Transforming Urban Landscapes in Thailand: The Policy Evolution from the Eastern Seaboard to the Eastern Economic Corridor

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Abstract

The transformation of Thailand's economic structure through the Eastern Seaboard policy marked a significant shift from an agricultural to a semi-industrial economy, resulting in enhanced employment rates and GDP growth (JICA, 2000). Building on this success, the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) introduced the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) in 2017 to further these economic reforms. The EEC aims to transform three Eastern provinces through sustainable area-based development, comprehensive infrastructure, connectivity enhancements, and the adoption of advanced technology and innovation, aligning with global sustainability trends (Pitakdumrongkit, 2022).

This study evaluates the EEC's approach, focusing on its integration of smart city and aerotropolis concepts to attract investment in Thailand as a middle-income country, where low-income labor is no longer a primary draw for investors. Using a comparative analysis method, the study traces the evolution of place-based economic policies from the Eastern Seaboard (ESB) to the EEC, examining their spatial development and urban transformation. Secondary data and structured interviews with local authorities, experts, and community members identify these policies' successes, challenges, and unintended consequences.

The results emphasize the need to integrate sustainable development concepts like smart cities to sustain area-based growth and attract global investors. This study provides critical insights for policymakers, emphasizing the need to address social and environmental issues while fostering sustainable economic growth. It offers recommendations for future policy formulations to bridge identified gaps and ensure successful large-scale economic transitions aligned with global sustainability goals.

1. **Introduction**

   In recent decades, the landscape of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and place-based policies has significantly transformed, driven by global sustainable development objectives (UNCTAD, 2020). Traditionally designed as isolated enclaves to attract foreign investments through tax incentives and relaxed regulations, SEZs are increasingly evolving into complex hubs integrating advanced technologies, sustainability measures, and inclusive development practices (UNCTAD, 2019). This evolution reflects a broader paradigm shift in global economic development strategies, emphasizing resilience, technological integration, and sustainable growth.

   This paper explores global trends through the Eastern Seaboard of Thailand, which has applied place-based economic policies in two distinct contexts: the Eastern Seaboard Development Project (ESB) and the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC). By examining

the transition from the ESB to the EEC, this study elucidates how changes in the global economic context have reshaped the design and framework of SEZs and place-based policies, impacting urban development and land use transformation. This analysis provides critical insights into the adaptive strategies of middle-income countries within the global economic hierarchy.

2. Methods

This research examines the impact of place-based policies on urban development. Using a qualitative methodology, it compares policy evolution over time and adaptation to global contexts, aiming to understand participant experiences (Merriam, 2002; Tenny *et al*., 2017).

Comparative Analysis Review

This review contains both secondary and empirical data as follows.

2.1 Secondary Data Review

2.1.1 Historical Overview: Examines the transformation from the Eastern Seaboard to the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), focusing on policy shifts and development milestones through historical documents, government reports, and previous studies.

2.1.2 Policy Analysis: Analyzes significant policies, including the EEC Act of 2018, assessing their objectives, implementation, and impacts on economic and urban planning strategies.

2.2 Empirical Data Collection

2.2.1 Data Gathering: In-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including policymakers, business leaders, and community representatives, to gain contemporary insights into policy implementation and impact.

2.2.2 Sampling Method: Purposive sampling will be used to select knowledgeable informants (Tongco, 2007). Participants will include scholars, real estate developers, industrial investors, experts, and community leaders who will provide detailed responses (Merriam, 2002).

2.3 Data Integration: Empirical data will be combined with secondary data findings to validate and deepen the comparative analysis.

This study offers insights into the adaptive strategies of middle-income countries, emphasizing sustainable development and technological integration in urban policy.

3. Global Trends in SEZs and Place-Based Policies

3.1 The Evolution of SEZs: From Traditional Industrial Hubs to Centers of Innovation and Sustainability

Place-based policies, designed to address economic disparities in specific geographic areas, present complex challenges and yield varied outcomes. These policies are grounded in economic theories like agglomeration economies and the spatial mismatch hypothesis, which suggest that concentrated economic activities can generate broader social and economic benefits (Neumark &

Simpson, 2014). However, their effectiveness is mixed. Moretti (2022) argues that while these policies target geographical inequalities and aim to boost local economies, they may create inefficiencies and unintended consequences, such as wealth transfer to landowners rather than benefiting the intended communities.

These concerns are particularly relevant in the context of geographical inequalities within countries. Overman and Xu (2022) highlight significant economic and wage disparities in the UK, mirroring similar issues in the U.S., Germany, and other nations. These disparities underscore the need for well-designed policies that can effectively leverage local conditions to improve economic outcomes.

Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are a notable example of place-based policies. According to UNCTAD (2022), SEZs are widely used in both developing and developed economies. UNCTAD (2019) defines SEZs as geographically delimited areas where governments facilitate industrial activity through fiscal and regulatory incentives and infrastructure support to attract investments. However, the success of SEZs is subjective, depending on individual definitions of success (Moberg, 2018). A critical issue is the financial incentive structure, with public development funds often allocated to unprofitable projects despite governmental support. Brussevich (2020) notes that the success and spillover effects of SEZs are multifactorial.

Recently, policymakers have begun to evaluate SEZs based on their contributions to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly sustainable urbanization and advanced technologies (UNCTAD, 2020). This shift is evident in transition economies that focus on industrial upgrading through SEZs, often centering around technology sectors (UNCTAD, 2019). Cherif and Hasanov (2019) argue that escaping the middle-income trap requires domestic firms to develop technologies and reach the technological frontier early in their development. This shift is driven by the need to respond to global economic changes, such as the rise of digital economies and the imperative for sustainable development. This trend is particularly visible in middle-income countries, including Thailand and China (World Free Zones Organization, 2020).

3.2 Introduction of New Elements in Place-based Policies: A Smart City SEZ

The global pandemic has heightened political, economic, and social challenges, placing cities at the forefront of the crisis. Cities are re-evaluating their economic growth strategies, adjusting service delivery methods, and initiating recovery efforts to become more livable, sustainable, resilient, and affordable (UNCTAD, 2015). This shift has led to the emergence of Smart City SEZs.

The rise of smart cities as part of Place-based development highlights the integration of advanced technologies and sustainable spatial planning to enhance urban living conditions. Smart city

initiatives within SEZs focus on utilizing IoT (Internet of Things) devices, data analytics, and green technologies to create efficient, sustainable, and livable urban environments. These Smart city SEZs aim to not only drive economic growth but also improve the quality of life for residents through better resource management, reduced environmental impact, and enhanced public services (World Free Zones Organization, 2020).

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4. Transition from the Eastern Seaboard to the EEC

In this section, a comparative study of these two policies will be discussed, focusing on the aspect of spatial development. It will examine how the EEC has transformed from the ESB in terms of spatial development.

4.1 The Eastern Seaboard Development Program (ESB)

The discovery of natural gas fields in the Gulf of Siam in 1973 and 1977 laid the foundation for the Eastern Seaboard Development Program, which was formalized in a master plan in 1982 under General Prem Tinsulanonda's administration. This program, part of the 5th and 6th National Economic and Social Development Plans (1982-1986 and 1987-1991), aimed to advance Thailand's industrial structure from agriculture to manufacturing and reduce economic concentration in Bangkok (Shimomura, 2000).

To achieve these objectives, the government planned to (1) specify land use, (2) offer investment incentives, (3) provide infrastructure, (4) offer skill development and public health services, (5) implement environmental controls, and (6) develop a master plan for the east coast areas (NESDB, 1981).

After the plan's implementation, the eastern seaboard region became the second largest industrial area in the country, after the Bangkok Metropolitan Region. The registered investment in the east, including the eastern seaboard region, accounted for 50% of the total registered investment in 1977 and rose to 64.7% by 1995. In 1996, the per capita income in this region was 2.76 times higher than the national average (JICA, 2001).

Despite the Eastern Seaboard (ESB) project's success in stimulating economic growth, it has significantly affected environmental and social issues. According to Krunnual and Sanitwong na Ayudhaya (2018), the economic benefits have primarily accrued to a small group, leaving many residents impoverished and even displaced by industrial estates. This economic disparity has

been accompanied by environmental problems, as industrial estates often fail to adhere to environmental protection guidelines, causing harm to local communities, such as in the Map Ta Phut area. Furthermore, several challenges were also identified during the Eastern Seaboard Development Program (ESB), as outlined in the Sema Group Belgium's report (1997). Key issues included insufficient availability of skilled labor, overburdened local administrations, speculative increases in land prices, and the strain on the area's water resources. Additionally, there was an overreliance on Bangkok's port and airport, coupled with lower-than-expected migration to the ESB.

Moreover, the concentration of development along the coast, driven by the establishment of deep seaports, industrial estates, roads, railroads, and water supply networks, led to higher land prices and attracted private investments primarily to coastal areas. Recent industrial activities in Pluak Daeng suggest a gradual shift towards the hinterlands of the ESB.

This point aligns with another interview with an urban planning expert involved in the ESB, who noted that the separation of public and private developments posed significant problems. Delays in public sector commitments undermined private sector confidence and investment. This sentiment was echoed by a real estate developer from Rayong, who emphasized that timely project execution was more critical than tax incentives for attracting private investment.

4.2 The Eastern Economic Corridors (The EEC)

Thirty years after the fifth national development plan, Thailand 4.0 aims to revitalize the Eastern Seaboard Development Program through the 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017-2021). This plan, known as the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), is designed to help Thailand escape the middle-income trap (Viyapone *et al*, 2019). Initially focused on three eastern provinces, the EEC seeks to transform both physical and social development, enhancing the country's competitiveness (EECO, 2019). The EEC is central to Thailand's 4.0 policy, aiming to transition the country into an innovative, value-based economy. Its Action Plan relies on three strategies: (1) enhancing railway and waterway capacities and connectivity; (2) upgrading transport networks for seamless movement of people; and (3) leveraging modern technologies to bolster transport systems (EECO,2023).

The transition from the Eastern Seaboard to the Eastern Economic Corridor marks a significant step in Thailand's economic evolution. The EEC's sustainable design reflects new global standards in Special Economic Zone (SEZ) development. By integrating advanced technologies and prioritizing environmental considerations, the EEC positions itself as a modern, forward-looking economic zone (Bunmak, 2019).

4.3 Comparative Spatial Aspect: The Transition between ESB and EEC

This section will discuss the differences and similarities in terms of spatial development between the ESB and the EEC.

1. Economic Zones and Special Areas

During the ESB, the spatial development plan focused more on specific areas to develop industrial estates. Meanwhile, during the EEC, strategic planning comprehends larger areas. In the ESB, the development plan only targeted specific areas. The first group is located next to the port, which includes the Map Ta Phut Area development (Map Ta Phut Industrial Complex, Eastern Industrial Estate, Padaeng Industrial Estate), and Laem Chabang Area development (Sahabat Industrial Estate, Laem Chabang Commercial Port, and Industrial Estate). Another group is inland projects, such as the Chonburi Industrial Estate, Amata City Industrial Estate, and Eastern Seaboard Industrial Estate, Gateway City Industrial Estate (Jica, 1999) (See fig.1).

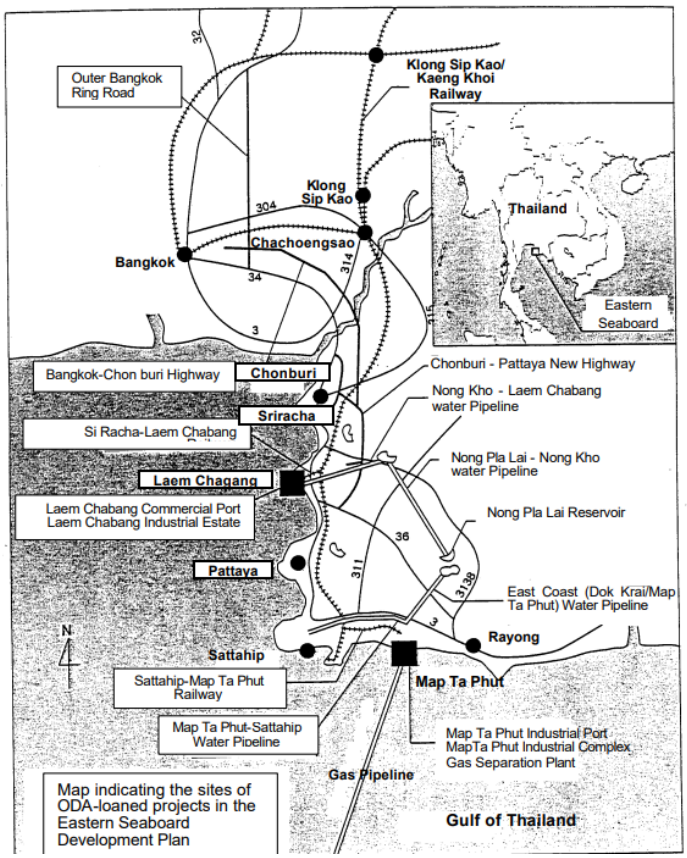

fig.1 Location of the projects in the eastern seaboard. Source: JICA,1999

Meanwhile, in the EEC, the development plan covers a more comprehensive area of three provinces. Furthermore, each area has been designated specific functions to serve different goals. These areas are called the Promoted Zones (EECO, 2019) The concept aims to strengthen foundations and contribute to sustainable business growth. This idea reflects new global

standards in SEZ design. It integrates digital infrastructure and smart city concepts, utilizing IoT devices, data analytics, and automation to enhance efficiency and improve residents' quality of life (UNCTAD, 2020). The EEC fosters high-tech industries, including digital technology, biotechnology, and aerospace, attracting high-value investments. Environmental sustainability is emphasized through renewable energy use, waste reduction, and sustainable resource management, ensuring development does not compromise environmental health (Bunmak, 2019).

This has been shown in the promoted zones in the EEC. The promoted zones include (see fig.2):

- EECh, High-Speed Rail Ribbon Sprawl: Along the high-speed rail track crossing Don Muang, Suvarnabhumi, and U-Tapao Airports.
- EECg, Genomics Thailand: A center for life sciences and genomics research at Burapha University, Chonburi Area.
- EECd, Digital Park: A global digital hub in Sriracha District, Chonburi.
- EECmd, Medical Hub: A medical and healthcare hub in Bang Lamung District, Chonburi.
- EECa, Eastern Airport City: An aerospace and aviation hub at U-Tapao International Airport, Rayong.
- EECi, Innovation Platform: A center for advanced research in Wang Chan Valley, Rayong.
- EECTp, Tech Park Ban Chang: A technology innovation hub in Ban Chang District, Rayong.

Apart from these promoted zones, the new concept adopted in the EEC is the smart city, developed by the EEC and the Digital Economy Promotion Agency (DEPA), which encouraged local and regional governmental agencies and private sectors to conduct smart cities by giving them certification, which can be used to ask for incentives. According to DEPA, the smart city is divided into two types: existing cities and new cities. Existing Cities are established cities upgraded with technology to improve infrastructure, housing, and amenities, aligning with local culture. New Cities are newly developed areas utilizing technology to create modern infrastructure and services, tailored to the cultural context (DEPA, 2024). Examples of existing cities in the EEC include Chachoengsao Smart City developed by provincial authorities. An example of a new city is Ban Chang Smart City by Ban Chang Subdistrict Administrative Organization. The smart city developed by the EECO will be in Banglamung District, Chonburi Province, Thailand. The project aims to transform agricultural land into the EEC Business Center & Livable Smart City. This area is projected to create a model city with world-class standards to accommodate the increasing demand for urban living. It aims to create a city for people with modern technologies for livability and develop a BCG Economy City with the concept of

human-nature coexistence, zero carbon, zero waste, and well-planned urban systems in EEC Aerotropolis (EECO, 2023). However, this project is still in the land expropriation phase and cannot be evaluated yet. These attempts to integrate the smart city concept in the strategic plan differentiate the EEC from the ESB.

Fig2. Location of the projects in the EEC. Source: EECO, 2019

2. Land Use and Zoning Regulations

Apart from strategic planning, land use and zoning regulations, or comprehensive plans, also play critical roles in the development of the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC). According to Krunnual *et al*. (2019), zoning regulations are vital for preventing pollution and displacement issues. The land use and zoning regulations in the area have undergone significant transformation during the periods of the Eastern Seaboard (ESB) program and the EEC.

The ESB program was a catalyst for advancing urban planning in Thailand. In 1975, the first law regarding urban planning in Thailand was enacted, known as the Town Planning Act B.E. 2518. This law defined urban planning as the preparation, establishment, and implementation of comprehensive and specific plans by the Department of Public Works and Town & Country Planning (Suwannadej, 2020)

Following this legislation, the first comprehensive plan under the Town Planning Act B.E. 2518 was implemented as a result of the ESB project. This was the Ministerial Regulation on the Comprehensive Plan for Rayong Municipality (Ministerial Regulation No. 5, B.E. 2526), which was the first instance of enforcing a comprehensive plan. It covered areas including Thap Ma, Nam Kok, Choeng Noen, Noen Phra, Tha Pradu, and Pak Nam Subdistrict in Mueang Rayong

District, Rayong Province. The necessity for land use planning was especially pronounced near the Map Ta Phut Industrial Estate, extending from Sukhumvit Road to the coast. The goal of the planning is to control the limitation of industrial zone and protect residents from pollution. The plan designated nine types of land use, including low-density residential areas where all types of factories were prohibited, except those that did not cause pollution to the community, wholesale fuel depots, explosive storage facilities, and waste disposal sites. This type of land is intended to ensure that residents are safe from industrial pollution. The plan also included a transportation and logistics map (Ministerial Regulation No. 5,1983).

Having had the first comprehensive plan, there have been many followings. Notably, during the tenures of Chatichai Choonhavan in 1991 and Thaksin Shinawatra in 2003, known for his neoliberal policies, as Thailand's economy flourished, there was a push to modify land use codes in the Ban Chang district and Mapthaput. This was to allocate more land for industrial pursuits, supporting economic growth and expansion (see fig.3).

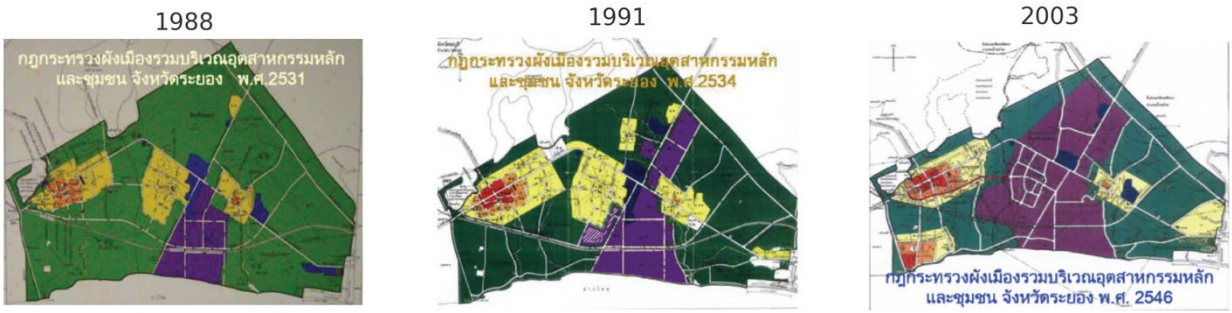

Fig 3. The three comprehensive plans of Rayong in 3 different times. Source: Thailand Environment Institute (TEI), 2024

Figure 3 illustrates the significant transformation in land use in the Rayong region between 1988 and 2003, characterized by a substantial increase in industrial zones and a corresponding decrease in agricultural lands. By 2003, industrial zones had more than doubled in size compared to 1988. Additionally, business zones and densely populated residential areas expanded considerably, reflecting heightened urbanization and commercial development. The dominance of agricultural lands was significantly reduced to accommodate this expansion, aligning with the Eastern Seaboard Development (ESB) goals of industrialization and urbanization. This shift prompted numerous complaints from Rayong locals. For instance, in a study interview, Uncle Noi, a garden owner affected by VOC emissions from Map Ta Phut, reported displacement due to pollution and rising land prices. He also noted a demographic change in his neighborhood, with an influx of laborers from northeastern Thailand, facilitated by developers constructing

housing near industrial estates. This highlights the transformation in land use around industrial areas, where residential spaces are now predominantly occupied by migrant laborers.

Another interview, with an environmental scholar, reveals differing perspectives on these changes. She noted that industries in the first and second phases of Map Ta Phut employed less advanced technologies compared to those in Sri Racha, developed later. This related to the number of complaints from the Map Ta phut.

Beyond Rayong, other areas faced similar challenges during the ESB era. Transitioning from ESB to EEC, comprehensive planning and law enforcement remain contentious, as both aim to enhance national economic growth.

Industrial zone expansion and urbanization continue under the EEC, as shown in the comprehensive plan covering Chachoengsao, Chonburi, and Rayong (see fig.4). This plan introduces a new land use and infrastructure development framework. The differing color codes and definitions from general plans pose challenges for local officials who must adapt while aligning with strategic goals. Despite the EEC's land use zones, interviews with real estate developers and industrial owners reveal concerns that the comprehensive plan does not fully align with the strategic plan, causing difficulties for investors. For instance, from an interview, a foreign investor who bought land to develop factories for microchips, encouraged by government plans and financial incentives from the BOI, faced issues as the land use zone did not allow industrial factory construction, illustrating the misalignment between fiscal incentives and land use regulations.

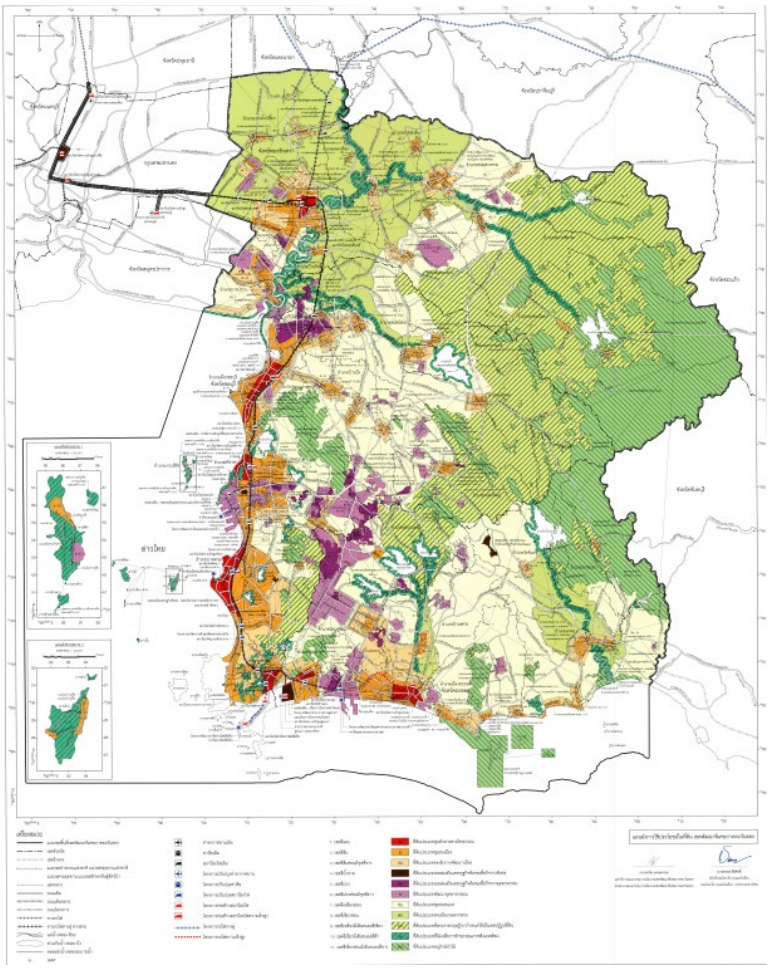

Fig.4 The land use plan of the EEC development plan.
Source: Eastern Special Development Zone Act B.E. 2561 (2018)

3. Infrastructure development

The transition from the Eastern Seaboard (ESB) to the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) marks a significant evolution in Thailand's regional development strategy. During the ESB phase 1, 88% of the budget was dedicated to building basic industrial infrastructure and developing deep-sea ports (JICA,1999). This included the establishment of industrial estates near ports, reservoirs, water supply systems, road networks like Highway 36 and the Chon Buri bypass, and the extension of the coastal railroad from Si Racha to Map Ta Phut (JICA,1999). While these efforts attracted substantial private investments, challenges such as lower-than-expected land occupancy rates and inadequate worker facilities were notable. Additionally, proposed science parks intended to foster industry-academic collaboration did not materialize.

In contrast, the EEC focuses on advanced infrastructure and innovation. Key initiatives include high-speed rail links connecting three major airports (Don Mueang, Suvarnabhumi, U-Tapao), the development of an aerotropolis around U-Tapao Airport, and the expansion of Map Ta Phut Port in its third phase. The EEC also established an R&D institute in Wang Chan Valley,

Rayong, to drive innovation. Furthermore, the EEC aims to develop digital infrastructure to support smart city initiatives in Ban Chang, with private providers collaborating with local authorities to implement 5G technology. This digital transformation is expected to enhance connectivity, facilitate smart city applications, and attract more high-tech investments. However, the EEC faces its own challenges, such as water shortages and delays in infrastructure projects, including the high-speed rail and airport expansion, which have slowed the region's development. This comparison highlights the shift from foundational industrial growth under the ESB to a more sophisticated and technologically driven approach under the EEC, despite ongoing logistical hurdles.

4. Community involvement

Both the Eastern Seaboard (ESB) and the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) are top-down initiatives where strategic plans are crafted by technocrats. However, there are signs that the EEC is more locally engaged than the ESB, as public hearings are now a required part of the comprehensive planning process. This shift aligns with the UNCTAD framework for Special Economic Zones (SEZs), which emphasizes promoting inclusive growth through linkages and positive spillovers.

An example of local engagement comes from an interview with a real estate developer, revealing that in Chachoengsao, NGOs significantly influence land use, often opposing industrial expansion. For instance, during a public hearing, locals argued that industrial estates should be located at least 500 meters from the Bang Pakong River. This resulted in zoning adjustments to include this buffer zone. Consequently, industrial developers reserved these areas for agriculture, demonstrating the EEC's attempt to engage more with local communities.

Another example of local engagement from an interview with governmental agencies involved in land readjustment in Rayong is the new city project in Ban Chang, where the local government implemented a land readjustment plan. Initially, the plan covered a larger area, but after public hearings, some landowners opted out, leading the government to exclude their lands from the project, which operates on a voluntary basis. Despite these efforts for inclusivity, some areas still experience top-down enforcement. For instance, in Bang Lamung, the government reclaimed land under Agricultural Land Reform to build a new city, displacing current occupants who lacked ownership rights.

This comparison highlights that while the EEC shows a greater effort toward inclusive development than the ESB, there are still instances where local voices are overlooked, particularly in areas with significant capitalist interests. The EEC's alignment with the UNCTAD framework represents a positive step toward fostering inclusive growth by creating economic linkages and supporting local development, though challenges remain in fully realizing these objectives.

5. **Discussion and Conclusion**

Comparative Analysis of Transition from ESB to EEC

The evolution of Thailand's economic policies from the Eastern Seaboard Development Program (ESB) to the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) reflects a significant shift in strategic planning and implementation to meet contemporary economic challenges and opportunities. This section explores the critical aspects of this transition and offers constructive suggestions for addressing current issues.

1. Delay of Government Projects and Separation of Private and Public Development

The ESB and EEC both faced challenges related to the timely execution of government projects. Delays often lead to a separation between public initiatives and private sector developments. During the ESB era, the focus was on establishing industrial estates and infrastructure primarily along the coastal areas, which created a dichotomy between coastal and inland development. This issue persists in the EEC, where delays in promised mega-infrastructure projects have led to mistrust among local communities and investors. Consequently, private developers often proceed independently, leading to fragmented and unsynchronized development.

Suggestions:

- Implement strict adherence to project timelines and milestones to rebuild trust.
- Develop a robust public-private partnership framework to ensure aligned and coordinated development efforts.

2. Asynchrony of Strategic Plan and Incentives

A significant issue identified in both the ESB and EEC periods is the lack of synchronization between strategic plans, investment incentives from the Board of Investment (BOI), and land use planning. This misalignment leads to inefficiencies and underutilization of resources. For instance, while incentives are provided to attract investments, the corresponding land use plans may not support the intended industrial or commercial activities.

Suggestions:

- Synchronize strategic plans and land use plans to be developed and implemented simultaneously.
- Ensure that investment incentives are directly aligned with the land use designations to maximize effectiveness.

3. Challenges in Land Use Transition and R&D Institute Involvement

The involvement of R&D institutes and smart city initiatives in existing urban areas, such as Chachoengsao, has shown promise due to the active participation of local governments and private sectors. However, transitioning land use from agricultural to industrial or residential purposes, especially in areas requiring expropriation, remains a significant challenge. The top-down nature of these initiatives often faces resistance due to delays and the need for local communities to see tangible benefits. Additionally, the trust deficit among local communities and private sectors is exacerbated by the delays in government projects, leading them to develop independently in their own organic ways.

Suggestions:

- Adopt a more participatory approach in planning and decision-making processes.
- Enhance transparency and communication to ensure local communities understand and support the benefits of proposed changes.
- Maintain consistent project timelines to rebuild trust and encourage collaborative development.

4. Technological Advancements and EEC Development

The EEC places a strong emphasis on integrating advanced technologies such as 5G, which can significantly enhance regulatory frameworks, reduce corruption, and improve transparency. These technologies are expected to play a crucial role in aligning private sector activities with strategic plans and ensuring more efficient implementation.

Suggestions:

- Accelerate the deployment of 5G and other digital infrastructures to support smart city initiatives.
- Use technology to facilitate real-time monitoring and reporting of development projects to ensure adherence to plans and timelines.

Conclusion

The transition from the Eastern Seaboard Development (ESB) to the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) marks Thailand's strategic shift towards a more diversified and technologically advanced economy. While the ESB focused on coastal industrial zones and basic infrastructure, the EEC aims to incorporate smart city concepts and high-tech industries, covering larger areas with specific functions. Key differences include the EEC's emphasis on advanced technologies, digital infrastructure, and greater community involvement through public hearings and participatory

planning. However, challenges such as adherence to project timelines, synchronization of strategic and land use plans, and the need for clear guidelines and incentives for smart city development persist. This study identifies several gaps that merit further investigation, particularly concerning the challenges of policy implementation at the local level and the integration of new concepts like smart cities and aerotropolis. Future research should focus on understanding the practical hurdles faced by local governments and private sectors, the socio-economic impacts of these innovative urban planning concepts, and the trust deficit between public and private stakeholders. Addressing these gaps will provide deeper insights into the effective deployment of policies and foster better collaboration, ultimately contributing to the success of sustainable and technologically advanced urban development in Thailand. By leveraging technological advancements and ensuring active participation from all stakeholders, Thailand can realize the vision of a modern, sustainable, and integrated urban corridor.

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