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**NOT ALL GLOBAL CITIES ARE CREATED EQUAL**  
**A Comparative Case Study of Urban Development**  
**in Metro Manila and Bangkok, 1990 - 2020**

by

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## ABSTRACT

How do non-Western cities navigate the complexities of global city formation amid the pressures of globalization? This thesis explores this question through a comparative analysis of Metro Manila and Bangkok from 1990 to 2020, challenging the prevailing Western-centric global city paradigms. Recognizing a significant gap in the literature, the study argues that existing theories inadequately address the unique trajectories and institutional frameworks of cities outside the Western context, often simplifying their diverse experiences into uniform models of urban development.

In an attempt to address this deficiency, the thesis introduces an innovative theoretical framework that integrates global city theory with an in-depth examination of local historical and cultural factors, agent dynamics, and diverse economic integration strategies. This framework allows for a nuanced understanding of how historical imperatives and hybridity shape global city formation, the roles various agents play in this process, and how cities integrate into the global economy with distinct economic strategies and outcomes.

Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research combines qualitative data from key informant interviews and policy documents with quantitative analysis. Findings highlight contrasting governance structures between the decentralized nature of Metro Manila and the centralized administrative approach of Bangkok, which significantly influence their respective responses to global economic integration and urban policy challenges.

This comparative analysis underscores the need for a reevaluation of dominant global city criteria and development strategies, and it suggests that local governance structures and economic strategies in non-Western cities lead to varied outcomes on urban development. The study's insights into these disparate effects offer critical implications for policymakers and urban planners, and they serve as a call for a more context-sensitive approach in the global discourse on urban development. The thesis not only fills a critical gap in urban studies literature by deconstructing and decolonizing traditional global city models but also sets a precedent for future research in global urban dynamics, especially in the Global South.

**Because, after all, *not all global cities are created equal.***

*Keywords: Global city, global city formation, urban development, metropolitan governance, globalization*

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# CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

## Background of the study

Picture this: You are a tourist in the bustling streets of Metro Manila. Unbeknownst to you, beneath the roads you walk on, a massive development is underway. The Philippine government's US\$1.7-billion 'Manila Subway Project,' the country's first mass underground transport system, aims to strengthen urban connectivity despite the city's history of flooding.<sup>1</sup> Less than three hours later, you fly westward and land in Bangkok, where a staggering US\$14-billion investment was recently channeled into the 'One Bangkok' project, committed to 'propel[ing]...the Thai capital into a world-class metropolis.'<sup>2</sup> As you traverse these cities, you may not immediately notice the grand developments, but while riding tuk-tuks and jeepneys, you gaze outside and see something clearly: over 1,200 displaced Bangkok street vendors on Khao San road protesting the city's spatial reorganization, and over 260,000 Filipino public transport drivers on strike, fearful of losing their jobs due to modernization programs.<sup>3</sup>

These phenomena, though seemingly anecdotal, are unfolding in real time, even as you read this thesis. They are not isolated incidents, but rather microcosms of larger, more profound urban transformations. Within the evolving cityscapes of Bangkok and Metro Manila, the developments you see are symptomatic of the complex socio-economic dynamics inherent to rapid global city development. As these cities stride towards modernization, they face the repercussions of growth: displacement, the struggle for livelihood, and the battle for space and recognition by local communities. Here, the observations of a traveler like yourself intersect with the spirited debates among globalization scholars. These discussions challenge the one-size-fits-all global city model and beg the question: How do Metro Manila and Bangkok align with or deviate from the current global city paradigm?

Since the second half of the twentieth century, contemporary urbanists and economic geographers have paid close attention to global city formation as a unique manifestation of globalization, and perhaps, a late-stage reconfiguration of the doctrine of neoliberalism. The process of global city formation, as characterized by leading scholars like Sassen and Brenner, integrates cities into the global economic system as critical nodes, attracting financial and service industries crucial for capital, management, and information flows, thereby enhancing their strategic role in global competitiveness and state

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<sup>1</sup> Railway Technology. 'Metro Manila Subway.' *Railway Technology*, September 15, 2023. Accessed on 25-12-23 at <https://www.railway-technology.com/projects/metro-manila-subway/?cf-view>. This article reveals that the first two phases of the subway project, part of the Duterte administration's 'Build, Build, Build' program, are financed through the official development assistance of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The design of the system is capable of handling up to 1.5 million passengers daily, while initial expectations are for daily usage ranging from 400,000 to 800,000 passengers.

<sup>2</sup> One Bangkok, One Bangkok, 'Evolving Bangkok,' One Bangkok, accessed December 25, 2023, <https://www.onebangkok.com/en/news/Evolving-Bangkok.html>.

<sup>3</sup> About 1,200 Bangkok street vendors marched to protest new vending restrictions on Khao San Road in 2018, demanding the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration rethink its urban development plans and negotiate a resolution. Meanwhile, transport groups and public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers set up camp in front of the transport regulatory agency in 2023 to protest the government's PUV modernization program and the consequential phaseout of traditional jeepneys. See Samantrakul Chidchanok and Sarah Orleans Reed, 'Bangkok's Renowned Street Vendors March against Evictions – and Rally Widespread Support,' Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), accessed December 24, 2023, <https://www.wiego.org/blog/bangkok%E2%80%99s-renowned-street-vendors-march-against-evictions-%E2%80%93-and-rally-widespread-support> and James Relativo, 'Transport Strikers Set up Camp before LTFRB, Vow to Stay 'until Demands Met,' accessed December 24, 2023, <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2023/12/14/2318829/transport-strikers-set-camp-ltfrb-vow-stay-until-demands-met>.

restructuring.<sup>4</sup> However, not all global cities are created equal, and the vision for global city formation differs across the world. In the succeeding sections, the historiographical exploration reveals the Western-centric bias of most studies on global city formation. The emphasis on advanced economies is apparent not only in the case selection for the testing of theories such as the dominant global city model,<sup>5</sup> but also in the manner in which existing frameworks have been developed. The discourse on global cities, broadly, and local urban development, specifically, fixates on whether or not the shoe fits. It does not—and decolonizing the scholarship warrants not merely venturing into new cases, but shifting the analytical approach altogether.

The thesis introduces a new meta-theoretical framework, anchored on a deep historiographical review, that aims to understand how the process of global city formation influenced urban development and metropolitan governance in Metro Manila and Bangkok from 1990 to 2020. The comparative case study examines the two cities' colonial histories—Metro Manila's under Spanish and American rule, contrasting Bangkok's unique position as never colonized within Southeast Asia. This divergence significantly influences their urban planning and governance, alongside their shared battles for democracy and economic liberalization in the 1990s. The study also contrasts their political structures and governance models, highlighting Metro Manila's fragmented and decentralized governance, as a city-region governed by 17 distinct local government units without an overarching regional government, versus Bangkok's centralized city administration. This comparative analysis reveals how historical legacies and institutional setups shape each city's approach to becoming a global city, providing novel insights into their urban development trajectories.

## Research questions and sub-questions

The thesis poses the central research question: *How did the process of global city formation influence urban development and metropolitan governance in Metro Manila and Bangkok from 1990 to 2020?*

This inquiry seeks to understand the extent to which global city formation has shaped both cities over a three-decade period. To comprehensively dissect this broad inquiry, the thesis is guided by three focused sub-questions, each delving into different dimensions of urban transformation. These dimensions—historical factors and hybridity, the roles of various agents, and the diversity in global integration—are critical for understanding the complex dynamics that characterize global city formation in developing contexts such as Metro Manila and Bangkok. In answering the main inquiry, three sub-questions guide the thesis, each with three sub-questions that account for local history, agents, and the diversity in the city's integration into the global economy:

1. **Historical factors and hybridity:** How have historical imperatives and hybridity shaped the global city formation of Metro Manila and Bangkok?
  - a. What role have historical legacies played in shaping the urban governance and policy approaches in Metro Manila and Bangkok?

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<sup>4</sup> Saskia Sassen, 'The Global City: Introducing a Concept Global Cities,' *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 11, no. 2 (2005 2004): 32-33; Neil Brenner, 'Global Cities, Glocal States: Global City Formation and State Territorial Restructuring in Contemporary Europe,' *Review of International Political Economy* 5, no. 1 (January 1, 1998): 22-23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/096922998347633>.

<sup>5</sup> Sassen, 'The Global City,' 28.

- b. How do local cultural traditions interact with global urban practices to influence urban development in Metro Manila and Bangkok?
  - c. In what ways have historical and cultural factors influenced major urban projects and reforms in Metro Manila and Bangkok?
2. **Agents and their dynamics:** How do various agents and their dynamics influence the process of global city formation in Metro Manila and Bangkok?
- a. What roles do government entities, business leaders, and civil society groups play in shaping the urban development and governance structures of Metro Manila and Bangkok?
  - b. How do the interactions among these agents affect the developmental trajectories and integration of Metro Manila and Bangkok into the global economy?
  - c. In what ways do these agent dynamics challenge or reinforce the existing theories of global city formation, particularly in non-Western contexts?
3. **Diversity in global integration:** How does the diversity in global integration influence economic strategies and outcomes in Metro Manila and Bangkok?
- a. What are the distinct paths taken by Metro Manila and Bangkok in integrating into the global economy, and how have these paths been shaped by their institutional setups?
  - b. How do specific policies, interactions with multinational corporations, and international trade engagements differ between the two cities, and what are the implications of these differences for local economic and urban development?
  - c. In what ways do these diverse integration mechanisms challenge the traditional narratives of global city research, particularly regarding economic globalization and urban development in the Global South?

These sub-questions not only reflect the empirical focus of each of the main chapters of the thesis but also address the complexities involved in the formation of global cities in non-Western contexts. Through a structured inquiry, the research aims to provide a nuanced analysis of the transformative processes affecting Metro Manila and Bangkok, and it reveals how historical legacies, agent dynamics, and economic strategies contribute to their evolving urban realities.

## **Theoretical framework**

Building on the historiography of global cities, this thesis introduces a novel meta-theoretical framework aimed at recontextualizing global city formation within the unique historical, socio-economic, and political landscapes of developing economies, specifically in Southeast Asia. Unlike existing frameworks that often extrapolate theories and models developed for the Global North to understand urban dynamics in the South, this study recognizes the distinctiveness of developing contexts. The innovation lies in not assuming variables as given but exploring their intricate relationship with global city formation. This approach departs from the one-size-fits-all analysis prevalent in globalization scholarship, highlighting the need for a more nuanced understanding that accounts for local specificities.

### *Towards an integrated meta-theoretical framework*

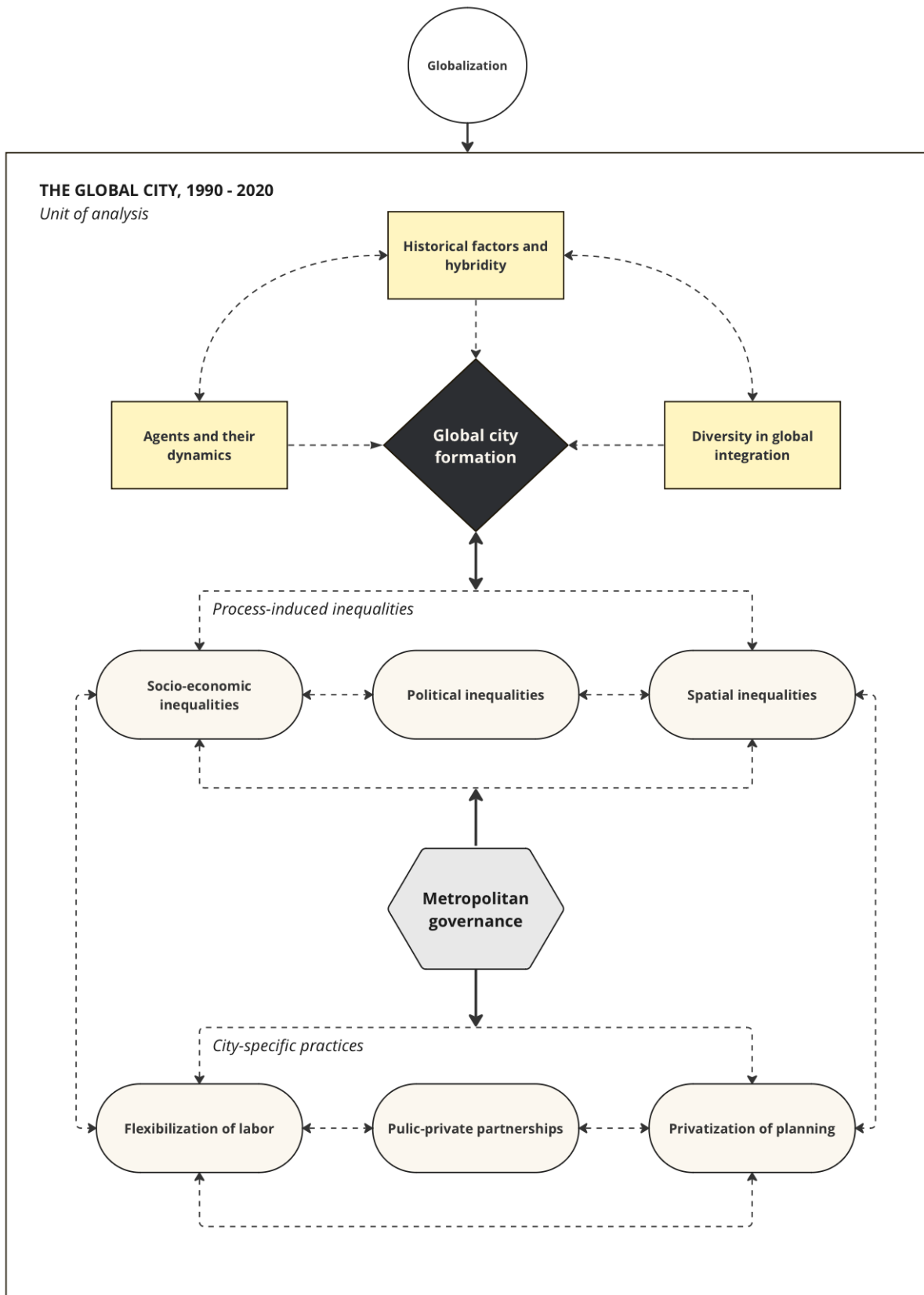
This thesis introduces an integrated meta-theoretical framework designed to understand the complex process of global city formation within developing economies. The term ‘meta-theoretical’ signifies a framework that not only provides a theoretical basis for understanding a phenomenon, but also critically examines the underlying assumptions, methodologies, and biases of existing theories. By doing so, it



transcends traditional theoretical boundaries, offering a higher-order analysis that integrates and synthesizes diverse scholarly contributions. This meta-theoretical framework thus serves as a bridge, connecting the general with the particular, the global with the local, and in doing so, it represents a significant innovation in the field of urban studies, and more importantly, contributes directly to the study program towards which this thesis is developed — Global Markets, Local Creativities.

The framework's innovation also lies in its recognition of globalization as an exogenous variable, informed by the established scholarship in the field. As metropolitan governance seeks to navigate and address the inequalities inherent in global city formation, questions arise: How do governance strategies shape and respond to these inequalities? How might city-specific practices influence or be influenced by metropolitan governance? These interrogatives underscore the framework's utility as a tool for both scholarly inquiry and policy formulation.

**Figure 1. An integrated meta-theoretical framework for understanding global city formation in developing countries**



*Source: Developed by the author of the thesis*

As illustrated in Figure 1, the unit of analysis in this thesis is the global city, represented within a rectangle. Globalization, conceptualized as an exogenous variable, is depicted by a circle surrounding the global city. This portrays globalization as a potent, external force influencing the formation of the global

city without dictating its internal mechanisms. This positioning underscores its role as an overarching influence rather than a direct actor within the urban landscape, challenging the assumption held by some scholars that global city formation is a universally uniform process driven by a singular force of ‘globalization’.

Central to the framework is the process of global city formation, represented as a diamond to signify a nexus of intersection and decision-making. This pivotal process is primarily influenced by three key variables: diversity in global integration, historical factors and hybridity, and the dynamics of local agents. These variables are interconnected through dashed lines, indicating fluid and evolving interactions that are neither fixed nor deterministic. The focus of this study is sharply on these variables, exploring how each interacts within the context of global city formation in Metro Manila and Bangkok.

Beneath the layer of global city formation, three process-induced inequalities—socio-economic, political, and spatial—are hypothesized by the author and are delineated within their own ovals, illustrating their distinct yet interconnected nature. Solid lines from global city formation to each inequality indicate a direct influence, while broken lines among the inequalities suggest potential interactions and mutual reinforcements. These inequalities are considered integral to the development of global cities and require thoughtful governance responses, though they lie beyond the primary scope of this thesis and represent areas for future exploration.

The role of metropolitan governance is captured within a hexagon at the base of the framework, emphasizing the structured approach needed to manage the complexities of global city formation. This study delves into how governance mechanisms interact with the three focused variables—diversity in global integration, historical factors, and agent dynamics—shaping and being shaped by the urban development landscape. While the city-specific practices of labor flexibilization, public-private partnerships, and privatization of planning are specifically recognized by the author based on the exhaustive review of existing literature, they are positioned as part of the broader narrative rather than central elements of this analysis. However, these elements fall outside the scope of the study and future researchers are encouraged to look more deeply in city-specific practices for a more nuanced understanding of urban development. These practices are depicted as interconnected through bidirectional arrows, illustrating their potential to influence and be influenced by the governance landscape.

Finally, the broken lines that loop from the city-specific practices back to the inequalities suggest a dynamic and cyclical relationship, acknowledging that these practices might impact the very inequalities they are intertwined with. This speculative link is noted as a gap in current literature and is highlighted as a promising direction for subsequent research.

## **Definition of terms and concepts**

The key concepts used in this thesis are presented below. The theoretical and operational definitions are provided to lay out how the terms are characterized in the literature, and how they are utilized in the present study.

**Table 1. Terms and concepts used in the study**

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Theoretical definition</b>	<b>Operational definition</b>
Global city	A global city serves as a critical hub in the world economy, marked by its role in international finance, commerce, and culture. It houses multinational corporations, leads in service and information sectors, and facilitates the flow of capital, information, and people, significantly impacting global economic and socio-political dynamics. <sup>6</sup>	This study identifies Metro Manila and Bangkok as global cities, focusing on their roles from 1990 to 2020 in connecting local economies to the global network and their strategic impact on international economic systems. These cities are noted for attracting global capital and influencing global economic trends through their governance and development strategies in emerging economies.
Global city formation	Global city formation is the process where cities integrate into the global economy, serving as hubs for finance, services, and information, enhancing their strategic importance and influencing state restructuring. <sup>7</sup>	In this thesis, global city formation operationalizes the historical processes by which Metro Manila and Bangkok integrated into the global economy. It emphasizes their transition from local to global urban centers due to external global economic influences and local actions. This definition underscores the cities' unique paths in the global urban hierarchy, highlighting historical context and the active roles of local stakeholders in shaping global city characteristics.
Historicizing	Historicizing refers to the process of interpreting or situating events, phenomena, or concepts within their specific historical context. It involves understanding and analyzing the historical conditions, forces, and dynamics that have shaped the development and meaning of a subject over time. This approach emphasizes the temporal dimension, recognizing that ideas, actions, and institutions are products of their historical moments and cannot be fully understood in isolation from their historical contexts. <sup>8</sup>	Historicizing in this study involves systematically examining historical documents, policy records, and archival materials to understand the influence of past events and decisions on current urban development in Metro Manila and Bangkok. This process includes identifying significant historical periods, interpreting the historical context of urban policies, and comparing historical developments to reveal patterns and changes over time.
Metropolitan governance	Metropolitan governance involves coordinating policies and services across jurisdictions within a region to address challenges efficiently and promote cooperation among local governments for improved overall welfare. <sup>9</sup>	Metropolitan governance in this study refers to strategies used in Metro Manila and Bangkok to manage urban development, address inequalities, and coordinate policies that impact urban planning and global economic integration, all within the context of process-induced inequalities and city-specific practices during global city formation.

<sup>6</sup> Sassen, 'The Global City,' 38-39.

<sup>7</sup> Brenner, 'Global Cities, Glocal States,' 22-23.

<sup>8</sup> Gavin Shatkin, "Global Cities of the South," *Cities* 24, no. 1 (February 1, 2007): 1-15, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2006.10.002>.

<sup>9</sup> Richard C. Feiock, 'Metropolitan Governance and Institutional Collective Action,' *Urban Affairs Review* 44, no. 3 (January 1, 2009): 356-57, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087408324000>.

Privatization of planning	The privatization of planning involves shifting urban planning and development responsibilities from public to private entities, driven by the goal of boosting economic competitiveness and efficiently tackling urban development challenges, often through public-private partnerships and government facilitation, resulting in integrated urban megaprojects. <sup>10</sup>	In Metro Manila and Bangkok, the privatization of planning delegates urban development to the private sector, emphasizing large-scale projects and infrastructure development, driven by government policies aimed at fostering economic growth and global competitiveness.
Public-private partnerships	Public-private partnerships (PPPs) in the smart city context involve collaborative arrangements between government and private sector partners, leveraging private resources and expertise to deliver public services and infrastructure while sharing risks and costs, ultimately fostering innovation and efficiency in implementing smart city technologies for more responsive, sustainable, and intelligent urban environments. <sup>11</sup>	Public-private partnerships (PPPs) in Metro Manila and Bangkok involve collaborative efforts between government agencies and private sector entities to develop or enhance urban infrastructure, services, or technology projects, combining public oversight with private sector efficiency, innovation, and funding to address urban development, sustainability, and inclusivity challenges in these specific urban contexts.
Urban development	Urban development is marked by the growing influence of for-profit private sector entities in urban politics and planning, seen through the rise of public-private partnerships for infrastructure, environmental management, and increased involvement of private sector actors in urban policy, reflecting a shift towards collaborative governance models influenced by local and global economic pressures and urban power dynamics. <sup>12</sup>	In this thesis, urban development represents collaborative government-private sector efforts in Metro Manila and Bangkok, emphasizing public-private partnerships to address urban challenges, enhance infrastructure, and optimize urban spaces for economic and social benefits within the dynamics of these global cities.

## Literature review

The foregoing literature review bridges the grassroots realities of Metro Manila and Bangkok with the deeper intellectual discourse on global city formation, all set against the unique socio-political landscapes of Metro Manila and Bangkok.

### *Global city perspectives*

In globalization studies, the definition of global cities often hinges on their role as command points in the world economy. Brenner demonstrates that, due to state territorial re-scaling, a global city integrates its

<sup>10</sup> Shatkin, 'Global Cities,' 10-12

<sup>11</sup> Michael J. Madison, Madelyn Rose Sanfilippo, and Brett M. Frischmann, 'Smart Cities and Knowledge Commons,' in *Governing Smart Cities as Knowledge Commons*, ed. Brett M. Frischmann, Madelyn Rose Sanfilippo, and Michael J. Madison, Cambridge Studies on Governing Knowledge Commons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 6–7, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108938532.002>.

<sup>12</sup> Shatkin, 'Global Cities,' 8-10.

home country into the global economy.<sup>13</sup> Sassen further posits that the functions of global cities are integrally tied to their specialized economic roles in a network of cities.<sup>14</sup>

The specialization in global functions is not a monolith; cities like New York and London, while often labeled as market-centered, possess distinct roles that defy broad categorizations. Hill and Kim emphasize the functional market-centeredness of the two global cities,<sup>15</sup> while also acknowledging Tokyo's economic positioning that diverges from mere market efficiency due to a strategic concern to preserve state 'autonomy.'<sup>16</sup> Robinson argues, however, that focusing solely on command-and-control functions risks oversimplifying and omitting the multifaceted nature of global cities.<sup>17</sup> This intellectual friction challenges reductive interpretations of global city formation — a debate this historiography unpacks in detail.

### Defining global cities

Brenner and Friedmann, through the 'world city hypothesis,'<sup>18</sup> describe global cities as strategic control points in the global economy, especially post-1970s. Global cities,<sup>19</sup> characterized by their capitalist accumulation activities, are distinguished by criteria such as being financial and service complexes for a global clientele and hubs for capital and information flows.<sup>20</sup>

Building upon this foundational definition, a key aspect in determining the status of global cities is a blend of economic function and the presence of corporate headquarters. Its quantifiability notwithstanding, this approach should not overshadow the varying trajectories of urban development. As Shatkin notes, the importance lies not in labeling cities as global or not, but in understanding their unique global-local dynamics.<sup>21</sup> The Globalization and World Cities network has classified cities based on functional metrics.<sup>22</sup> However, Sassen observes the newfound roles of global cities in developing

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<sup>13</sup> Neil Brenner, 'Global Cities, Glocal States: Global City Formation and State Territorial Restructuring in Contemporary Europe,' *Review of International Political Economy* 5, no. 1 (January 1, 1998): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/096922998347633>.

<sup>14</sup> Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, REV-Revised (Princeton University Press, 2001), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt2je93q>.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Child Hill and June Woo Kim, 'Global Cities and Developmental States: New York, Tokyo and Seoul,' *Urban Studies* 37, no. 12 (2000): 2170. Hill and Kim characterized New York City as a 'market-oriented city,' where a transnational capitalist class and private firms, deeply embedded in the global economy, shape both the economic and spatial dynamics of the city through its flourishing financial and production services sector.

<sup>16</sup> Hill and Kim, 'Global Cities and Developmental States,' 2171.

<sup>17</sup> Jennifer Robinson, 'Global and World Cities: A View from off the Map,' *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 26, no. 3 (2002): 535, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.00397>. Robinson argues that this oversimplification marginalizes many urban areas that he calls cities that are 'dropped off the map.'

<sup>18</sup> Brenner, 'Global Cities, Glocal States,' 8; John Friedmann, 'The World City Hypothesis,' *Development and Change* 17, no. 1 (1986): 72, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.1986.tb00231.x>.

<sup>19</sup> Cities like New York, London, and Tokyo are notable control centers, followed by Los Angeles and Chicago; Cleveland, Philadelphia, and Frankfurt are identified as regional control centers. See Michael Dear and Steven Flusty, 'Postmodern Urbanism,' *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88, no. 1 (1998): 50–72; Richard P. Greene, 'Chicago's New Immigrants, Indigenous Poor, and Edge Cities,' 1997, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0002716297551001013>; David H. Kaplan and Alex Schwartz, 'Minneapolis-St. Paul in the Global Economy,' *Urban Geography* 17, no. 1 (January 1, 1996): 44–59, <https://doi.org/10.2747/0272-3638.17.1.44>; Barney Warf and Brian Holly, 'The Rise and Fall and Rise of Cleveland,' accessed December 25, 2023, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0002716297551001015>.

<sup>20</sup> Saskia Sassen, 'The Global City,' in *A Companion to the Anthropology of Politics* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2007), 172, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470693681.ch11>; David Simon, 'The World City Hypothesis: Reflections from the Periphery,' in *World Cities in a World-System*, ed. Paul L. Knox, Peter James Taylor, and Peter J. Taylor (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 152.

<sup>21</sup> Gavin Shatkin, 'Global Cities of the South: Emerging Perspectives on Growth and Inequality,' *Cities* 24, no. 1 (February 1, 2007): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2006.10.002>.

<sup>22</sup> Loughborough University, 'GaWC - The World According to GaWC 2016,' 2016, <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/microsites/geography/gawc/world2016.html>. For instance, Metro Manila and Bangkok, once

countries as she notes that ‘centralized control and management ... does not come about inevitably as part of a world system’ as there are other highly specialized, supportive functions cities can assume.<sup>23</sup>

Further, urban centers globalize in their unique ways and to varying degrees. Smith argues that all cities, including those in emerging regions of Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia, are part of the global economy and, by extension, the network of world cities.<sup>24</sup> However, the position of cities in underdeveloped countries within this network often appears peripheral or weakly connected. Chubarov and Brooker further emphasize that the paths toward becoming global are not uniform, but are shaped by various actors actively transforming their cities. This diversity in trajectories highlights the complexity and heterogeneity inherent to globalization.<sup>25</sup>

### Critical debates in global city studies

Are social inequalities inherent to global city formation? Shatkin's analysis highlights three dimensions: the class divide between high-income professionals and low-wage service workers, socio-spatial segregation, and political inequality favoring growth-oriented policies over community interests.<sup>26</sup> This perspective draws on earlier works<sup>27</sup> and links urban growth to inequalities.

The framing of global city studies also reveals a bias towards Western perspectives, as observed by Cohen and Leichencko, as well as Solecki, noting the problematic trend towards a universal urbanization model.<sup>28</sup> This ethnocentric view is also challenged by Robinson and Roy who argue for the importance of local dynamics over global influences.<sup>29</sup> Olds and Yeung, as well as Parnell and Robinson, criticize this narrow focus and highlight the oversight of dynamic urbanization in the Global South, driven by a

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classified as 'gamma' world cities according to Scott et al., rose to 'Alpha minus (-)' in the 2016 GAWC study. See Allen J. Scott et al., 'Global City-Regions,' in *Global City-Regions Trends, Theory, Policy*, ed. Allen J. Scott (Oxford University Press, 2001), 0, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198297994.003.0002>.

<sup>23</sup> Some of these non-central areas include industrial services and information and communication technology. See Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy*, 4th ed, Sociology for a New Century (Los Angeles [i.e. Thousand Oaks, Calif.]: SAGE/Pine Forge Press, 2012): 323-324.

<sup>24</sup> David A. Smith, 'The World Urban Hierarchy: Implications for Cities, Top to Bottom,' *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 11, no. 2 (2005): 49-51.

<sup>25</sup> Ilya Chubarov and Daniel Brooker, 'Multiple Pathways to Global City Formation: A Functional Approach and Review of Recent Evidence in China,' *Cities* 35 (December 1, 2013): 187, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2013.05.008>.

<sup>26</sup> Shatkin, 'Global Cities of the South,' 2.

<sup>27</sup> Social inequality, as also noted by Mollenkopf and Castells and Sassen, is evident in the polarization between a wealthy professional class and a low-wage service sector. Uneven development is also observed through socioeconomic segregation and unequal access to space, as seen in the suburbanization of the affluent and the formation of impoverished urban areas, as observed by Marcuse and Marcuse and van Kempen, often referred to in Metro Manila as the 'slums' or 'informal settlers.' Lastly, political inequality emerges when urban politics prioritize growth-oriented policies, often at the expense of neighborhood interests, as pointed out by Logan and Molotch. See John H. Mollenkopf and Manuel Castells, *Dual City: Restructuring New York* (Russell Sage Foundation, 1991); Saskia Sassen, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New Press, 1998); Peter Marcuse, 'The Enclave, the Citadel, and the Ghetto: What Has Changed in the Post-Fordist U.S. City,' *Urban Affairs Review* 33, no. 2 (November 1, 1997): 228, <https://doi.org/10.1177/107808749703300206>; Peter Marcuse and Ronald van Kempen, 'Conclusion: A Changed Spatial Order,' in *Globalizing Cities* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2000), 250, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470712887.ch12>; John R. Logan and Harvey Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place, 20th Anniversary Edition, With a New Preface*, 2007.

<sup>28</sup> Michael A. Cohen, 'The Hypothesis of Urban Convergence: Are Cities in the North and South Becoming More Alike in an Age of Globalization?,' in *Preparing for the Urban Future: Global Pressures and Local Forces* (Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1996), 26; Robin M. Leichencko and William D. Solecki, 'Exporting the American Dream: The Globalization of Suburban Consumption Landscapes,' *Regional Studies* 39, no. 2 (April 2005): 243, <https://doi.org/10.1080/003434005200060080>.

<sup>29</sup> Robinson, 'Global and World Cities,' 2171; Ananya Roy, 'Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning,' *Journal of the American Planning Association* 71, no. 2 (June 30, 2005): 149, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944360508976689>.

tendency of scholars to concentrate on familiar, local contexts.<sup>30</sup> Labor migration puts this broad observation into context. For instance, Sassen connects foreign direct investment with emigration from developing countries to a few developed urban hubs.<sup>31</sup> However, Tyner critiques Sassen's view for overlooking the vital functions of recruitment agencies within the origin countries, suggesting this omission downplays the presence of peripheral global cities; 'the a priori exclusion of Third World cities represents a serious deficiency in the global cities literature,' he argues.<sup>32</sup>

The ongoing debate about global city convergence questions whether global cities are all evolving towards a Western-based model. Shatkin cautions against overlooking institutional, cultural, and geographic differences;<sup>33</sup> whereas, Davis ties this trend to dependency theory, challenging the perception of advanced economies as the end goal for all cities.<sup>34</sup> Lemanski further urges recognizing the unique experiences of yet-to-be-global cities.<sup>35</sup> The debate extends to developed countries as well, with Hill and Kim questioning Tokyo's global city status using immigration data analysis,<sup>36</sup> an argument countered by Sassen who highlights the importance of Tokyo's distinct institutional environment.<sup>37</sup>

### Critiques of the global city model

The ethnocentric assumptions of the global city model have been heavily criticized. Robinson questions the emphasis on sectors like high-tech industries and producer services, suggesting this approach overlooks the broader implications of globalization.<sup>38</sup> White further argues that 'states can allow or disallow a city to globalize and dualize,' highlighting the diverse paths cities can take based on their socio-political contexts.<sup>39</sup> Davis points out the ahistorical nature of the literature, linking it to outdated development theories.<sup>40</sup> These critiques suggest a need for a more nuanced framework for understanding global cities that acknowledges local dynamics and historical contexts. Taylor et al. attempt to defend the global cities concept, but the critiques nonetheless call for a finer-grained analysis that respects differences and contingencies.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Kris Olds and Henry Yeung, 'Pathways to Global City Formation: A View from the Developmental City-State of Singapore,' *Review of International Political Economy* 11, no. 3 (June 1, 2004): 489, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969229042000252873>; Susan Parnell and Jennifer Robinson, '(Re)Theorizing Cities from the Global South: Looking Beyond Neoliberalism,' *Urban Geography* 33, no. 4 (May 1, 2012): 595-596, <https://doi.org/10.2747/0272-3638.33.4.593>.

<sup>31</sup> Saskia Sassen, *The Mobility of Labor and Capital: A Study in International Investment and Labor Flow* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 5.

<sup>32</sup> James Tyner, 'Global Cities and Circuits of Global Labor: The Case of Manila, Philippines,' *Professional Geographer* (February 1, 2000): 61, <https://doi.org/10.1111/0033-0124.00205>.

<sup>33</sup> Shatkin, 'Global Cities of the South,' 2.

<sup>34</sup> Diane Davis, 'Cities in Global Context: A Brief Intellectual History,' *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29 (February 1, 2005): 94, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2005.00572.x>.

<sup>35</sup> Charlotte Lemanski, 'Global Cities in the South: Deepening Social and Spatial Polarisation in Cape Town,' *Cities* 24, no. 6 (December 1, 2007): 449-450, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2007.01.011>. Lemanski critiques this homogenizing approach, arguing that it fails to value the uniqueness of diverse cities and often results in sacrificing local priorities, especially in developing countries.

<sup>36</sup> Hill and Kim, 'Global Cities and Developmental States,' 2181.

<sup>37</sup> Saskia Sassen, 'Global Cities and Developmentalist States: How to Derail What Could Be an Interesting Debate: A Response to Hill and Kim,' *Urban Studies* 38, no. 13 (December 1, 2001): 2539, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980120094650>. Sassen counters Hill and Kim's argument, stating that such 'simple empiricism' fails to capture the complexity of a city's global status. She emphasizes that Tokyo's specific institutional environment, influencing its economic and labor market dynamics, is a more significant factor in determining its global city status.

<sup>38</sup> Robinson, 'Global and World Cities,' 532.

<sup>39</sup> James W. White, 'Old Wine, Cracked Bottle?: Tokyo, Paris, and the Global City Hypothesis,' *Urban Affairs Review* 33, no. 4 (March 1, 1998): 464, <https://doi.org/10.1177/107808749803300401>.

<sup>40</sup> Davis, 'Cities in Global Context,' 94.

<sup>41</sup> Peter Taylor et al., 'Diversity and Power in the World City Network,' *Cities* 19 (August 1, 2002): 231, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0264-2751\(02. In response to criticisms of the global city model as inadequate to explain social and](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0264-2751(02. In response to criticisms of the global city model as inadequate to explain social and)



Global capitalist restructuring has redefined the role of cities, especially in the Global South, evolving from command points to coordinators of decentralized production. This shift is particularly evident in countries like the Philippines and Thailand, where cities have become central in coordinating specialized activities in non-central parts of global value chains. This evolving landscape offers a platform for this thesis to shift the analytical paradigm for understanding global city formation in the developing world.

### *Reframing the approach to global city analysis*

The need to move beyond the current global city label is highlighted by Marcuse and van Kempen, who emphasize the limitations of a rigid approach in comparative political economy.<sup>42</sup> They propose the term ‘globalizing cities,’ underlining that all cities are shaped by globalization, but the nature and extent of this influence vary. This perspective challenges the notion of a uniform ‘globalized city’ model, suggesting that some cities might even be ‘deglobalizing.’<sup>43</sup>

In analyzing command-and-control functions, several studies have applied frameworks, originally developed for Western cities, to developing nations. Scholars have particularly utilized approaches suited for contexts like the United States, where issues like social polarization and urban regime development are important.<sup>44</sup> These studies often focus on convergence in urban form and metropolitan politics. Shatkin notes that while these studies identify convergence, they vary in their exploration of its causes and potential differences.<sup>45</sup> Sassen explains that major financial centers are not exclusively entitled to roles in the global circuit of cities and illustrates the decentralization of control where ‘peripheral’ cities ‘might be best described as having global city functions.’<sup>46</sup> The literature’s command-and-control focus fails to fully capture the diverse outcomes in developing countries.<sup>47</sup>

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urban change, scholars like Taylor et al. have defended the global cities concept by arguing that ‘the gains [of generalizing about global cities] have far outweighed the losses.’

<sup>42</sup> Marcuse and van Kempen, ‘Conclusion,’ 271.

<sup>43</sup> Shatkin, ‘Global Cities of the South,’ 3. Shatkin prefers to keep the terms ‘global’ or ‘world’ cities instead of contemplating whether ‘globalizing’ is a more fitting adjective. He explains that even if the degree to which cities are influenced by globalization differs, to an extent all cities are affected by globalization nonetheless; hence, all cities are essentially globalizing already. The more crucial debate is the imposition of global city status. This thesis holds the same position.

<sup>44</sup> Numerous studies have been conducted that are specifically tailored to the context of the United States, addressing key issues such as social polarization, the evolution of urban regimes, and the emerging landscapes of consumer culture. These studies delve into a variety of urban contexts to explore these critical themes, offering insights into the unique challenges and dynamics shaping American cities. See Stephen W. K. Chiu and Tai-lok Lui, ‘Testing the Global City-Social Polarisation Thesis: Hong Kong since the 1990s,’ *Urban Studies* 41, no. 10 (September 1, 2004): 1863–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098042000256297>; Leichenko and Solecki, ‘Exporting the American Dream’; Rodrigo Salcedo and Alvaro Torres, ‘Gated Communities in Santiago: Wall or Frontier?’, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 28, no. 1 (2004): 27–44, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0309-1317.2004.00501.x>; Fulong Wu and Klaire Webber, ‘The Rise of ‘Foreign Gated Communities’ in Beijing: Between Economic Globalization and Local Institutions,’ *Cities* 21, no. 3 (June 1, 2004): 203–13, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2004.03.002>.

<sup>45</sup> Shatkin, ‘Global Cities of the South,’ 3.

<sup>46</sup> Saskia Sassen, ‘Locating Cities on Global Circuits,’ *Environment and Urbanization* 14, no. 1 (April 1, 2002): 14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/095624780201400102>.

<sup>47</sup> For instance, Roberts finds that the impact of producer services in Latin American cities is less significant than global city models predict. Chakravorty adds that the industrialization accompanying globalization in these cities leads to different spatial and social characteristics than those seen in ‘post-Fordist’ cities. See Bryan Roberts, ‘Globalization and Latin American Cities,’ *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29 (February 1, 2005): 121, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2005.00573.x>; Sanjoy Chakravorty, ‘From Colonial City to Globalizing City? The Far-from-Complete Spatial Transformation of Calcutta’: From P. Marcuse and R. van Kempen (Eds) *Globalizing Cities: A New Spatial Order?* (2000),’ in *The Urban Geography Reader* (Routledge, 2005), 58. Note that the Fordist-to-post-Fordist trajectory is a historical development not necessarily present in developing countries.

To accurately reflect the varied experiences in underdeveloped contexts, this thesis proposes a new analytical paradigm. This approach transfers focus from a uniform global city model to examining global-local interactions in specific cities, offering a more precise understanding of urban development. Robinson critiques the tendency in urban theory to analyze cities globally based on the experiences of a limited number of Western cities,<sup>48</sup> underscoring the need for this broader, more inclusive perspective.

Understanding global cities requires acknowledging the significant role of local conditions, institutions, and cultures. Sassen emphasizes this by describing the global city as an analytical construct, shaped partly by local institutional environments, thus varying from one city to another.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, it becomes evident that methodologies need to shift away from traditional comparative models. As Sassen asserts, the intricacies of global city formation are ill-served by approaches that standardize across countries. Instead, there is a pressing need for methodologies that delve into the specific, localized ways<sup>50</sup> global city functions develop, respecting the unique characteristics of cities.

### *Urban growth and inequality in developing countries*

Global cities in underdeveloped countries exhibit unique growth and inequity trends, differing markedly from developed cities and among themselves. Grant and Nijman, alongside Olds and Yeung, identify and describe these differences as ‘differential and dynamic developmental pathways.’<sup>51</sup> The role of global production networks in shaping global cities is also pivotal, and Arbab advocates for frameworks that embrace their complexity.<sup>52</sup> This approach, supported by Scholvin et al. and Shatkin, calls for new patterns and models more attuned to local conditions and diverse outcomes.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, the literature acknowledges inherent social, spatial, and political inequalities resulting from global city development.

Global cities in developing countries are also integrated into the global economy in diverse ways. Instead of being command points, these cities often coordinate global supply chains and manufacturing

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<sup>48</sup> Robinson, ‘Global and World Cities,’ 531.

<sup>49</sup> Sassen, ‘Global Cities and Developmentalist States,’ 2538.

<sup>50</sup> Note that global city scholars are increasingly considering diverse variables beyond conventional metrics. Robinson suggests that analyzing cities like Jakarta or Kuala Lumpur might yield a different list of influential global cities, particularly when considering Islamic economic and political networks. Smith and Timberlake emphasize examining relationships and changing patterns in the global city system, using airline passenger flows as a measure. Their research reveals shifting roles in the urban hierarchy, with cities outside the traditional Western-centric focus gaining significance. Studies like those of Otiso et al. and Kratke have broadened the scope by analyzing African cities' connectivity and the influence of global media firms, respectively, highlighting cultural globalization's impact alongside economic factors. See Robinson, ‘Global and World Cities,’ 539; David A. Smith and Michael F. Timberlake, ‘World City Networks and Hierarchies, 1977-1997: An Empirical Analysis of Global Air Travel Links,’ *American Behavioral Scientist* 44, no. 10 (June 1, 2001): 1656, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027640121958104>; Kefa M. Otiso et al., ‘Airline Connectivity as a Measure of the Globalization of African Cities,’ *Applied Geography* 31, no. 2 (April 1, 2011): 609, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apgeog.2010.12.002>; Stefan Kratke, ‘Global Media Cities in a World-Wide Urban Network,’ *European Planning Studies* 11, no. 6 (September 1, 2003): 605, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965431032000108350>.

<sup>51</sup> Richard Grant and Jan Nijman, ‘Globalization and the Corporate Geography of Cities in the Less-Developed World,’ *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 92, no. 2 (2002): 320; Olds and Yeung, ‘Pathways to Global City Formation,’ 489. Olds and Yeung emphasize that global cities, including those in the Global South, are integral to global production networks, signifying the interwoven nature of global economics and urban development.

<sup>52</sup> Parsa Arbab, ‘Global and Globalizing Cities from the Global South: Multiple Realities and Pathways to Form a New Order,’ *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 18, no. 3 (May 17, 2019): 333, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15691497-12341518>.

<sup>53</sup> Sören Scholvin et al., ‘Gateway Cities in Global Production Networks: Exemplified by the Oil and Gas Sector,’ January 1, 2017, 1-2; Shatkin, ‘Global Cities of the South,’ 2.

networks.<sup>54</sup> They are influenced by a range of global forces. Several scholars point out factors such as integration into natural resource markets, the global criminal economy, foreign aid, and the impact of international institutions and non-governmental organizations.<sup>55</sup> These diverse forms of integration have broad equity and security implications for global cities.

### History and inequality

Scholars have called for an emphasis on ‘historicizing analysis’ grounded in local actors and actions — viewing urban change as a negotiated process<sup>56</sup> and global political and economic power as a ‘nested hierarchy’.<sup>57</sup> Studies across disciplines advocate grounding global city studies in local history.<sup>58</sup> The common thread is the need to avoid premature conclusions about urban form or political convergence and focus on adaptation processes.

Furthermore, the global city literature also explores the impact of economic growth on income inequality. Sassen emphasizes that the critical question is not the extent of inequality per se, but whether economic growth is exacerbating income inequality.<sup>59</sup> This perspective underscores the importance of analyzing the sources and temporal dynamics of inequality. In reframing the link between global city and inequality, the analysis must incorporate the diverse nature of global city experiences, historical contexts, and the actions of local actors.<sup>60</sup>

### *Metro Manila as a global city*

Metro Manila, more accurately described as a city-region,<sup>61</sup> encompasses 16 cities and one municipality over 630 km<sup>2</sup>. It is the second-largest urban agglomeration in Southeast Asia, with a population of 13.484

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<sup>54</sup> For a detailed analysis of labor exports and their economic impact, particularly in cities like Metro Manila, see Maimbo and Ratha. For an exploration of urban redevelopment influenced by tourism and its impact on socio-economic segregation, refer to Fainstein and Judd. To understand the transformation of urban landscapes and the emergence of new urban classes through business process outsourcing in cities like Metro Manila and Kuala Lumpur, consult Bunnell and Audirac. See Samuel Munzele Maimbo and Dilip Ratha, ‘Remittances: Development Impact and Future Prospects,’ *World Bank Publications - Books*, 2005, <https://ideas.repec.org/b/wbk/wbpubs/7339.html>, 133; Dennis R. Judd and Susan S. Fainstein, *The Tourist City* (Yale University Press, 1999), 5; Tim Bunnell, ‘Multimedia Utopia? A Geographical Critique of High-Tech Development in Malaysia’s Multimedia Super Corridor,’ *Antipode* 34 (March 1, 2002): 265, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8330.00238>; Ivonne Audirac, ‘Information-Age Landscapes Outside the Developed World Bangalore, India, and Guadalajara, Mexico,’ *Journal of the American Planning Association* 69 (March 31, 2003): 16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944360308976291>.

<sup>55</sup> See Simon, ‘The World City Hypothesis: Reflections from the Periphery,’ 140; Shatkin, ‘Global Cities of the South,’ 5; Robinson, ‘Global and World Cities,’ 537; Peter J. Taylor, ‘Leading World Cities: Empirical Evaluations of Urban Nodes in Multiple Networks,’ *Urban Studies* 42, no. 9 (2005): 1595.

<sup>56</sup> Shatkin, ‘Global Cities of the South,’ 5.

<sup>57</sup> Hill and Kim, ‘Global Cities and Developmental States,’ 374.

<sup>58</sup> Abidin Kusno, *Behind the Postcolonial: Architecture, Urban Space and Political Cultures in Indonesia* (London: Routledge, 2014), [https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315011370\\_124](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315011370_124); Nezar Alsayyad, *Hybrid Urbanism: On the Identity Discourse and the Built Environment* (Westport, Conn: Bloomsbury 3PL, 2001), 88-90; M Douglass, ‘The ‘Developmental State’ and the Newly Industrialised Economies of Asia,’ *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 26, no. 4 (April 1, 1994): 543, <https://doi.org/10.1068/a260543>; Hill and Kim, ‘Global Cities and Developmental States,’ 2169. Kusno and Alsayyad delve into cultural hybridity and ‘third space’ development between local and global dynamics, challenging perceptions of passive urban residents. The role of developmental states in urban growth and equity is also extensively explored, focusing on Asia.

<sup>59</sup> Sassen, ‘Global Cities and Developmentalist States,’ 2538.

<sup>60</sup> Shatkin, ‘Global Cities of the South,’ 7. According to Shatkin, these dimensions reveal that economic opportunities and labor relations are variable, influenced by global integration and local pressures for competitive labor regimes. Historical interventions and state-society relationships shape cities’ competitiveness and actor-centered perspectives show inclusion or exclusion in globalization’s economic impacts is tied to social group relations.

<sup>61</sup> Allen Scott, ‘Globalization and the Rise of City-Regions,’ *European Planning Studies* (October 1, 2001): 816, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654310120079788>.

million as of 2020.<sup>62</sup> The global city-hood of Metro Manila has often been scrutinized through its public-private partnerships (PPPs) in major urban projects, notably the Central Business Districts (CBDs). These partnerships, mostly driven by private land-owning elites, link the city-region to the global economy, with local governments playing a supporting role in project development.<sup>63</sup> Saguin highlights that these CBDs are instrumental in Metro Manila's partial integration into the global economy,<sup>64</sup> reflecting a development pattern termed 'bypass-implant urbanism' by Shatkin.<sup>65</sup>

### Is Metro Manila a global city?

Metro Manila's claim to global city status has been met with skepticism. Boquet argues that the city lacks 'hyperurbanism,' a defining feature of global cities, noting a shortfall in several established criteria.<sup>66</sup> Conversely, Saguin interprets the state's focus on CBD development through PPPs as an attempt to fill these gaps.<sup>67</sup> Kleibert further suggests that Manila's growing business service offshoring might reflect greater dependency, driven by lower-end services, rather than increased command.<sup>68</sup> This service offshoring challenges current global city studies. Kleibert further notes that the expansion of global service networks has indeed increased Metro Manila's international linkages, transforming it into a significant node for global offshore service delivery.<sup>69</sup>

### History and local agency in Metro Manila

Some scholars have argued that Metro Manila's fragmented and uncoordinated urban planning is rooted in its colonial history, further complicated by the influence of land-owning oligarchs. Saguin observes that the rise of private developers is a direct response to these historical challenges,<sup>70</sup> whereas van den Muijzenberg and van Naerssen note that these planning failures led to a disjointed collective vision for the city-region.<sup>71</sup> This gap in effective planning opened doors for non-state actors, as indicated by the rise of 'privatized planning,' shifting the city's approach to global city formation.

The literature also highlights the state's facilitative role in urban planning, where the private sector often leads in defining the city's global image through PPPs. Metro Manila, as Saguin notes, significantly

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<sup>62</sup> 'Population and Housing,' Philippine Statistics Authority, August 31, 2021, accessed on 25-12-23, <https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/population-and-housing/node/165009>.

<sup>63</sup> Kidjie Saguin, 'Actors in Global City Formation: The Case of the Entertainment City in Metro Manila,' *International Journal of Policy Studies* 8 (June 16, 2017): 01. Key urban development projects such as the Makati CBD, Rockwell Center, Ortigas Center, Eastwood City, and Bonifacio Global City, are the result of PPPs.

<sup>64</sup> Saguin, 'Actors in Global City Formation,' 6.

<sup>65</sup> Gavin Shatkin, 'The City and the Bottom Line: Urban Megaprojects and the Privatization of Planning in Southeast Asia,' *Environment and Planning A* 40 (February 1, 2008): 384, <https://doi.org/10.1068/a38439>. Shatkin coined the term 'bypass-implant urbanism' to describe a form of urban development driven by private sector incentives to integrate new production and consumption spaces within cities, navigating around decaying public areas, influenced by the globalization and economic dynamics of the local context.

<sup>66</sup> Yves Boquet, 'Is Manila Becoming a Global City? Bonifacio Global City,' August 2013, [https://www.academia.edu/4253996/Is\\_Manila\\_becoming\\_a\\_global\\_city\\_Bonifacio\\_Global\\_City\\_\(Conclusion\)](https://www.academia.edu/4253996/Is_Manila_becoming_a_global_city_Bonifacio_Global_City_(Conclusion)); For the list of criteria, refer to McDearman, Greg Clark, and Joseph Parilla, 'The 10 Traits of Globally Fluent Metro Areas,' Brookings, accessed December 25, 2023, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-10-traits-of-globally-fluent-metro-areas/>.

<sup>67</sup> Saguin, 'Actors in Global City Formation,' 16.

<sup>68</sup> Jana Kleibert, 'On the Global City Map, but Not in Command? Probing Manila's Position in the World City Network,' *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 49, no. 12 (December 1, 2017): 2897, 2911, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X16663710>. Kleibert suggests that the city's perceived global status could be misleading, as the offshoring of back-office service tasks might inaccurately elevate its perceived importance.

<sup>69</sup> Kleibert, 'On the Global City Map,' 2898.

<sup>70</sup> Saguin, 'Actors in Global City Formation,' 2.

<sup>71</sup> Otto van den Muijzenberg and Ton van Naerssen, 'Metro Manila: Designers or Directors of Urban Development?,' in *Directors of Urban Change in Asia* (Routledge, 2005), 140.

deviates from typical Asian developmental state models, highlighting minimal state involvement as the 'antipode of a strong state involvement.'<sup>72</sup> Further, she observes that Metro Manila's integration into the global economy is driven by competition among private developers creating their own business centers.<sup>73</sup> This trend has historically limited state involvement in urban planning.<sup>74</sup>

### Studies on the global city-hood of Metro Manila

Recent studies focus on CBDs, with 'The Entertainment City' being a prime example. Together with the influx of offshoring service activities, this 120-hectare megaproject has been examined as the government's bold entry into global city formation, challenging the dominance of privatized planning.<sup>75</sup> Some scholars have also challenged the notion that Metro Manila's urban development is solely a product of contemporary globalization. Garrido argues that the development of Makati, a major business district, in the 1950s reflects significant remnants of American colonization rather than just recent global influences, as most studies look exclusively at the 1990s.<sup>76</sup> He argues that understanding postcolonial cities requires looking beyond globalization to the lasting impacts of colonialism and the interplay between class and ideology in urban development.<sup>77</sup>

### Global city formation and inequality in Metro Manila

Recent studies have also delved into the relationship between urban development and social inequalities. Shatkin focuses on Metro Manila's informal settlements, which have become 'forgotten places' amidst globalization.<sup>78</sup> This contradiction arises from redevelopment and rising property values conflicting with the housing needs of low-income residents, and Shatkin notes that urban planners have increasingly overlooked these settlements.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, Ortega and Van Naerssen provide enriching perspectives on social issues.<sup>80</sup> Ortega studies the nuances of gentrification, highlighting how market-oriented changes displace informal communities.<sup>81</sup> Conversely, Van Naerssen's analysis of urban social movements reveals

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<sup>72</sup> Saguin, 'Actors in Global City Formation,' 4.

<sup>73</sup> Saguin, 'Actors in Global City Formation,' 2.

<sup>74</sup> This scenario mirrors the broader trend in developing countries where state failures in implementing large-scale urban projects are common. Burgess and Carmona note that these states often lack the necessary powers, institutional capacity, and budgets for effective development control, further underscoring the critical role of private entities in urban development. See Marissa Carmona and Rod Burgess, 'Strategic Planning & Urban Projects: Responses to Globalization from 15 Cities,' *Transformation*, 19, January 3, 2001, <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Strategic-Planning-%26-Urban-Projects%3A-Responses-to-Carmona-Burgess/1f8da9ae90961ab3ea9aa2287f56b592b7fce07d>.

<sup>75</sup> Saguin, 'Actors in Global City Formation,' 2.

<sup>76</sup> Marco Garrido, 'The Ideology of the Dual City: The Modernist Ethic in the Corporate Development of Makati City, Metro Manila,' January 2013, 165, <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/95410>. This perspective suggests that class and ideological factors, shaped by colonial history, play a significant role in urban planning.

<sup>77</sup> Garrido, 'The Ideology of the Dual City,' 181.

<sup>78</sup> Gavin Shatkin, 'Planning to Forget: Informal Settlements as 'Forgotten Places' in Globalising Metro Manila,' *Urban Studies* 41, no. 12 (November 1, 2004): 2469–70, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980412331297636>. Shatkin examines the shelter crisis and the growth of illegal settlements, arguing that such crises are inherent to globalizing cities in developing countries.

<sup>79</sup> Shatkin, 'Planning to Forget,' 2481.

<sup>80</sup> Arnisson Andre C. Ortega, 'Manila's Metropolitan Landscape of Gentrification: Global Urban Development, Accumulation by Dispossession & Neoliberal Warfare against Informality,' *Geoforum* 70 (March 1, 2016): 35, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2016.02.002>; Ton van Naerssen, 'Globalization and Urban Social Action in Metro Manila,' *Philippine Studies* 51, no. 3 (2003): 435.

<sup>81</sup> Ortega, 'Manila's Metropolitan Landscape of Gentrification,' 35. Utilizing mixed methods, Ortega assesses changes in informal households and property values, revealing a gentrification pattern that contributes to a market-oriented global city. This process results in the displacement and restriction of informal spaces, highlighting the interplay of violence, neoliberal urbanism, colonial land legacies, and elite power.

a strategic shift from opposition to a critical cooperation stance post-Marcos dictatorship, suggesting that persistent social inequalities could fuel future radical movements.<sup>82</sup>

### *Bangkok as a global city*

Bangkok is characterized by its role as Thailand's capital and the heart of the Extended Bangkok Region.<sup>83</sup> With an 11-million population and an additional 8 million in peri-urban areas, it is a key player in Southeast Asia's manufacturing sector.<sup>84</sup> Bangkok represents a significant portion of Thailand's economy, making it a dominant urban and economic center in Southeast Asia.<sup>85</sup>

### *The role of politics and policies in Bangkok*

In analyzing Bangkok's global city formation, the literature shows complementary perspectives. Webster and Maneepong discuss the evolving role of the Thai government and note, 'the government needs Bangkok [...] more than Bangkok needs the capital function.'<sup>86</sup> This observation highlights a shift from governmental to private sector influence, with Bangkok increasingly shaped by external factors like globalization and changing economic priorities. Meanwhile, Croci et al. emphasize Bangkok's unique approach to climate change, revealing that while European global cities focus on energy efficiency and sustainability, Bangkok's strategy is influenced more by its transportation sector.<sup>87</sup> Bangkok's mitigation strategy underlines the need for city-specific strategies in addressing global challenges.

### *Globalization and urban development in Bangkok*

Webster and Maneepong dissect Bangkok's cosmopolitanism and reveal a 'fundamental misalignment' in Bangkok's national governance framework. They observe that while governments are chosen by the broader Thai population, the global city disproportionately influences national political dynamics.<sup>88</sup> This tension reflects the evolving nature of Bangkok, transitioning from its historical role as a capital to a more outward-looking metropolis. On the other hand, Jenks uses the 'Bangkok Skytrain' as a global city metaphor, observing a distinct coexistence between the modernist symbol of the Skytrain and the vibrant traditional urban life beneath it.<sup>89</sup> He argues that globalization and urban development are complexly intertwined, with local environments maintaining their identity despite globalization.<sup>90</sup> Both studies

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<sup>82</sup> van Naerssen, 'Globalization and Urban Social Action in Metro Manila,' 436-437. van Naerssen notes a transition from strong opposition to the state in the 1970s to a stance of 'critical cooperation' after the overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986. The 1990s saw a decline in active support for a metropolitan-wide movement, coinciding with legislative developments.

<sup>83</sup> Douglas Webster and Chuthatip Maneepong, 'Bangkok,' *City* 13, no. 1 (March 1, 2009): 81, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604810902726236>. This 1,569-km<sup>2</sup> metropolitan area is notable for its significant population and economic contributions and government functions contribute notably to Bangkok's Gross Metropolitan Product.

<sup>84</sup> Statista, 'Thailand: Population in Bangkok Metropolitan Area 2023,' Statista, 2023, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/910999/thailand-population-in-bangkok-metropolitan-area/>.

<sup>85</sup> Webster and Maneepong, 'Bangkok,' 81.

<sup>86</sup> Webster and Maneepong, 'Bangkok,' 86-87. The scholars point out the government's struggle to adapt to these changes, stating it's 'trying to catch up with the reality of Bangkok's global role.' This dynamic reveals a growing disconnect between Bangkok's global orientation and the government's more traditional focus, thereby generating socio-political tensions.

<sup>87</sup> Croci, Melandri, and Molteni, 'A Comparative Analysis of Global City Policies in Climate Change Mitigation,' 20. This approach has a heavy reliance on public transport reflecting its distinct urban emission profile and examines the global city's climate change mitigation strategies. The authors also highlight that 'GHG emissions derive primarily from local energy uses' in urban areas, with transportation and energy usage in buildings being significant contributors.

<sup>88</sup> Webster and Maneepong, 'Bangkok,' 80.

<sup>89</sup> Mike Jenks, 'Above and below the Line: Globalization and Urban Form in Bangkok,' in *Globalization and Urban Development*, ed. Harry W. Richardson and Chang-Hee Christine Bae, Advances in Spatial Science (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer, 2005), 550, [https://doi.org/10.1007/3-540-28351-X\\_20](https://doi.org/10.1007/3-540-28351-X_20).

<sup>90</sup> Jenks, 'Above and below the Line' 555-556.

emphasize Bangkok's unique position, navigating the challenges of being both a national capital and a global metropolis.

There are also comparative studies on Bangkok and Metro Manila, such as by Berner and Korff, focusing on local reactions to globalization. In Metro Manila, established slums with strong community ties showed greater negotiation ability; whereas, Bangkok's post-WWII urban expansion led to slum evictions in now-valuable urban areas.<sup>91</sup> The studies highlight the need for a city-based approach where inhabitants shape urban meanings, integrating sociological and anthropological insights.<sup>92</sup>

### **Innovation and the literature gap**

Postcolonial urban scholarship critiques the global cities research agenda for its Western-centric bias, often excluding peripheral cities from global network analyses. Developing new case studies from developing countries has not effectively tackled the core problématique of command and control — the myopic vision of current global city narratives.

While it is a valid claim that global cities research often overlooks the non-Western world—what Kleibert calls cities ‘falling off the map,’<sup>93</sup> this thesis reaches beyond reinserting 'forgotten' cities into the global narrative. The author dares assert that an analytical paradigm shift is the only way to decolonize globalization research. This can be achieved not through the superficial addition of some case studies from developing countries, but by ending the imposition of analytical frameworks based on the experiences and outcomes in developed countries. This thesis addresses this anomaly in the literature and introduces an approach that prioritizes specific, historical, and actor-centered local nuances by posing the central research question: *How did the process of global city formation influence urban development and metropolitan governance in Metro Manila and Bangkok from 1990 to 2020?*

### **Sources and methodology**

The study employs a mixed-methods approach to analyze a variety of primary sources, including key informant interviews, policy documents, historical archives and geospatial maps, and statistical data, complemented by secondary sources such as academic journal articles and book chapters for additional context and comparison. The research focuses on the specific elements of labor flexibilization, public-private partnerships, and privatization of urban planning. The succeeding sections outline a description of sources, the methodology, some ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study.

#### *Primary sources*

The study draws on four primary sources, with key informant interviews as the first. In Metro Manila, Deputy Executive Director Eleazar Ricote from the Public-Private Partnership Center of the Philippines is interviewed. Bangkok's case features insights from Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee, former ASEAN Deputy

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<sup>91</sup> Erhard Berner and Rüdiger Korff, ‘Globalization and Local Resistance: The Creation of Localities in Manila and Bangkok\*,’ *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 19, no. 2 (1995): 214, 218. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.1995.tb00501.x>.

<sup>92</sup> Berner and Korff, ‘Globalization and Local Resistance,’ 220. Berner and Korff underscored the importance of preserving urban diversity and heterogeneity, arguing for a use value-oriented approach where residents define the meaning of their urban spaces. This perspective merges sociological and anthropological views, linking macro-level world-system analysis with micro-level studies of local group formation.

<sup>93</sup> Kleibert, ‘On the Global City Map,’ 2899.

Secretary-General for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community and former official of the Ministries of Justice and Foreign Affairs of Thailand, as well as from an official of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. Dr. Robin Michael Garcia further contributes expertise on Thailand and the Philippines' international political economy, focusing on the 1990s economic liberalization.

The second set of primary sources consists of policy and legislative documents related to local governance, including Metro Manila's Local Government Code of 1991 and Metro Manila Development Authority Law, alongside Bangkok's Act on the Organization of Local Administration (1914), Bangkok Metropolitan Administration Act, and Municipal Act (1953), with a focus on decentralization and local administration.

The third source category features historical and geospatial maps for urban governance and development analysis sourced from the Metro Manila Development Authority and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. World Bank geospatial maps offer insights into the urban development and informal settlements in both cities, presenting a visual record of changes over the past thirty years. The fourth primary source category encompasses statistical data from the Thai and Philippine Statistics Authorities, along with international reports from the International Labor Organization, the United Nations, and the World Bank.

#### *Secondary sources*

The research also uses a range of secondary sources, including academic journal articles and relevant book chapters that address global city formation and urban development in Metro Manila and Bangkok. These sources focus on labor flexibilization, urban megaprojects, and privatization of urban planning. They serve two main purposes: providing essential background information to contextualize primary data, and enabling comparative analysis with existing scholarly work. This method helps identify trends, patterns, and potential deviations from established theories.

#### *Source criticism*

In the study on urban development and governance in Metro Manila and Bangkok, rigorous source criticism is applied to ensure the credibility and authenticity of both primary and secondary data. Primary sources, such as key informant interviews and legislative documents, are carefully verified for reliability and sourced directly from official repositories. Historical documents and statistical data are scrutinized for accuracy, representational bias, and validity, with a keen focus on matching data types across both cities for a balanced comparative analysis. Similarly, secondary sources, including academic journal articles and book chapters, are chosen based on their relevance, authority, and currency to the topic of urban transformation in Southeast Asia. This meticulous approach to source criticism enhances the study's ability to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the impacts of global city formation on socioeconomic, political, and spatial inequalities in the two cities, ensuring that findings are both robust and insightful.

#### *Research design and sampling strategy*

The study utilizes a mixed-methods research design, and develops an exploratory narrative structure using two case studies. It employs purposive sampling for key informant interviews with experts like government officials and labor stakeholders. The analysis of legislative documents and historical archives



is extensive, capturing diverse perspectives. Analysis of some quantitative data is conducted using publicly-available data tailored to the study's objectives and data availability.

### *Data collection and analysis*

The thesis employs three data collection strategies:

1. **Key Informant Interviews:** In-depth semi-structured interviews are conducted with experts, stakeholders, and officials such as Mr. Eleazar Ricote, Deputy Executive Director of the Public-Private Partnership Center of the Philippines; Dr. Robin Michael Garcia, an expert in Southeast Asian and international political economy; Mr. Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee; former senior official of the Thai government and former Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN. These interviews aim to gather qualitative insights into the cities' political, economic, and social dynamics. These discussions focus on urban planning, global city formation, and governance structures.
2. **Policy Analysis:** This method involves a critical review of legislative frameworks, including the Local Government Code of 1991 and the Metro Manila Development Authority Law, as well as significant acts in Bangkok. The objective is to understand the legal and institutional influences on urban development and governance.
3. **Historical Documents and Geospatial Maps Analysis:** Archival materials and geospatial data from entities like the Metro Manila Development Authority and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration are examined. This analysis traces the evolution of urban policies and practices and maps the spatial distribution of slums and megaprojects, providing context and visual insights into urban development trends.

By integrating these data collection techniques, the research offers a comprehensive analysis of urban development and governance, ensuring a detailed examination of the complex dynamics shaping Metro Manila and Bangkok.

### *Validity, reliability, and ethical considerations*

The research agenda prioritizes validity, reliability, and ethical standards. Triangulation enhances validity by corroborating findings across various methods and sources, ensuring a detailed understanding of urban dynamics. Consistent, systematic data collection and thorough source verification improve reliability. Ethically, the study adheres to stringent data protection and privacy standards, following the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and obtaining consent through detailed Erasmus University Rotterdam forms, which highlight data use and participant rights. Intellectual property rights are respected for archival and legislative documents, while privacy laws guide the handling of statistical data. Geospatial mapping is conducted with anonymity for individuals and locations, reflecting the research's ethical commitment and its aim to thoroughly examine urban inequalities.

### *Scope and limitations*

This study specifically examines the global city formation processes in Metro Manila and Bangkok over a thirty-year period from 1990 to 2020. Given this focus, the findings and analyses presented may not be directly transferable to other urban environments or different temporal contexts without adjustments. The theoretical framework employed is uniquely developed to capture the specificities of the two cities based on an extensive review of existing literature and theoretical underpinnings. While this framework robustly supports the exploration of diversity in global integration, historical factors and hybridity, and the

dynamics of local agents, it also delineates areas such as socio-economic, political, and spatial inequalities as peripheral components that are acknowledged but not deeply investigated within this study.

These broader inequalities and city-specific practices such as labor flexibilization, public-private partnerships, and the privatization of planning are identified as integral to the overarching process of global city formation. However, they are not the primary focus of this thesis. This selective focus allows for a deeper exploration of the chosen variables but also means that the interplay between these broader elements and the core variables may not be exhaustively analyzed. The discussion of these elements is intended to highlight potential avenues for future research and to provide a holistic view of the complexities involved in global city formation, and this thesis suggests that further studies can explore how these broader factors interact more explicitly with the governance structures and urban development strategies in global cities.

The research relies on accessible data and documented sources which, while extensive, may limit the exploration of certain facets of urban development, particularly those that are not well-documented or easily quantifiable. Additionally, the use of specific quantitative methods introduces inherent limitations regarding the analysis's depth and breadth, dependent on the availability and reliability of the data. These methodological choices, while appropriate for the study's objectives, may constrain the generalizability of the findings.

Given these parameters, this thesis presents a structured yet focused investigation into how Metro Manila and Bangkok integrate into the global economic system, how historical and local dynamics shape their urban forms, and how various agents influence these processes. This work contributes to a nuanced understanding of global city formation but also underscores the need for further inquiry into the less-explored aspects of the theoretical framework, thereby inviting subsequent studies to build on its foundations and expand the foregoing discourse about urban development in emerging economies.

## **CHAPTER II: Historical Imperatives and Hybridity: Historicizing Global City Formation in Emerging Economies**

The identified anomaly in the literature of global city formation has been observed by many scholars, albeit in different ways. Despite differences in opinion as to how to decolonize the study of global cities, scholars across disciplines have underscored two critical aspects: (1) the need to root analyses in a nuanced understanding of local history, and (2) the imperative to account for the reality of urban transformation in emerging economies as an intrinsically ‘negotiated’ process.<sup>94</sup> As such, this study is a deliberate attempt to historicize the analysis of global cities. The foregoing chapter interrogates the conventional narratives of global city formation by emphasizing the critical roles of historical factors and hybridity in shaping the urban trajectories of what the scholarship considers ‘marginal’ global cities.

Historical factors encompass past events, colonial and non-colonial legacies, and local conditions that have indelibly influenced contemporary urban forms and governance structures. Hybridity, on the other hand, refers to the layered and co-evolving socio-cultural, political, and economic realities that emerge when local traditions interact with global, non-indigenous forces. This framework challenges the prevailing models which often overlook these realms of urban development that do not necessarily conform to the technological or economic centeredness of globalization, particularly in non-Western contexts. But what happens when these ‘marginal’ cities defy the expected patterns of global city criteria? How do their unique historical legacies shape their paths differently than their Western counterparts?

In traditional global city studies, the focus is predominantly on economic and infrastructural metrics—factors that do not sufficiently account for the deeply ingrained historical and cultural nuances that influence urban policy and development. For Metro Manila, the Spanish and American colonial legacies have left a fragmented urban governance structure, which complicates cohesive metropolitan planning. In contrast, Bangkok’s development as a never-colonized city showcases an alternative path that highlights nationalistic policies and a unique response to global pressures. How have these diverging historical backgrounds influenced their abilities to integrate into the global economic system? There is more to unpack than what the existing body of knowledge supposes, and more lessons to be drawn from ‘marginal’ experiences that challenge the standard global city model.

Furthermore, this study extends the discourse by detailing significant urban projects and policies that reflect each city's efforts to link their unique histories with efforts—deliberate or not—to turn themselves into global cities. It scopes how post-colonial migrations have diversified the social fabric of these urban centers, how ancient trade routes have predisposed them to certain economic specializations, and how these factors cumulatively influence current infrastructural and economic developments. By embedding these historical truths into the analysis, the study questions the long-standing assumptions of global city formation and introduces a new lens to free the study of globalization from the analytical shackles of homogeneity.

In doing so, this thesis frames global city formation as a non-linear, historically contingent process that varies significantly across different urban contexts. It proposes the incorporation of intrinsic historical and hybrid influences as central to the narrative of global city formation. This recalibration is both academic and practical—an attempt to generate new insights that can influence future urban planning and policymaking in similarly complex urban environments.

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<sup>94</sup> Cite (Abu-Lughod, 1999; AlSayyad, 2001a; Kusno, 2000; Nasr and Volait, 2003b; Hill, 2004) from Shatkin 2004

## Colonial path dependencies: The case of Metro Manila

Metro Manila, the capital region of the Philippines, is a critical unit of analysis for understanding how colonial history shapes modern urban development. The region referred to as Greater Manila encompasses Metro Manila and six strategically significant provinces: Pampanga, Bulacan, Rizal, Cavite, Laguna, and Batangas. It is important to distinguish Metro Manila from the City of Manila; the former being the city-region under study, whereas the latter is a historical city within Metro Manila. While the scope of this study focuses on Metro Manila alone, it is important to acknowledge that the Greater Manila area collectively represents a substantial demographic footprint and the primary locus of economic and political activity in the Philippines.

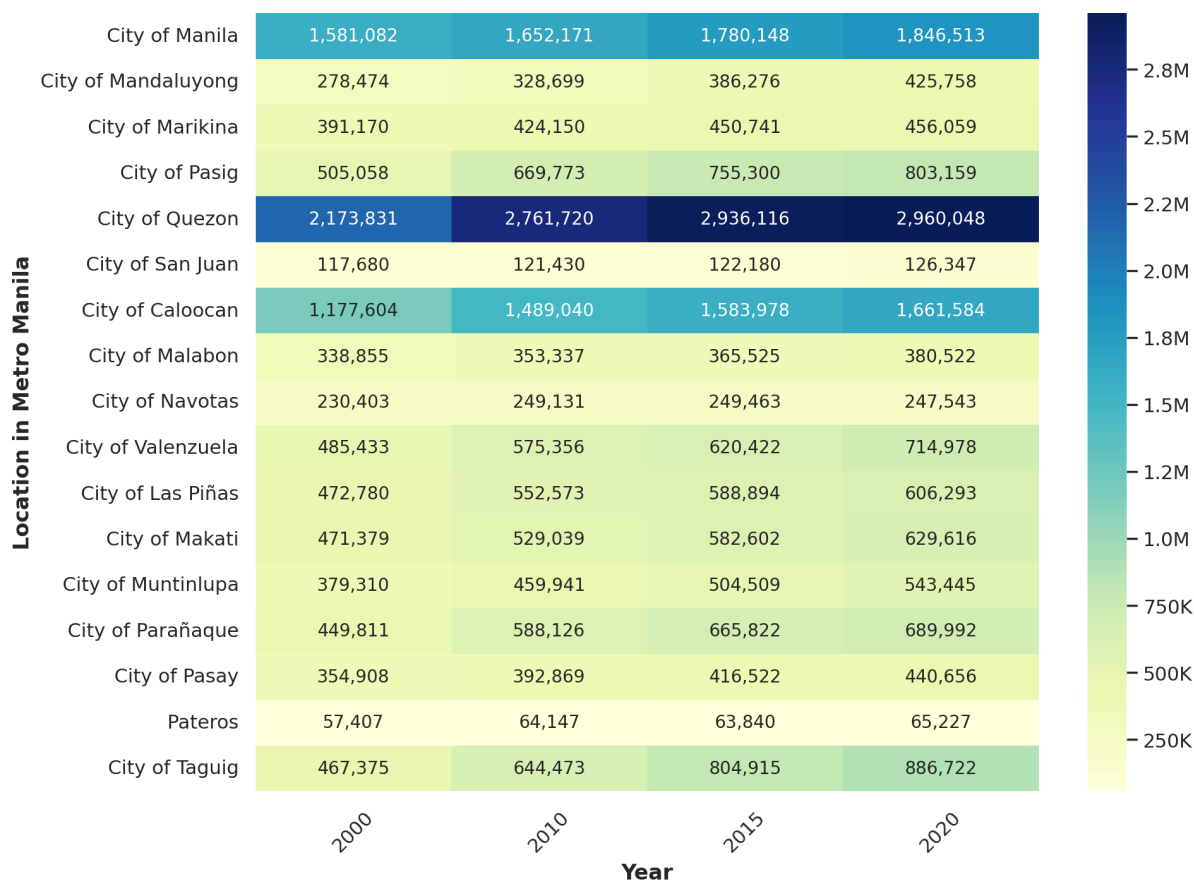
The core of this analysis hinges on the assertion that Metro Manila's evolution into a global city has been profoundly shaped by its colonial past under Spain and the United States. This historical trajectory gave rise to persistent institutional frameworks that influence Metro Manila's urban development and governance up to the present day. Institutions—be they political, economic, or social—still carry the imprints of colonial rule, shaping the governance structures, modeled notably after the American system, and also everyday life and cultural practices, such as the prevalent influence of Catholicism introduced during Spanish colonization. This thesis argues that the urban planning and form of Metro Manila today are not mere products of recent urban development and metropolitanization efforts, but rather the continuation of institutional structures established during the American colonial period.

In building this narrative, it is critical to define the geographical and demographic setup of Metro Manila. The National Capital Region, considered in this study as Metro Manila, comprises 16 cities and one municipality,<sup>95</sup> forming the historical and political core of Greater Manila. The outer zone, consisting of adjacent provinces such as Pampanga and Cavite, although significant, is not included in this analysis to maintain a focused examination of the urban core and immediate surroundings. From 1990 to 2020, the population of Metro Manila expanded dramatically from 7.9 million to 13.5 million. This substantial growth hints at the region's critical role and is indicative of the ongoing urban challenges and transformations influenced by its local history.

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<sup>95</sup> The National Capital Region is composed of the cities of Caloocan, Las Piñas, Makati, Malabon, Mandaluyong, Manila, Marikina, Muntinlupa, Navotas, Parañaque, Pasay, Pasig, Quezon City, San Juan, Taguig, and Valenzuela, including the municipality of Pateros.

**Figure 2. Population Heatmap of Cities in Metro Manila, 2000 - 2022**



Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, “Population and Housing”<sup>96</sup>

The population trends in Metro Manila from 2000 to 2020<sup>97</sup> provide a clear visual representation of the growth patterns across various cities and municipalities within the region. As depicted in Figure 2, the City of Manila, despite its historical significance and central location, shows a modest population increase, suggesting a degree of population saturation or possible migration to less dense areas within Metro Manila itself. In contrast, cities like Taguig and Pasig exhibit significant population growth over the two decades—more pronounced than any other city in the region, and this thesis argues that the profound change is indicative of their evolving roles within Metro Manila as burgeoning centers of commerce and residential development.

The substantial growth in Taguig from approximately 467,000 in 2000 to over 886,000 by 2020 can be attributed to the development of areas like Bonifacio Global City, a large financial and lifestyle district, and increased industrial and commercial investments which have attracted a younger, working population. Similarly, Pasig, known for its central business district in Ortigas, has seen its population rise from just over 505,000 in 2000 to more than 803,000 in 2020, pointing to its appeal as a key residential and business hub. This trend is indicative of the shifting urban landscape in Metro Manila, where newer business districts and residential areas are drawing populations away from traditional (historical) city centers, restructuring the metropolitan population distribution.

Conversely, the relatively stable or modest population growth in the City of Manila and other historically dense areas like Caloocan and Pasay is arguably reflective of issues related to urban congestion and

<sup>96</sup> Philippine Statistics Authority, “Population and Housing.”

<sup>97</sup> Granular data from the 1990s are unavailable.

limited space for further development, which in turn influences migration patterns within the city-region. Understanding these patterns helps in planning for sustainable urban expansion, ensuring that growth is managed in a way that optimizes living conditions and economic opportunities.

### *From pre-colonial settlements to metropolitanization*

Metro Manila's evolution from the pre-colonial settlement of *Maynilad* to its present extensive urban form reveals significant transformations shaped by economic imperatives and regulatory developments across three distinct historical periods. Each period reflects pivotal shifts in the region's administrative and geographic definitions, which have played crucial roles in shaping its path toward becoming a modern metropolis. This thesis defines metropolitanization as a strategic approach to urban governance in Metro Manila, aimed at addressing the complexities of city development, infrastructure deficits, and high population density. The term also encompasses the integrated management effort, distinguishing it from earlier, fragmented urban planning practices. Through coordinated governance across different municipalities, this model seeks to enhance urban life quality and promote sustainable development within the densely populated metropolitan area.

Originally, Maynilad was situated strategically along Manila Bay, near Laguna de Bay, establishing itself as a crucial trading hub. This location facilitated early interactions with local tribes and international traders, particularly the Chinese, long before the onset of Spanish colonization. With the Spanish conquest beginning in the 1560s, the military and administrative centers established in Manila marked a new colonial era. Intramuros, the walled city, became the epicenter of political and religious governance. The geographic and administrative foundations of Manila began to shift significantly post-independence, particularly during American colonial rule. In 1903, the American administration initiated a bold urban expansion that consolidated Intramuros with surrounding municipalities to form the larger City of Manila. This expanded city then transformed into a major site for manufacturing and residential development, especially as the spatial and economic limitations of Intramuros became evident.<sup>98</sup>

By the mid-20th century, industries and populations began migrating to adjacent areas, driven by the need for more space and favorable industrial policies. This suburban expansion brought to light significant infrastructure challenges, including deficiencies in transportation and utilities, exacerbated by the lack of coordinated urban planning across the newly urbanized areas. Addressing the inefficiencies of fragmented governance, the Philippine government under President Marcos Sr sought to create a more unified administrative framework. In 1975, Presidential Decree 824 officially established the Metropolitan Manila Area, encompassing 17 cities and municipalities. This legal recognition acknowledged Manila's role beyond its original borders. Today, Metro Manila stands as a testament to strategic urban planning and resilience. Despite housing only a fraction of the Philippines' total population, it commands a significant portion of the nation's economic output and serves as an important cluster for educational and healthcare services.

### *Colonial Strategies to Urban Development Strategies*

The urban formation of Metro Manila is deeply rooted in the colonial strategies implemented by the Spanish, particularly through the resettlement policies that dramatically reshaped the early urban configurations of the Philippines. This deliberate consolidation of scattered indigenous communities into

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<sup>98</sup> Rachel Racelis and Paula Collado, "The Manila MUR: Continuing Magnet for Migrants," in *Mega-Urban Regions in Pacific Asia: Urban Dynamics in a Global Era*, ed. Gavin W. Jones and Mike Douglass (NUS Press, 2008).

centralized settlements during the 1580s was a strategic move designed to streamline administration and facilitate religious outreach, mirroring colonial practices observed in Latin America. Historical accounts<sup>99</sup> indicate that these newly formed villages were intended to support populations ranging from 2,400 to 5,000 people, a scale considered manageable for governance and ecclesiastical oversight.

**Figure 3. View of Manila, c. 1665**



Source: Johannes Vingboons, *Bird's eye view of Manila*<sup>100</sup>

These concentrated settlements proved particularly effective in regions around Laguna de Bay and across Central Luzon, which later became the core areas of Greater Manila. The dense settlement patterns in these regions facilitated the imposition of Spanish cultural and administrative norms, effectively creating urban nuclei that have persisted and evolved over the centuries. Prominent cities within Greater Manila, such as Antipolo and Morong in Rizal, Apalit in Pampanga, and Baliuag in Bulacan, owe their origins to this resettlement policy, having been established as *poblaciones* during the Spanish era. Furthermore, the evolution of transportation networks was also pivotal in urban development. Before Spanish colonization, the primary modes of transport were by water, along rivers and coastlines, primarily because of the archipelago's maritime nature. Settlements typically emerged along these natural transport routes, which continued to hold importance even as the Spanish introduced more structured transportation plans in the 1830s.

The late Spanish period marked the beginning of significant transformations in overland transportation, with the introduction of a road network that connected Manila to major population centers across the island of Luzon. This development signaled a shift from a predominantly riverine transport system to a

<sup>99</sup> Racelis and Collado.

<sup>100</sup> Johannes Vingboons, *Nederlands: Vogelvlucht van Manilla*, circa 1665, Nederlands: aquarel/waterverf op papier English: watercolour on paper, height: 64 cm (25.1 in); width: 45 cm (17.7 in), circa 1665, Nationaal Archief, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AMH-6763-NA\\_Bird%27s\\_eye\\_view\\_of\\_Manila.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AMH-6763-NA_Bird%27s_eye_view_of_Manila.jpg).

more complex network involving roads and, eventually, railways. The first major railway line, completed under Spanish oversight in 1892, connected Manila to northern Luzon, setting the stage for further rail developments by American colonial administrators; this is the predecessor of the state-owned Philippine National Railway. During the American period, the expansion of rail and road networks followed earlier Spanish routes but incorporated more sophisticated engineering techniques and broader geographic coverage. This expansion was crucial in integrating previously isolated or less accessible areas into the burgeoning urban fabric of Greater Manila. The establishment of the Main Line North and South facilitated economic growth and migration, connecting Manila's economic core with its agricultural hinterlands and emerging suburban areas.

However, the railway system's initial profitability faced challenges by the 1930s as road transportation, offering greater flexibility, began to dominate passenger and freight movement. The decline of rail services, exacerbated by destruction during World War II and a subsequent shift to road transport post-war, underscores the dynamic shifts between different transportation modes and their impact on urban development patterns. Today, the legacy of these transportation networks is evident in the alignment of major highways such as the North and South Luzon Expressways, which trace the routes of historical rail lines and continue to influence movement patterns and urban expansion within Greater Manila.

#### *Historical factors in housing development in Metro Manila*

Housing development in Metro Manila is also profoundly influenced by historical variables, particularly the intense competition for land during the colonial periods, which has shaped current land use and urban settlement patterns. As demand for prime land for commercial, financial, and trading purposes escalates, the availability of land for housing—especially for the middle-income group and the urban poor—has drastically declined. This phenomenon reflects broader trends where the high cost of land continues to escalate, pushing affordable housing options further away from Metro Manila. In response to the scarcity of central urban land, government-funded low-cost housing projects and relocation initiatives for urban informal settlers are being established in more accessible areas outside of Metro Manila, such as Rizal and Cavite. This trend towards suburbanization reflects a strategic choice influenced by proximity to the metro area, aiming to alleviate the dense population center's pressures.

While some localities are attracting migrants at robust rates comparable to those within Metro Manila, others like San Juan, Pasay City, and the City of Manila are witnessing migrant population declines. These declines are due to high out-migration rates that natural population increases are not sufficient to offset. Similarly, private developers are capitalizing on this push towards the periphery by concentrating their efforts on affordable and mid-priced housing projects in the same regions, particularly Rizal, Cavite, and Laguna. This movement not only diversifies housing options but also suggests a potential reshaping of urban landscapes as growth spreads outward from the congested city center. In this context, Manila acts as a nucleus from which population 'spillover' influences surrounding central localities. Traditionally, these central areas around the City of Manila have absorbed this overflow, resulting in extremely high population densities.

Interestingly, localities at the north and south ends of Metro Manila, considered newer settlements, continue to attract net migration while exhibiting significantly lower population densities. This trend contrasts sharply with the older, central parts of Metro Manila, which are now experiencing net out-migration. This shift reflects an inverse relationship between population density and net migration within Metro Manila. Areas with high population densities in 1990 often saw low or negative net migration rates



in the following decade. The net migration data from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for Metro Manila as a whole show an averaging effect across different localities, with some areas experiencing positive migration trends while others face negative trends.<sup>101</sup> This thesis argues that such distribution points to the importance of a new analysis that takes into account the historical and spatial dynamics shaping urban settlement patterns and migration flows within the greater Metro Manila area.

### **Historical continuity: the Bangkok case**

The Thai capital, Bangkok, uniquely illustrates the intersection of traditional sovereignty and modern urban development. Unlike cities shaped by colonial legacies, Bangkok's growth trajectory is marked by its longstanding independence and nationalistic policies, which have shaped its integration into the global economy. This distinctive background, referred to here as 'sovereign path dependencies,' highlights Bangkok's ability to navigate its development without external colonial influences, setting a course that leverages its rich history and cultural identity.

**Figure 4. Photo of Phra Prom Erawan Shrine in Ratchaprasong**



Source: ThailandPhoto<sup>102</sup>

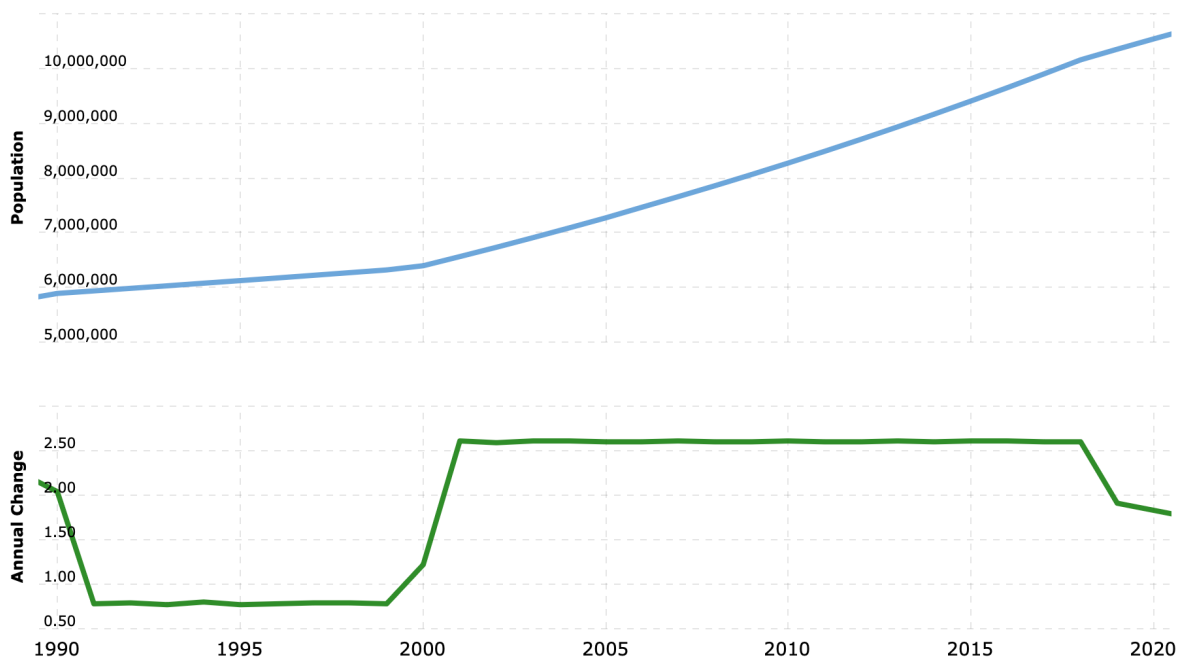
At the heart of Bangkok's urban strategy is its central role in Thai governance and culture, which has deeply influenced its approach to economic development and global integration. The city has strategically developed key business districts like Siam and Silom, which have transformed into bustling centers of commerce and tourism, reflecting Bangkok's capacity to blend its historical heritage with modern economic demands. For example, the development of the Ratchaprasong shopping district has turned

<sup>101</sup> Racelis and Collado, "Mega-Urban Regions."

<sup>102</sup> ThailandPhoto, *Erawan Shrine*, January 16, 2015, January 16, 2015, Work created under contract with the Department of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism and Sports. Published with author's permission, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bangkok\\_ErawanShrine1.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bangkok_ErawanShrine1.jpg).

central Bangkok into a world-class shopping destination, drawing both international investors and millions of tourists annually.

**Figure 5. Population growth in Bangkok, 1990 - 2020**



Source: United Nations World Population Prospects via MacroTrends “Bangkok, Thailand Metro Area Population 1950-2024”<sup>103</sup>

Figure 5 depicts Bangkok's population growth from 1990 to 2020 and shows a steady increase from approximately 6 million to just under 10 million over three decades. The annual change rate presents a significant spike around the year 2000, indicating a rapid growth phase before stabilizing and slightly declining post-2010. This phase of accelerated growth coincides with Thailand's intensified focus on expanding infrastructure and economic zones such as the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC).

Analytically, the correlation between Bangkok's population growth and strategic urban developments, such as the EEC, points to the direct impact of governmental policies on urban dynamics. The EEC, designed to foster high-tech industries and enhance connectivity, likely attracted a workforce, contributing to the population surge in the early 2000s. This period of growth stabilization post-2010 could reflect the maturation of Bangkok's urban expansion efforts, where the focus shifted from rapid growth to enhancing the quality of infrastructure and sustainable development. This trend highlights the effectiveness of targeted economic policies in shaping urban population patterns, reinforcing Bangkok's role as a regional hub and illustrating the broader implications of policy-driven urban management on demographic trends.

Infrastructure development in Bangkok has been robust, marked by significant projects such as the expansion of the BTS Skytrain and the MRT Metro systems. These projects are driven by Bangkok's independent policy-making and are aimed at improving urban mobility and reducing congestion. For instance, the recent extension of the Green Line of the BTS has connected more residential areas to the city center, facilitating easier access for Bangkok's growing suburban population. Similarly, the

<sup>103</sup> United Nations World Population Prospects, “Bangkok, Thailand Metro Area Population 1950-2024,” accessed May 13, 2024, <https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/cities/22617/bangkok/population>.

construction of the new Suvannabhumi Airport was a key national project that supports Bangkok's role as a major international gateway, enhancing its connectivity with global markets. In addition to these large-scale developments, Bangkok has also fostered a vibrant cultural scene that attracts global attention. Initiatives like the Bangkok Art Biennale and the annual Bangkok International Film Festival have helped cement the city's reputation as a cultural hub, attracting artists, filmmakers, and audiences from around the world. These cultural projects not only enrich the city's international profile but also support local economic sectors such as hospitality and entertainment.

Bangkok's approach to urban development and global integration showcases how a city can leverage its historical sovereignty to create a unique and competitive position on the world stage. By aligning traditional Thai values with strategic economic policies, Bangkok exemplifies a dynamic model of a global city, one that maintains its cultural integrity while adapting to the demands of global economic participation. This strategy not only provides a roadmap for similar cities but also enriches the global discourse on urban development in non-Western contexts.

### *From ancient trade routes to a never-colonized modern metropolis*

Bangkok began as a critical trading post on the Chao Phraya River, linking the Gulf of Thailand with the fertile Central Plains. Established as the capital in 1782 after transitioning from the ancient capitals of Sukhothai and Ayutthaya, Bangkok has consistently been the epicenter of political authority, economic vigor, cultural wealth, and educational prominence in Thailand. This entrenched central role has been instrumental over centuries in shaping Bangkok into a leading primate city in Asia, profoundly guiding its transformation into a contemporary metropolis. In an unattributed interview with the author, a Bangkok official noted:

*'Bangkok's early days by the river were not only about trade. The city's strategic location was very important for defense and governance, and it helped the city become the political and cultural center of Thailand. I would also say that this status has only been reinforced over the centuries.'*<sup>104</sup>

The city's historical centrality and geographic placement have been crucial in maintaining its dominance within Thailand's urban framework. By 2000, Bangkok housed one-third of Thailand's urban population and was approximately 30-40 times the size of the nation's second-largest city, underlining its unprecedented scale and influence in the national context. This demographic concentration in Bangkok was partly due to its established infrastructure that supported major economic sectors including trade, manufacturing, and services, which have historically been centered around the city due to its strategic location. *'Bangkok's role as the gateway to Thailand's economic activities cannot be overstated,'* the key informant added. *'Its infrastructure not only supports the local economy but also integrates Thailand into the global market, facilitating everything from manufacturing to financial services, etc.'*<sup>105</sup>

Bangkok's urban and economic systems began transforming significantly with the opening of Thailand to international trade through the Bowring Treaty of 1855. Although rooted in the rural production of rice, with all rice exports passing through Bangkok, the city expanded its share of the urban population while

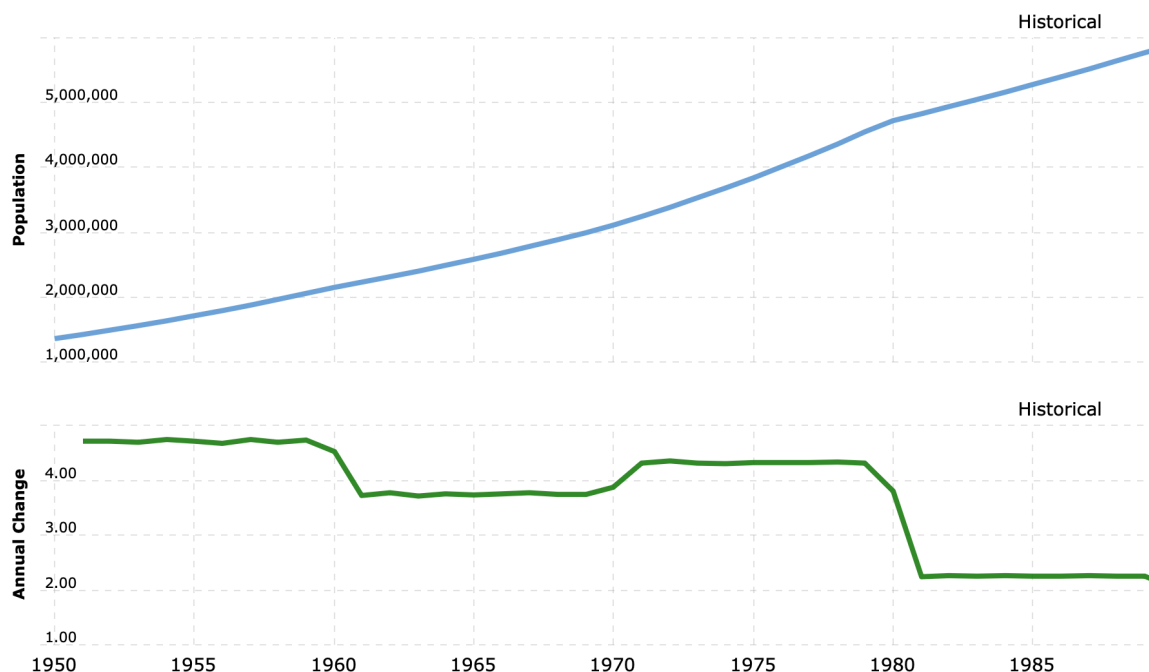
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<sup>104</sup> Key Informant (Bangkok Metropolitan Administration), An unattributed key informant interview with an official of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. Anonymity was requested by the informant., April 17, 2024.

<sup>105</sup> Key Informant (Bangkok Metropolitan Administration).

other cities remained modest in size.<sup>106</sup> This pattern changed in the 1960s and 1970s when light industry began to take root in the city, pulling massive waves of migration from rural regions, particularly from the impoverished northeast. As shown in Figure 6, the following decades saw an acceleration in urbanization rates, with the urban population jumping from 21% to 72% during the 1970s, signaling a rapid shift to an urban society predominantly centered around Bangkok.

**Figure 6. Population growth in Bangkok, 1950 - 1990**



Source: *United Nations World Population Prospects via MacroTrends*<sup>107</sup>

Bangkok's development corridors have played a pivotal role in shaping its urban form since the 1960s. The construction of highways such as Highway 1 to the north and Highway 34 to the east facilitated rapid urbanization away from traditional canal routes, turning once remote areas into integral parts of Bangkok's urban field of interaction. These corridors, strategically developed to avoid conflicts over land acquisition and high costs, have reinforced existing pathways rather than forging new ones, illustrating a pragmatic approach to urban expansion. This strategic road development has supported demographic and economic growth, particularly along the northern corridor serving the old Bangkok International Airport at Don Muang and the eastern corridor leading to the new Suvarnabhumi Airport, catering to the burgeoning industrial and tourism sectors.

<sup>106</sup> Nucharee Nuchkoom Smith and Robert Brian Smith, "Has Thailand Learnt Any Lessons from the Bowring Treaty and the Treaty of Amity?," *Athens Journal of Law (AJL)* 5 (2019): 405.

<sup>107</sup> United Nations World Population Prospects, "Bangkok, Thailand Metro Area Population 1950-2024."

## 7. Map of Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor



Source: Eastern Economic Corridor Office of Thailand<sup>108</sup>

Bangkok's historical continuity as an independent trade center and its strategic adaptation to modern economic imperatives showcase a unique narrative in its evolution into a global city. The city's ability to integrate traditional routes with contemporary economic corridors has facilitated a dynamic urban expansion, which continues to shape its trajectory in the global urban landscape.

### *Bangkok's Development Pathways*

Bangkok's development as an urban center is a definitive example of an urban transformation from a historic, canal-based cityscape into a bustling metropolis with a sophisticated road network. This development trajectory, steered largely by local initiatives rather than colonial legacies, reflects a deep respect for Bangkok's intrinsic cultural and geographical identity. The city's growth has been shaped by its indigenous roots and strategic planning, and these set the Thai capital apart from other cities whose urban structures bear the marks of colonial imposition.

Bangkok's transition from a canal-based to a road-based city reflects its adaptability to modern demands while respecting its historic pathways. Originally vital for transport and trade, the canals were central to Bangkok's development. Over time, these were systematically converted into roads, a move that merged traditional routes with modern urban needs. This strategic transformation underscores Bangkok's ability to balance historical preservation with contemporary urban growth.

Bangkok's evolution from a canal-centric layout to an expansive road network may arguably be a deliberate urban strategy. Initially designed for accessibility, the city's downtown areas featured a closely-spaced grid network of roads that maintained alignment with historic arterial routes. As the city expanded, however, the distance between major roads widened significantly in the outer zones, leading to the emergence of superblocks. These large, underdeveloped spaces, while providing opportunities for future development, have posed challenges for efficient urban service delivery and have affected the flow of traffic across the metropolitan area.

<sup>108</sup> Eastern Economic Corridor Office of Thailand, "Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor Leads SE Asia into 5G, and Full Logistic Connectivity - PR Newswire APAC," accessed May 13, 2024, <https://en.pnasia.com/releases/apac/thailand-s-eastern-economic-corridor-leads-se-asia-into-5g-and-full-logistic-connectivity-305303.shtml>.

The development strategy extended the city's urban growth along major corridors up to 40 kilometers from the city center. This pattern of development favored vehicular movement over integrated urban planning, contributing to sprawling suburban areas that are expensive to service. To address these issues, Bangkok initiated major road development projects like the Inner Ring Road and the Outer Ring Road, designed to ease congestion in the city core and enhance connectivity throughout the metropolitan area. These projects are complemented by development corridors aimed at steering industrial and tourist development away from the congested city center, thereby attracting foreign investment and improving Bangkok's role as a regional economic hub.<sup>109</sup>

Bangkok has effectively integrated its historical canal routes into its modern roadway network, showcasing a deep appreciation for its heritage alongside urban innovation. This transition from waterways to roads is both a response to transportation demands and a strategic evolution to preserve the city's historical spirit while meeting modern needs. This approach not only maintains Bangkok's connectivity but also enhances its functionality as a metropolis, demonstrating the city's capacity to adapt its historical infrastructure to contemporary demands.

### *Historical and Strategic Dimensions of Housing Development in Bangkok*

Bangkok's housing development landscape has been significantly shaped by its unique historical trajectory, free from colonial legacies, and characterized by strategic urban planning initiatives responding to its rapid economic growth and urban expansion. In recent decades, Bangkok has faced a growing challenge in housing affordability, driven by an escalating demand for land in central areas for commercial and high-end residential developments. This has led to a notable shift in housing development towards the periphery of the city, where land is more available and less expensive. Specific projects, such as the development of the Muang Thong Thani complex, exemplify this trend. Originally conceived in the 1990s as a comprehensive mixed-use development, Muang Thong Thani is in the northern outskirts of Bangkok and has evolved into a densely populated area that includes a variety of housing options, catering primarily to middle-income families. An expert from the Thai government noted:

*'Muang Thong Thani was strategically developed to alleviate the central city's housing pressure by providing affordable and high-quality living options. In my opinion, this development helped balance the demographic spread, and it also encouraged the growth of local economies around these new [hubs].'*<sup>110</sup>

Another pivotal area in Bangkok's housing development is the expansion along the Eastern Seaboard. This region has seen extensive industrial growth, spurred by its proximity to major ports and industrial zones like Laem Chabang and Map Ta Phut. The industrial boom has driven the demand for both worker and family housing, resulting in new residential developments that offer a range of housing from low-income to middle-class units. The government has facilitated this growth by improving infrastructure, such as roads and public transportation, to connect these areas more effectively with central Bangkok. In an interview with the author, an official from the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration elaborated:

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<sup>109</sup> Utis Kaothien and Douglas Webster, "The Bangkok Region," in *Global City Regions* (Routledge, 2000).

<sup>110</sup> Key Informant (Bangkok Metropolitan Administration), An unattributed key informant interview with an official of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. Anonymity was requested by the informant.

*‘Actually, when we started developing the Eastern Seaboard, it was all part of a bigger plan to diversify the economic and residential areas around Bangkok. We really focused on improving the roads, public transport—really, the whole infrastructure setup—because we wanted to make sure these new residential areas weren't just built but that they were actually livable and appealing. The goal was to meet the needs of our diverse population, you know, to make sure everyone could find something that worked for them out there.’*

Furthermore, the Thai government has actively engaged in developing affordable housing projects to address the needs of lower-income residents. One such initiative is the Baan Eua-Arthorn housing project, launched by the National Housing Authority. This project aims to provide affordable homes across Thailand, including the outskirts of Bangkok, where several developments have been completed. These homes are typically located in areas with good public transport connectivity to ease residents' commute to the city center.

Bangkok's approach to managing its housing challenges also includes revitalizing existing urban areas to prevent the decay of city centers and reduce the pressure on suburban expansion. The Rattanakosin Island preservation project is an example of how Bangkok is attempting to balance historical preservation with modern needs, providing incentives for the renovation of old properties and improving public amenities to make central areas attractive for living and tourism.

Moreover, the recent shift towards transit-oriented development in Bangkok illustrates a sophisticated approach to urban planning. Developments like the ones near the BTS and MRT lines, such as the projects in the Phaya Thai and On Nut areas, are designed to maximize access to mass transit, thereby reducing reliance on cars and encouraging more sustainable urban living. These projects are typically mixed-use, offering residential units alongside commercial and leisure facilities, which enhances the livability and attractiveness of these areas.

Bangkok's strategy for housing development is a multifaceted approach that includes expanding suburban areas with new developments, revitalizing city centers, and integrating residential projects with mass transit systems. These efforts demonstrate Bangkok's proactive stance in creating a balanced urban environment that accommodates its growing population while striving to maintain affordability and quality of life. The approach is evidently rooted in Thailand's independent urban policy framework, and it sets Bangkok apart in how it adapts to the challenges and opportunities of urban growth and global integration.

## CHAPTER III: The Role of Agents in Global City Formation

This chapter scrutinizes the roles of diverse agents and their dynamics in shaping the urban development of Metro Manila and Bangkok from 1990 to 2020. It particularly focuses on government entities, business leaders, and civil society groups, collectively referred to here as 'agents'. These agents exert a profound influence not just through their economic decisions but through their shaping of social policies and cultural interactions. The 'dynamics' discussed pertain to the interactions among these varied agents, exploring how their alliances, conflicts, and negotiations directly affect urban governance and developmental trajectories.

During the three decades under study, Metro Manila experienced significant shifts in its urban governance due to the decentralization of power to local government units. This led to varying forms of policy approaches that influenced the city's integration into the global economic system. Conversely, Bangkok's development was steered by a more centralized approach where state-led initiatives and powerful business entities played dominant roles. This study critically examines these contrasting setups and their implications for each city's global city status, questioning the adequacy of global city theories that often overlook such localized, agent-driven dynamics.

Moreover, the analysis will utilize a grounded approach, contrasting the 'urban regime' theory—which posits that coalitions involving private sector interests can heavily influence public policy—with the actual practices observed in the field. It will also consider how civil society and informal networks have responded to or shaped these regimes, often injecting competing agendas that challenge the status quo imposed by more dominant economic players. By doing so, the chapter argues for a nuanced understanding of global city formation as a process deeply embedded in specific socio-political contexts, thereby innovating beyond the traditional economic determinism prevalent in earlier studies.

### Agents in a decentralized global city: The case of Metro Manila

The key argument of this case is that the urban development of Metro Manila, and the process of its global city formation—including the process towards which it became a metropolitan region it is today, has been shaped or influenced by the various agents that affect political and economic decision-making across different levels of governance, across the entire policy cycle: from the moment of strategic planning, policy conception, or program ideation to the implementation and evaluation of development agendas. These actors come from the government (both local, regional, and national), the local and international private sectors especially those who engage in public-private partnerships and who, through direct or indirect lobbying, influence decisions and hence the trajectory of global city formation. They also include foreign entities like foreign governments who give foreign aid and deliver development programs, or foreign direct investors who drive economic growth in the city-region. They also include civil society organizations and actors who engage in public consultations, public protests and movements against or in favor of certain development projects, and the public at large (e.g., residents and workers) who directly or indirectly contribute to or shape the urban development process.

#### *'Privatizing' urban development in Metro Manila?*

Metro Manila's path towards becoming a global city significantly deviates from the more common government-led models seen in other parts of Asia, indicative of a cityscape largely shaped by private



interests with relatively minimal state intervention. This privatized approach to urban development emerges from a complex historical backdrop of failed government initiatives and powerful private entities stepping in to fill the governance void. What does this shift mean for the broader urbanization phenomenon and Metro Manila's residents? This question becomes particularly pressing when examining the specific roles and contributions of various agents within this development schema.

Reflecting on the city's history, the American colonial administration once commissioned the creation of a master plan that aimed to model Manila as a city of grand boulevards and monumental buildings. However, the plan fell short, primarily because it did not sufficiently consider the existing political and social tensions, exacerbating social inequalities concerning land ownership and urban living. Decades later, under the Marcos Sr. regime, another ambitious plan was devised by former First Lady Imelda Marcos who envisioned transforming Metro Manila into the 'City of Man'. This plan focused more on aesthetic enhancements and less on functional living conditions for the poorer segments of the population.<sup>111</sup> Why did these state-led initiatives consistently fail to realize their visions? Both examples highlight a recurrent theme of disconnect between grandiose planning and practical implementation, influenced by inadequate resources, political conflicts, and an inability to incorporate the diverse needs of Metro Manila's residents.

As a result of these governmental shortcomings, private developers have risen as primary agents of urban development, leading to what is now characterized as 'privatized planning' or what Shatkin calls turning a city into a 'privatopolis'.<sup>112</sup> This trend is markedly seen in the development of major areas such as Makati CBD, Rockwell Center, and Bonifacio Global City. These districts, driven by the ambitions of private developers rather than public welfare considerations, serve as enclaves that cater to the affluent and global businesses, often at the expense of broader urban integration. This model of development raises a critical question: Can a city truly become a global center if its development benefits only a select few?

The development of these areas starkly contrasts with the aims of governmental bodies like the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), which endeavors to address more inclusive urban challenges such as transportation, housing affordability, and public services. The authority's efforts underscore the need for strategies that consider the welfare of the broader population rather than just the elite. However, reconciling these divergent objectives remains a significant challenge. And there emerged a shared idea among scholars that the role of MMDA as an institution in urban development has significantly decreased over the past three decades. As Garcia explains in an interview with the author:

*'Creating [a] political structure that can give more attention to the industrialization, globalization, or development of Metro Manila is crucial—it has always been important. Sadly, we don't have that. Unfortunately, the MMDA 'ay taga-ticket lack ng traffic' [only manages road traffic by issuing violation tickets] and they are no longer a real authority in the development of Metro Manila. Also, the responsible authorities of the development of Metro Manila are too dispersed functionally; there is always a different agency for a different*

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<sup>111</sup> Scott Kirsch, "Aesthetic Regime Change: The Burnham Plans and US Landscape Imperialism in the Philippines," *Philippine Studies* 65, no. 3 (September 2017): 315–56, <https://doi.org/10.3316/informit.098468011135049>.

<sup>112</sup> Gavin Shatkin, "Planning Privatopolis: Representation and Contestation in the Development of Urban Integrated Mega-Projects," in *Worlding Cities* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2011), 77–97, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444346800.ch3>.

*aspect of development, when in fact they are all linked together. We would benefit from having a central authority...*<sup>113</sup>

Within this context, the power dynamics between the government and private developers unveils a more complex transaction than what many scholars assume; it points to the understated role of private sector actors in urban development, particularly given the vague public sector direction towards evolving Metro Manila into a global city. Private developers not only shape the physical and economic landscape of the city but also influence urban policy through their substantial economic contributions and political connections. This influence often results in urban policies that favor development projects which, while profitable, may not necessarily address the needs of the wider community. Meanwhile, the government, often constrained by limited resources and bureaucratic inefficiencies, struggles to assert a more balanced urban developmental agenda.

Furthermore, the privatization of planning in Metro Manila aligns with broader trends of neoliberalism and globalization, where the state transitions from being a direct service provider to a facilitator of market-driven development. This shift raises critical questions about the future of urban equity and governance in Metro Manila. How can public policy be structured to ensure that the benefits of urban development are more evenly distributed among all city residents? The author of this study agrees with the definition of Shatkin of ‘privatization of planning’ as the transfer of authority and accountability for ‘[en]visioning urban futures’ and implementing social initiatives for urban transformation from public entities to private sector actors.<sup>114</sup> This proposition, however, is countered—or at least clarified—by the findings of this study, as the discussion in succeeding sections show.

In Metro Manila, private developers gain considerable authority to reshape cities to establish new centers for production and consumption. They manage to circumvent the congested old city centers and create new, privatized spaces optimized for consumerism and export-oriented industries. In response to an unclear public sector direction, a few major developers have taken it upon themselves to devise their own strategies for urban redevelopment. These strategies often involve large, strategically positioned large-scale projects designed to take advantage of and influence the city-region's developmental trends to benefit the investors. These projects are comprehensive, encompassing not just real estate development but also the construction of necessary infrastructure such as transportation networks and community amenities.

Under this framework of practice, private developers take on the roles of primary planners and managers of the urban environments they construct, embodying a type of public-private partnership dominated by private interests. Moreover, it is the private developers who often initiate and direct the urban planning agenda, urging public sector bodies to align with their corporate goals and prioritize corporate profits. This reversal of traditional roles—where private entities rather than public bodies lead the urban developmental charge—marks a distinct characteristic of Metro Manila, setting it apart from many Western global cities and potentially foreshadowing trends in urban planning across other developing economies.

The case of Metro Manila provides a compelling study of a global city's formation that is heavily influenced by privatized planning and minimal state intervention. However, this thesis argues that, in

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<sup>113</sup> Robin Michael Garcia, Key informant interview with Dr. Robin Michael Garcia, May 7, 2024.

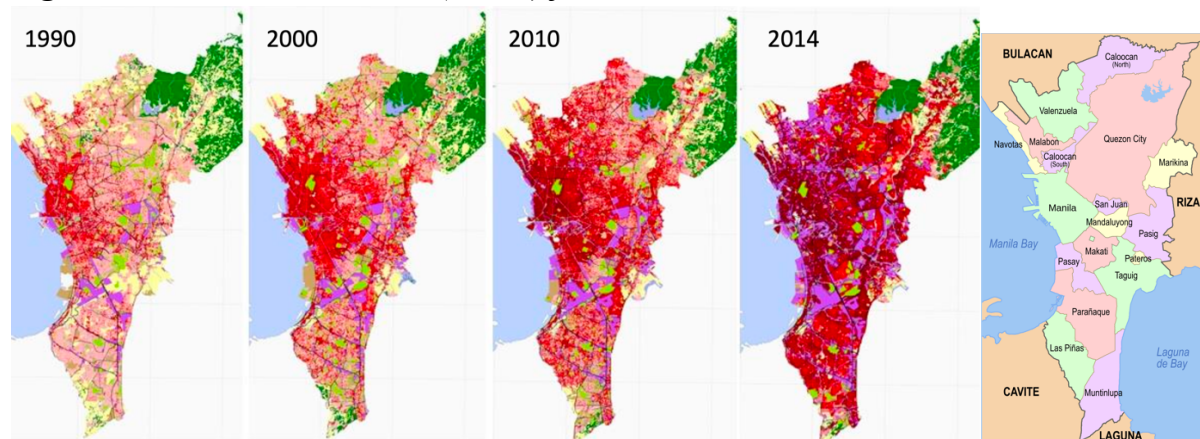
<sup>114</sup> Shatkin, “The City and the Bottom Line.”

contextualizing privatized urban development in Metro Manila, one must also account for the complexity brought forth by the decentralized structure of government in metropolitanization—a subject that will be detailed in the succeeding chapters. Metropolitanization makes urban development projects that cut across multiple jurisdictions a logistical and bureaucratic nightmare. In an interview with the author, Eleazar Ricote—Deputy Executive Director of the Public-Private Partnership of the Philippines—described the following:

*‘The challenge in metropolitanization is that, while there’s a mechanism for jointly addressing shared concerns, it must not contradict the jurisdictional divisions among them. For example, in traffic management, no one is precluded because vehicles need to traverse different cities and will therefore fall under multiple jurisdictions in one journey. They need to align with the MMDA’s color coding scheme, consistent with the rest. However, a city like Makati can impose local government-specific, context-specific requirements, like one-way, two-way restrictions, etc. So, that’s the disconnect. And this is where I think the discussion and discourse should be political. Also, in MMDA or any other metropolitanization initiative, the trigger for metropolitanization is always political, not from a development planning perspective. Because of development requirements, we have to come together, but it’s usually the prominent or strong political leader in that area who triggers or leads the metropolitanization activities. I think there’s a political economy discourse here.’<sup>115</sup>*

This scenario in Metro Manila is a critical case study that globalization literature has failed to pay adequate attention to; a case zooming in on the impact of privatized urban planning and limited governmental oversight in shaping a global city under conditions of struggling political legitimacy, decentralized governance systems, and corrupt practices. The Metro Manila example is essential for evaluating the risks of giving too much control to the private sector in urban planning. It calls for a reassessment of governmental roles in urban development, not just to boost global competitiveness but also to maintain urban areas that are equitable and livable for all inhabitants.

**Figure 8. Land Use Land Cover (LULC) for Metro Manila, 1990 – 2014**



Source: The World Bank’s Singh (2022), *From Satellites to Settlements: Identifying Slums from Outer Space within Metro Manila’s Complex Urban Landscape*<sup>116</sup>

<sup>115</sup> Eleazar Ricote, Key informant interview with Mr. Eleazar Ricote, April 6, 2024.

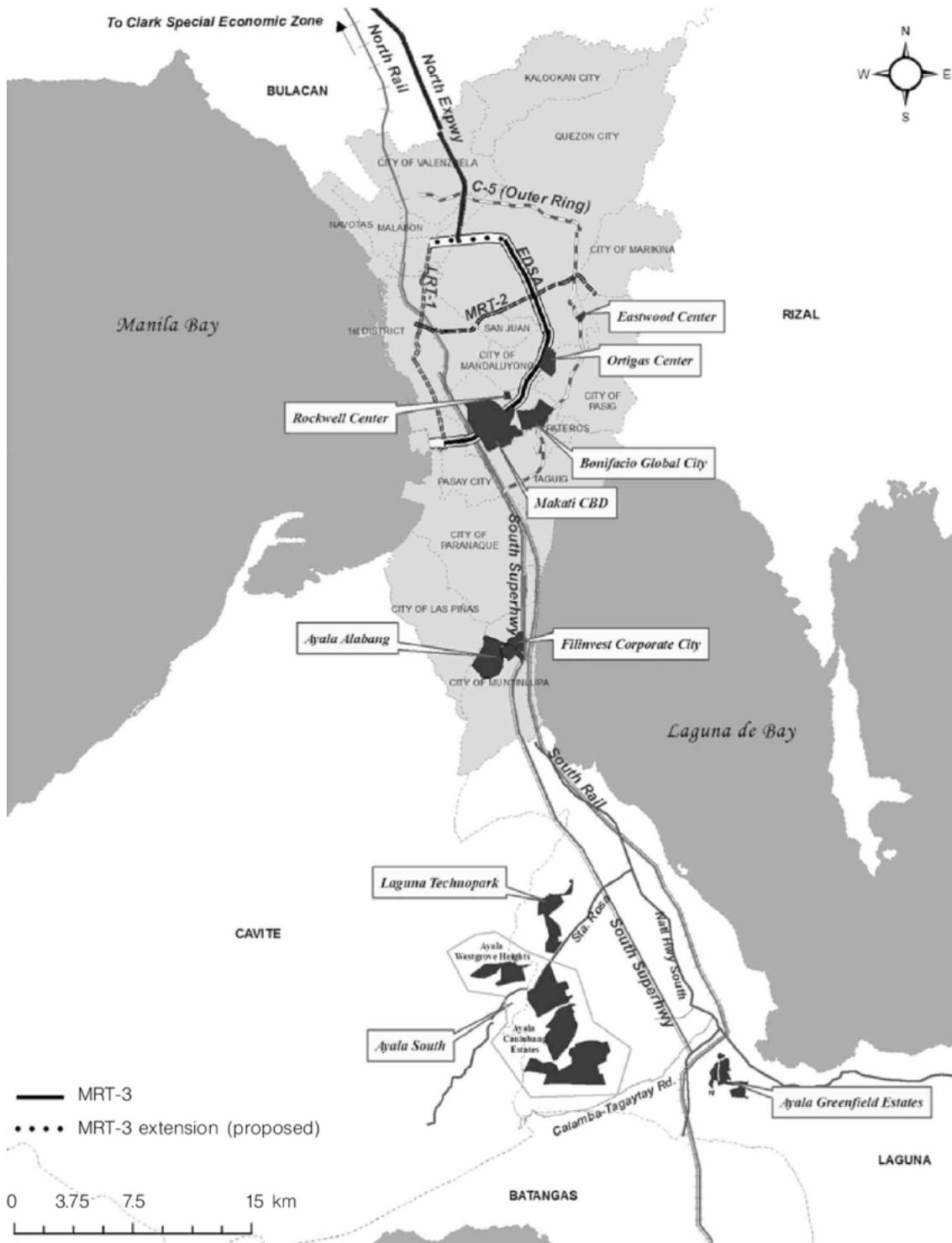
<sup>116</sup> Gayatri Singh, “From Satellites to Settlements : Identifying Slums from Outer Space within Metro Manila’s Complex Urban Landscape” (The World Bank, October 14, 2021), <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/f7c6f54f7e7871b19ab4c2211be51d40-0240012021/from-satellites-to-settlements-identifying-slums-from-outer-space-within-metro-manila-s-complex-urban-landscape>.

In Figure 8, the sequence of geospatial maps detailing the land use and land cover changes in Metro Manila from 1990 to 2014 illustrates a significant urban transformation within this major Philippine metropolis. In the 1990 map, there are extensive green areas representing undeveloped or agricultural lands, particularly noticeable in areas around Quezon City and northern cities like Caloocan. The prevalence of green zones during this period corresponds with a lesser degree of urban development. However, even by 1990, the central areas such as Makati and Manila already show considerable urban density, marked by the red areas indicating built-up spaces. This period in the Philippines' history was marked by economic recovery and growth after the political upheavals of the 1980s, setting the stage for increased urban development.

By the year 2000, the map shows a noticeable increase in red areas, especially spreading from the central cities like Makati and Manila towards neighboring areas such as Pasig and Taguig. This thesis argues that the expansion is indicative of the booming real estate and commercial development spurred by economic growth and the increased demand for residential and commercial spaces. Notably, the Ortigas Center in Pasig emerges as a significant commercial hub during this period, reflecting on the map as increased red areas. The development of major real estate projects, commercial establishments, and infrastructures such as the expansion of the Metro Manila Skyway and improvements in the South Luzon Expressway contributed to this transformation, facilitating greater connectivity and thus more intensive land use.

The trend of diminishing green spaces and expanding red zones becomes even more pronounced by 2010 and continues into 2014, indicating a phase of sustained urban expansion. The maps of these years show significant urbanization, especially into the areas of Quezon City and towards the southern cities of Parañaque and Las Piñas. This period corresponds with major governmental and private sector projects, such as the development of Bonifacio Global City in Taguig, which further attract residential, commercial, and business activities. These are complemented by infrastructure developments like the extension of the MRT-3, shown in the infrastructure projects map in Figure 9, which provides the backbone for intensified urban development by improving transportation links and cementing connectivity across the city-region. The continued spread of built-up areas in these maps not only highlights the economic dynamics of Metro Manila, characterized by a growing population and the continuous inflow of domestic and foreign investments; it also underscores the challenges of managing urban growth, maintaining green spaces, and ensuring sustainable development in a rapidly expanding metropolitan region.

**Figure 9. Map of urban infrastructure projects in Metro Manila by Shatkin**



Source: Shatkin (2008), *The City and the Bottom Line: Urban Megaprojects and the Privatization of Planning in Southeast Asia*<sup>117</sup>

Further analysis of Figure 9 showing major real estate and infrastructure projects reveals the strategic focus on enhancing urban infrastructure to support economic zones and commercial growth. Projects like Filinvest Corporate City and Laguna Technopark simultaneously foster economic activities and massively alter land use patterns from agricultural and undeveloped to industrial and commercial. These projects,

<sup>117</sup> Shatkin, "The City and the Bottom Line."

which attract a mix of domestic and international investments, have been a major factor in shaping the metropolitan landscape and influencing the shift in land cover observed over the last three decades.

### *The link between global city status and political currency*

In the Philippines, the decentralization of governance (and devolution to local governments of development-oriented powers) plays a significant role in enabling local political agents to deliver urban development strategies through substantial autonomy and incentivizing them to build and invest in the global city reputation of their respective jurisdictions. This decentralized approach not only allows local political leaders like mayors to implement impactful urban development projects but also motivates them to invest in initiatives that enhance their city's global standing. The motivation behind such efforts is twofold: not only do they improve the city's infrastructure and quality of life, but they also serve as a strategic move to enhance the political stature of the leaders themselves. As these leaders strive to create internationally recognized urban centers, they simultaneously bolster their own credibility and relevance among the electorate.

The connection between the ambition to elevate a city to national or even global prominence and the personal political aspirations of local leaders is evident in the dynamics of Philippine politics, which is heavily influenced by personality and popularity. Local leaders often leverage their developmental successes to gain political traction and expand their influence. The case of Rodrigo Duterte, the former Mayor of Davao City who eventually became Philippine President, exemplifies this phenomenon. His 22-year tenure as mayor, during which he transformed a once crime-ridden city into a peaceful and business-friendly environment, significantly increased his political currency, eventually aiding his ascent to the presidency. Such transformations are not merely about urban development but are also strategic maneuvers to accumulate political capital. In an interview, Garcia notes this link between the drive to increase the reputation of a city and the political currency of the local leader:

*'The big cities are always the crown jewels of the countries. The global cities give countries more status, it's a source of pride for people, and it is also a jump off point for a greater political career. If you look at the case of Isko Moreno, who, even if he lost the presidential election, his sudden rise to national political fame was [due to] his success in developing the City of Manila. The same case with [former Philippine president] Duterte, who was the Mayor of Davao City and is known nationwide for his peace and order initiatives in the city. You can see that in the political trend of local governments having that reputation — the reputational value of leading a world class city, globalizing, and developing it, as a springboard for national political career. Precisely because, if you increase respect of the city and the country in the international stage, it gives you more political currency. Xi Jinping too, was the mayor of Shanghai, even the mayor of Thailand became the standard bearer for Prime Minister.'*<sup>118</sup>

The public perception of these urbanization efforts is shaped through various media channels, including press releases, interviews, and mass media coverage, which highlight the achievements of local leaders. This publicity does not only inform the public but also enhances the political leverage of these leaders by showcasing their capability and vision. This strategy of using media to project development achievements

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<sup>118</sup> Garcia, Key informant interview with Dr. Robin Michael Garcia.

as a testament to effective leadership is crucial in a society where political success is often tied to public perception and popularity.

Moreover, global cities act as symbols of national pride and progress. Leaders who successfully manage these cities often gain a national, if not international, reputation that can propel them to higher political offices. As Garcia accentuates, the narratives of leaders like Isko Moreno and Xi Jinping, who both used their tenure in local government as a springboard for higher political ambitions, reinforce the idea that successful city governance can serve as a critical step toward broader political achievements. In this context, the development of a city goes beyond mere urban planning; it becomes a strategic element in the broader political game, where the stakes include not only the welfare of the city's residents but also the political future of its leaders.

### *Centralization and decentralization in urban governance*

The evolution of Metro Manila's urban landscape is intricately tied to the dynamics of centralization and decentralization in governance. This push and pull between national directives and local autonomy has crafted a unique metropolitan narrative. The Philippines' Local Government Code of 1991 marked a significant shift towards decentralization, empowering local government units (LGUs) with greater autonomy. This change was intended to allow more tailored, responsive governance but has also led to different development strategies across Metro Manila. Each LGU in the region has crafted its urban policies based on local needs and perspectives, which, while promoting innovation, has occasionally led to policy fragmentation and overlapping jurisdictions.

Moreover, the decentralization effort has impacted how infrastructure projects and urban policies are implemented. For instance, the development of transport infrastructure like the Metro Manila Skyway and the LRT-2 extensions involved complex coordination between multiple LGUs and national agencies. These projects, while essential for enhancing metropolitan connectivity, often faced delays and increased costs due to the challenging dynamics of multi-level governance. The Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), intended as a coordinating body, has struggled to assert effective metropolitan-wide governance due to these decentralized structures, revealing the complexities of managing a rapidly urbanizing mega-city without a unified administrative command.

Another aggravating aspect was highlighted in an interview with a key official of the Philippine government:

*'The challenge, in reality, is readiness. The local government unit [LGU] is typically not ready, and then there is also a need for election preparation. The national government holds onto some functions because their budget and number of staff are tied to those functions. While we support more autonomy for local governments, the legal structure and our fiscal processing budget need to catch up because the directives are outpacing them, but the LGUs are not ready.'*<sup>119</sup>

This highlights a core issue within the Philippine decentralization initiative: the readiness of local government institutions to effectively assume increasingly expanding roles. Despite legal mandates aimed at increasing LGU autonomy, these units frequently lack the necessary preparation and resources, which

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<sup>119</sup> Ricote, Key informant interview with Mr. Eleazar Ricote.

complicates their ability to manage new responsibilities efficiently. This struggle is exacerbated by the timing of election cycles, which often shift focus and resources away from governance improvements.

The retention of certain functions by the national government further complicates this scenario. This retention is often driven by practical concerns, as the national budget and staffing are directly tied to these functions. The slow pace at which fiscal and administrative adjustments are made reflects a systemic inertia that hinders the transition toward true decentralization. This situation poses significant implications for governance and policy implementation. While the legal framework exists to support decentralization, the reality on the ground reflects a gap between legislative intent and practical execution. This disconnect not only undermines the effectiveness of decentralization but also impacts the broader governance landscape, potentially stalling important reforms and innovations that could arise from more empowered local governance. The challenges identified in this interview are crucial for policymakers to address, ensuring that decentralization leads to more responsive and capable local government structures.

### *The role of public-private partnerships in Metro Manila*

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) have become a cornerstone of metropolitan development in Metro Manila, significantly influencing its urban form and economic landscape. Projects like the development of Bonifacio Global City (BGC) showcase how private capital, when combined with government facilitation, can create vibrant economic hubs. BGC's transformation from a military base into a premier business district illustrates the potential of PPPs to repurpose urban spaces. However, this model has also raised questions about inclusivity and the prioritization of commercial interests over public welfare. For example, while BGC boasts high-end offices and residences, it has also been critiqued for contributing to the gentrification of urban areas, pushing lower-income residents to the peripheries of the metropolis.

The role of PPPs in service delivery, particularly in utilities and transportation, highlights both the efficiencies and challenges of this approach. The privatization of water services in the late 1990s, intended to improve efficiency and expand access, initially saw significant investment in infrastructure. However, the ensuing years have exposed the complexities of regulating private entities in public utilities, with issues arising around pricing and service quality. This scenario underscores the need for robust regulatory frameworks to ensure that PPPs align with the broader public interest while harnessing private sector efficiency and innovation.

Expanding on the structural and regulatory dimensions, a key government official elaborates on the empowerment of local government units (LGUs) through legislative advancements: *'And the Philippines is the first to have enacted a BOT [Build-Operate-Transfer] law in the 90s, Local Government Code. And then currently, the BOT law entered the PPP [Public-Private Partnership] Act. So [we have] a consolidated, more comprehensive PPP program.'*<sup>120</sup> This legal framework not only facilitates but actively encourages LGUs to engage in PPPs, providing them with the authority to independently initiate and manage large-scale projects.

The interview further reveals the autonomy granted to LGUs under the current PPP framework: *'The new law also allows them some autonomy in the review [and] approvals under the current PPP law. They can approve projects up to 15 billion pesos at their level. They don't have to go to the national government*

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<sup>120</sup> Ricote.



*anymore unless there is a government guarantee or subsidy needed or [a] conflict with another project in terms of alignment.*<sup>121</sup> This level of autonomy is crucial for enabling timely and responsive development initiatives at the local level, reflecting a shift towards more decentralized economic planning and project implementation.

Moreover, the real-world impacts of these legal and structural changes are significant, as illustrated by current projects and partnerships: ‘Right now, I was in a management committee meeting [where] we’re talking about several projects: hemodialysis machines in Iloilo province, public health facilities, expanding [and] modernizing existing provincial hospitals, solid waste management facilities being proposed to them by the private sector as PPPs.’ These examples highlight how PPPs are being utilized to address a wide range of infrastructural and public service needs, showcasing the flexibility and scope of this approach in contributing to regional development.

#### *Non-state actors in Metro Manila’s urban development*

Non-state actors, including NGOs, community organizations, and advocacy groups, play pivotal roles in Metro Manila’s urban governance. These groups often fill governance gaps by providing services and advocating for underrepresented communities. For instance, NGOs like Gawad Kalinga have been instrumental in addressing housing shortages for the urban poor, providing not only homes but also fostering community development. Their efforts highlight the potential for civil society to significantly impact urban development in areas that may be overlooked by state and private sectors.

Community groups in Metro Manila have also been active in urban planning processes, advocating for more inclusive development policies. Movements against large-scale evictions or unsustainable development projects have prompted local governments to reconsider urban redevelopment initiatives. These actions emphasize the growing power of grassroots movements in shaping urban landscapes and policies.

Moreover, the engagement of these non-state actors in policy discussions has fostered a more participatory approach to urban governance. Initiatives like participatory budgeting in some LGUs have allowed residents to have direct input into how public funds are utilized, empowering citizens and increasing transparency in governance. These developments are crucial in a context where urbanization processes often outpace the capacity of traditional governance structures to adequately respond to complex metropolitan challenges.

By examining these dimensions, the narrative around Metro Manila’s urban development is enriched, offering deeper insights into the multifaceted influences shaping its growth as a global city. The interaction between governmental strategies, private sector dynamics, and community advocacy not only determines the physical development of the city but also the socio-economic well-being of its residents. This comprehensive view is critical for devising more effective urban strategies that are equitable, sustainable, and responsive to the needs of a diverse metropolitan population.

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<sup>121</sup> Ricote.

## The distinctive case of state-led urban development in Bangkok

Bangkok's journey towards becoming a global city notably contrasts with the privatized development models prevalent in many other Asian cities, such as Metro Manila. In Bangkok, the development has been predominantly driven by state-led initiatives, where the government, in collaboration with major business entities, plays a central role in urban planning and execution. This centralized approach to urban development stems from a blend of historical governance practices and a strategic vision aimed at transforming Bangkok into a leading global city through comprehensive public sector involvement.

Historically, Bangkok has not relied heavily on private developers to shape its urban landscape. Instead, the Thai government has undertaken ambitious projects intended to enhance the city's infrastructure and global standing. One such example is the development of the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system, which was part of a broader governmental effort to improve public transportation, reduce traffic congestion, and promote sustainable urban mobility. A government official explained the philosophy behind such initiatives:

*'Actually, our whole approach has been about taking charge of urban development ourselves. With the MRT, it's really not only about cutting down on traffic, although many people think that. We're really trying to push the city towards more sustainable transport options that everyone can use comfortably. It's all part of a bigger plan. We want to make sure that the changes we make in the city really benefit everyone in the long run, not just make a quick money for a few people.'*<sup>122</sup>

Unlike in cities where private developers often initiate and direct urban development, Bangkok's approach demonstrates a significant governmental footprint in planning and implementing key infrastructural projects. Furthermore, Bangkok has seen several state-led projects aimed at beautifying the city and enhancing its functionality. The Chao Phraya Riverside Promenade project is an initiative driven by the city government to revitalize the riverfront, turning it into a vibrant public space that attracts tourists and serves the local community. This project reflects the government's role in directing urban aesthetics and public usability, contrasting with Metro Manila's more fragmented and privatized approach to urban aesthetics.

The role of powerful Thai business conglomerates, often in partnership with the government, also underscores a different dynamic in Bangkok's urban development. These conglomerates have been instrumental in developing some of Bangkok's most iconic commercial and residential properties. However, unlike in Metro Manila, where private entities dominate the urban development without significant public oversight, in Bangkok, these private enterprises frequently collaborate with the government, aligning their projects with broader urban planning objectives set by state policies.

This collaborative approach is evident in the development of the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), a major initiative by the Thai government to foster economic growth through enhanced infrastructure, innovation, and connectivity. The EEC illustrates how governmental planning and private sector execution can complement each other, with the government providing the framework and infrastructure,

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<sup>122</sup> Key Informant (Bangkok Metropolitan Administration), An unattributed key informant interview with an official of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. Anonymity was requested by the informant.

such as improved transportation links and utilities, and private businesses investing in industrial, commercial, and technological developments. An official of the BMA explained:

*'For the EEC, we really put in the effort to set up everything first. We make sure the infrastructure is good, so businesses have a strong base to grow. It's all about making a place where new ideas and business can really do well, and we're here to help them along.'*<sup>123</sup>

The government's proactive role in urban planning extends to addressing housing affordability and urban sprawl. Projects like the Baan Eua-Arthorn, a government-subsidized housing initiative, aim to provide affordable housing solutions across Thailand, including in areas surrounding Bangkok. This project highlights the government's commitment to social welfare, a sharp contrast to Metro Manila's scenario, where housing development is heavily influenced by private developers with little coordinated state intervention in providing affordable housing solutions.

Bangkok's state-led urban development model showcases a government-centric approach where strategic public sector interventions aim to guide the city's growth and global integration. This approach not only ensures that urban development aligns with national economic and social objectives but also positions Bangkok distinctly in the global urban landscape, differentiating it from cities like Metro Manila, where privatized planning prevails. The Bangkok model demonstrates the potential for government-led initiatives to achieve comprehensive urban development that balances economic growth with social equity, offering valuable lessons on the benefits of maintaining robust public sector involvement in urban planning.

#### *Government strategies in urban governance and metropolitan development*

Bangkok's urban governance structure emphasizes a strong central government influence, a stark contrast to the decentralized model observed in other Asian cities. This centralized governance has enabled a cohesive approach to urban planning and development, which is evident in the strategic expansion of the city's infrastructure and public services. A pivotal example of this is the comprehensive flood management systems developed after the devastating floods of 2011. The Thai government launched a multi-billion-dollar program, involving extensive canal dredging and barrier constructions, aimed at enhancing the city's resilience against future floods. In a detailed discussion, a government official elaborated on these initiatives:

*'Actually, back in 2011, the floods really took us by surprise, and it was a wake-up call for all of us. We learned that to really handle these kinds of natural disasters, we needed to have a strong, centralized system in place. So, we started this massive program to fix what was damaged and to make sure we're not caught [off-guard] again. We invested billions in [dredging] our canals, building strong flood barriers, and doing some more sustainable projects for drainages. It's a big big project, and it was coordinated entirely by national agencies to make sure everything is good quality and interconnected.'*<sup>124</sup>

Such large-scale governmental initiatives underscore the proactive role of state agencies in managing urban development challenges directly, rather than relying predominantly on private sector solutions.

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<sup>123</sup> Key Informant (Bangkok Metropolitan Administration).

<sup>124</sup> Key Informant (Bangkok Metropolitan Administration).

Additionally, the centralization in Bangkok has facilitated the rapid implementation of transportation projects that are critical to its urban expansion and economic growth. The expansion of the Skytrain (BTS) and the extension of the MRT Blue Line are part of a broader government plan to improve connectivity within and beyond the city's core. These projects were executed with significant state funding and oversight, illustrating the government's commitment to integrating urban mobility solutions with broader development plans. This approach ensures that such infrastructural developments are not only aligned with the city's overall urban plan but also cater to the growing needs of Bangkok's population.

### *Public-private partnerships in Bangkok*

In Bangkok, public-private partnerships (PPPs) play a crucial role in the execution of urban development projects, blending government oversight with private expertise and efficiency. This model is exemplified in the management of Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport, where the government partnered with private firms to handle operations and expansions. Such collaborations are strategic, enabling the infusion of private sector dynamism and capital into critical public sector projects without relinquishing governmental control and planning.

Moreover, the Thai government's partnership with private developers in the creation of the Thonglor district, now a bustling hub for nightlife and luxury living, demonstrates how targeted government policies can spur private investment in ways that align with urban development goals. These partnerships not only foster economic growth but also help in the urban beautification and functionality, contributing to Bangkok's goal of becoming a global city. However, this approach also necessitates robust frameworks to ensure that the public interest is safeguarded, a challenge that Bangkok continues to navigate.

### *Non-state actors in Bangkok's urban planning*

Non-state actors, including NGOs, community groups, and international organizations, also contribute significantly to Bangkok's urban landscape, often filling gaps left by governmental programs. Organizations such as the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) work closely with local communities to address issues like waste management and community health, leveraging local knowledge and resources. For instance, the collaboration between the BMA and local NGOs in the Klong Toey district has been pivotal in improving living conditions through community-led housing projects and environmental initiatives.

Additionally, international bodies such as the United Nations have partnered with Bangkok to implement sustainability projects that address urban challenges like air quality and traffic congestion. These collaborations often introduce innovative practices and technologies, illustrating the benefits of incorporating diverse perspectives in urban governance.

Bangkok's approach to urban development, characterized by a strong central government role, strategic public-private partnerships, and active engagement with non-state actors, presents a unique model that other cities could learn from. While this centralized approach has its advantages, such as cohesive planning and rapid implementation of large-scale projects, it also presents challenges, including the need for constant alignment of private sector incentives with public goals and ensuring that non-state actors are effectively integrated into the urban development agenda. As Bangkok continues to evolve, the balance between state-led strategies and collaborative governance will be crucial in shaping its future as a resilient and inclusive global city.

The key differences between non-state actors in Metro Manila and Bangkok are primarily rooted in their historical, socio-political, and economic contexts. In Metro Manila, non-state actors, particularly private developers and land-owning elites, play a significant role in urban development through PPPs. The fragmented and decentralized governance structure in Manila allows these actors considerable influence, often leading to development projects that cater to elite interests and contribute to uneven urban growth. Civil society organizations in Manila, while active, frequently face challenges in coordinating their efforts across the various local government units, which can limit their impact on broader urban policy and planning.

In contrast, Bangkok's centralized governance structure creates a different dynamic for non-state actors. Here, the central government maintains more control over urban development projects, although influential business conglomerates and private developers still play key roles, particularly in large-scale infrastructure and commercial projects. Non-state actors in Bangkok often collaborate closely with government agencies, benefiting from a more streamlined policy environment that facilitates the execution of significant urban projects. Additionally, civil society in Bangkok is relatively more unified and organized, which allows for more effective advocacy and influence on urban policy, particularly in areas such as environmental sustainability and social equity.

## **CHAPTER IV: Diversity in Global Integration**

This chapter scrutinizes the ways in which global integration diversifies economic strategies and outcomes for cities developing on the world stage. Here, 'diversity in global integration' is understood as the variety of paths cities take to embed themselves within the global economy, encompassing the range of policies, interactions with multinational corporations, and engagements in international trade. In advancing this narrative, this thesis posits that the institutional set-up of the two cities under study heavily shape, if not determine, the scope, depth, and kind of their integration into the global economy. This exploration confronts the often uniform narrative presented in global city research, which traditionally emphasizes a linear progression towards economic globalization.

During the critical decades stretching from the early 1990s to 2020, both Metro Manila and Bangkok exemplified unique trajectories in their pursuit of global city status. Metro Manila's economic strategy, shaped by its colonial and post-colonial legacy, has vigorously pursued integration into global markets through the development of business process outsourcing sectors and special economic zones. Meanwhile, Bangkok has utilized its political stability and central geographic location in Southeast Asia to attract diverse foreign investments and cultivate a robust manufacturing base.

Further, this chapter delves into the specific policies that facilitated such distinct paths—ranging from investment incentives to regulatory reforms aimed at improving the business environment. By evaluating these policies' real impacts on the ground, including their influence on local labor markets and the spatial configuration of urban development, the narrative brings to light the complex reality of globalization's effects on urban centers. This analysis not only illustrates the variability of outcomes but also underscores how global economic forces are filtered through local socio-political fabrics, leading to markedly different results in city landscapes.

### **Metro Manila's decentralized governance structure**

The Philippine government operates under a democratic and republican state structure, heavily influenced by the American system of governance. At the national level, the Philippines is governed by a central government characterized by three branches: the Executive, led by the President; the Legislative, consisting of the Senate and the House of Representatives; and the Judicial, comprising various levels of courts. This tripartite system establishes the framework for a series of devolved powers to lower levels of government, facilitating a decentralized governance structure that extends down to the local levels.

Metro Manila, or the National Capital Region (NCR), exemplifies this decentralization uniquely, as it consists of seventeen local government units (LGUs), including sixteen cities and one municipality. Unlike other regions in the Philippines, Metro Manila does not have a regional government, setting it apart as a direct administrative region under the national government. This structure makes NCR an agglomeration of local city governments, each with its administrative autonomy yet collectively contributing to the capital region's governance.

These LGUs in Metro Manila exercise significant local autonomy, granted by the national constitution and detailed in the Local Government Code of 1991. Each city and municipality within Metro Manila is governed by a local city council, which is headed by a mayor. These councils are responsible for local legislation, while the mayors execute policies, oversee local government operations, and ensure service

delivery within their jurisdictions. This decentralized setup allows for tailored approaches to governance and development that align with the specific needs and conditions of each local area. In explaining how a decentralized governance structure affects metropolitan governance in Metro Manila, Ricote argues:

*'Number one, by law, the Philippines has embraced a decentralized, autonomous, devolved setup. It's a local government code, I think the first one in the region, from the early 1990s. So that our structure sector-wide, we are mindful of the fact that they can actually be developed or led by the local government. Traditionally, work led by the national government—like agriculture, health, etc.—is already devolved to local governments. And that is something local government units in the Philippines, province and municipality, really hold on to. Because that was also a mechanism for them to get a bigger share, a bigger share fiscally, share in taxes and all. However, the national government and the local governments themselves, even the local government also made provision for shared concerns that cut across physical jurisdiction, i.e., solid waste management, traffic, water, etc. So they can be done through a collaborative way of delivering things across LGUs. [So that] economies of scale, [more] efficient, etc. I think this is the context of not just the MMDA, but the metropolitanization framework, which is also provided by the local government code.'*<sup>125</sup>

An example of how the aforementioned local governance dynamics can be seen in Quezon City, one of the largest cities in Metro Manila. Quezon City's government has leveraged its autonomy to implement urban development projects and infrastructural improvements, which are specifically designed to enhance local economic growth and improve living conditions. This includes initiatives in transport infrastructure, healthcare, and education, which cater to the needs of its diverse population.

In contrast, the city of Taguig, home to the burgeoning financial district of Bonifacio Global City, illustrates how local governance can shape economic development. The local government's policies have been pivotal in transforming Taguig into a prime destination for international business and residential communities, fostering an environment that supports both local and international investments. These examples underline the profound impact of decentralized governance in Metro Manila, and they demonstrate how local leadership and policies can directly influence the socio-economic conditions of urban areas within the region.

#### *Institutional Frameworks within Metro Manila: The Roles of DILG, MMDA, and the Metro Manila Council*

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) plays a crucial role in overseeing local governments across the Philippines, including Metro Manila. Established under the Local Government Code of 1991, the DILG is tasked with promoting peace and order, ensuring public safety, and strengthening the capabilities of LGUs through policy guidance and performance monitoring. The DILG's authority encompasses administrative oversight, which involves ensuring that local executives perform their duties and adhere to national policies. This includes the implementation of laws, programs, and projects that affect local governance. The DILG also plays a significant role in disaster preparedness and response, a critical function given the Philippines' susceptibility to natural disasters.

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<sup>125</sup> Ricote, Key informant interview with Mr. Eleazar Ricote.

The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) is another pivotal institution specifically focused on the National Capital Region. Established by Republic Act No. 7924 in 1995, the MMDA is mandated to deliver metro-wide services that transcend the boundaries of individual LGUs, addressing common issues such as traffic management, waste disposal, and flood control. The MMDA's responsibilities include the planning and implementation of projects that aim to improve the overall urban environment, enhancing both mobility and livability in the metro. Unlike the DILG, which has a broader national scope, the MMDA focuses solely on Metro Manila, coordinating closely with local governments to address region-specific challenges.

The dynamics between these institutions and the local government units of Metro Manila are intricate and require effective coordination to ensure smooth governance and development. The MMDA, for instance, must work closely with the individual city governments to implement traffic and waste management systems that are consistent across the region. This coordination is facilitated by the Metro Manila Council, which consists of the mayors of the 17 LGUs. The council serves as the governing board and policymaking body of the MMDA, ensuring that local perspectives and needs are integrated into metro-wide initiatives.

The Metro Manila Council plays a critical role in bridging the gap between local autonomy and regional coherence. It allows for a collaborative approach to solving metropolitan issues that no single LGU can effectively address alone. This council exemplifies the decentralized governance structure of the Philippines, where local autonomy is balanced with the need for coordinated regional development. Through regular meetings and consultations, the council ensures that the initiatives of the MMDA align with the priorities and capacities of the local governments, fostering a synergistic relationship that enhances the effectiveness of governance in Metro Manila.

In practice, the coordination between the DILG, MMDA, and the local government units involves a delicate balance of national oversight and local autonomy. The DILG ensures that local governments adhere to national laws and policies while respecting their local autonomy. Meanwhile, the MMDA implements regional projects that require collaboration across multiple jurisdictions, often mediated by the Metro Manila Council. This structure allows for both localized and centralized responses to urban challenges, reflecting a governance model that leverages the strengths of various governmental layers to enhance the functionality and livability of Metro Manila. Through this coordinated approach, Metro Manila strives to integrate into the global economy while addressing the diverse needs and challenges of its constituent cities and municipalities.

#### *A unique institutional set-up, a unique global city experience*

Metro Manila's integration into the global economy is significantly influenced by its decentralized governance and diverse economic activities, presenting a unique challenge to the traditional global city model. This model tends to overlook the multifaceted ways cities like Manila engage globally, particularly pronounced in developing contexts like the Philippines. Unlike global command centers such as New York or London, where multinational corporate headquarters and producer services dominate, Metro Manila showcases a different trajectory. Here, burgeoning sectors like Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) and tourism are pivotal. The rise of BPOs has driven urban development in areas like Eastwood City and Bonifacio Global City, creating a demand for new kinds of real estate and infrastructure to accommodate a growing class of highly educated workers. This evolution prompts a



critical question: How do these emerging sectors reshape the traditional metrics by which a global city's status is judged?

Furthermore, labor export is a critical economic activity for the Philippines, with remittances from overseas Filipino workers significantly surpassing foreign direct investments. This phenomenon supports sectors indirectly tied to the global economy, such as real estate and construction, which have seen a boom even during periods of stagnant local economic growth. For example, Metro Manila has experienced a surge in residential and commercial developments partly funded by these remittances. Tourism, too, plays a transformative role in urban redevelopment across Metro Manila. Efforts to promote urban tourism have led to the construction of tourism enclaves and the proliferation of small enterprises like guest houses, eateries, and craft shops, particularly in culturally rich areas like Intramuros and Rizal Park. These initiatives often aim to create a positive city image and foster tourist consumption, which can exacerbate socio-economic segregation. Can the benefits of boosted tourism trickle down to improve the broader economic base of Metro Manila, or do they merely reinforce existing disparities?

Local government units in Metro Manila have leveraged their autonomy to form various partnerships with foreign investors and private developers, undertaking ambitious urban development projects like the subway project in Makati City. This significant infrastructure development, partly funded by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), exemplifies how local initiatives can align with national efforts to enhance infrastructure, although it also introduces challenges such as coordinating with multiple government bodies and managing public scrutiny.

An interview with a key government official underscores the depth of local autonomy:

*'Today, there is a more pronounced need for local governments to be independent and have their own resources, to capitalize on their own. LGUs are given local resources and political leadership, starting to evolve on their own without the national government being heavily present. Valenzuela, for example, has become a major city over the period from 1990 to 2020 because of the Gatchalians. And new cities in the provinces, second tier, have evolved over the last 10 years because of devolution, empowerment, or resources given to them.'*<sup>126</sup>

This first-hand account highlights the dynamic changes occurring across Metro Manila as LGUs harness these new powers and resources to direct their development trajectories. Similarly, the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) collaborates with foreign entities through public-private partnerships to address broader infrastructure needs. These collaborative efforts, alongside sister city agreements for knowledge and technical exchange—such as Makati's international city ties—underscore a multifaceted approach to global integration, influencing urban policy and governance.

Understanding the diverse ways in which Metro Manila integrates into the global economy requires a broad view of the various economic activities shaping its urban landscape. This diversity not only challenges traditional global city dynamics but also encourages a deeper exploration of how different forms of economic integration affect urban equity and stability. As Metro Manila continues to adapt to these global influences, the city's strategy to harness these diverse integrations will be crucial in defining its future as a truly global city. This evolving landscape suggests that Metro Manila's approach to global

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<sup>126</sup> Ricote.

integration is not merely about participating in the global economy but how it adapts its unique characteristics to forge a path that reflects both its opportunities and its challenges.

### *Diverse mechanisms of Metro Manila's global integration*

Metro Manila's approach to global economic integration is significantly influenced by policies aimed at enhancing the ease of doing business, crucial in attracting international capital. These policies streamline bureaucratic processes and provide incentives for foreign investors, making Metro Manila an attractive destination for multinational corporations looking to establish regional headquarters or service hubs. Prime examples of this are Bonifacio Global City (BGC) and Makati, which have become synonymous with corporate prestige and economic activity. BGC, developed as a master-planned financial and lifestyle district, boasts world-class infrastructure that supports various multinational companies, drawing significant foreign direct investment into the region. These policies not only attract but also retain international capital, bolstering Metro Manila's dynamic urban markets.

As highlighted in an interview with a key official of the Philippine government, the legal framework in the Philippines encourages, and indeed requires, the national government to devolve to local governments various crucial functions, such as health and education. This legal mandate has led to full devolution directives like Executive Order 138, enhancing local government units' fiscal autonomy and responsibility. Ricote noted:

*'Structurally and legally, our legal framework in the Philippines encourages and requires the national government to devolve local governments all these devolved functions, such as health and education. Interestingly, these functions are also those that benefit from shared delivery due to scale and efficiency. Has this been strengthened over the last thirty years? Yes, particularly when the pandemic shifted focus to individual jurisdictions. In 2022, the president released Executive Order 138, also known as the full devolution directive. This order fully devolves to local governments, increasing their share following the Mandanas ruling and assigning more responsibility. Consequently, an instruction was issued for all national government agencies to prepare a devolution transition plan, anticipating a larger budget share for the LGUs in 2024 and 2025. This marks a significant step in the transition of devolving more functions to the LGUs.'*<sup>127</sup>

These policies not only attract but also retain international capital, bolstering Metro Manila's dynamic urban markets. Standardization of business practices and regulatory frameworks plays a pivotal role in aligning Metro Manila with global markets, enhancing its competitiveness as a global city. The adoption of international standards in business operations, environmental compliance, and financial reporting ensures that businesses operating in Metro Manila can seamlessly integrate with their global counterparts. This alignment is evident in the operations of the Philippine Stock Exchange and the convergence towards International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), facilitating transparent and efficient market transactions that are attractive to global investors. This standardization positions Metro Manila on par with established global cities in developed countries.

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<sup>127</sup> Ricote.

The presence of multinational corporations and foreign investments in Metro Manila has transformed its urban landscape and economic profile. Companies such as Accenture, Google, and HSBC have established significant operations in the region, capitalizing on the skilled workforce and strategic geographic location. These corporations bring substantial economic activity and drive the development of local industries while creating high-value employment opportunities. The economic influence of these entities is profound, often dictating trends in office space demand, residential developments, and even public infrastructure projects, intertwining multinational influences with local economic agendas and development plans.

Metro Manila's key business districts, such as Makati CBD, Ortigas Center, and BGC, are pivotal in the city's role in global value chains, especially in sectors like information technology and business process outsourcing (BPO). These areas showcase a concentration of business activities and symbolize global economic integration. The BPO industry has reshaped the urban economy, contributing significantly to GDP growth and employing thousands of locals in high-skilled jobs. These districts not only attract foreign direct investment but also facilitate the integration of local businesses into the global market. However, the concentration of economic power in specific districts raises questions about promoting balanced urban development and whether it exacerbates regional disparities.

Labor outsourcing trends in Metro Manila highlight its strategic position in global value chains. The city's well-educated, English-speaking workforce makes it an ideal location for outsourcing operations, which include customer service, IT support, and back-office processing. This sector's growth is supported by targeted educational programs and government policies that encourage skill development aligned with global market needs. Universities and training centers in Metro Manila collaborate with international partners to keep curricula relevant and globally competitive. These collaborative efforts ensure a constant supply of qualified professionals who meet the demands of global businesses, impacting the socio-economic landscape of Metro Manila in profound ways. Through these various channels, Metro Manila engages with the global economy, influenced by a mix of policy decisions, international standards, and local initiatives.

### **Bangkok's centralized urban administration**

Thailand operates under a constitutional monarchy where the national government is centralized, significantly influencing how governance and administration are conducted across various regions, including Bangkok. Unlike the decentralized system in the Philippines, Thailand's governance structure is centralized, with the national government holding substantial influence over local administrative bodies. At the national level, governance is divided among the executive, led by the Prime Minister, the legislative, composed of a bicameral parliament, and the judiciary, which oversees legal matters across the country.<sup>128</sup>

Bangkok, officially known as the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), is unique in its administrative setup within Thailand. It is the only area recognized as a special administrative area, which grants it a status similar to that of a province. This designation allows Bangkok to be governed more like a city-state, with greater autonomy compared to other cities in Thailand. The BMA is headed by a Governor, elected by the residents of Bangkok, which distinguishes it from other Thai provinces managed

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<sup>128</sup> Bidhya Bowornwathana, "Politics of Governance Reform in Thailand," in *Handbook of Comparative and Development Public Administration*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2001).

by governors appointed by the central government. This structure gives Bangkok significant administrative leverage to implement policies and manage its affairs, albeit within the frameworks established by the central government.<sup>129</sup>

The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration exercises substantial control over urban planning, transportation, environment, and public services within the city. These responsibilities are managed through various departments and offices that report directly to the Governor of Bangkok. This centralized control allows for coordinated efforts in addressing the city's challenges such as traffic congestion, flood control, and urban development. An official from the BMA described this in more detail: *'With this structure, we can really align our efforts. For example, if we decide in the morning to adjust a traffic flow or plan a new flood barrier, we can start those right away. It's all about quick response times, which in a city that grows as quickly as Bangkok, is very important. This quick action [capability] is what lets us keep up with both the daily needs of the city and its fast development.'*<sup>130</sup> The BMA's centralized nature facilitates swift decision-making processes that can respond promptly to the city's dynamic needs, a critical factor in managing one of Asia's largest and fastest-growing cities.

Bangkok's governance model is also vividly reflected in the rapid development of its transit systems like the BTS Skytrain and the MRT Subway. These projects showcase its ability to manage and execute large-scale infrastructure undertakings aimed at improving urban mobility and cutting down on traffic, which has been a perennial issue for the city. Beyond transportation, the city also focuses on projects that enhance the city's appeal to tourists, such as the Chao Phraya River Promenade. The same official elaborated on this point:

*'Look, when we talk about projects like the BTS or the River Promenade, they're not just about building infrastructure. They really transform how the city looks and functions. With the BTS, our goal was to provide a reliable and fast alternative to road travel. For the promenade, it's about turning the riverfront into a very nice place that attracts tourists and locals. Each project has its own story, but I can tell you they all aim to improve life in Bangkok. Our proactive approach to these projects shows our commitment to really improving life in urban areas, beyond the usual expectations.'*<sup>131</sup>

However, while Bangkok enjoys a degree of autonomy similar to a city-state, it must still align with national policies and regulations, which can sometimes lead to tensions or conflicts of interest between the city's administrators and the central government. Despite these challenges, Bangkok continues to thrive as a centralized hub of economic, cultural, and political activities in Thailand, demonstrating a contrasting yet effective model of urban governance compared to more decentralized systems. This centralized approach allows Bangkok to maintain a cohesive strategy for urban development and international business integration, reinforcing its status as a vital player in the global economy.

#### *Institutional Frameworks within Bangkok: The Roles of BMA and the Bangkok Metropolitan Council*

The coordination of BMA's efforts is supported by the Bangkok Metropolitan Council, an elected body that functions similarly to a city council. This council comprises members elected from various districts

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<sup>129</sup> Webster and Maneepong, "Bangkok."

<sup>130</sup> Key Informant (Bangkok Metropolitan Administration), An unattributed key informant interview with an official of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. Anonymity was requested by the informant.

<sup>131</sup> Key Informant (Bangkok Metropolitan Administration).

of Bangkok, providing a platform for addressing the citywide issues that affect all residents. The council plays a pivotal role in legislating and overseeing the execution of urban projects, aligning them with the broader objectives set by the BMA. This body is essential for ensuring that the diverse needs of Bangkok's rapidly growing population are met, particularly in areas like housing, transportation, and public health.

In practice, the dynamic between the BMA and the Bangkok Metropolitan Council involves meticulous planning and coordination to address the sprawling city's complex challenges. The BMA, with its centralized control, directs development projects and policy implementations that cater to both local and international standards, facilitating Bangkok's role in global commerce and culture. Meanwhile, the Bangkok Metropolitan Council ensures these implementations reflect the democratic will and needs of the populace, enabling a balanced approach to urban management. An official from the BMA shared insights on this process:

*'Our work with the Metropolitan Council is very important. We focus on executing development plans that meet high standards, while the Council brings in the voice of the people, to make sure everything we do aligns with their needs. This partnership helps us manage the city effectively, so we can be sure all projects, like expanding public transport or improving flood defenses, um, go smoothly and quickly to benefit everyone in Bangkok.'*<sup>132</sup>

The BMA governance model contrasts with neighboring Southeast Asian capitals by emphasizing more centralized control, which can expedite decision-making and project implementation in a city that is both a national capital and a major global city. The BMA's centralized system allows for swift responses to urban challenges, such as the rapid expansion of public transportation and flood mitigation projects that require coordinated action across multiple sectors and jurisdictions. This governance model contrasts with neighboring Southeast Asian capitals by emphasizing more centralized control, which can expedite decision-making and project implementation in a city that is both a national capital and a major global city. The BMA's centralized system allows for swift responses to urban challenges, such as the rapid expansion of public transportation and flood mitigation projects that require coordinated action across multiple sectors and jurisdictions.

Through this centralized approach, Bangkok not only manages its internal affairs effectively but also positions itself strategically on the global stage, leveraging its governance model to attract investment and foster economic growth. This system ensures that Bangkok continues to develop as a cohesive urban entity, capable of competing with other global cities while maintaining its unique cultural and political identity.

#### *Bangkok's link to the global economy*

Bangkok's approach to global integration is distinctly shaped by its centralized governance structure, aligning its urban development and economic activities closely with national strategies that emphasize economic development and international competitiveness. The city's centralization facilitates the swift implementation of policies and projects intended to position it prominently on the global stage. This includes significant initiatives aimed at enhancing Bangkok's infrastructure and cultural appeal to attract international tourists and investors.

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<sup>132</sup> Key Informant (Bangkok Metropolitan Administration).

One of the key projects that underscore Bangkok's efforts to bolster its global appeal is the extensive redevelopment of the Chao Phraya riverfront. This project aims to transform the riverfront into a vibrant commercial and tourist hub, featuring luxury hotels, shopping centers, and cultural attractions that leverage Bangkok's rich heritage. Additionally, the expansion of luxury retail and hospitality offerings in districts like Ratchaprasong is tailored to cater to affluent international visitors, showcasing Bangkok's capacity to host global events and conferences. A Bangkok official shared: *'We see this as a way to really put Bangkok on the map for luxury tourism and global conferences. But it's not just about the international visitors; we're mindful of the local community too. We're working to ensure that these developments bring benefits to everyone in Bangkok, not just the wealthy or tourists. It's about creating a balanced approach where growth boosts our economy but also improves the quality of life for all our residents.'*<sup>133</sup> These developments reflect a strategic leveraging of tourism and luxury sectors to boost economic growth, though they also underscore the need for balanced urban planning that benefits the broader population.

Infrastructure developments, particularly in public transportation, are pivotal in Bangkok's transformation. The expansion of the BTS Skytrain and the MRT Subway systems are part of a broader strategy to improve urban mobility, making the city more accessible for both residents and international visitors. These enhancements not only support the daily commute but also integrate with business districts like Sukhumvit and Sathorn, which have become centers for multinational corporations. The presence of these corporations has transformed these districts into bustling hubs of activity, drawing a skilled workforce and fostering a micro-economy centered around global business services. A former high official of the Thai Ministries of Justice and Foreign Affairs notes: *'These areas are booming with activity now, and you see that they really attract a skilled workforce and creating a sort of mini-economy focused on global business services. The government is making sure that our public transport supports daily commutes, yes, but it also supports the economic dynamism that comes from being an international city.'*<sup>134</sup>

Labor dynamics in Bangkok also highlight its strategic approach to economic diversity. The city has cultivated a multifaceted labor market that supports both local and multinational enterprises, drawing skilled professionals from across the globe. This diverse workforce underpins various sectors, from technology and finance to creative industries, contributing to the city's robust economic ecosystem. The integration of a diverse workforce is facilitated by policies that encourage the establishment of international schools and cultural institutions, which help to assimilate expatriates and their families into the community.

Moreover, public-private partnerships (PPPs) are instrumental in propelling Bangkok's large-scale urban projects. The Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), a major initiative involving significant investment from both Thai and international investors, aims to develop a high-tech industrial hub in Eastern Thailand, enhancing the country's competitiveness in advanced industries such as robotics and aerospace. Beyond infrastructure, these projects include developing new cities and business parks that are integrated with residential communities, schools, and healthcare facilities, ensuring a comprehensive development approach that caters to both economic and social needs.

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<sup>133</sup> Key Informant (Bangkok Metropolitan Administration).

<sup>134</sup> Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee, Interview with Mr. Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee, April 26, 2024.

Bangkok's centralized governance model and strategic global integration efforts provide a powerful framework for urban development. While this approach offers the advantages of coordinated policy implementation and the ability to undertake ambitious projects, it also demands careful consideration to ensure that growth is inclusive and benefits the entire community. As Bangkok continues to evolve, the city's strategy in managing its role as a global hub will be crucial in determining its success in fostering a sustainable and vibrant urban environment that meets the needs of its diverse population.

### *Diverse mechanisms of global integration in Bangkok*

Bangkok's strategic approach to global economic integration is significantly shaped by policies designed to enhance the ease of doing business, which are crucial for attracting international capital. These policies streamline bureaucratic processes and offer incentives for foreign investors, positioning Bangkok as a compelling destination for multinational corporations seeking to establish regional headquarters or service hubs. Key examples include the development of districts such as Sukhumvit and Silom, which have become synonymous with corporate prestige and robust economic activity. The growth of these areas into major business hubs is supported by state-of-the-art infrastructure that accommodates a range of multinational companies, thereby attracting substantial foreign direct investment.

Aligning Bangkok with global markets through standardized business practices and regulatory frameworks is crucial for its competitive stance as a global city. Implementing international norms in business operations, environmental practices, and financial transparency allows Bangkok-based businesses to engage more effectively in the global marketplace. Notable developments like the Stock Exchange of Thailand embracing international financial standards exemplify this shift, making the city more attractive to international investors and elevating its global stature.

Bangkok's urban and economic landscape has been significantly reshaped by the influx of multinational corporations and foreign investments. Major global players like IBM, Google, and Sony have established significant operations in Bangkok, drawn by its strategic position and skilled labor pool. These companies spur economic growth, propel local industry advancements, and generate high-value employment opportunities. Their influence extends to shaping trends in office space, residential development, and public infrastructure, ensuring these developments align with Bangkok's broader economic strategy and growth plans.

Bangkok's major business districts, notably Sathorn and Sukhumvit, play a critical role in the city's participation in global value chains, particularly in sectors such as finance, technology, and hospitality. These districts are vibrant centers of activity, symbolizing Bangkok's integration into the global economy. The growth of the hospitality and retail sectors contributes significantly to GDP growth and employs a large segment of the local population in various service-oriented roles. These areas not only draw foreign direct investment but also support the integration of local businesses into the global marketplace, fostering economic diversity and resilience.

Labor trends in Bangkok also underscore its strategic role in global value chains. The city's educated, multilingual workforce makes it an ideal hub for multinational business operations, including regional headquarters and shared service centers. This sector's expansion is supported by comprehensive educational programs and government initiatives that foster skill development in alignment with global market demands. Collaboration between universities and international corporate partners ensures that the

local workforce is well-prepared to meet the evolving needs of global businesses, profoundly impacting Bangkok's socio-economic development.

Bangkok's engagement with the global economy through these diverse mechanisms highlights a sophisticated blend of policy, international standards, and strategic local initiatives. As Bangkok continues to develop, the synergy between these elements will be crucial in shaping a sustainable urban development strategy that benefits both local and global stakeholders, ensuring the city's ongoing transformation into a fully integrated player on the global stage.



## **CHAPTER V: Integrative Analysis of Global City Dynamics in Metro Manila and Bangkok**

This chapter synthesizes the findings of the study, focusing on how historical factors and hybridity, agent dynamics, and diversity in global integration collectively influence the development of Metro Manila and Bangkok as global cities. The objective is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interconnected processes that shape urban development in the two Southeast Asian contexts.

Building on the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter I, this section examines the specific ways in which historical legacies, the roles of various agents, and different integration mechanisms impact the global city formation. By weaving these dimensions, the study offers a detailed analysis that addresses the limitations of Western-centric models and highlights the unique characteristics of non-Western global cities. The chapter is structured to first discuss each variable individually, then explore their interrelations, and finally consider the broader theoretical and practical implications of the integrated findings.

### **Historical factors and hybridity**

The historical development of Metro Manila and Bangkok has been shaped by distinct colonial and sovereign histories. Metro Manila, with its colonial past under Spanish and American rule, has experienced fragmented urban governance and development. This colonial legacy has left an indelible mark on its urban structure and policy approaches. In contrast, Bangkok's history as a never-colonized city has allowed it to retain greater autonomy in its urban planning and governance. This paved a unique path to modernization influenced by its uninterrupted sovereignty.

The colonial history of Metro Manila has resulted in a decentralized governance structure, with 17 local government units operating independently. This fragmentation has led to inconsistencies in urban policies and development strategies, often driven by the interests of local elites. Conversely, Bangkok's centralized administration has facilitated more cohesive urban planning and policy implementation, which ultimately aligns with national development goals. The comparative analysis reveals that historical legacies play a critical role in shaping the governance frameworks and urban development patterns of these cities.

Hybridity, or the blending of local and global influences, is evident in the urban development of both cities. In Metro Manila, hybridity manifests through the integration of Western urban models with local practices, often resulting in a patchwork of development projects that reflect both global aspirations and local constraints. Bangkok, while also incorporating global influences, has maintained a stronger emphasis on preserving its cultural heritage and national identity within its urban development agenda. This hybridity influences the cities' approaches to global city formation, which demonstrates that the incorporation of diverse influences can lead to varied outcomes in urban development.

### **Agent dynamics**

In both Metro Manila and Bangkok, various agents play pivotal roles in urban development. Key agents include government entities, private sector actors, and civil society groups. In Metro Manila, local government units, private developers, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are prominent,

whereas Bangkok's urban landscape is shaped significantly by national government agencies, influential business conglomerates, and a relatively active civil society.

In Metro Manila, the decentralized governance model gives local government units considerable autonomy, leading to varied approaches in urban planning. The private sector, particularly land-owning elites, heavily influences urban development through public-private partnerships (PPPs). Civil society, while active, often struggles to coordinate effectively across the fragmented governance landscape. In Bangkok, the central government plays a dominant role in urban planning, with significant involvement from the private sector in large-scale infrastructure projects. Civil society in Bangkok has a more unified voice, often influencing policy decisions through organized advocacy.

The dynamics between government, private sector, and civil society in both cities lead to distinct urban governance outcomes. In Metro Manila, the fragmented governance structure results in uneven development and policy implementation, often skewed towards the interests of private developers. In contrast, Bangkok's centralized governance facilitates more coordinated and comprehensive urban planning, though it may also limit the influence of local communities. This comparative assessment highlights the importance of governance structures in mediating the interactions between different agents and shaping urban development policies.

### **Diversity in global integration**

Metro Manila and Bangkok have adopted different economic strategies to integrate into the global economy. Metro Manila has focused on business process outsourcing (BPO) and special economic zones (SEZs) as key strategies for attracting foreign investment and integrating into global value chains. Bangkok, on the other hand, has emphasized foreign direct investment (FDI) in manufacturing and infrastructure development, positioning itself as a regional hub for trade and logistics.

Metro Manila's integration into the global economy is characterized by its significant role in the BPO industry, which has generated employment and economic growth but also led to increased socio-economic disparities. Bangkok's approach to global integration through FDI in manufacturing and infrastructure has spurred economic development and modernization, but it has also faced challenges related to urban congestion and environmental sustainability. The comparison demonstrates that while both cities have successfully integrated into the global economy, the pathways and outcomes of this integration are markedly different.

The diverse integration mechanisms in Metro Manila and Bangkok have produced varied urban development and socio-economic outcomes. In Metro Manila, the focus on BPOs and SEZs has resulted in the development of modern business districts and infrastructure, but it has also exacerbated socio-economic inequalities and urban fragmentation. Bangkok's strategy of attracting FDI has led to significant infrastructure improvements and economic diversification, yet it has also contributed to urban sprawl and environmental challenges. This discussion underscores the complexity of global city formation, highlighting that diverse integration mechanisms can lead to different developmental trajectories and socio-economic conditions.

## **Interconnections and overlapping themes**

### *The Interaction of Historical Factors, Agent Dynamics, and Global Integration*

The interaction between historical factors, agent dynamics, and global integration in Metro Manila and Bangkok reveals a complex web of influences that shape their development as global cities. Historical legacies in both cities set the stage for contemporary governance structures and policy decisions. In Metro Manila, the fragmented governance system rooted in its colonial past interacts with diverse agent dynamics, where local government units, private developers, and civil society groups each pursue their agendas. This interaction influences how the city integrates into the global economy, often leading to uneven development and socio-economic disparities.

In Bangkok, the centralized governance structure, shaped by its sovereign history, allows for more coordinated policy implementation. The interaction between government agencies and the private sector in Bangkok facilitates large-scale infrastructure projects and strategic economic planning. This centralized approach impacts the city's global integration, enabling it to position itself as a regional hub for trade and investment. The interplay of these factors in both cities underscores the importance of historical context in shaping contemporary urban dynamics and global integration processes.

### *Overlapping themes and their impact on global city trajectory*

Several overlapping themes emerge from the analysis of historical factors, agent dynamics, and global integration. First, the theme of governance fragmentation versus centralization highlights how different governance models influence urban development. In Metro Manila, fragmented governance leads to diverse and sometimes conflicting development strategies, while Bangkok's centralized model enables cohesive planning and implementation.

Second, the role of private sector influence is evident in both cities, although it manifests differently. In Metro Manila, private developers play a dominant role in urban planning through public-private partnerships, often at the expense of comprehensive urban policies. In Bangkok, the private sector collaborates more closely with government agencies, contributing to large-scale infrastructure projects that align with national development goals.

Third, the impact of global economic integration is a common theme. Both cities leverage their unique historical and governance contexts to integrate into the global economy, but the outcomes vary. Metro Manila's focus on business process outsourcing has driven economic growth but also heightened inequalities, while Bangkok's emphasis on manufacturing and infrastructure development has spurred modernization but posed challenges related to urban sprawl and environmental sustainability.

### *Illustrating the interconnections*

Several case studies illustrate these interconnections. In Metro Manila, the development of Bonifacio Global City (BGC) exemplifies the interaction between historical legacies, agent dynamics, and global integration. BGC, a former military base, was transformed into a premier business district through public-private partnerships, reflecting the influence of private developers and the fragmented governance system. This development highlights the city's strategy to integrate into the global economy through business districts and special economic zones.

In Bangkok, the construction of the Suvarnabhumi Airport illustrates the centralized governance model and its impact on global integration. The airport project, driven by national government agencies and supported by private investment, positioned Bangkok as a major aviation hub in Southeast Asia. This project showcases the coordinated efforts between government and private sector and its role in enhancing the city's global connectivity and economic integration.

### **Implication for theory and practice**

The integrated analysis of Metro Manila and Bangkok challenges existing theories of global city formation that often rely on Western-centric models. These theories typically emphasize uniform pathways to global city status, driven by similar economic and governance processes. However, the case studies of Metro Manila and Bangkok demonstrate that global city formation is context-specific, influenced by unique historical legacies, governance structures, and local dynamics. The findings support the argument for a more nuanced approach to global city theory, one that recognizes the diversity of experiences and the importance of local context in shaping urban development.

#### *Practical implications for urban planning and development policy*

The insights gained from this analysis have several practical implications for urban planning and policy in developing global cities. First, there is a need for governance models that balance decentralization and centralization to enhance policy coordination while allowing for local flexibility. Metro Manila's fragmented governance could benefit from stronger regional coordination mechanisms to address inconsistencies and promote integrated urban development.

Second, the role of the private sector in urban planning should be carefully managed to ensure that development projects align with broader urban policies and social equity goals. In both cities, fostering public-private partnerships that prioritize inclusive and sustainable development can mitigate some of the negative impacts associated with privatized urban planning.

Third, policies aimed at global economic integration should consider the socio-economic and environmental implications of different development strategies. For Metro Manila, enhancing the regulatory framework for business process outsourcing can help address socio-economic disparities. For Bangkok, implementing sustainable urban planning practices can mitigate the environmental challenges associated with rapid infrastructure development.

### **Significance of the integrated findings**

The integrated analysis presented in this chapter challenges the predominant Western-centric models of global city formation, advocating for a more nuanced approach that accounts for local contexts, historical legacies, and diverse integration mechanisms. The case studies of Metro Manila and Bangkok illustrate that global city formation is not a uniform process but is deeply influenced by unique local dynamics and governance structures.

The significance of these findings lies in their contribution to a more comprehensive understanding of global city formation in non-Western contexts. By highlighting the linkages between historical factors, agent dynamics, and global integration, this study provides valuable insights for policymakers and urban

planners in developing cities. It emphasizes the need for adaptive governance models that balance decentralization and centralization, carefully managed public-private partnerships, and policies that consider the socio-economic and environmental impacts of urban development.

Ultimately, this thesis underscores the importance of context-specific urban policies and theoretical frameworks that recognize the diversity of global city experiences. By adopting a holistic and integrated approach to urban planning and policy, cities like Metro Manila and Bangkok can navigate the complexities of global city formation and promote more equitable and sustainable urban development in the Global South.

## CHAPTER VI: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The final chapter of this thesis aims to encapsulate the research undertaken, summarize key findings, and discuss their broader implications for the study of global city formation. This chapter revisits the main research question, which explored how the process of global city formation influenced urban development and metropolitan governance in Metro Manila and Bangkok from 1990 to 2020. By reflecting on the methodology, summarizing the key insights from the empirical chapters, and situating the results within the broader literature, this chapter provides a comprehensive conclusion to the study. Additionally, it addresses the limitations of the research, revisits the theoretical framework employed, and offers recommendations for policy and future research, highlighting the significance of this study in the context of urban development and global city studies.

### Summary of the study: The research problem and methodology

This study investigated the process of global city formation in Metro Manila and Bangkok from 1990 to 2020, focusing on how historical factors, agent dynamics, and diverse mechanisms of global integration influenced urban development and metropolitan governance. The central research question aimed to understand the extent to which global city formation shaped both cities over three decades. By examining these cities' unique historical trajectories and governance structures, the study sought to challenge the prevailing Western-centric models of global city development and offer a more nuanced understanding relevant to non-Western contexts.

The research employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis. Key informant interviews with government officials, policy analysis of legislative documents, and historical and geospatial map analysis were the primary data collection methods. This was complemented by secondary sources such as academic journal articles and book chapters. The study focused on three key variables: historical factors and hybridity, agents and their dynamics, and diversity in global integration.

### Brief overview of the empirical chapters

*Chapter II Historical Imperatives and Hybridity:* This chapter highlighted the distinct colonial and sovereign histories of Metro Manila and Bangkok. Metro Manila's colonial past resulted in a fragmented urban governance structure, while Bangkok's uninterrupted sovereignty facilitated centralized urban planning. These historical legacies significantly shaped their contemporary urban development and policy approaches.

*Chapter III The Role of Agents in Global City Formation:* The analysis of agent dynamics revealed the critical roles played by government entities, private sector actors, and civil society groups. In Metro Manila, decentralized governance led to varied and often conflicting development strategies, whereas Bangkok's centralized governance enabled cohesive urban planning. The interactions among these agents were crucial in shaping the cities' urban trajectories.

*Chapter IV Diversity in Global Integration:* The chapter examined the economic strategies and policies adopted by Metro Manila and Bangkok to integrate into the global economy. Metro Manila's focus on

business process outsourcing and special economic zones contrasted with Bangkok's emphasis on foreign direct investment and manufacturing. These strategies resulted in different urban development outcomes and socio-economic conditions.

## **Key findings**

The integrated analysis of historical factors, agent dynamics, and global integration mechanisms provided several key insights. Firstly, the historical legacies of Metro Manila and Bangkok played a foundational role in shaping their urban governance structures and development policies. Metro Manila's fragmented governance, influenced by its colonial past, contrasted with Bangkok's centralized approach, rooted in its history of sovereignty.

Secondly, the dynamics between various agents significantly influenced urban development. In Metro Manila, local government units operated independently, leading to a diversity of development strategies driven by local elites and private developers. This decentralization often resulted in uneven development and socio-economic disparities. In contrast, Bangkok's centralized governance model allowed for coordinated and large-scale urban projects, aligning with national development goals and facilitating more consistent policy implementation.

Thirdly, the economic strategies for global integration varied between the two cities, leading to different developmental trajectories. Metro Manila's reliance on business process outsourcing and special economic zones generated economic growth but also heightened socio-economic inequalities. Bangkok's strategy of attracting foreign direct investment and developing a robust manufacturing base spurred economic modernization but posed challenges related to urban congestion and environmental sustainability.

## **Linking the findings to the research questions**

The findings addressed the central research question by demonstrating how global city formation influenced urban development and metropolitan governance in Metro Manila and Bangkok. The study revealed that historical legacies, agent dynamics, and economic strategies are interdependent factors that collectively shape the cities' paths towards global city status.

1. **Historical Factors and Hybridity:** The analysis showed that historical imperatives and hybridity significantly shaped the governance structures and urban policies of both cities. This underscores the importance of considering local histories in global city studies.
2. **Agent Dynamics:** The study highlighted the critical roles of government entities, private developers, and civil society in shaping urban development. The interactions among these agents were found to be important in understanding the urban trajectories of Metro Manila and Bangkok.
3. **Diversity in Global Integration:** The research demonstrated that the economic strategies adopted by each city resulted in different integration mechanisms and outcomes, challenging the notion of a uniform model of global city formation.

## Revisiting the theoretical framework

The integrated meta-theoretical framework developed for this study proved to be an effective tool for analyzing the complex processes of global city formation in Metro Manila and Bangkok. By incorporating historical factors, agent dynamics, and diversity in global integration, the framework allowed for a comprehensive examination of the multifaceted influences shaping these cities. The flexibility of the framework to integrate various theoretical perspectives provided a robust structure for understanding the unique developmental trajectories of non-Western global cities.

### *How the framework helped in understanding global city formation*

The integrated meta-theoretical framework facilitated a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in the global city formation of Metro Manila and Bangkok by:

1. **Highlighting Historical Contexts:** By emphasizing the role of historical legacies, the framework underscored the importance of understanding past influences on contemporary urban governance and policy. It revealed how colonial histories and uninterrupted sovereignty shaped the divergent governance structures and development paths of the two cities.
2. **Elucidating Agent Dynamics:** The framework allowed for a detailed analysis of the roles and interactions of various agents, including government entities, private sector actors, and civil society groups. This focus on agent dynamics illustrated how different governance models—decentralized in Metro Manila and centralized in Bangkok—resulted in distinct urban development outcomes.
3. **Exploring Diverse Integration Mechanisms:** The framework's incorporation of diverse mechanisms of global integration enabled a comparative analysis of the economic strategies employed by each city. It showed how Metro Manila's focus on business process outsourcing and Bangkok's emphasis on foreign direct investment led to different socio-economic and developmental results.

## Recommended improvements to the use of the framework

Based on the findings of this study, several improvements can be made to enhance the integrated meta-theoretical framework:

1. **Incorporating Environmental Sustainability:** Future iterations of the framework should explicitly include environmental sustainability as a key dimension. The analysis of Bangkok highlighted challenges related to urban congestion and environmental impacts, suggesting that sustainability is a critical factor in global city formation.
2. **Enhanced Focus on Socio-Economic Inequalities:** While the current framework addresses socio-economic conditions, a more explicit focus on the mechanisms driving inequalities within global cities could provide deeper insights. This would involve a closer examination of how specific policies and development strategies impact different socio-economic groups.
3. **Greater Emphasis on Local Cultural Dynamics:** The role of local cultural practices and values in shaping urban development and governance could be more prominently featured in the framework. This study showed that cultural hybridity influences urban policies and integration mechanisms, indicating that cultural factors are integral to understanding global city formation.



4. **Interdisciplinary Approach:** Strengthening the interdisciplinary nature of the framework by integrating insights from fields such as environmental science, sociology, and economics could enhance its comprehensiveness. This approach would allow for a more holistic understanding of the diverse factors influencing global city development.

## Recommendations for policy and future research

### *Practical recommendations for urban policy in developing global cities*

1. **Balanced Governance Models:** Developing cities should aim to strike a balance between decentralized and centralized governance structures. For Metro Manila, enhancing regional coordination mechanisms can address inconsistencies and promote integrated urban development. For Bangkok, maintaining a strong central planning authority while incorporating local stakeholder inputs can ensure more inclusive and effective urban policies.
2. **Inclusive Development Strategies:** Urban development policies should prioritize inclusivity to address socio-economic inequalities. In Metro Manila, this could involve creating regulatory frameworks that ensure equitable distribution of resources and benefits from business process outsourcing and special economic zones. In Bangkok, policies should focus on mitigating the environmental impacts of rapid industrialization and urbanization, ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth.
3. **Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):** Both cities can benefit from well-managed PPPs that align with broader urban development goals. These partnerships should focus on transparent governance, equitable risk-sharing, and ensuring that projects serve the public interest, particularly in the areas of infrastructure development and service delivery.
4. **Sustainability and Resilience Planning:** Urban planning must integrate sustainability and resilience to address environmental challenges. Implementing green infrastructure, promoting sustainable transportation, and enhancing disaster preparedness are essential for long-term urban sustainability. Bangkok's experiences with environmental issues highlight the need for proactive environmental policies in global city planning.

### *Direction for future research based on the study results*

1. **Comparative Studies of Other Non-Western Global Cities:** Expanding the comparative analysis to include other non-Western cities can provide further validation and insights. Future research can explore how different historical, cultural, and governance contexts influence global city formation across various regions.
2. **Longitudinal Studies:** Conducting longitudinal studies that track urban development and global integration over extended periods can offer deeper insights into the evolving dynamics of global city formation. This approach can help identify long-term trends and the impact of policy changes over time.
3. **Policy Impact Analysis:** Evaluating the impact of specific urban policies on socio-economic and spatial inequalities can inform more effective urban governance strategies. Detailed policy impact studies can provide evidence-based recommendations for improving urban development outcomes.
4. **Role of Informal Sector:** Investigating the role of the informal sector in global city formation can provide a more comprehensive understanding of urban economies. Studies focusing on informal

settlements, labor markets, and their integration into the formal economy can reveal important dynamics often overlooked in traditional urban studies.

### *Potential areas for further research*

1. **Cultural Hybridity in Urban Development:** Further exploration of how cultural hybridity shapes urban development policies and practices can enhance people's understanding of global city formation. This includes examining how cultural values and traditions influence urban planning and governance.
2. **Technological Integration:** Investigating the role of technology in shaping urban development and global integration can provide insights into the future of global cities. This includes studying the impact of smart city initiatives, digital infrastructure, and technological innovations on urban governance and development.
3. **Environmental Justice:** Exploring the intersection of environmental sustainability and social equity can reveal important considerations for urban policy. Research on environmental justice issues can highlight the need for policies that ensure equitable access to clean air, water, and green spaces.

### **Final thoughts**

This study has undertaken a critical examination of the global city formation processes in Metro Manila and Bangkok, revealing the understated significance of accounting for historical legacies, agent dynamics, and diverse mechanisms of global integration. The contribution of this research lies not only in its challenge to the prevailing Western-centric models but also in its illumination of the unique pathways non-Western cities navigate towards global city status. By extrapolating the specific contexts of Metro Manila and Bangkok, this study has highlighted the importance of local histories, governance structures, and cultural hybridity in shaping urban development.

Global city formation is not a monolithic process, but a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by embedded local factors. This research underscores the need for a more inclusive understanding of urban development that transcends traditional theoretical boundaries. It calls for a reevaluation of how global cities are defined and understood, particularly in the context of the Global South, where historical and contemporary dynamics differ markedly from those in Western cities.

### *Reflecting on the broader implications for globalization and urban studies*

The broader implications of this study resonate deeply within the fields of urban development and global city research. It raises fundamental questions about the nature of globalization and its impact on cities that are often overlooked in mainstream discourse. How do cities like Metro Manila and Bangkok carve out their identities and roles within the global economic system? What lessons can be learned from their experiences to foster more equitable and sustainable urban development?

This study has revealed the key importance of acknowledging and incorporating local histories and contexts into the analysis of global cities. The fragmented governance of Metro Manila, a legacy of its colonial past, and Bangkok's centralized, sovereign approach to urban planning illustrate the diverse governance models that can shape a city's trajectory. These insights challenge the one-size-fits-all models

of urban development and emphasize the need for adaptive governance frameworks that can respond to local realities.

Moreover, this research highlights the pivotal role of various agents in shaping urban outcomes. The interactions between government entities, private developers, and civil society are crucial in determining the success and inclusivity of urban development projects. By examining these dynamics, the study provides valuable lessons for policymakers and urban planners on the importance of fostering collaborative and transparent governance practices.

The findings also underscore the necessity of integrating sustainability into urban planning. The environmental challenges faced by Bangkok due to rapid industrialization and Metro Manila's socio-economic disparities resulting from its focus on business process outsourcing highlight the complex trade-offs involved in global city formation. Addressing these issues requires innovative policies that balance economic growth with social equity and environmental stewardship.

Ultimately, this study serves as a call to action for urban scholars and policymakers. It invites a rethinking of how global cities are conceptualized and developed; it urges the need to shift towards more context-sensitive and inclusive approaches. By embracing the diversity of urban experiences and prioritizing the needs of local communities, it is possible to develop global cities that are not only economically vibrant but also socially equitable and environmentally sustainable.

In reflecting on the journey of this study, one is reminded of the profound human element at the core of urban development. Cities are not only economic hubs or geopolitical entities; they are lived spaces where people's lives unfold. This study has sought to bring these human stories to the forefront, reminding us that the goal of urban development should be to enhance the well-being and quality of life for all city dwellers. In doing so, it has contributed to a more holistic and humane understanding of what it means to be a global city in the 21st century.

As the world continues to urbanize and globalize, the insights from Metro Manila and Bangkok offer a valuable lens through which to view the future of global cities. They remind us that while the challenges are immense, the potential for creating more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urban futures is equally great. This study, therefore, stands as a testament to the power of local contexts in shaping global realities and as a north star for future research and policymaking in the realm of urban development.

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