metropolitan. The size and the population is 30 times bigger than Chiang Mai in the north, which regarded as the second biggest city in Thailand. Economically and culturally, Bangkok plays a dominant role in the Thai world. Apart from having dense industrialized areas in Bangkok or around Bangkok, it also gathers in the best of the educational system and offers more promising job opportunities national wide. People from different part of Thailand come to Bangkok to work, study and do business, foreign investors and entrepreneurs gather in Bangkok in order to have a finger in the pie.

Figure1: Bangkok's skyline-it reflects the booming urbanization process of Bangkok.



Thompson (1967: 532) states that apart from the Wat(Buddhist temples), there is nothing of a settled character about Siamese towns. All the development of agriculture and trade has not made real towns out of the old settlements, which were almost always both administration centers and market places. She also reveals that to this day the only real city was Bangkok. It is found that during the Sukothai period all the settlements including Sukothai, the capital city, were characterized as rural areas which their people engaged in agriculture. During the Ayuttaya period, there was only one city which began to develop urbanization gradually and that was Ayuttaya, the capital city at that time. Bangkok is located on the left bank of the Chaopraya River. It was

³ . Krongkaew M, The changing urban system in a fast-growing city and economy: the case of Bangkok and Thailand, Emerging world cities in Pacific Asia, edited by Fu-chen Lo and Yue-man Yeung. Tokyo, Japan, United Nations University Press, 1996. 286-334.

built on the site of older settlements. “Ten thousand Cambodian war prisoners worked to build this city as nearly as possible in the glorious image of Ayuttaya. In 1967 the only real city was Bangkok” (Thompson, Virginia, 1967: 532-533).

During the Ayutthaya period, Bangkok was still a small rural area when compared with the capital city Ayutthaya, and at that time it was obviously far from any urbanization process. After the fall of Ayutthaya and short-lived Thonburi dynasty, in the middle of 18th century, the power city of Siam shifted to Bangkok. It was this historical event which led to the beginning of the urbanization in Bangkok. The size and population of the city rose with various streams of Chinese and Indian immigrants pouring in. Meanwhile, during this period, imperial expansion became a significant issue in Southeast Asia, as every neighboring country had already become the colony of a Western power. To avoid following the same disastrous pattern, Siam started to change from within. During the reign of King Rama I, the Grand Palace and the Emerald Buddha Temple were built as cultural landmarks of Bangkok and Thailand. “King Chulalongkorn (Rama IV) set up the first modern Avenue namely New Road (Jarengroong Road) in order to boost the urbanization and modernization of Bangkok. It was he who created, as a sort of royal hobby, boulevards, residential quarters, new palaces, and public buildings” (Thompson, 1967: 535).

However, concerns for the disabled people were not on the agenda as the whole society developed. The development of society was not in keeping with the empowerment of every individual in Thai society. The early Thai Chinese established a charitable society called Poh Teck Tung Foundation in 1896, which was recognized by the Siamese government in 1937. Even though this society was active on helping people, disabled people were not a concern.

THE BTS SKYTRAIN SYSTEM OF THE BANGKOK METROPOLITAN.

The focus of the research is mainly about the imbalance between the fast-paced development of economy and the slow-paced adjustment of infrastructures which could be suitable and accessible for every group including the wheel chair users and the other differently-abled people. The issue mentioned in this paper began with ignoring the wheel chair users and the other differently-abled people’s basic rights to use mass transit system in the urban space which conducted the twisted interest concerns of Bangkok Metropolitan Administration(BMA) and Bangkok Mass Transit System company(BTS). The main objective of this research is to awaken a common concern on the needs of different society as we consider the urban space is a space for all residences, especially when min term of the government and the private companies who are constructing and running governmental projects. This issue is obviously visible around us but ignored by many of us easily, except some reports from many Thai news agencies, there wasn’t any researches has been done. Simply hope this paper can be a stepping-stone for further study on this issue or any other related issues.

The BTS skytrain system is the first overhead railway in whole of Thailand. It started to function on December 5th 1999. Until now there are only two routes - the first route (Sukhumvit Route) begins from Bearing station in Samut Prakan province to the Chatuchak Market in the north - the second route (Silom Route) begins from Bang Wa station in Phasi Charoen district to the National Stadium. The Thai government has plans to construct 10 more routes of electric rails in order to solve the traffic congestion, as well as helping people in Bangkok and adjacent cities to commute more conveniently and comfortably⁴.

After the successful examples of four ‘Asian dragons’: Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea from the 50s to the 70s in the 20th century, Thailand together with Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines emerged as the so called ‘Asian four tigers’. From the end of the 70s, until the Asian financial crisis, Thailand witnessed its own economic boom, with many people even predicting that Thailand would become another good example of an Asian successful economy, like Taiwan and South Korea. While the economy kept developing, Thailand’s economic hub, Bangkok, experienced unprecedented challenges - the size of the city tripled or even more compared with its original size and industrialized automobile workshop plants provided people with easy access to purchase inexpensive vehicles. As a result, the traffic congestion worsened day by day. The urbanites found it took many hours even to go to a nearby destination. This situation therefore caused numerous expressions of popular discontent in Bangkok by local residents and expats. In terms of improving the image of the city and progressing the general well-being of society, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administrative Authority (BMA) issued a 30 years contract with the Bangkok Mass Transit System(BTS), authorizing this company to construct the system and operate the system according to the contract which was signed in 1996. The first elevated rapid transit system in Bangkok was constructed in 1997. In 2002, the cabinet of the former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra amended a law in order to allow a private firm to finance the cost of operating the train system, while the government would take care of all the civil engineering work.

Figure 2: A Bangkok’s BTS skytrain is stopping at a station

⁴ Assoc. Prof. Dr. Wichai Srikam, Silpakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand, *Urbanization and Urbanism in Thailand*, 2006.



However, when compared with the rapid overhead train & metro constructions in some cities in other developing countries such as China and Malaysia, the BTS skytrain and MRT metro system in Bangkok could be regarded as a very incomplete case. Two BTS lines, one MRT line and a Airport Link line comprises Bangkok's urban mass transit system. Limited stations mainly stretch in the central part of Bangkok city, and as most people who live far from these mass transit stations can't get access to use them easily. Large numbers of the urban residents still rely on road transport which including buses, tuk-tuks, taxis and motorbikes. Even though the BMA authority has made plans to extend Silom Line to Taling Chan District and Sukhumvit Line to Bang Pu in Samut Prakan province, it seems to be a very long-term plan and people will have to endure travel inconveniences for years to come.

The BTS system will not be integrated well with the MRT and Airport Link system until people can efficiently use one card to take every transit system. But the reality is that every passenger has to use three different cards in order to take these three systems respectively - the reason is that each system belongs to different operators. This man-made burden has created obstacles for passengers. Another significant truth is that there are no toilet facilities existing on all of the three systems, despite the basic physiological needs of masses people who come and go with their trains.

Many aspects of the whole system need to be forced to make tremendous advances. Excuses that the lack of facilities can be attributed to bad economic growth and earlier bad urban planning cannot be tolerated. Moreover, poor software facilities make online information and explanations inadequate.

THE BTS SKYTRAIN SYSTEM IS AN IMPORTANT URBANIZATION PROCESS IN THE EYES OF THE NEEDY GROUPS IN BANGKOK - THE WHEEL CHAIR USERS AND THE OTHER DIFFERENTLY-ABLED GROUPS FOR EXAMPLE

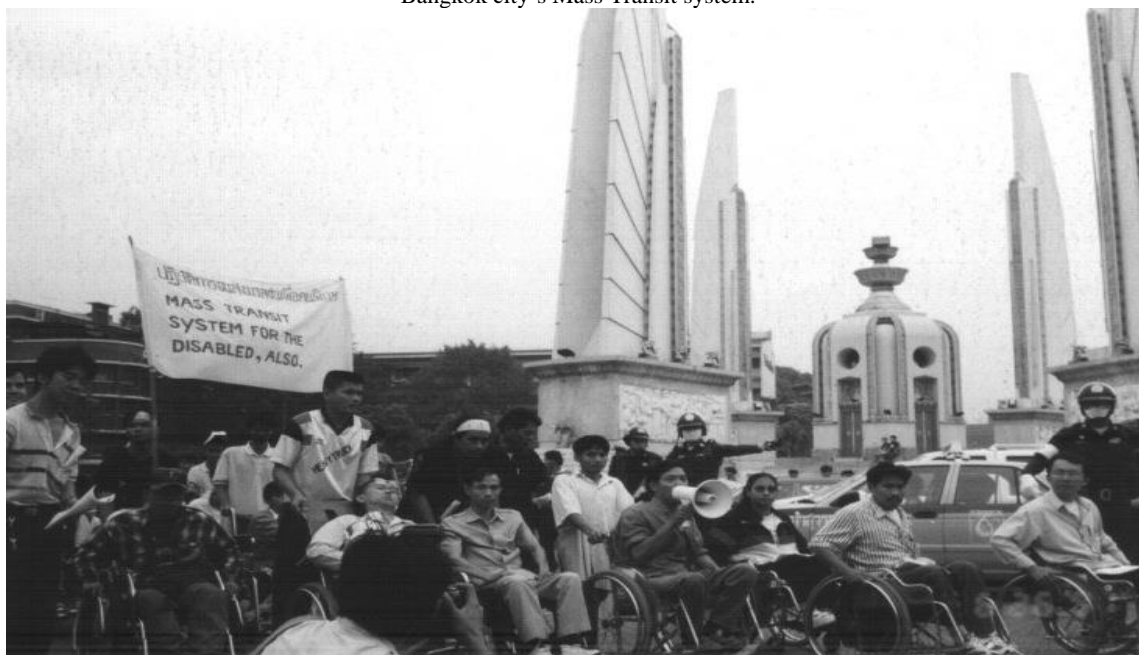
The urbanization of a metropolitan area is meant to provide for the general well-being for most members of society, no matter the age, race and social statues differences. Many big cities around the world which include the cities in the developed countries and the developing countries experienced difficulties during the process of urbanization.

The urbanization in Thailand happened long before the establishment of Bangkok. The first Thai Kingdom chose Sukhothai as a capital, compared with the Angkorian urban settlements, and Sukhothai which was small by size.

After the enclosure movement and the Industrial Revolution took place in England in 1769, the greed and selfishness of people were heavily increased, people hurriedly ran after the profit making process. As Western power expanded internationally, especially in the cases of the British, the French and the Dutch during the early period of colonialist era, they brought this ideology along with well-equipped gunboats. Hence the ideology of the booming West strongly affected the thinking pattern of the people from Oriental world, which included the Kingdom of Siam at that time. For the sake of modernization and industrialization purposes, the society in Siam gradually transformed to a form of the Western versions and the structures of society especially in the capital city Bangkok dramatically changed. The disabled group which once enjoyed the welfare system in Wats (Temple) had to face the fact that now they had to face new challenges, as the charity of the Wat didn't function well in the industrialized urban setting. This situation continued until recent years.

In common sense, the disabled people are an important component in every aspect of our society. Even if they are not capable of participating in some social activities, they are still able to make contributions, many of them could be even make bigger contributions to the society than some people without any disabilities.

Figure3: A long term struggle for Wheelchair Users and the other differently-abled groups to fight for their equal rights to use Bangkok city's Mass Transit system.



Normally considered as a marginal group, their basic rights can be totally forgotten or ignored by the interest groups. Especially in most of the developing countries, the infrastructures and facilities which were built by different levels of government and private entities were designed and constructed for the needs of the economic growth and commercial activities of urban areas and ignored disabled issues and the need to protect the access of several public groups including the disabled. However, the system needs to be changed due to the awakening of an awareness of human rights and growing civil rights movements.

In 2007, His Majesty the King of Thailand Bhumibol Adulyadej gave an act called "Persons with disabilities Empowerment Act", in order to guide the legislation on Rehabilitation of the Disabled Persons Act. In Point 4, Section 6, His Majesty urged the Commission to set up rules and practices for the government agencies and the private entities on how to assist, promote, support and develop life quality of disabled persons. These were to be implemented in order to adequately and equally provide technical assistance, subsidies, facilities or services to persons with disabilities. In Point 5 and Point 6, the emphasis was put on prohibiting discriminatory acts and discriminatory treatment performed toward disabled persons, and to consider to support and assist activities of both the public and the private entities concerning promotion and development of life quality of disabled persons⁵.

On January 20th, 2015, the Supreme Administrative Court of Thailand(SAC), with the disabled peoples' 20 years long struggle since 1990s. The BTS skytrain system has existed in Thailand for 20 years, since the beginning it hasn't provide entire accessible equipments for the disabled to use it. Guided by His Majesty the King of Thailand's *Persons with Disabilities Empowerment Act*, the interior Ministry of Thailand released a regulation to regulate the public transportation services to provide enough accessibilities for the disabled people. Nevertheless the situation didn't change that much, even under the framework of the ministerial regulation the Supreme Administrative Court let the BTS company won the case with the conclusion that the contract was signed by the BMA and the BTS in 1996, argued that at that time the ministerial regulation didn't even exist. The main point in this long running case is the attitudes towards the disabled from the beginning to the end, from the beginning the disabled groups had been excluded from the accessibilities in case of constructing the BTS system since 1995 to the dismiss of the case against unaccessibilities for the disabled to use the BTS which came up with by the protest of differently-abled groups, to the end that the persistent efforts made by the wheel chair users and the other differently-abled people's civilian societies and groups gained great effects, the justice came back to the righteous with the result that the wheel chair users and the other differently-abled people finally won the case at the Supreme Administrative Court of Thailand.

However, after the 30 years contract of managing the BTS skytrain system was handed over to the BTS company, the tensions among the company, the BMA and the needy groups came to the surface. Recently the issue of constructing a lift in every BTS

⁵ *Persons with Disabilities Empowerment Act, B.E. 2550(2007)*, Bhumibol Adulyadel Rex, the King of Thailand, Given on the 18th day of September B.E.2550, being the 62nd year of the Present Reign.

skytrain station to improve their accessibility was raised again to the forefront. Mr Supornnum Mongkolsawadi, the director of Pattaya based Redemptorist Foundation Fthe people with disabilities, argued that many BTS stations do not have elevators. Moreover, there is only one lift for each station which has many exits. The network calls for the BTS to install lifts at every station exit, so that the disabled do not have to take a taxi to cross the street. It is unjust to claim that there is no demand to provide transport equity for people with physical challenges because not many of them would use the BTS. In January 21st, 2015, the Supreme Administrative Court's ruling was read by the central administrative court, this ruling overturned the case raised by the disabled people on the ground that the ministerial regulation regarding standard facilities for the disabled which became effective in 1999 is not retroactively enforced and cannot applied with the contract for the construction of BTS sky train which was inked three years earlier. After a long campaign from 1996 to 2015, the disabled group whom also represent many other need groups finally won the case.

Besides the elevators which the city administration will be required to provide for the convenience of disabled people at all the 23 BTS stations, the city administration will also be required to build an elevated pathway to enable wheel-chaired disabled people to get in and off the trains. All the aforementioned facilities have to be put in place within one year as of the date of the Supreme Administrative Court's ruling.

Mr Udomchok Churut, the director of Redemptorist vocational school for people with disabilities said they will continue to fight for more rights and the general awareness of the disabled protection.

However, the author conducted interviews with concerned groups. During the interview with an official named Gift (Nick-named) from the BTS company, he mentioned that firstly as a private sector instead of governmental organization, unlike their government supported MRT counterpart, they didn't have authority to remove any private and public facilities along two skytrain lines. And secondly he argued, from 1997 to 2015, the social structure in Bangkok totally changed, with an increasing number of needy groups including the elderly and the disabled. He argued that nowadays Thailand has become an ageing society which they didn't plan to cope with at first. On contrast, Mr Suparnnum Mongkolsawadi pointed out that the authorities often concentrate on 'necessity' but not 'equality', which can be explained as a discrimination toward the needy groups. Moreover, it is unjust to claim that there is no demand to provide transport equity for people with physical challenges because not many of them would use the BTS system.

It is said in the contract that after the 30 years of operation, the operational duty of already-built two lines of the BTS system will be handed back to the BMA, an officer from the BTS company who didn't want to named referred that it's likely that the BMA will extend their contact to let them operate the system longer. Furthermore, as the extending process is going on, longer lines with more stations will appear to the public. He mentioned that the BMA might run the extensional system directly or still ask for assistance from the BTS company.

Since December 5th,1999, the BTS company operated the Bangkok overhead train for almost 15 years. In theory, 15 years are long enough for a company to gain enough experience to provide services to the public. The BMA, the administrative agent of Bangkok city, yet became an underdog in this case according to the ruling of the Central Administrative Court of Thailand, many people arguing that it was its own mismanagement and carelessness which caused its own failure in the case.

Referring to an old Chinese saying which was frequently mentioned by Emperor Taizong of Tang, "Water can float your boat, it can also overturn it". He used this saying to warn the bureaucrats to take seriously the concern of the will of the people during his reign. Interestingly, the old saying can also give explanations to the contemporary phenomenon. The people are always the pusher of social progress even though they are suppressed under the setup, so it's still plain to see that people don't expect to have more problems in their daily lives. What they need is a simple, well-managed social order whatever the form is and a good government which is always concerned about their interests. No matter how big the interests are, to meet the peoples' needs is always the primary duty of a government.

The rich experience of the wheel chair users and the other differently-abled people in Thailand and the whole process on how did they deal with the stakeholders with powerful backgrounds like the BMA(Bangkok Metropolitan Administration) and the BTS (Bangkok Mass Transit System) also could be learnt and applied in many similar cases around the world. Fighting for the rights of marginalized groups such as the wheel chair users and the other differently-abled people is nothing but handle the interest contests with these concerned parties, as a human nature, the game of interests can be found everywhere on the planet earth, a crucial way to cut the high level of the polarization of interest is letting the concerned parties especially the government in so called democracy countries know that they are the representatives of the people instead of a interest groups themselves, insistent and perennial urge with right methods will lead the campaign to a success.

Conclusions

Interestingly, at last the Supreme Administrative court judged that the BMA instead of the BTS company must build lifts for the disabled people. Mr Gift (nick-named) discussed that the BTS company is still under the umbrella of the contract which was signed in 1996 with the BMA. Functions as a governmental administrative organization, the BMA therefore will use the revenues which are paid by the taxpayers to make up the bad effects caused by a commercial organization the BTS company. The whole processes could be raised as a lesson for the BMA, to deal with the public needs is the primary aim of the government organization instead of only put the concentration on work through the executive procedures.

In contrast, the long-standing hard work by the Father Ray Foundation and the Redemptorist Foundation explains the progress of awareness of people's rights in Thai civil society. Once described as a marginal group, the disabled emerged as a pioneer group to fight for more equality and rights not only for its own concerns but also to do a favor for other groups. The increasing influences and reputation of civil empowerment NGOs also indicates the essential role of decentralization of power in society. It is believed that this sort of populist organizations will even play more important roles than the governmental authorities in the coming future. As a religious background foundation, the Father Ray Foundation and the Redemptorist Foundation set good examples for other NGO counterparts. The secret recipe of their successes is that since they started to be concerned about this issue they carried it on to the end and pushed it to a final success. It's obvious to indicate that if they hadn't persisted they wouldn't have achieved the fame that they have after the completion of the case.

Figure 4: Mr Suporntum Mongkolsawadi, the director of the Redemptorist Foundation for People with Disability.



The Bangkok Mass Transit cooperation, known as the BTS company, simply acts as an operator of the two lines of the skytrain system, and is therefore is itself another beneficiary under the judgment along with the needy groups, whereas the losers are the owners of the system - the Bangkok Metropolitan Administrative (BMA) and the Mass Rapid Transit Authority of Thailand (MRTA). Working under the authorization of the owners , the BTS company was confused about its duties other than its commercial-centered intentions since the beginning. After issuing the contract and before the construction of the skytrain lanes, the BMA and the MRTA gave full warranty to the BTS company, the company built and operated the system without the concern for the needy groups, as they mentioned that they are running a business, furthermore, accidentally at that time, there were no related rules, regulations and laws in relation to the disabled. It is universally common that chasing after money is the nature of every commercial organization but not everyone of them forgets honour at the sight of money, suggesting therefore, that there must be some preconditions set by responsible authorities to always set clear laws and regulations to restrain the behaviors of profit-oriented agencies. Moreover, constant oversight and investigation ought to be used to supervise these organizations to ensure that the general rights and welfare of the people will be always protected. Nonetheless, Mr Gift said frankly that even if the government paid lots of attention to make plenty of regulations they seldom have been efficiently applied. To sum up, there should be serious concerns about the strength of executive policies at every level of government and their efficient administration.

The result of the case implied the awaking of civil societies in a highly hierarchical country- Thailand, at the first the administrative body didn't put the wheel chair users and the other differently-abled people into their agendas, or simply forgot the existence of people from these groups might use the service as well, furthermore, these business bodies minimumized the cost for construction and maximized the money they will earn in the future by marginalizing those already marginalized groups. The case showed general publics the value of justice, according to the contract the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration(BMA) have to spend money to install the accessible lifts to every BTS satation in Bangkok, despite the Bangkok Mass Transit System(BTS) company's indirect irreponsibilities,the BMA has to swallow the whole portion of the 'bitter gourd'. As a lesson which could be learnt, the BMA needs to be strongly urged to decide and apply any policies carefully, especially when it turns to the people's livelihood. However, even though Bangkok has been rapidly commercialized, the basic rights of every individual shouldn't be neglected by the money oriented commercial company, in emergent cases, the government must stand up to represent the existence of justice and equality.

When conducting this research, limited resources and references became a problem for me, indeed the reality of the research in this field is rarely mentioned. I strongly believe the research which based on policy analyses and studies need to get more attentions since different levels of policies have countless ties with our daily lives. In the future, the MRT (Most Repaid Transit) system and inefficient BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) system in Bangkok could become studying objects as well. Questioned by Mr Leonardo Carvajal H, the Minister Plenipotentiary of the Embassy of Colombia to the Kingdom of Thailand, the BRT system is a big success in Bogota, the capital city of Colombia, but why it doesn't work at the same level in Bangkok. This question need dedicate study and detailed answers.

Future perspective

1.) The awakening of public awareness and the emergence of the NGO's roles. Future research needs to be applied on the changing role of this significant social phenomenon. More concerns must to be put on the growing emergence of various NGOs and their ability to change public and government awareness. In a word public awareness is the strongest drive for all sorts of social and political reforms. The awakening of public awareness of the rights of the disabled represents the growing understanding that "all men are created equal" in Thai society. Thai people therefore will gradually change their attitudes and views towards their disabled fellows. The final ruling which was released by the Central Administrative court of Thailand put a big focus on the developing roles of NGOs in Thailand. The Father Ray Foundation and the Redemptorist Foundation, which concentrate on the empowerment of the disabled people for decades. Following the good examples and aims set by the founder of the the Father Ray Foundation - Father Ray, at present the two foundations are taking care of 850 orphaned, abused and disadvantaged children and students with disabilities. In this perspective, these two charitable foundations will work closely along with the other international and national NGOs, join hands to make a more promising future for Thai society.

2.) Government's cooperation and collaboration with the private sector need to be discussed more. News in Bangkok Post in January criticized that the BMA's usage of Thai taxpayer's money to upgrade the lift system along two BTS lines instead of urging the BTS company to take actions. The failure of the BMA in the court was highly related to the agreements in the bilateral contract which released as early as 1996. This event exposed the shortcoming of the BMA's lack of foresight and abilities for future planning, and also disclosed that the decision which made my the BMA lacked consciences that the will of the people is the foundation of governmental level decision makings at the very beginning. This transitional moment taught a big lesson to the BMA on how to carefully deal with the private sections who will work closely with different levels of governments, and the formation of a contract is not only in favor of the government's sole interest. Opinions and suggestions from civil society must take into serious consideration by the policymakers. Without the supervision of people, no government worldwide can avoid fatal mistakes.

3.) Apart from the BTS skytrain issue, we could also find the other policy-related issues from many different aspects of our daily lives. For example the flood and inefficient drainage systems in Bangkok Metropolitan. Recently, the accessibility of the BTS skytrain system for the needy groups is not only the hot potato of the media.

During the monsoon season this year the tropical storms constantly hit the coastal city of Bangkok, simultaneously causing sequences of floods in the metropolitan. On March 24th, 2015, the flood outpaced pumps. Many streets were flooded thus badly affecting the efficiency of circulation of traffic and the conveniences of pedestrians. The flood from the downpour spread to an underground Tops supermarket under the Robinson department store on Sukhumvit road. As a consequence, the supermarket transformed to a 'floating market'. When he was asked about the solutions of the urban flood in Bangkok, the Lord Mayor of Bangkok Metropolitan Mr Sukhumbhand Paribatra replied that "I am not a God", while he was attending an official activity at the five star Four Seasons Hotel in Chitlom on March 24th. Overall, the evolution of an effective Bangkok drainage system will be a big challenge for the administrative authority of the city.

APPENDIX

Questions need to be asked in the BTS headquarter in Bangkok and the Father Ray foundation and Redemptorist foundation in Pattaya.

1. A ministered regulation of the Interior Ministry, issued on 2005, stipulates that transportation services, hospitals, and department stores must provide means of access, including lifts, for people with disabilities, and the elderly.

Question 1: What was the background behind the establishment of the regulation in 2005.

2. The administrative court in 2009 dismissed the case on the grounds that the construction contract of the BTS company was signed in 1996, which was before the regulation was enacted. The law cannot have retrospective effect. The case, therefore, was dismissed.

Question 1: Why the BTS company didn't build the basic facilities for the needy people such as the disabled at first? What kind of difficulties did it brought to the needy groups?

Question 2: The needy groups including the disabled are important parts of human society, what were the reasons that the BTS company didn't even consider about these groups?

Question 3: Why the authorities in Thailand cannot push to make enforcement to improve the condition faster and the whole case which have been put on the court even was dismissed?

Question 4: Recently, the BMA announced the news that they they will use 2 years to accomplish the basic facilities for the needy groups? Obviously 2 years are far too long for these people, why it will take such a long period to accomplish the plan?

***Remark:** The quotations for these questions referred from *Prachatai English* which was submitted by the editor on Tuesday, January 20th, 2015.

References

- Tisdale Hope. University of North Carolina. *The process of urbanization*[J]. Social Forces, 1942: 311-316.
- Qingling Zhang, Yale University, *Mapping Urbanization dynamics at regional and global scales using multi-temporal DMSP/OLS nighttime light data* [J]. Remote Sensing of Environment, 2011: 2320-2329.
- Krongkaew M, The changing urban system in a fast-growing city and economy: the case of Bangkok and Thailand, *Emerging world cities in Pacific Asia*, edited by Fu-chen Lo and Yue-man Yeung. Tokyo, Japan, United Nations University Press, 1996. 286-334
- Assoc. Prof. Dr. Wichai Srikam, Silpakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand, *Urbanization and Urbanism in Thailand*, 2006.
- Persons with Disabilities Empowerment Act, B.E. 2550(2007)*, Bhumibol Adulyadel Rex, the King of Thailand, Given on the 18th day of September B.E.2550, being the 62nd year of the Present Reign.