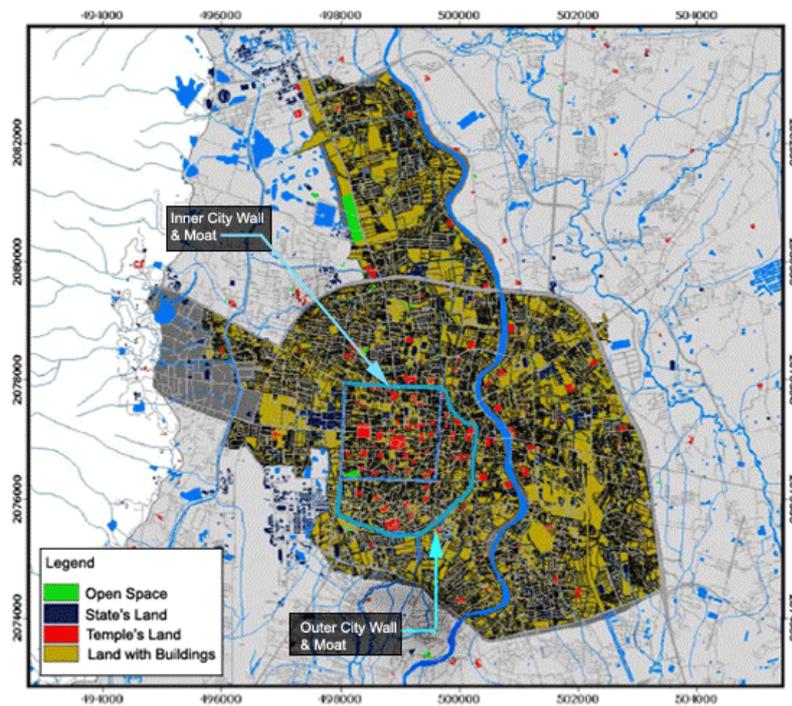


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## Informal Settlements in Chiang Mai



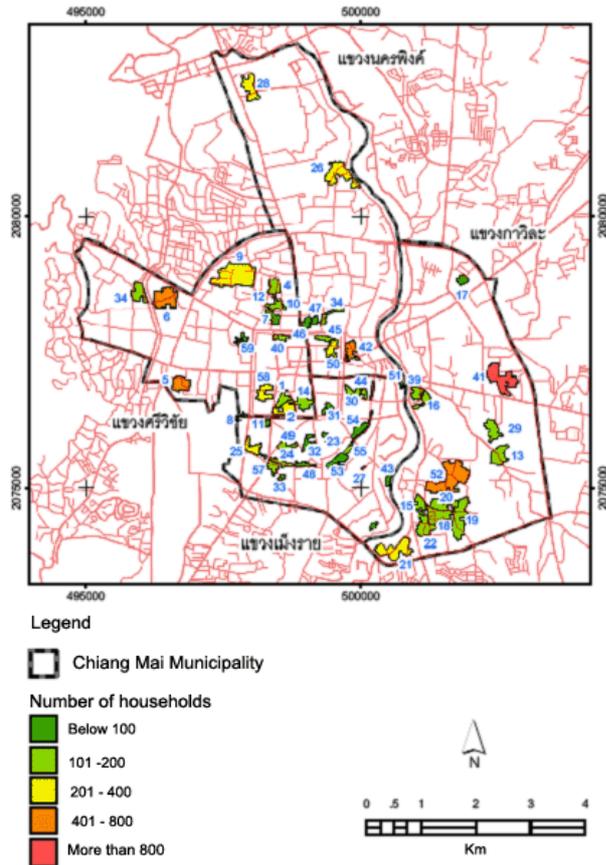
**Note:** Notice the prevalence of Buddhist Temples in Chiang Mai. The temple ground is one of the largest homes to squatter communities; seconded only to the State's land (Treasury Department, Fine Art Department, State Railway Authority, and Port Authority).

This, indeed, is an indirect result of the philosophy of "openness" in Buddhism. "Anyone can stay at the temple," goes the old saying. In Buddhist folklores, there are countless instances where Kings and Princes took residence in the same temple ground as beggars, outlaws, and whores.

The city of Chiang Mai is a collection of smaller communities; in the old days, the temple was the center of each distinct community. It was where all the social activities took place. "Looking for a date? Go to the temple!" was another old saying.

Today as the city grows, there is a great need for labor and housing; Chiang Mai was designated as a northern hub in the 4th National Development plan (1977-1982). The growth of highways, transportation, and tourism follows - so were the informal economy and squatter settlements.

Map of Squatter Communities in Chiang Mai



Informal Settlements along the Old City Wall

The Old City Wall around the ancient city of Chiang Mai acts - literally - as a **Site and Service** structure for the squatter communities along its entire perimeter. The folks build their houses using the old city wall as a foundation to lean against; and they use the ancient city moat as a source of water supply.

The old city wall belongs to the Treasury Department, but the *Fine Art Department* (F.A.D.) was put in charge of its actual day-to-day management. Not surprisingly, the squatters often come into conflicts with the F.A.D. who wanted to preserve the wall's historical integrity and appearance. The F.A.D. views the current - though more practical - utilization of the old city wall as an insult on history.

The squatters, with the help of CODI, have made several negotiations with the F.A.D. using the issue of setback line. Currently, many houses are built right on the wall - not just near it. So a group of community activists are trying to negotiate a 30- year land lease from the F.A.D.; the negotiation rests on the condition that the squatters would agree to move the houses (that are within 3 meter of the wall) to other areas around the wall.

