ARI: THE DYNAMICS OF CONTEMPORARY URBAN CHANGE IN A BANGKOK NEIGHBORHOOD

Mr. Jonas Hove Doctor
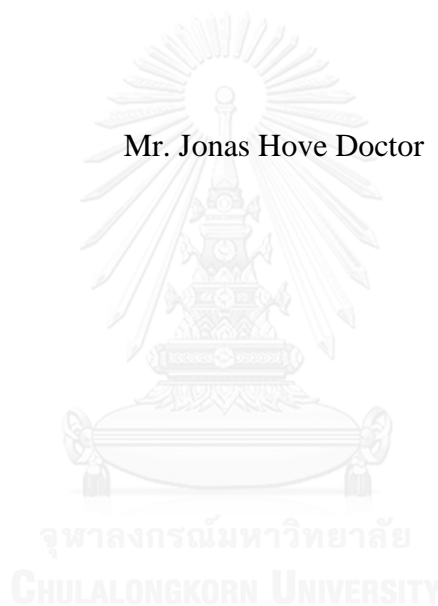
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By	Mr. Jonas Hove Doctor
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Thesis Advisor	Assistant Professor Wasana Wongsurawat, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree

....Dean of the Faculty of Arts
(Assistant Professor Prapod Assavavirulhakarn, Ph.D.)

THESIS COMMITTEE

....Chairman
(Assistant Professor Carina Chotirawe, Ph.D.)

....Thesis Advisor
(Assistant Professor Wasana Wongsurawat, Ph.D.)

....External Examiner
(Assistant Professor Maneewan Pewnim, Ph.D.)

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

โจนัส โฮฟ ด็อกเตอร์ : อารีย์: พลวัตการเปลี่ยนแปลงสังคมเมืองร่วมสมัยในย่านหนึ่งของ
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หน้า.

ในบริบทเมืองในโลกตะวันตกนั้น การเกิดขึ้นของย่านชุมชนมักถูกมองว่าเป็นผลจากการปรับปรุง
พื้นที่เพื่อการค้าและการอยู่อาศัย ซึ่งอาจสืบเนื่องมาจากการที่มีกลุ่มประชากรที่มีความสร้างสรรค์และ/หรือมี
ฐานะร่ำรวย และกลุ่มทุนธุรกิจค้าปลีกย้ายเข้ามาในเขตชุมชนซึ่งแต่เดิมมีฐานะยากจนและประชากรส่วนใหญ่เป็น
กลุ่มผู้ใช้แรงงาน แม้ว่าการปรับปรุงพื้นที่เพื่อการค้าและการอยู่อาศัยอาจช่วยยกระดับย่านชุมชนให้มีสถานภาพ
และภาพลักษณ์ที่ดีขึ้นในบริบทของเมืองใหญ่ที่แวดล้อมอยู่ แต่กระบวนการดังกล่าวก็มักถูกวิพากษ์วิจารณ์ว่า
นำไปสู่การทำให้กลุ่มประชากรเดิมของชุมชนต้องย้ายออกไปและกลุ่มธุรกิจดั้งเดิมในชุมชนต้องปิดกิจการลง

วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้เป็นผลงานชิ้นบุกเบิกซึ่งนำเสนอการศึกษาในระดับจุลภาคของความเปลี่ยนแปลง
ที่กำลังเกิดขึ้นในย่านชุมชนร่วมสมัยแห่งหนึ่งในประเทศไทยโดยอาศัยกรอบคิดและทฤษฎีเกี่ยวกับการปรับปรุง
พื้นที่ (gentrification) งานชิ้นนี้ศึกษาความเปลี่ยนแปลงที่เกิดขึ้นอย่างรวดเร็วของย่านอารีย์ในช่วงคริสต์ทศวรรษ
ที่ 2000 ในพื้นที่ดังกล่าวมีการเพิ่มจำนวนขึ้นของร้านอาหารและร้านกาแฟแบบสมัยนิยม และคอนโดมิเนียม
หรูหรามากมาย และศึกษากลุ่มนักธุรกิจ สื่อ นักพัฒนาอสังหาริมทรัพย์และโครงข่ายการขนส่งมวลชนซึ่งเป็นตัว
จักรสำคัญบางส่วนที่ขับเคลื่อนการพัฒนานี้ นอกจากนี้วิทยานิพนธ์ชิ้นนี้ยังสำรวจโครงสร้างดั้งเดิมของประเภท
อาหารที่มีขายอยู่มากมายในซอยอารีย์ อันประกอบด้วยแผงขายอาหารและร้านอาหารท้องถิ่นของชุมชนที่อยู่ราย
รอบสถานีรถไฟฟ้าอารีย์ พร้อมทั้งวิเคราะห์สถานภาพในปัจจุบันและแนวโน้มความเปลี่ยนแปลงของชุมชนนี้ใน
อนาคตด้วย

แม้ว่าพลวัตรหลายประการในกรณีของย่านอารีย์นั้นจะคล้ายคลึงกับกรอบทฤษฎีการปรับปรุงพื้นที่ใน
บริบทตะวันตก วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้พบว่าสถานภาพของย่านอารีย์ซึ่งแต่เดิมเป็นชุมชนที่ค่อนข้างมีฐานะดีนั้นบ่งชี้
ว่าความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างย่านชุมชนที่เกิดใหม่กับการปรับปรุงพื้นที่ในกรุงเทพฯ นั้นจำเป็นต้องศึกษาในบริบทของ
สังคมไทย โดยเน้นแง่มุมของแรงบันดาลใจ ค่านิยม และความคาดหวังของนักธุรกิจและผู้บริโภครุ่นใหม่ที่เป็น
ชนชั้นนำและมีความรอบรู้ในความหลากหลายทางวัฒนธรรมต่างๆ ทั่วโลกด้วย

สาขาวิชา   ไทยศึกษา   ลายมือชื่อนิสิต _____
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JONAS HOVE DOCTOR: ARI: THE DYNAMICS OF CONTEMPORARY URBAN CHANGE IN A BANGKOK NEIGHBORHOOD. ADVISOR: ASST. PROF. WASANA WONGSURAWAT, Ph.D., pp.

In urban settings in the West, emerging neighborhoods are often viewed as products of residential and commercial gentrification: the influx of creative and/or affluent populations and new entrepreneurial retail capital into poorer, working class communities. While residential and commercial gentrification can significantly upgrade a neighborhood's status and image within the wider context of the surrounding city, the process is often criticized for leading to the displacement of the neighborhood's original population and the closure of traditional businesses.

This thesis – a first of its kind within the field of Thai Studies – presents a micro study of contemporary neighborhood change in Thailand and considers the relevance of gentrification as an explanatory model. Centered on the affluent residential neighborhood of Ari in northern Bangkok, the study documents how, since the mid2000s, the area has witnessed a remarkable increase in the number of fashionable restaurants and cafés and high-end condominium buildings, and identifies design savvy entrepreneurs, media, real estate developers, and mass transit as among the agents behind these developments. The study also surveys the state of Ari's traditional foodscape – the street food vendors and the local eateries based around the neighborhood's BTS station – and considers its current position and future in the neighborhood.

While many of the dynamics at play are similar to western models of gentrification, the thesis argues that Ari's status as a traditionally privileged community suggests that the relationship between emerging neighborhoods and gentrification in Bangkok needs to be considered within the broader cultural context of Thai society, with a particular view to the motivations, values, and aspirations of a new cosmopolitan generation of élite consumers and entrepreneurs.

Field of Study: Thai Studies   Student's Signature _____

Academic Year: 2014   Advisor's Signature _____

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Writing in 1854, Jean-Baptiste Pallegoix, French missionary and later Bishop of Siam, notes of Bangkok that "this city did not yet exist ninety years ago and already counts more than 400,000 inhabitants" (Pallegoix 2000: 29). Today, with a population well over ten million, Monsignor Pallegoix would hardly recognize in 21st century Bangkok the city situated "in the middle of vast gardens adorned with perpetual greenery" of which he speaks to his readers (Pallegoix 2000: 30).

The changes which Bangkok have undergone since the time of Pallegoix – or, for that matter, since the city's founding on the banks of the Chao Phraya in 1782 – are very apparent, indeed staggering in scale, when viewed through the centuries: it is quite clear that things are no longer the same. To account for this, we have chronologies of how Bangkok (and, more broadly, Thailand) has evolved over the centuries, and while this approach certainly provides an indispensable framework for understanding Bangkok in broad terms, I would suggest that historical, political, and economical analysis alone cannot describe and explain to us satisfactorily the nature of the street-level change (and continuity) we encounter in our everyday life.

The ongoing transformation of the Bangkok neighborhood of Ari (sometimes spelled Aree) illustrates well such small-scale, local change and continuity. Located north of the city's Victory Monument around Soi Phaholyothin 7 (Soi Ari), Ari is an affluent residential neighborhood characterized by leafy, quiet streets and villas set in

lush tropical gardens. Over the last decade or so, however, the area has gradually emerged as a food and drink destination, and in August 2014 the lifestyle online and print media BK Magazine listed "seven reasons why Ari is Bangkok's hottest neighborhood right now", six of them being new restaurant openings (Quadri Aug 13, 2014). Parallel with the increase in restaurants and cafés a significant number of high-end condominium buildings have been constructed in the relatively small area between Soi Phaholyothin 5 and 11, with at least two new projects being either under construction or in development.

In Western contexts, "hot" neighborhoods are usually the product of gentrification, a process in which housing in poorer, working-class neighborhoods is upgraded to suit the tastes of a wealthier and better educated segment of the population. When increasingly more people wish to settle in a gentrified neighborhood, its original residents are eventually forced to relocate to other, more affordable parts of the city due to rising rent costs. As the population changes old neighborhood businesses close and are replaced by hip new restaurants, cafés, and boutique shops.

In Asia, there are few examples of this type of gentrification, and at first glance Ari does not appear to be among them. It is an affluent, privileged, and slightly conservative neighborhood, not a poor community. And yet it has managed to emerge as one of Bangkok's hippest locations. This raises a number of questions. Firstly, what are the nature and characteristics of the process Ari is going through, and how does this process compare to the dynamics of 'Western' gentrification? Secondly,

what was Ari like in the past, and what are the main factors which have shaped (physically and otherwise) the neighborhood into what it is today? And not least: By attempting to answer these questions, what may we learn of the dynamics of contemporary urban culture and change in Thailand?

1.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of this thesis are:

- To document change and continuity in the Bangkok neighborhood of Ari with special emphasis on food and drink culture and the built environment.
- To identify the main agents of change in the particular case of Ari and analyse these in relation to existing models of urban change.

1.3 Hypothesis

The last decade has brought about significant change to the neighborhood of Ari, and over the last 3-4 years the pace of change has quickened significantly. While initial change appears to have been characterized largely by external factors such as increased accessibility (BTS and expressway) and the construction of a number of company headquarters and governmental agencies, the characteristics of later stages of change (i.e. the emergent food and drink culture and a seeming booming condominium market) have been driven and characterized by more intangible phenomena such as atmosphere, style, social class and values.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The boundaries of this study are physical as well as temporal. With certain provisions, the study focuses mainly on the area between Soi Phaholyothin 5 and 11 from the mid-2000s to 2015.

1.5 Research Methodology

The methodology for this study is interdisciplinary and contains elements of geography, history, sociology, and anthropology. Data has been gathered using a variety of methods, most notably through quantitative statistical surveys of the evolution and the characteristics of Ari's foodscapes and the history and extent of condominium development in the neighborhood. A total of seven recorded interviews with residents, entrepreneurs, and patrons of Ari's restaurants have been conducted. These interviews, together with countless hours of casual conversation and personal observation while frequenting Ari's cafes and restaurants on a daily basis for more than two years, constitute the study's qualitative elements. It should be noted, however, that the majority of interviews have been conducted with English-speaking informants. This naturally means that a large number of Thai-speaking potential informants were not consulted for their thoughts and opinions. Lastly, internet blogs and magazine and newspaper articles have also proved an invaluable source of information.

1.6 Definitions and Transliteration

'Ari' and the English word 'neighborhood' are used interchangeably throughout this thesis in reference to the area between Soi Phaholyothin 5 and 11.

According to Merriam Webster, the primary definition of 'neighborhood' is "a section of a town or city". The closest Thai language equivalent is the popular word *yan* which functions both as a noun and a classifier for districts or local areas within the city. Other more general words used in this context include *thi* (place), *thaeo* (section or district) and *haeng* (place) (O'Connor 1991: 71). What distinguishes the word *yan* is that it recalls a pre-modern identification of the city as a conglomeration of centers of particular activities or people (Askew 2002: 109).

Judging from popular Thai language internet fora, such as Pantip.com and Wongnai.com, *yan* is used in reference to both Ari and Soi Ari. However, both carry similar meanings: Although *yan* Soi Ari refers explicitly to Soi Ari (Soi Phaholyothin 7), the topic of discussion, for instance a restaurant or a café, may very well be located in another *soi* in the area. Similarly, because *yan* is not an official administrative word, it follows that the boundaries of the localities to which the word is applied are not fixed. Thus, while this thesis understands 'Ari' to be the area between Soi Phaholyothin 5 and 11, other definitions undoubtedly exist.

For a definition of gentrification, readers are referred to section 1.7.2 of Chapter 1.

The Thai words *thanon* (road, boulevard, avenue, street) and *soi* (lane, side street, alley) are preferred over their English language equivalents in street names and addresses. Thus, for instance, Sukhumvit Road is referred to as Thanon Sukhumvit.

Finally, a note on transliteration: Thai language terms are transliterated in Roman letters according to the Royal Thai General System (RTGS), although alternative renderings may appear in written quotations and proper names.

1.7 Literature Review

The first of the following two sections will briefly introduce the reader to the study of urban localities in Thailand and present an overview of previous studies relating to place and change in Bangkok. Next, a short review of gentrification theory in international and Asian contexts is presented, and selected literature on related topics, such as the values and motivations of gentrifiers, is discussed.

1.7.1 Urban Studies in Thailand

Research on the development and characteristics of urban life in Thailand has been carried out since the 1950s when concern about Bangkok's rapid development prompted administrators to commission the advice of specialists in demographics and urban planning. Later, in the 1960s, migration from countryside to city became a topic of scholarly interest, and a number of studies on migration and socio-cultural change appeared. In these studies, Bangkok was perceived as an agent of change which disseminated modern culture and attitudes to migrant workers and, in turn, to their rural communities. In the 1970s, political economists began viewing Bangkok as the center of power and economic change and as the site for the development of a new middle class (Askew 1994: 37-48). Subsequent studies set in Bangkok have covered a wide range of themes such as social organization, gender, displacement, and conflict, but as historian and Thai Studies scholar Marc Askew notes, the full list of studies

which attempt to understand the urban cultural influence in Bangkok is not long (Askew 1994: 53).

Shorter still is the list of literature pertaining to particular urban places, or micro environments, and the dynamics of change. Indeed, thirty years after its publication, sociologist Erik Cohen's study of the changing 'ecology' of a *soi* in Bangkok's Sukhumvit area still stands out for addressing the general processes of physical urban change in a local setting (Cohen 1985). Cohen chronicles the development of his *soi* and divides it into four overlapping stages: rural, semi-urban, early urban, and mature urban. Cohen notes that none of these stages have entirely superseded their predecessors, and that the landscape of the *soi* had therefore become "a highly heterogeneous mosaic of areas built up during different stages, with a correspondingly segmented population"(Cohen 1985: 19). While there was only little social integration between the different population segments, and the *soi* could therefore not be regarded as a community, Cohen nonetheless identified a considerable degree of functional integration, in particular with the socio-economically lower groups, who would make their living by working in the *soi*. These groups also used the street's local eating establishments as venues for socializing and thereby endowed the soi with "the ambience of a vibrant street-life" (Cohen 1985: 18).

Anthropologist Richard O'Connor also considers 'place' in the context of Bangkok (O'Connor 1991). Rather than treating the development of a single fixed location, O'Connor's study deals with what he identifies as a uniquely Thai, popular,

way of experiencing the city. Bangkok is, O'Connor argues, a system of named places (*yan*) which are defined by whatever activities are associated with them. According to O'Connor, this way of imagining the city is influenced by a particular "Thai social and cultural order that presumes the prominence of place" (O'Connor 1991: 62). Thus, early Bangkok's conglomeration of villages, temples, and palaces, named places around which social communities arose, still provide the popular, Thai, mental blueprint for navigating the city.

The popular image of Bangkok is not static, however. New places can rise to prominence, their names gradually imposing themselves on their surroundings. O'Connor concludes that while urbanization opens up new possibilities of wealth and education at the expense of place and the local community, the process simultaneously facilitates larger, city-wide, communities that "flourish within and between bureaucracies".

Place also features prominently in Marc Askew's book-long study of Bangkok (Askew 2002)**.** While the first three chapters are large-scale, yet detailed, chronologies of how Bangkok developed from a traditional royal capital to the world city it is today, in the second part of the book, Askew turns his attention to studies of specific locations within Bangkok. Of particular interest are chapters four, which documents urban change and continuity in the Banglamphu neighborhood, and eight, in which the impact of luxury condominiums in the Sukhumvit area is analysed. In his analysis of the Sukhumvit condominium market, which follows up on Cohen's above-mentioned work, Askew points out the resilience of local *soi* 'ecologies' and argues

that "the high-rise developments, including hotels and condominiums, have impacted on – but also been assimilated within – the diverse activity system that has been formed around the *soi* configurations of Sukhumvit" (Askew 2002: 244). We shall return to Askew's study again in the context of gentrification.

A more recent study which deserves mention is Ross King's chronological as well as thematic study of the stories and meanings imbued in built fabric and spaces of Bangkok (King 2011). The main theme of King's study is colonization, which King understands as the intrusion of people, economy, consumption, and ideas into Thai society, and how this colonization has manifested themselves in the urban landscape. The book-long study draws on urban planning, history, anthropology, and political economy, and along the way King, a Professorial Fellow in the Faculty of Architecture Building and Planning at the University of Melbourne, provides a wealth of facts, background information and contemporary urban history while venturing well beyond the beaten tracks of previous studies on Bangkok. Place and change is featured prominently in the study, but as the title – "Reading Bangkok" – suggests both are mostly invoked to serve as textual evidence of King's theoretical framework.

The last research to be considered in this short review of studies of place and change in urban Thai settings is in fact an exhaustive proposal rather than a study. In his proposal, architect and anthropologist Non Arkaraprasertkul argues for a case-based study on Bangkok's *soi* neighborhoods in relation to urban planning and stresses the urgent need to update previous studies. Non argues that first-hand experience and ethnographic and anthropological research is a key methodology for

understanding "the relationship between the people and the built environment" and that "the sole knowledge of physical space is simply "useless" (Non Arkaraprasertkul 2010). He suggests a transdisciplinary approach which incorporates history, cultural studies, urban studies, architecture, and anthropology.

1.7.2 Gentrification

Briefly put, 'gentrification' refers to the movement of wealthy, well-educated, people into lower-class neighborhoods, and the higher property values that follow them (Zukin 2010: 47). The term was first coined in 1964 by the British sociologist Ruth Glass to refer to what she described as working-class quarters in London being "invaded by the middle classes" until "the whole social character of the district is changed" (Glass quoted in Smith 1996: 31). As noted by the British geographer Neil Smith, Glass' coinage has an unmistakable critical intent which was widely understood as the term passed into common usage. Thus, gentrification was – and still widely is – perceived as a process of displacement in which the fate of a neighborhood's original community is at stake.

Early scholarship on gentrification revolved around identifying its causes. According to one school, gentrification occurs when there is a mismatch or a 'rent gap' between potential economic returns from a centrally located building and the actual economic gains from its current use (Mathema 2013: 1). Others argue that gentrification is the result of changing societal needs and demands rather than structural changes in the housing market. According to the latter theory, gentrification

is driven by the demand for gentrifiable housing from a new urban middle class with certain cultural, lifestyle and political values (Mathema 2013: 2) ((Moore 2013: 117).

Scholars have also investigated how states and local governments may actively pursue gentrification as a means to improve their tax bases. This process of revitalizing poorer neighborhoods to attract middle-income residents is known as "second-wave" gentrification (Mathema 2013: 3) (Moore 2013: 117).

More recently, a third wave of contemporary gentrification has been identified. Whereas gentrification was previously only considered in terms of the transformation of inner-city housing into valuable real estate, the process is now seen as linked to global systems of finance and real estate (Moore 2013: 117). Thus, research now speaks of 'new-build' gentrification in which condominium buildings redefine the urban landscape, and 'commercial' gentrification which is characterized by the emergence of particular types of restaurants, cafés, and stores in a neighborhood as the result of an influx of new entrepreneurial retail capital.

While the definition of what constitutes 'gentrification' has thus broadened considerably since the 1960s, the majority of studies has tended to focus on 'textbook' cases in Western European and North American settings involving the upgrading of existing housing in traditional working class or ethnic neighborhoods to suit the needs of financially privileged and well-educated newcomers. Such neighborhoods include Vesterbro in Copenhagen, Denmark, a former red-light district *cum* working class neighborhood behind the city's central railway station which since the early 1990s has gradually emerged as one of the most trendy and expensive locations in the capital.

Residents are now primarily a mix of students living in apartments bought by their parents as an investment, bohemians and members of the creative class (of whom we shall hear more later in this chapter). Other well-known international examples of gentrification are the Marais, a historical Jewish neighborhood in Paris, France, which is now one of the city's most popular nightlife and restaurant venues and home to a substantial gay community, and Williamsburg in New York City, USA, where an influx of artists and musicians, and subsequent capital, has transformed a rundown multiethnic Hispanic, Afro-American and Hasidic Jewish neighborhood into one of the city's hippest communities.

1.7.2.1 Commercial Gentrification

In their study of commercial gentrification in two neighborhoods (Harlem and Williamsburg) in New York City, USA, sociologist Sharon Zukin et al. (Zukin et al. 2009) describe the process of commercial gentrification as concurrent with residential gentrification. The process is pioneered by entrepreneurs who may either be outsiders seizing an economic opportunity offered by a neighborhood's changing population, and the resultant increase in disposable income, or they may themselves belong to the new population and be acting in the cultural and social interests of their community. Specializing in "innovative or value-added products", such as designer furniture or clothing, and gourmet food, the new businesses are characterized by "a recognizably hip, chic, or trendy atmosphere" and are likely to enjoy a "buzz factor in promotion, including heavy press coverage and online presence" (Zukin et al. 2009: 62).

Indeed, as argued by sociologist Altan lkucan and professor in marketing Özlem Sandıkcı in their case study of gentrification and consumption in Istanbul, Turkey, such buzz factor may extend and commodify the gentrified community at large. Often, this construction is facilitated by mass media through the stories and images articulated about the neighborhood. The gentrified area becomes its own brand, and a particular sense of community intensifies (Ilkucan and Sandıkcı 2005).

Zukin et al. argue that the increasing presence of 'boutique' businesses signals that an area is safe for commercial investment, at which point larger players begin to enter the market. This process eventually leads to an increase in 'corporate' retail capital in the form of chain stores and franchises and a decline in the number of old, local retail stores.

1.7.2.2 Authenticity, Cosmopolitanism, and Place

In her book-long study on urban authenticity in New York City, Sharon Zukin criticizes gentrified areas as being inauthentic and homogenized. Authenticity has to do with "origins", that is "the right to inhabit a space, not just to consume it as an experience". Authenticity is not "a stage set of historic buildings," she argues. Rather, it should be viewed as a "continuous process of living and working, a gradual buildup of everyday experience, the expectation that neighbors and buildings that are here today will be here tomorrow" (Zukin 2010: 42-43). Ironically, while the subjective experience of inhabiting a place over time enables a person to recall how it used to be in past, these memories rarely, if ever, involve distinguishing between 'authentic' and

'inauthentic'. Instead, the authentic-inauthentic dichotomy, Zukin argues, originates with the aesthetic evaluation by outsiders of an inhabited space:

> "[When] we look at a rundown neighborhood we ask, Is it interesting? Is it gritty? Is it 'real'? Like the criteria we use while shopping for consumer products, these standards objectify the authenticity that we desire" (Zukin 2010: 85).

Historically, Zukin traces the preoccupation with authenticity (and identity) to the ages between Shakespeare and Rousseau, "when men and women began to think about an authentic self as an honest or true character, in contrast to an individual's dishonesty, on the one hand, and to society's false morality, on the other" (Zukin 2010: 86). In the 18th century, German intellectuals scorned what they perceived as frivolous court culture while considering their own pursuits "serious, virtuous, and authentic" in comparison, and later, in mid-19th century Paris, poets and novelists living "la vie de bohème" would romanticize and contrast authentic, lower-class urban life with the comfortable and conformist lives of the rich (Zukin 2010: 88-87). According to Zukin, these attitudes still live on in the hipster districts and gentrified neighborhoods of the cities of 21st century Western Europe and North America, manifesting as a search for, and fascination with, urban authenticity

Authenticity, then, is what attracts gentrifiers to a given neighborhood. However, as Zukin observes, once an area undergoes gentrification its authenticity is

immediately threatened by the introduction of a new cosmopolitan atmosphere which, while tolerant, hip and casual, disrupts the continuity of the old neighborhood (Zukin 2010: 47). Anthropologist Ulf Hannerz notes of cosmopolitanism that it is an "intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness towards divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrast rather than uniformity" (Hannerz 1990: 239). As such, Hannerz argues, there is an apparent appreciation of the local on the part of the cosmopolitan, but it is non-committal since he knows that he is always free to disengage from it. For the cosmopolitan, then, his interaction with a locality becomes a means to add to an idiosyncratic collection of experiences which in turn facilitates the construction of his own personal perspective on the world.

Zukin speaks of a neighborhood's "soul" as the continuity of everyday experience in a given place (Zukin 2010: 44). Urban soul, or authenticity, in other words, is the result of the unbroken relationship between place and individual. This interaction fosters what anthropologist Marc Augé characterizes as "anthropological" place: that is, place as "relational, historical, and concerned with identity"(Augé 1995: 77). According to Augé, the opposite of anthropological place is "non-place" – impersonal, quantifiable, commercial spaces formed in relation to certain ends, such as transport, transit, commerce, and leisure. While gentrified communities are not devoid of interaction between place and individual, and are certainly concerned with identity, their lack of origins, ahistorical nature, particular aesthetics, and global scale turn them into potential non-places.

1.7.2.3 Gentrification in Asia

According to Russell Moore, a lecturer at Mahidol University, the forms of gentrification most commonly associated with East Asian and Southeast Asian cities in the academic literature are new-build gentrification, in reference to large-scale state-led construction of modern apartment buildings and condominiums, and beautification for development and tourism purposes (Moore 2013) This is not to say that other types of gentrification do not occur in Asian contexts. For instance, architect Stephen Wei-Hsin Wang has documented how commercial gentrification, in the form of adaptive reuse of historic neighborhood into locales for shopping, dining, art and culture, constitutes an alternative process of neighborhood renewal in Shanghai, China (Wang 2011).

In the context of Bangkok, anthropologist Michael Herzfeld's comparative study of 'spatial cleansing' in Rethemnos, Greece, and Bangkok, Thailand, may be viewed as an example of gentrification as beautification for development and tourism purposes (Herzfeld 2006). The focus of Herzfeld's Bangkok-case is the national restoration plan for the city's old dynastic capital of Rattanakosin Island which has been criticized by socially engaged academics and NGO activists for emphasizing the establishment of green open spaces (viewed by the plan's critics as alien to local Thai ideas of sociability) and for entailing the eviction of several poor populations. Herzfeld describes how one of these communities, the Pom Mahakan community located in the area between the Mahakan fort (*pom*) and the neighboring canal, so far has managed to avoid eviction, and how the city's poor appeal to the authorities to

respect them as participants in national history by imbuing their wooden houses with historical value (Herzfeld 2006: 139).

While the Pom Mahakan case contains both neighborhood change and community displacement Herzfeld refers to the dynamics at play as spatial cleansing rather than gentrification. For gentrification, according to Ruth Glass' classic definition, to manifest in Bangkok, Herzfeld argues, old houses first need to be considered desirable by the socially and economically mobile middle class, and as long as this is not the case, eviction-threatened communities such as Pom Mahakan will not find much popular support for their wish to remain in their dwellings:

"Gentrification, long recognized as a growing and perhaps problematic phenomenon in the West, [...] still seems quite fragile in Thailand; its success depends on creating a desire for old houses (however radically restructured internally), and this has yet to come about. Of its incipient stirrings there can be little doubt, although fear of the ghosts of long-dead inhabitants and a persistent streak of nouveau-riche abhorrence of anything that looks dilapidated also provide an undertow of support for what we might call spatial cleansing by the municipal and state authorities" (Herzfeld 2006: 142).

Askew also considers gentrification as a model for the emergence of luxury condominiums along Bangkok's Thanon Sukhumvit but finds the concept largely inapplicable:

"In the case of Bangkok, some of the key features of the gentrification process are absent. Thus, it is notable that the key areas developed for luxury condominium complexes have long been associated with high-income groups. A large-scale wave of Thai middle-class reoccupation of the centre has not taken place: rather the occupants have been largely foreign expatriates and affluent Thai families who were always located in the inner city"(Askew 2002: 239).

Askew also takes issue with the homogenizing effects of new-build gentrification. Bangkok's soi, the tributary lanes of the city's main streets, constitute a resilient and diverse 'ecology', which exhibit "a persistence of heterogeneity in the overall context of change" (Askew 2002: 245). Thus, in the case of Thanon Sukhumvit, the high-rise developments, including hotels and condominiums, impact on − but are also assimilated within − the diverse system formed around its *soi* configurations. This notion of *soi* culture as resilient and adaptive to change is echoed by Non who speaks of a dynamic '*soi* urbanism' unique to Bangkok's identity as a city (Non Arkaraprasertkul 2010).

While the nature of *soi* ecologies or *soi* urbanism may indeed be relevant to the issue of gentrification in Bangkok, Moore argues that attention must be paid to what particular demand side factors motivate people to desire certain areas and types of housing in Southeast and East Asian contexts, and how these factors influence gentrification. Thus, Moore calls for a better understanding of "what particular values or dispositions, if any, 'characterise' a gentrifier in this context" (Moore 2013: 125).

1.7.2.4 Characteristics of Gentrifiers

Whereas the values and dispositions of Southeast Asian gentrifiers remains largely unexplored, in western contexts gentrification is often linked with the 'creative class', a term coined by the urban studies theorist Richard Florida based on his analysis of demographic and economic data from cities across the USA (Florida 2003)..

According to Florida, the creative class consists of a "super-creative core" which includes scientists, artists, university professors, and designers, as well as "creative professionals" who work in a wide range of knowledge-based occupations (Florida 2003: 8). When such individuals choose to settle down, Florida argues, they look for communities which are abundant in high-quality experiences, tolerant and open to diversity, and above all, able to provide them with the opportunity to validate their identities as creative people. Conversely, the creative class finds conventional physical attractions, such as urban malls and sport arenas, irrelevant, insufficient, or even unattractive. According to Florida, the presence of large gay and bohemian populations indicates that a city or a neighborhood is attractive to the creative class,

because the presence of these groups serves as a measure of a community's tolerance and creativity level.

While Florida stresses the importance of values in what makes a city or a neighborhood desirable, sociologist Terry Clark argues that consumption and amenities are drivers of contemporary urban dynamics in North America (Clark). The presence of 'constructed' amenities such as restaurants, for instance, redefines the local context, even for persons who do not eat there, and they function to attract certain classes of people. This, Clark argues, represents a reversal of traditional economic determinism which teaches that individuals with high income (demand) cause amenities such as expensive restaurants (supply) to emerge. Particularly the young and mobile are sensitive to the subtle ways in which a city or a neighborhood can be rich or poor in terms of constructed amenities and other 'coolness' components, such as the presence and/or absence of particular classes of people.

Where Florida speaks of values, and Clark of amenities, geographer David Ley speaks of the 'aestheticisation of place' as an important element in the process of gentrification (Ley 2003). According to Ley, artists are important agents in the gentrification process since they emphatically value the affordability and mundane off-center status of gentrifiable neighborhoods, and are among the first newcomers to take up residence. Based on his research in Toronto, Canada, Ley argues that artists shun popular commodified sites, subjecting them to aesthetic rejection, while "valorising" as authentic, rich in symbolism, and free from commodification, locations and neighborhoods which other classes consider ordinary and everyday (Ley

2003). Ironically, however, this process eventually leads to commodification since the excess of meaning, or authenticity, in places frequented by artists becomes a valued resource for the entrepreneur. In this way, the cultural capital embodied by the artists paves the way for the influx of economic capital and resultant commercial gentrification described previously.

1.8 Significance

The thesis aims to contribute significantly to the study of contemporary Thai urban culture and to the understanding of the processes at work when a Bangkok neighborhood gains popularity.

1.9 Structure

The thesis is divided into five chapters:

- Chapter 2 serves as a general introduction to Ari and the origins of the neighborhood.

- Chapter 3 documents change and continuity in Ari's traditional and modern foodscapes through quantitative surveys. Findings are related to relevant models of urban change, and notable characteristics of the modern foodscape are discussed.

- Chapter 4 briefly familiarizes the reader with the history of condominium buildings in Bangkok before proceeding to document their emergence in Ari by means of a quantitative survey. Findings are compared with some of the general characteristics of present-day condominium development in Bangkok, and the significance of location is discussed. The chapter is concluded by a

discussion of the potential of condominiums to reshape Ari's traditional landscape.

- Chapter 5 summarizes the findings from the previous chapters and relates them to existing models of urban change.

CHAPTER 2: INTRODUCING ARI

2.1 Origins

Since its foundation in 1782 on the banks of the Chao Phraya river, the city of Bangkok has grown from a traditional royal capital to a 21st century primate city. Bangkok's early urbanism was characterized and comprised by the royal citadel, the city's trading areas, and outlying villages and various places of importance, all connected by a network of canal- and river-based transportation. Beginning in the reign of King Mongkut (Rama IV, r. 1851-1868) the construction of roads instigated a number of changes, such as commodification of land and the transformation of Bangkok into a land-based city (Askew 2002: 31).

During the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V, r. 1868-1910), road construction accelerated, and as the city expanded a new economy centered around land-ownership gradually emerged. The construction of Dusit, a new royal suburb linked to the old palace by the grand boulevard Ratchadamnoen, heralded the expansion of the city to the north which is where the neighborhood around Soi Ari is located today.

Between 1900 and 1936 Bangkok's built-up area expanded from 13 to 43 square kilometers, but the city was unevenly populated and ecologically diverse (Askew 2002: 41). While it has not been possible to determine the exact year of the construction of Soi Ari, it seems highly likely that the *soi* and the neighborhood surrounding it came into existence in the early 1930s, presumably after the republican

revolution in 1932. Thus, Thanon Phaholyothin, of which Soi Ari (Soi Phaholyothin 7) is a tributary *soi*, was originally named Thanon Prachathipatai, or "Democracy Road", a name which would have been unlikely prior to the fall of absolute monarchy. During the years of the first Phibun government (1938-1944) Thanon Phaholyothin was extended and re-named in honor of General Phraya Phahol Pholphayuhasena (formerly Phot Phahonyothin), the second Prime Minister of Thailand and one of the heads of the 1932 revolution (Askew 2002: 47) (Orani 2002).

Figure 1: Location of Ari
(Source: Author)

Two old maps of the area north of the Samsen canal, which were obtained from the Royal Thai Survey Department, further support dating the development of the area around present-day Ari to the 1930s. The first map (Figures 2 and 3) dates back to 1924 (B.E. 2467-68) and marks the area as farmland. Present-day Thanon Phaholyothin is unnamed and stops abruptly just north of the Samsen canal. In contrast, the second map (Figure 4), which was prepared in 1955 (B.E. 2498-99), clearly indicates the location of Thanon Phaholyothin, Soi Ratchakru (Soi Phaholyothin 5) and Soi Ari (Soi Phaholyothin 7). What a mere twenty years earlier was farmland is now distinctly a suburb with detached houses set in large plots of land. On the corner of Thanon Phaholyothin and Soi Ari the first rows of shophouses (*tuek thaeo*) have started to appear.

2.2 Current Features of Ari and Its Surroundings

Today, Bangkok is divided into a total of 50 administrative units known as *"khet"* which are further subdivided into 169 subdistricts, or *"khwaeng"*. Soi Ari and its surrounding streets and *"soi"* are located in *khet* Phaya Thai, more specifically in the subdistrict of *khwaeng* Samsen Nai. Established in 1966, *khet* Phaya Thai occupies an area of 9.6 square kilometers and takes its name after Thanon Phaya Thai, a major road which in turn is named after Wang Phaya Thai, a palace constructed by King Chulalongkorn in 1909 on the banks of the Samsen canal. As of 2013 *khet* Phaya Thai had a total registered population of 72,495, making it the seventh-least populated district in Bangkok. To the north *khet* Phaya Thai borders *khet* Chatuchak, to the east *khet* Din Daeng, to the south *khet* Ratchathewi, and to the west the district

connects with *khet* Dusit. The District Office of Phaya Thai (*samnak ngan khet phaya thai*) is located on Soi Ari 2.
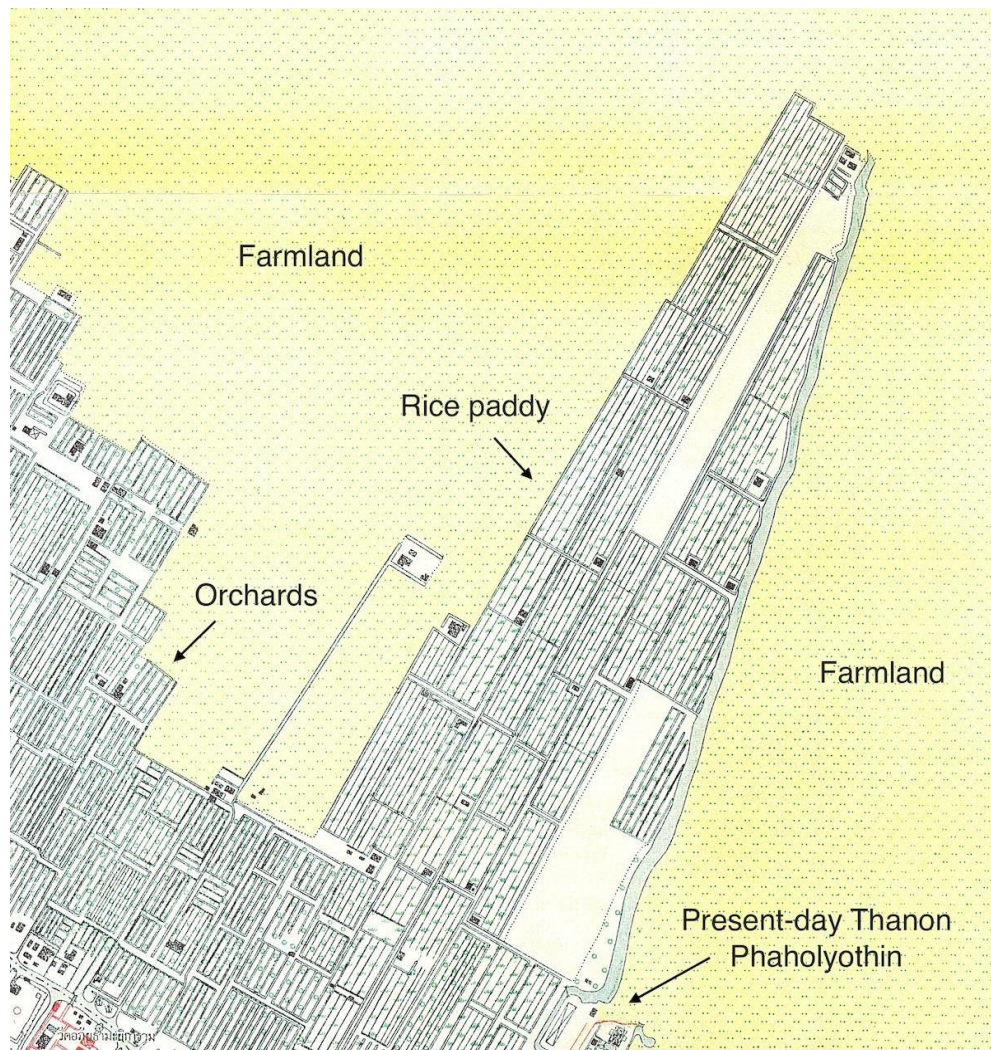
Figure 2: Map of area north of Samsen canal (1924) (1)
(Source: Royal Thai Survey Department)
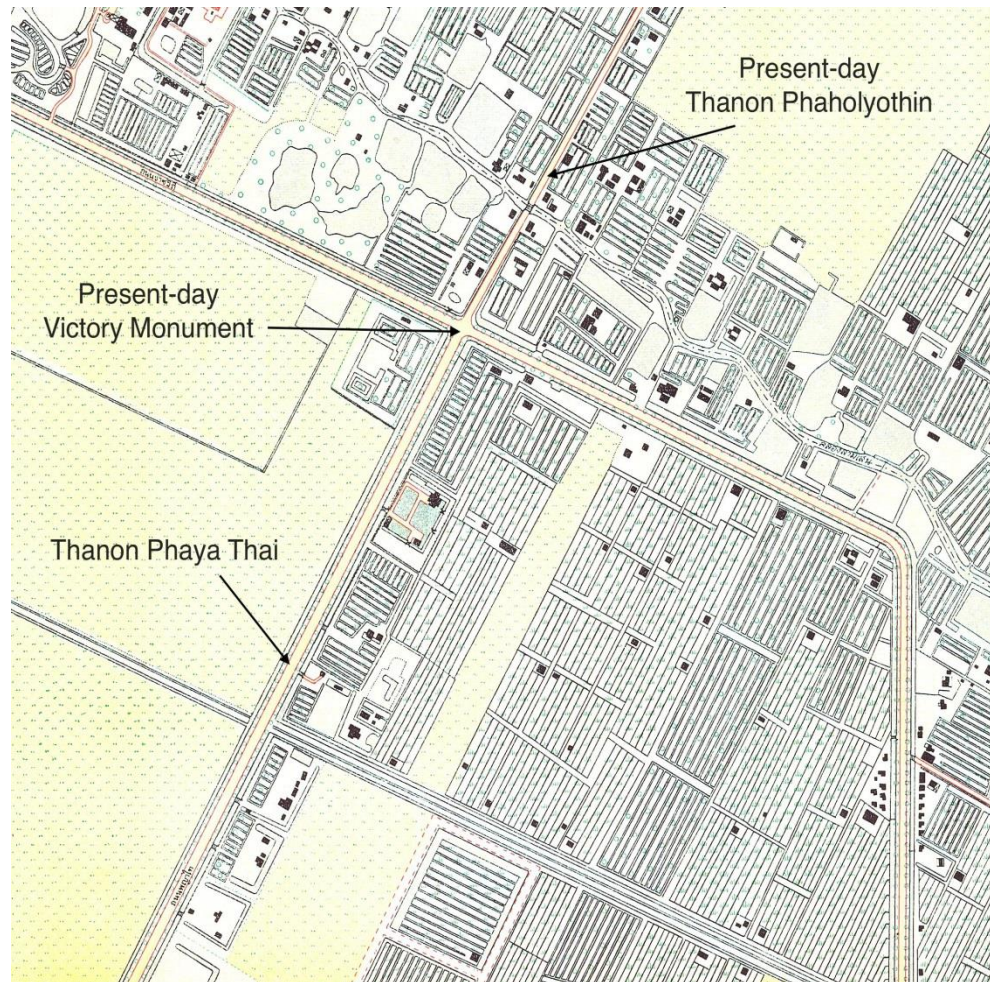
Figure 3: Map of area south of Samsen canal (1924) (2)
(Source: Royal Thai Survey Department)

Figure 4: Map of area between Soi Ratchakru and Soi Ari (1955)
(Source: Royal Thai Survey Department)

During the reign of King Vajiravudh (Rama VI, r. 1910-1925), two of the country's three armies were strategically located in the capital, and the main barracks and associated offices of the army have continued to dominate the area north of Dusit and immediately west of Ari (across from Thanon Rama VI) (Askew 2002: 42).

Additionally, the headquarters of Channel 5, the Royal Thai Army-owned television station which began broadcasting in 1958, are located on Thanon Phaholyothin, immediately north of the Victory Monument (*anusawari chai samoraphum*). The monument was erected in 1941 in commemoration of the brief 1940-1941 Franco-Thai War, and today the location serves as of the city's main transportation hubs.

Besides the military presence around Soi Ari the area is also home to a number of governmental agencies, such as the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, and the Public Relations Department of the Thai Government. Perhaps most notably, the headquarters of the Revenue Department, a massive 100,000 square meter structure constructed between 1995 and 1997, sits in the heart of the neighborhood, at the far end of Soi Ari, in what used to be a large piece of open marshland.

A number of schools are located in the vicinity of Soi Ari. These include Suan Bua School, an elementary school established in 1957 on Soi Phaholyothin 5, and Samsenwittayalai School, a lower and higher secondary school located on Thanon Rama VI, which dates back to 1955. Also located in the area are Bangkok Lung Hospital and the headquarters of the Border Police, both on Thanon Phaholyothin, and the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission on Soi Phaholyothin 8.

Figure 5: Map of Ari
(Source: Author)

Through the 1980s and 1990s the stretch of Thanon Phaholyothin near Soi Ari became home to a number of high-rise commercial office buildings. These include one of Kasikornbank's three headquarters in Bangkok, the S.P. Tower which houses IBM in Thailand, the EXIM Bank Building, and Shinawatra Tower I and II.

In terms of transportation the 1990s brought significant changes to Ari, notably the opening of the Second Stage Expressway (SES), which was fully operational by 1996, and the introduction in 1999 of the Bangkok Transportation

System (BTS), the city's elevated train system popularly known as *"rot fai fa"*, or "Skytrain" in English. Being close to expressway entrances and exits and with a BTS station constructed right at the mouth of Soi Ari, at the beginning of the new millennium Ari had become efficiently linked with the rest of the city.

In 2006, Siam Future Ltd. opened La Villa, a 5,700 square metre open-air mall on Thanon Phaholyothin across from Soi Ari. Featuring Villa Market, an upmarket supermarket, and a number of well-known restaurant and café chains, such as Starbucks, Fuji, Greyhound Café, and Hobs, and only a handful retail shops, La Villa clearly revolves around the consumption of food. Neighborhood malls, which are also referred to as community malls, are small-scale, semi-outdoor malls located in residential or suburban neighborhoods. Community malls have been on the rise in Bangkok since Siam Future's 2004-launch of J Avenue, which is located in the Thonglor neighborhood of Thonglor and caters to the neighborhood's substantial community of Japanese expats. J Avenue's popularity with the Japanese community and local Thais alike, coupled with the difficulty of opening large-scale shopping malls and hypermarkets in the city area due to zoning restrictions, has made community malls popular with real estate developers, and as of 2014, a total of 19 have been constructed in locations around the city by various companies (Godchapan & Navneet 2014).

Photo 1: Chakran, Soi Ari 4
(Photo by Author)

Photo 2: House in Soi Phaholyothin 11
(Photo by Author)

As previously stated, Ari and its surrounding area is host to a number of governmental agencies and offices, military institutions, and private companies. Notably absent from the area, however, is one of the most evocative symbols of traditional Thai culture: the *wat*, or Buddhist monastery. In fact, Phaya Thai District is

home to just one *wat*: the more than 200 years old Wat Phai Ton which is situated on Soi Phaholyothin 15 along the banks of the Bang Sue canal (*khlong*), near the Saphan Khwai BTS station. The *wat* scarcity around Ari lends the area a worldly quality: The symbols of civil service and the military figure prominently in the landscape while religion is almost hidden from view, tucked away at the far end of a long inconspicuous *soi*. The fact that Phaya Thai District is only home to a single *wat* can undoubtedly be attributed to the area's relatively short history. Thus, already during the reign of Chulalongkorn temple-construction was in decline, and by the beginning of the 20th century most of Bangkok's original character as sacred cityscape had been lost (Peleggi 2007: 173).

Perhaps to make up for the absence of organized religion in the neighborhood, the private non-profit foundation Baan Aree was established in Ari in 2007 to support and promote Buddhism. The foundation runs a Dhamma library and meditation hall located in Banana Family Park, a small compound reminiscent of a community center on Soi Ari 1 which hosts a series of wholesome activities, such as yoga and tai chi sessions, music classes, and regular Dhamma talks by visiting monks. There are also food stalls selling organic vegetarian food, a coffee shop, a language school, and an exhibition space showcasing art works.

The area which is the focus of this thesis – Soi Phaholyothin 5 to Soi Phaholyothin 11 and the multiple *soi* connecting these streets – is characterized by being largely residential. Besides the condominium buildings which have emerged in the area since the mid-1990s (and which are the topic of Chapter 4), accommodation

is primarily in the form of detached houses set in spacious walled compounds. Notable exceptions are Soi Ratchakru (Soi Phaholyothin 5), Soi Ari (Soi Phaholyothin 7) and Soi Ari 1 which all have stretches of concrete shophouses, two to five storeys high with various types of businesses occupying the ground floor. These streets are also the busiest in terms of traffic, particularly in the late afternoon and early evening when the staff of the neighborhood's various government agencies and private companies make their way home from work. Another type of accommodation which can also be found in Ari are town houses, mostly located in smaller semi-private *soi* and sometimes executed in imposing neoclassical designs (*satai roman*).

Whereas Ari's traditional eating options (the traditional foodscape) are primarily located on the street and in the shop houses close to the BTS station, the venues of their contemporary counterparts (the modern foodscape which has emerged over the last decade) can be found everywhere, from detached houses to shop- and town houses, and on the street as well. The particulars of these two foodscapes will be discussed next, in Chapter 3.

Compared with the commercial hubs of Soi Ratchakru (Soi Phaholyothin 5), Soi Ari (Soi Phaholyothin 7), and Soi Ari 1, the remaining *soi* are all quiet and feature little in the way of street life besides restaurants and cafés. Interestingly, it is in two of these quiet residential *soi* that the only signs of vice in the otherwise respectable neighborhood are encountered: Chakran, an upscale gay sauna club on Soi Ari 4, and a short-time hotel on Soi Phaholyothin 11. While Chakran's discreet facade blends

well with its surroundings, the short-time hotel, on the hand, looks curiously out of place between the stately neighboring family homes and well-manicured lawns.

CHAPTER 3: ARI'S CHANGING FOODSCAPES

3.1 Introduction

One of the very visible signs that a neighborhood is changing is the emergence of new types of businesses. So, too, in Ari. Since the latter half of the 2000s the neighborhood has witnessed a rapid increase in its number of restaurants and cafés, and as of 2015, it seems that every little *soi* now has its share of new establishments. The new restaurants and cafés cater to local residents and visitors alike, and social and conventional media has successfully branded Ari as a popular culinary destination in Bangkok. In the following, we shall refer to these restaurants and cafés as Ari's modern foodscape.

Ari, however, is also home to a well-established traditional foodscape which predates the emergence of the new restaurants and cafés. Centered around the neighborhood's BTS station, the traditional foodscape consists of quick and inexpensive meals and snacks served from street-side stands and in basic indoor eateries.

Through quantitative surveys of Ari's traditional and modern foodscapes this chapter seeks to examine the state of the traditional foodscape and to understand the emergence of its modern counterpart.

3.2 Ari's Traditional Foodscape

Looking back on life in Ari in the 1980s, an informant remembers Soi Ari (Soi Phalolyothin 7) for its "small shops and restaurants – *moo daeng/guytio/guytio bpet*; a pawn shop; a watch repair kiosk; a shop that made picture frames and cut glass and mirrors," and continues: "At that time, the Sahakorn Co-op store was the most upscale place on Soi Ari". In those days, she recalls, her "orientation was toward Rama 6 road" (as opposed to Thanon Phaholyothin), and concludes: "On Sundays we would take a taxi to the Victory Monument to attend Mass and then get a bus, taxi or *samlor* to go back home. We passed through Soi 7 to go home, but it wasn't a place I had much to do with."

One gathers from these recollections that in the 1980s, Ari was not a destination in itself nor did the neighborhood particularly stand out in terms of its choice of restaurants or cafés. Indeed, another informant – who started working in the area in 1982 – recalls that any food options around Soi Ari were fairly limited until the mid-1980' when the first office buildings were constructed in the neighborhood. In a classic case of demand and supply dynamics, as the number of hungry office workers grew, so did the number of establishments ready to serve them.

It follows, then, that Ari's traditional foodscape – in its present form – only dates back some thirty-odd years. Regardless of its age, however, it is still considered by some to represent a more authentic, more Thai, Ari. Thus, on blog run by a long-term, anonymous, resident of the neighborhood, we find a sharp distinction between

"present-day *trendy* Ari" and "*real* Ari (e.g. noodle shops, khao moo daeng places, etc)" (Soi Ari Blah)

3.2.1 Typologies of Traditional Thai Food Establishments

In her study of public eating in Bangkok, anthropologist Gisèle Yasmeen creates a typology of eating establishments of which three categories in particular are applicable to the traditional Ari foodscape (Yasmeen 1996). These are 'stalls' (phaeng loi); 'pushcarts' (rot khen); and 'shophouses' (tuek thaeo). They are defined as follows:

"[Stalls are] defined as eating establishments located outside a fixed building, such as on a sidewalk or in a lane. A stall usually has tables and chairs which are set up at the beginning of the selling period and taken down and put away at night. Quite often, a stall will include a pushcart – in addition to tables, chairs and other furniture – as part of its basic equipment. [...] Pushcarts [...] are a crucial piece of equipment which are either part of a stall or exist independently to serve take-out customers only. Pushcarts are at times itinerant but, more often, set up at a fixed location every day. [...] Shop houses [...] are distinctive features of cities with a strong Chinese influence such as Bangkok. [...] Many older restaurants in Bangkok are located in shop houses" (Yasmeen 1996: 161-163).

Chulanee also creates a typology of traditional outlets for prepared food (Chulanee Thianthai 2003). In contrast to Yasmeen, she does not distinguish between

stalls and pushcarts and instead label the two simply as 'street vendor food' (ahan hap re or ahan khang thanon) (Chulanee Thianthai 2003: 9). Likewise, Chulanee does not operate with the 'shophouse' category, but instead simply uses the term 'restaurant' (ran ahan) thus broadening the category significantly. While Chulanee translates ran ahan (literally 'food shop') with 'restaurant', according to Yasmeen ran ahan can be used for almost any stall or restaurant where prepared food can be obtained. Thus "the only fixed criterion seems to be that the establishment should provide seating to qualify as a raan ahaan, whether these are small stools or lavish and expensive furnishings is immaterial" (Yasmeen 1996: 14).

Personal observations while researching for this thesis suggest that the two terms most commonly used to describe traditional establishments seem to be *ahan khang thanon* and *ran ahan* with *ahan khang thanon* (literally 'streetside food') being the more specific of the two terms; 'restaurant' or 'food shop' (*ran ahan*), on the other hand, can be applied to anything from a streetside stall with seating to a traditional, local shophouse establishment to a modern and thoroughly designed concept restaurant of the type which shall be discussed later in connection with the survey of the modern Ari foodscape. Accordingly, in the survey of the traditional Ari foodscape, establishments are divided into three types: Stalls/pushcarts/stands with seating, stalls/pushcarts/stands without seating, and shophouses.

3.2.2 Typologies of Traditional Thai Food

While the type of venue is an important factor for classifying an establishment as 'traditional', the type of food served also needs to be taken into account. What,

then, we may ask, is 'traditional' Thai food? Chuanee distinguishes between two types of traditional Thai cuisines: the 'high' cuisine of palace food (*ahan chao wang*) and the 'low' cuisine of village food (*ahan chao baan*). It is the latter which is most commonly found in the stalls and pushcarts along the city's streets (Chulanee Thianthai 2003: 6). Chulanee further divides traditional Thai cuisine into eight groups based on the cooking techniques used to prepare the dishes: currying and soups (*kaeng*); stir-fried (*phat*), mixed dips (eg. *nam phrik*), marinating (*yam* and *phra*), grilled (*ping*), grilled or barbequed (*yang*), deep-fried (*thot*), and steamed (*nueng*) (Chulanee Thianthai 2003: 5).

In her survey of the types of street food available in the Victory Monument area in the mid-1990s Yasmeen used six categories: noodles (*kuaitiao*), made-to-order food (*ahan tam sang*), rice and curry (*khao kaeng*), Isan food (*ahan isan*), pork/chicken rice (eg. *khao mu daeng*, *khao man kai*, etc.), and 'other' food. Included in the 'made-to-order' category are specialties such as fried rice (eg. *khao phat*), fried noodle dishes (*phat siio*, *rat na*), varieties of salads (*yam*), and fried eggs and omelets (*khai dao*, *khai chiao*), whereas the 'other' category includes foreign food, deep-fried chicken (*kai thot*), fruit (*phonla mai*), sweets (*khanom*), steamed Chinese buns (*salapao*) or dumplings (*khanom chip*), grilled or deep-fried meat- and fish balls (*luk chin*), stalls selling drinks only, etc. (Yasmeen 1996: 187-193). Since Yasmeen's categories deal specifically with local food and derive from research in an area close to Ari, these categories were also employed in the survey of the traditional Ari foodscape.

3.2.3 Defining Tradition

Just as Ari's traditional foodscape, in its present form, dates back to the 1980s, it is noteworthy that many of the above-mentioned food types, which are today considered Thai staples (eg. the coconut-based curries, the *khao man kai*, *kuaitiao*, etc.), are in fact additions to the Thai culinary landscape. Some were adopted through centuries of contact with Indian and Chinese traders, and others originated with the influx of Chinese immigrants between the middle of the nineteenth century and the middle of the twentieth (Chulanee Thianthai 2003: 7) (Peleggi 2007: 198).

Indeed, the inclusion of regional cuisines such as Isan food into the broader category of 'Thai' food is a modern phenomenon as well. Thus, in the 1950s and 1960s, the green papaya salad (*som tam*), sticky rice (*khao niao*), and grilled chicken (*kai yang*) sold on streets everywhere in the capital today, were available in Bangkok only at locations such as boxing venues and construction sites where northeasterners (*khon isan*) would gather for work or entertainment. Today, northeastern food is considered to be part of the standardized national cuisine, but the process has involved the selection and modification of a few specific dishes while others are still widely considered to be exotic country food (Esterik 1992: 182-183).

Thus, 'traditional' Thai cuisine does not, and arguably never did, consist of any set number of dishes. Rather it should be regarded as a continuous process of adopting and and adapting flavors, ingredients, and cooking methods, and any attempt to formally define it will always be of the nature of a snapshot of the process unfolding. Nonetheless, for the present purposes of documenting continuity and

change in the Ari foodscape, it is necessary to establish a popular culinary tradition against which present practices can be contrasted. In the following, then, the terms 'popular' or 'traditional' Thai food will be used about the food commonly found in the street-side pushcarts and stalls and shophouse *ran ahan* as described previously.

3.2.4 A Quantitative Survey of Ari's Traditional Foodscape

The traditional, local foodscape in Ari as of early 2015 is centered in the streets and alleys immediately around the neighborhood's BTS station, and its size varies according to the time of day. Stands and pushcarts are highly mobile, and their numbers fluctuate throughout the day. Some are present in the area around the BTS station in the morning and relocate to a different location in the afternoon. From 6 PM onwards stalls without seating become fewer and the number of those offering tables and chairs increases. One particular alley which functions as a canteen for office workers on lunch break in the daytime later turns into a venue for socializing: At night only a handful of shops specializing in Isan food remain open, and customers enjoy their meals over bottles of beer, accompanied by a guitar duo playing popular songs from a small makeshift stage parallel to the tables. It has been attempted to allow for these differences in the survey by counting the number of establishments at night as well as by day.
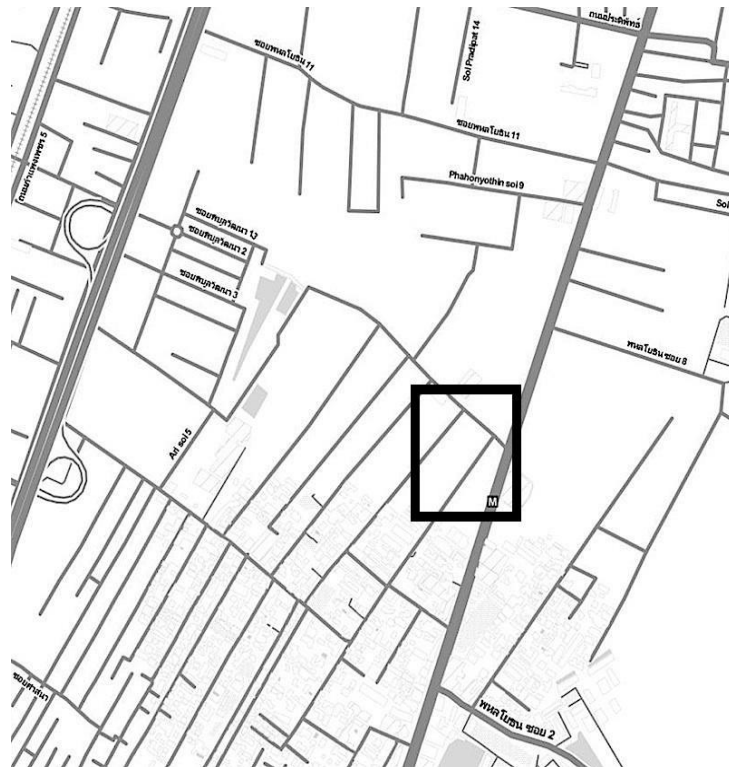
Figure 6: Approximate location of Ari's traditional foodscape
(Source: Author)

3.2.5 Results

Altogether, 111 traditional establishments, as previously defined, were identified in the survey. Of these 70, or 63 percent, were stalls, pushcarts, or stands without seating while 28, or 25 percent, were stalls, pushcarts, or stands with seating. 13 establishments, or 12 percent, were located in shop houses.

In terms of food types, 9 establishments, or 8 percent, were classified as noodle shops; 6, or 5 percent, served 'made-to-order' food; 7, or 6 percent, served curry and rice; 9, or 8 percent, cooked Isan food; and 5, or 5 percent, served variations

of chicken or pork and rice. The single largest category was 'other' food types: 75 establishments, or 68 percent, were identified as belonging to this category.

In 1994, Yasmeen, whose food typology was adopted for this survey, conducted an exhaustive quantitative survey of eating-establishments in the area around Victory Monument (Yasmeen 1996). Since no past data for Ari exists, and since the Victory Monument area is located less than two kilometers from Ari, it seems worthwhile to take a brief look at some of her findings.

Compared with the 111 establishments identified in Ari in 2015, Yasmeen identified a total of 58 in the Victory Monument area. Of these, 39.7 percent were found to be pushcarts and stalls (with and without seating), whereas 31 percent were located in shophouses. Food-wise, the largest category in Yasmeen's survey was noodles (31 percent) while a mere 6.9 percent were identified as serving food belonging to 'other' types (Yasmeen 1996: 187-193).

While it cannot be certain that the local food scene in Ari in 1994 displayed the same traits as that of the Victory Monument area, the difference between Yasmeen's survey and the present findings is nonetheless interesting, and it seems reasonable to expect that the percentage of traditional establishments in Ari selling food belonging to the category of 'other' foods was lower in the past. Likewise, the number of traditional shop house establishments may very well, at some point, have been higher than today.

But these are speculations. For now, what we may safely conclude about the state of the traditional, local food scene around the Ari BTS station as of March 2015, is that with 111 establishments serving inexpensive meals and snacks in an area measuring roughly 0.015 km² it is certainly very much a presence in the neighborhood.

3.3 Ari's Modern Foodscape

According to Philip Cornwel-Smith, author and commentator on contemporary Thai culture and design, with whom an interview was conducted as part of the research for this thesis, the modern foodscape which has emerged in Ari is in fact the "second or third wave of creative expression" in a process which began as far back as the late 1990s and early 2000s when Ari was sought out by a group of creative pioneers:

> *"Generally, anywhere in the world where there is something trendy, you can be pretty sure that the artists got there first. And this is the case in Ari. The artists got there first [...]. There was a whole community of creative arts people living in Aree Condominum. Eventually, they all got evicted, and the owner redid the condominium. There were lots of people there, many of whom I know, and they were multinational: Singaporeans, Japanese, British, Thai, American. They were all indie minded people. So there was quite a character buildup. That was really where the band Futon came to be. They were plugged into many creative networks, music, arts, fashion [...] So it was a very small world."*

At that time, Cornwel-Smith recollects, Ari was an area known for what he calls "house and garden restaurants":

> *"There are very few of those left now. It was an area you would go to because it was rather nice like that. And they were more old-school. They tended to be a biggish house sitting in a plot of land, and there was one I used to go to quite a lot on soi 2. I forget the name, but it was an old, partly wooden house, all white painted with retro-style furniture in it. It was famous for ostrich which was being farmed then in Thailand. That type of restaurant was a quite early example of what I would say are hipster elements."*

It appears that nearly all of the new establishments which emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s have disappeared as of 2015. Among these is Reflections – a hotel *cum* restaurant which opened in 2004 on Soi Ari between Soi Ari 2 and 3. The brain-child of Anusorn "Nong" Ngernyuang, a Thai exporter-importer and designer, each room in the converted apartment complex was designed by different artists, ensuring that no two rooms in the hotel were alike. A contemporary description of the lobby reads:

> "It's delightfully assaulting, with vibrantly clashing colors and floral patterns on the walls and furniture, Virgin Mary pillows on the couch and a mannequin with bug-eyed Bono glasses voguing by the check-in desk. Outside, plastic cows float in the pool. The

campy aesthetic flows into the two-story restaurant with indoor and outdoor seating, the third-floor spa and the karaoke bar, where guests and locals down large bottles of Asian beer and sing Thai tunes off-key" (Sachs 2006).

With Reflections, Ari gained media attention and began to develop into a destination for a larger audience. Indeed, in 2005, merely a year after its opening, it was referred to in the New York Times as the "emblem of creative Bangkok" (Gross 2005). In Cornwel-Smith's description, Reflections is the product of a privileged, innovative and cosmopolitan environment:

"The children of officials [residing in Ari] would probably be among the earlier types to be able to go and live abroad, or study abroad. And so they brought back ideas, and one of those was a friend of mine who founded Reflections. He lived there, and he used to live in the Netherlands, speaks Dutch, and he was possibly one of the most pivotal people in Thai design [...] And then he set up Reflections, and, you see, this was done with a Czech architect, he was Vaclav Havel's architect. So you see, it is not just anybody, these are people who have good connections."

Cornwel-Smith's description of the influx of creative individuals to Ari in the late 1990s and early 2000s brings to mind the theories of David Ley who argues that artists are important agents in the gentrification process because they emphatically

value the affordability and off-center status of gentrifiable neighborhoods, and are among the first newcomers to take up residence (Ley 2003). Likewise, Richard Florida argues that the presence of gay and bohemian populations indicates that a city or a neighborhood is attractive to what he labels the 'creative class' – scientists, artists, university professors, designers, etc. – because of its preference for tolerant and creative communities (Florida 2003). And indeed, while Thanon Pradipat near Saphan Khwai BTS station is perhaps a better-known area for gay nightlife, Ari does have at least one gay venue, Chakran, a sauna located on Soi Ari 4.

3.3.1 A Quantitative Survey of Ari's Modern Foodscape

In November 2014 an exhaustive quantitative survey of the number of restaurants in Ari was conducted for this study, the results of which were updated again in April and May 2015. Contrary to the survey of the traditional foodscape, which is essentially a snapshot of its current state, this survey aims at gauging the level of change in the modern foodscape by looking at the age of the individual establishments. In other words: When did a given establishment open? The survey was carried out between Soi Phaholyothin 5 (Soi Ratchakru) and Soi Phaholyothin 11 – the area which is the focus of this thesis. Limiting the survey to these streets means that no data was obtained from Soi Rama VI 30 and Soi Ari Samphan 1-10 as well as from Thanon Phaholyothin where a number of restaurants are also located.

Photo 3: Salt, Soi Ari. Opened 2010
(Photo by Author)

Photo 4: Isan food in Soi Ari 1
(Photo by Author)

The main criterion for including an establishment in the survey was that it could qualify neither as a traditional street food stand nor as a shophouse-style food shop as previously defined. This left geographically fixed venues with seating and a distinct name and style.

3.3.2 Results

Following the criteria mentioned above the survey identified a total of 70 restaurants and cafés in Ari (Table 1). The largest cluster of restaurants was observed on Soi Phaholyothin 7 (Soi Ari), Soi Ari 1, and Soi Ari 2 with 20, 15, and 7 restaurants respectively. Together, these *soi* account for 60 percent of Ari's restaurants and cafés. Only one *soi*, the dead-end Soi Ari 4, does not have any restaurants and remains entirely residential (Figure 5).

When looking at the supply of establishments over time, 2009 appears to be the year when Ari's present-day modern foodscape first started emerging (Figure 6) Thus, quite spectacularly, from the beginning of 2009 to mid-2015, the supply of restaurants and cafés in the neighborhood has increased by 678 percent.

The period with most activity, however, is 2013 to mid-2015: 41, or 59 percent, of the 70 establishments identified in the quantitative survey have opened within this period. With more than half of Ari's restaurants having opened for business within the last two and a half years of the survey it certainly seems reasonable to conclude that the neighborhood's foodscape is currently changing dramatically.

In terms of cuisine, 18, or 26 percent, of the restaurants were found to be serving Thai food. Another 18, or 26 percent, are cafés. That is, establishments whose main edible attraction is coffee, soft drinks, and desserts along with, in some cases, a small selection of actual dishes. 10, or 14 percent specialize in Japanese food such as sushi and ramen noodles. Other national cuisines represented in Ari include Italian (2 establishments, or 3 percent), Mexican (1 restaurant, 1 percent), Vietnamese (3 restaurants, or 4 percent). Another large group in the survey is the category of restaurants serving fusion and international cuisine. Altogether 18 establishments, or 26 percent, were identified as belonging to this relatively broad category which includes both the highly specialized (eg. gourmet hamburgers and hotdogs) and the decidedly more eclectic (eg. "Asian pizza with hoisin duck").

Year	Restaurants	Cumulative Supply
N/A	**9D Noodle** (Soi Phaholyothin 9, Thai)**, Krua Chum Sai** (Soi Phaholyothin 5, Thai), **T. House** (Soi Phaholyothin 5, Vietnamese)**, Tomyum Noodle Ari** (Soi Chamnan Aksom, Thai)	4
1993	**Baan Baitong** (Soi Chamnan Aksom, Thai)	5
1999	**Somtum Bangkok** (Soi Ari 3, Thai)	6
2000	**Baan Puengchom** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, Thai)	7
2003	**Aaari Ba Bar** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, Thai)	8
2008	**Shambaala** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, Thai)	9
2009	**Basilico** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, Italian), **Dalad** (Soi Ari 4 Nua, Vietnamese), **The Coffee Zelection** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, café), **Muse Garden** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, fusion/international), **The Nineteenth Boutique Café** (Soi Ari 1, café), **Pizza Pazza** (Soi Phaholyothin 11, Italian)	15
2010	**Fondue House** (Soi Chamnan Aksom, fusion/international)**, Salt** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, fusion/international), **Thitaya** (Soi Ari 5, café)	18
2011	**Flow** (Soi Phaholyothin 9, fusion/international)**, Oh Café** (Soi Ari 1, café), **Reflection Again** (Soi Ari 3, Thai), **Sweets Café** (Soi Ari 1, café), **Ushi Yakiniku** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, Japanese)	23
2012	**103+ Factory** (Soi Ari 4 Nua, café)**, Aree** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, Thai), **Caffe Undici** (Soi Phaholyothin 11, café), **Chubby Cheeks** (Soi Ari 4 Nua, café), **PH1b Coffee Bar** (Soi Phaholyothin 11, café), **Wholly Cow** (Soi Ari 2, fusion/international)	29
2013	**Bin Bin Long** (Soi Phaholyothin 11, Vietnamese)**, Casa Lapin X** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, café), **Double You** (Soi Ari 2, fusion/international), **Fatbird** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, fusion/international), **Hisosushi** (Soi Ari 1, Japanese), **Hor Hidden Café** (Soi Ari 1, café), **Kaizen** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, Japanese), **Kasa** (Soi Ari 2, Japanese), **OV Restaurant** (Soi Chamnan Aksom, Thai)**, Panary Café** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, café), **Pep's Diner** (Soi Ari 2, fusion/international), **Puritan** (Soi Ari 5, café), **Rock** (Soi Chamnan Aksom, fusion/international)**, Sousaku** (Soi Ari 2, Japanese), **Steve Cuisine & Café In Town** (Soi Ari 1, Thai), **Ton Chin Kan Ramen** (Soi Ari 4 Nua, Japanese), **Tonhom** (Soi Ari 5, Thai)	46
2014	**The Artwins** (Soi Phaholyothin 9, fusion/international)**, Farmily** (Soi Chamnan Aksom, café)**, Good Monday** (Soi Ari 1, Sannanapa Courtyard, café), **Lay Lao** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, Thai)**, Marlin Café** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, fusion/international), **My Coffee** (Soi Ari 1, café)**, Nong Khai Pasu** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, Thai), **Nomou Camping** (Soi Chamnan Aksom, Japanese), **O'glee** (Soi Ari 1, fusion/international), **Paper Butter & The Burger** (Soi Ari 1, Sannanapa Courtyard, fusion/international), **Park Rd. Café** (Soi Phaholyothin 11, fusion/international), **Porcupine Café** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, café), **The Roof Top** (Soi Phaholyothin 11, Thai)**, Salt Smoke** (Soi Ari 1, fusion/international), **Shinsei** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, Japanese), **Summer Street** (Soi Ari 2, Thai), **Tanyamama** (Soi Phaholyothin 5, fusion/international), **Tete Et Nez** (Soi Ari 2, fusion/international), **Zato** (Soi Ari 1, Japanese)**, Zin Kid Hotdog** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, fusion/international)	66
2015	**Be Onn Osaka Japanese Bread** (Soi Ari 1, Sannanapa Courtyard, Japanese), **Casa Azul** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, Mexican), **Gu** (Soi Ari 1, Sannanapa Courtyard, Thai), **Like A Mountain** (Soi Ari 1, Sannanapa Courtyard, café)	70

Table 1: Restaurants by year
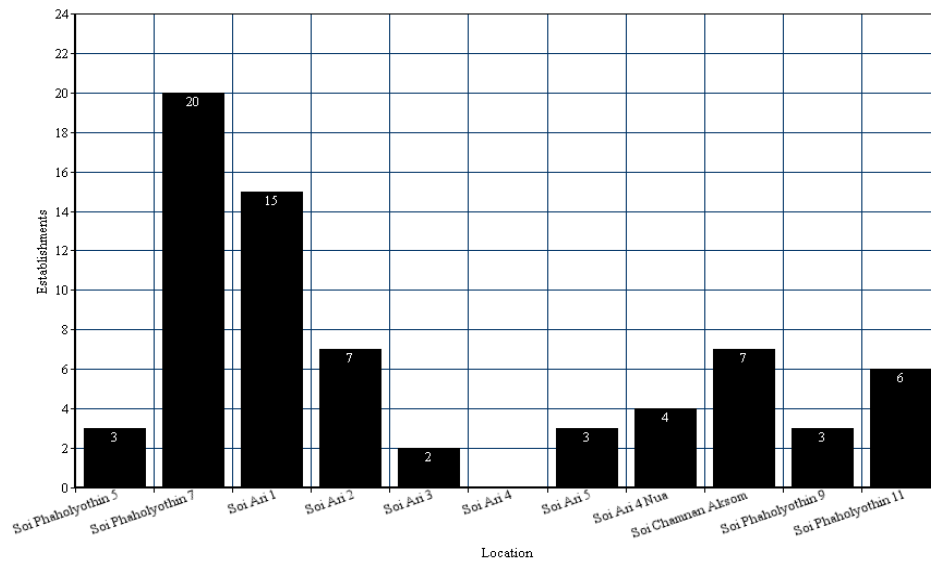**(Source: Author)**

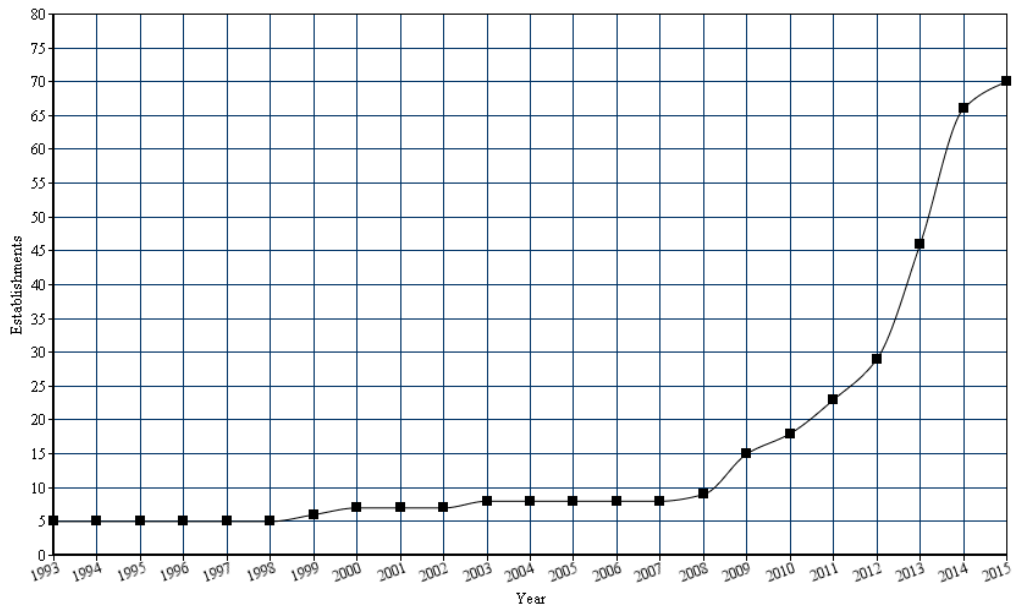*Figure 7: Establishments by location*
(Source: Author)

Figure 8: Cumulative establishment supply 1993-2015
(Source: Author)

Combining the above data in terms of age and cuisine the numbers are as follows: Of the 41 establishments which have opened between 2013 and 2015, a total of 8, or 20 percent, serve Thai food; 9, or 22 percent, are cafés, an additional 9, or 22 percent, serve Japanese cuisine, and 13, or 32 percent, specialize in fusion and international food. Vietnamese and Mexican establishments are each represented by 1 establishment, or 2 percent, respectively. In short, 80 percent of establishments which have opened in Ari between 2013 and 2015 do not serve Thai food.

Prior to 2009, when Ari's modern foodscape started emerging, however, the composition was quite different. Thus, of the nine restaurants which opened between 1993 and 2008, 8, or 89 percent, serve Thai food. While this number includes restaurants for which an opening year could not be established, and does not account for establishments which have opened and closed during this period, it still seems quite safe to conclude that Ari's appetite for Thai cuisine was greater in the past than it is today.

3.3.3 Commercial Gentrification and Characteristics of the Modern Ari Foodscape

According to Zukin et al., the emergence of particular types of restaurants, cafés, and stores in a neighborhood happens as the result of an influx of "new entrepreneurial" retail capital in a process known as 'commercial gentrification' (Zukin et al. 2009: 58). The new businesses are characterized by "a recognizably hip, chic, or trendy atmosphere, offering innovative or value-added products (e.g.,

designer furniture or clothing, gourmet food) and enjoying a buzz factor in promotion, including heavy press coverage and online presence" (Zukin et al. 2009: 62).

The process is pioneered by entrepreneurs who may either be outsiders seizing an economic opportunity offered by a neighborhood's changing population, or they may themselves belong to the new population and be acting in the cultural and social interests of their community. The increasing presence of 'boutique' businesses signals that an area is safe for commercial investment, and larger players enter the market. This process, Zukin et al. argue, eventually leads to an increase in 'corporate' retail capital in the form of chain stores and franchises and a decline in the number of old, local retail stores.

3.3.3.1 Aesthetics

In the case of Ari, there has certainly been a remarkable rise in the number of restaurants and cafés with a "recognizably hip, chic, or trendy atmosphere". Indeed, aesthetics and atmosphere is a major concern to the neighborhood's new entrepreneurs. It is interesting to note that particularly cafés and establishments in the international and fusion category – the two categories which, along with Japanese cuisine, have increased the most from 2013 to 2015 – tend to be more creatively designed than others. Indeed, décor, ambiance and clientele, rather than cuisine, is actually what may set two otherwise similar establishments apart. The 26-year-old male architect and co-owner of Porcupine Café, a successful coffee shop which opened in 2014 on Soi Ari, explains:

"I don't have my own style. I just want to create something new and special. Actually, this place is not my style. I think about what style is popular and how to make a chill and cool place for the customer. [...] I get my inspiration following art and design on the internet. It took two months to finish this place. The name Porcupine doesn't have any meaning. It sounds cool and I can develop some things around it as I go along. A porcupine has a unique form, and I can use it to create new products, cakes, or whatever."

Pondering the ability of Porcupine Café to stay afloat in an increasingly competitive environment, the blog Soi Ari Blah (2014) refers to the aesthetics of Porcupine Café as symptomatic of Bangkok's affluent neighborhoods:

"Porcupine is another attempt that I just can't figure out. Soi Ari might be able to support yet another cute little cafe with cute drinks and cute things and cute cookies and cute chairs and cute cakes and cute pillows and cute stuffed animals and so on, it's tough to say. The demand for cute things seems inexhaustible in Bangkok's wealthier areas. Never bet against 100% pure narak ["cuteness"] in wealthy parts of Bangkok." (Soi Ari Blah)

Another informant, a 27-year-old male who in December 2014 launched a burger shack in Soi Ari 1's recently renovated Sannanapa courtyard, also emphasizes

the importance of design and style in marketing an establishment. His 29-year-old girlfriend and business partner holds a degree in graphic design, and her skills in designing both logo and menu has made 'Paper Butter & The Burger', as the venue is called, a visually desirable location to share on social media such as Instagram where the small shop as of April 2015 counts 5,869 followers. In March 2015, just three months after its opening, Paper Butter & The Burger was featured in Bangkok Post as an example of Ari's claim to the title of "hipster central of the culinary scene"(Jarupat Buranastidporn 2015).

In other words, while the type and quality of food in a given establishment is certainly a factor to be taken into account, the style, design, and culture projected by the new venues is arguably just as important for their success. Thus, the first paragraph of a 2013-review of the restaurant Fatbird reads:

> "Fatbird has quickly forged a reputation as a comfortable yet cool hangout spot. And it's easy to see see why. The renovated shophouse radiates a very hip and homey vibe, with its vintage furniture, dangling light fittings and retro knick-knacks strewn across pale wood and exposed brick. The result is something approaching English country manor chic, all backed with a nice, not-too-challenging indie soundtrack" (BK Magazine April 25, 2013).

The review concludes:

> "[If] you bypass the below-par menu, Fatbird is actually a very
> inviting spot for groups of grazing hipsters and couples on indie
> dates" *(BK Magazine April 25, 2013).*

3.3.3.2 Cuisine

As is evident from the results of the quantitative survey, the cuisine of Ari's modern foodscape ranges widely, from Japanese sashimi and traditional Thai dishes, over Mediterranean calamari, to artisan burgers, craft beer, and drip-brewed coffee. In spite of the obvious differences between these types of food, certain common elements can nonetheless be identified: emphasis on quality, authenticity, and innovation, and, particularly in the case of the café and fusion/international categories, a high degree of awareness of international food trends. The preoccupation with quality, authenticity, and innovation results in what Zukin et al. refer to as "value-added products" (Zukin et al. 2009: 58).

In other words, the food does more than just fill the customers' stomachs, as illustrated by the following excerpt from the website of the restaurant 'Steve in Town' which opened in 2013:

> "Khun Pat and I want to open a Thai restaurant - a place where
> teenagers or family can hang out. Today, I don't see much of new
> Thai restaurants around Bangkok anymore. This might be because

the making of Thai food takes quite a lot of processes, ingredients and time. The chef with skills to master Thai food cooking might also be rare. So Khun Pat and I intend to make a Thai restaurant that attracts younger generation which tend to turn to Japanese or other foreign fusion food nowadays. I am not sure whether opening a Thai restaurant in town is a good idea or not. If this doesn't work, what can we do? I guess we will just need to close it down and let Thai food fade away from today mainstream" (Steve in Town).

While the product on offer cannot be considered innovative as such, the description skillfully invokes authenticity (family-owned business and a love of traditional Thai cuisine), quality (ingredients), and skill (trained chefs), all of which combine to add value to the food.

The above quotation also displays sentiments similar to what sociologist James Farrer refers to as "culinary nationalism", understood as a strong preference for one's own national cuisine, in his study of the culinary geography of high cuisine in Shanghai and Tokyo (Farrer 2010: 10). Not surprisingly, establishments specializing in other cuisines than Thai food do not exhibit such culinary nationalism. Instead, they emphasize the authenticity of the foreign origins of their cuisine. Thus the website of the restaurant 'Salt', which opened in late 2010 and remains one of the most popular fusion/international establishments in Ari, features the following description:

"Salt Ari is a fine dining restaurant with wine and cocktail bar serving japanese sushi and sashimi from its sushi bar, authentic pizza from its wood fired pizza oven, french cuisine from its kitchen" (Salt).

Farrer refers to the ascription of intrinsic value to western cuisine as a "positive culinary Occidentalism" but notes that in the case of China, "western restaurants are primarily discussed in terms of their environmental qualities, such as décor, atmosphere and service, rather than tastes" (Farrer 2010: 10). In contrast, he argues, Japan appears "more deeply penetrated by foreign tastes", and he observes "an unreflective and casual mixing of Japanese, western and Asian foods" (Farrer 2010: 11).

Thailand arguably falls somewhere between these two attitudes: While Thais are certainly very fond of their national cuisine, and care a great deal about aesthetics and ambiance as well, the country's urban population also has a long history of enjoying foreign foods (or adapting them to their liking). The fact that in a recent international survey 34 percent of Thai leisure travelers cited food as a critical factor for choosing which countries to visit, can be viewed as testimony to the country's relaxed and open attitude towards the consumption of foreign foods (Tourism Authority of Thailand Newsroom 2014).

The last type of cuisine to be considered here is Japanese food. While highly different from the taste(s) of traditional Thai food, the Thai middle class appear to

have embraced Japanese cuisine to such a degree that in 2012 8.6 percent of all restaurants in Bangkok were Japanese, second only to establishments serving Thai cuisine. The growth in restaurants in Ari specializing in Japanese cuisine must thus be seen as part of a nationwide, mainstream, trend in which the number of Japanese restaurants in Thailand more than doubled between 2007 and 2012 to a total of 1,676 (Shimbun 2012).

3.3.3.3 Media

According to Zukin et al. (2009) and lkucan & Sandıkcı (2005), media can facilitate change in the commercial landscape of a neighborhood by branding it through stories and images. In the case of Ari there has indeed been a steady rise in media coverage of the neighborhood.

Asia City Media Group's bi-weekly free English language print publication and online media BK Magazine – which bills itself as "the insider's guide to Bangkok" – is among the media which have covered the developments in Ari's modern foodscape most extensively. A search for 'Ari' on the publication's website yields a total of 111 articles in which Ari is mentioned. Of these, only 7 articles were published prior to 2009 – the year in which Ari's modern foodscape first started emerging. 2009, 2010 and 2011 saw a combined total of 32 articles, whereas 2012, 2013, 2014, and the first four months of 2015 produced 21, 24, 27 and 11 articles respectively. Of the total of 111 articles, 81 articles, or 73 percent, are filed under 'restaurants'.

Judging by the number of articles it would seem that the readers of BK Magazine are likely to avail themselves of Ari's modern foodscape. According to the Asia City Media Group's 'media kit', an information sheet for prospective advertisers, BK Magazine has a circulation of 30,000 and an estimated readership of 90,000 (Asia City Media Group 2015). Under the heading "Our Powerful, Active Readers", BK Magazine describes its audience as follows:

> "The local English-reading Thai population makes up the majority of our readers. One thing all our readers have in common is they are committed residents of Bangkok with impressive spending power. We speak directly to the city's most affluent and active young professionals" (Asia City Media Group 2015).

Listed below this introduction to the magazine's readers are key statistics. For instance, 71 percent are in the "prime" 21-40 age range; 92 percent are Thai residents; 75 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher; 59 percent make more than 60,000 Baht per month; and 94 percent travel internationally. The readers of BK Magazine, and likely patrons of Ari's restaurants, bars, and cafés, are, in other words, young, affluent, well-educated, cosmopolitan Thais.

CHAPTER 4: ARI'S CHANGING LANDSCAPE

4.1 A Brief Introduction to Condominiums in Bangkok

Condominiums first appeared as a type of housing in Bangkok with the Condominium Act of 1979 which allowed for multiple ownership of single land blocks. The first condominium to be completed was Siam Penthouse on Sukhumvit Soi 8 in 1981. The first big wave of condominium launches, however, happened in the years between 1989 and up to the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997. During this period, more than 29,000 condominium units were completed in downtown Bangkok (CBRE Global Research 2015: 6). In the wake of the 1997-crisis the number of developers dropped sharply from 2000 to just 200 companies, and launches of new condominium projects were few and far between (Sonthya Vanichvatana 2007: 45).

However, as Thailand's economy eventually recovered, so did the real estate sector, and in 2002 a second condominium cycle began in Bangkok (CBRE Global Research 2015: 6). Thus, from 2004 to 2012 the cumulative supply of condominium units in Bangkok almost doubled from around 185,000 to around 355,000 (Colliers International Thailand 2012:2).

While the first wave of condominium projects in Bangkok was focused on luxury developments in the central entertainment and business districts and lower-cost developments in in suburban areas, the second wave has been highly influenced by the introduction of mass transit (Moore 2012:105). Since the opening of the elevated Bangkok Mass Transit System (BTS) in 1999 and the underground Metropolitan

Rapid Transit (MRT) in 2004, developers have increasingly aimed to build close to existing transit lines and stations and along their planned extensions. The focus on such new locations can partly be explained with the price of prime sites in Bangkok continuously appreciating due to fierce competition among developers and a limited supply of land. This significant rise in development activity in outlying areas, however, has driven up land prices across the network (Raimon Land Public Company Limited 2013: 10).

4.2 Condominiums in Ari

In spite of its relatively central location, Colliers International Thailand locates Ari in the so-called 'northern fringe' of urban Bangkok: an area along the BTS route starting from Ratchathewi Station to Mo Chit Station to the north and the MRT route starting from Petchaburi station to Bangsue Station to the north. In 2012, the northern fringe was the most popular area with developers as evidenced by the fact that approximately 15 percent of the total number of condominium units launched during the year were located there (Colliers International Thailand 2012:12). Within the northern fringe, Thanon Phaholyothin, on which Soi Ari is located, has proven particularly popular. Thus, in a 2013-interview the managing director of a property development company explains. Within the northern fringe, Thanon Phaholyothin, on which Soi Ari is located, has proven particularly popular. Thus, in a 2013-interview the managing director of a property development company explains:

"Inner Phaholyothin is a high-potential business area. From research and analysis, the location is ranked one of the top 10 business areas in Bangkok with the growth of vertical development. Currently, there are large office buildings with many sources of jobs. Definitely, following this is the development of condominium projects to support working people and people whose purchasing power is at the B+ level. Transportation is very convenient; that is, the road network, and proximity to the expressway and the mass-transit lines of the BTS Skytrain and the MRT. It is one of the favourite locations for developers" (Somluck Srimalee 2013).

Indeed, as early as 2009 the English language daily Bangkok Post described Soi Ari as a "booming hot spot" for condominiums and recounted how Noble Development had closed sales of its 930-million-baht Noble Reform, with 198 units priced at an average 95,000 baht-per-square-metre, within four hours of its launch (Kanana Katharangsiporn 2009).
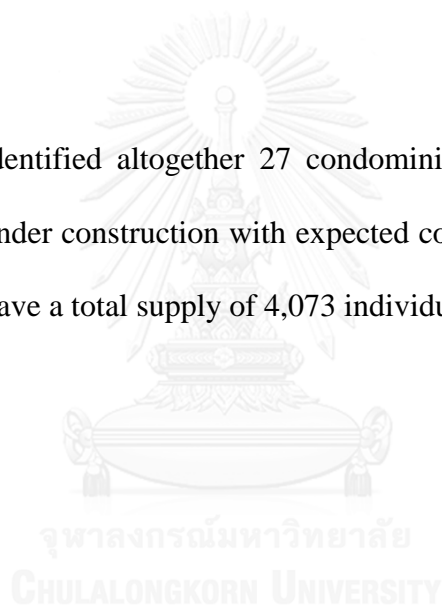
Today, in 2015, two years after its completion, the average asking price per square metre in Noble Reform is 149,000 baht – testimony that Ari's popularity extends beyond the supply side, and that the neighborhood certainly also appeals to those who are in the market to buy a condominium.

4.2.1 A Quantitative Survey of Condominiums in Ari

In November 2014, a quantitative survey of condominiums in Ari was prepared for this thesis alongside the surveys of the traditional and modern foodscapes. The objective was to take stock of the number of condominium buildings and individual units in the neighborhood, and to see how these numbers had changed over time. Again, the condominium survey was carried out between Soi Phaholyothin 5 (Soi Ratchakru) and Soi Phaholyothin 11 – the area which is the focus of this thesis.

4.2.2 Results

The survey identified altogether 27 condominium buildings in Ari, two of which are currently under construction with expected completion in 2016. Upon their completion Ari will have a total supply of 4,073 individual condominium units (Table 2).

Year	Building	Cumulative Unit Supply
1993	**Centurion Park** (Soi Ari 5, 202 units, N/A)	202
1996	**Baan Yoswadi** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, 55 units, 18 floors) **Chavana Place** (Soi Ari 4, 34 units, 14 floors)	291
2000	**Royal Park** (Soi Ari 2, 83 units, 8 floors)	374
2001	**Adamas Phaholyothin** (Soi Ari 4, 71 units, 16 floors)	445
2005	**Centric Place** (Soi Ari 4 Nua, 77 units, 8 floors)	522
2006	**Noble Lite** (Soi Ari 1, 217 units, 24 floors)	739
2007	**Aree Place** (Soi Ari 2, 250 units, 10 floors) **Centric Scene Phahol-Ari** (Soi Phaholyothin 9, 206 units, 24 floors)	1,195
2008	**Centric Scene Ari 2** (Soi Ari 2, 79 units, 8 floors) **The Signature Residence** (Soi Ari 2, 22 units, 7 floors)	1,296
2009	**The Aree Condominium** (Soi Ari 4, 51 units, 8 floors)	1,347
2010	**The Fah** (Soi Ari 4, 44 units, 8 floors) **The Fine** (Soi Ari 4, 79 units, 8 floors) **Silk Phaholyothin-Aree 2** (Soi Ari 2, 79 units, 8 floors) **Le Monaco Residence** (Soi Phaholyothin 11, 68 units, 30 floors)	1,617
2011	**Chateau In Town** (Soi Phaholyothin 11, 79 units, 8 floors, 2011) **Noble Reflex** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, 205 units, 20 floors, 2011) **The Vertical Aree** (Soi Ari 1, 189 units, 25 floors)	2,090
2012	**The Crest** (Soi Phaholyothin 11, 163 units, 30 floors) **Harmony Living** (Soi Phaholyothin 11, 176 units, 8 floors, 2 buildings) **Le Rich** (Soi Ari 2, 73 units, 8 floors)	2,502
2013	**Noble Reform** (Soi Phaholyothin 7, 191 units, 22 floors)	2,693
2014	**Noble Red** (Soi Ari 1, 272 units, 23 floors) **Silk Phaholyothin 9** (Soi Phaholyothin 9, 109 units, 8 floors)	3,074
2016	**Centric Ari Station** (Soi Ari 1, 516 units, 30 floors, 2 buildings) **Noble Revolve** (Soi Ari 1, 483 units, 38 floors, 2 buildings)	4,073

Table 2: Condominium buildings by year
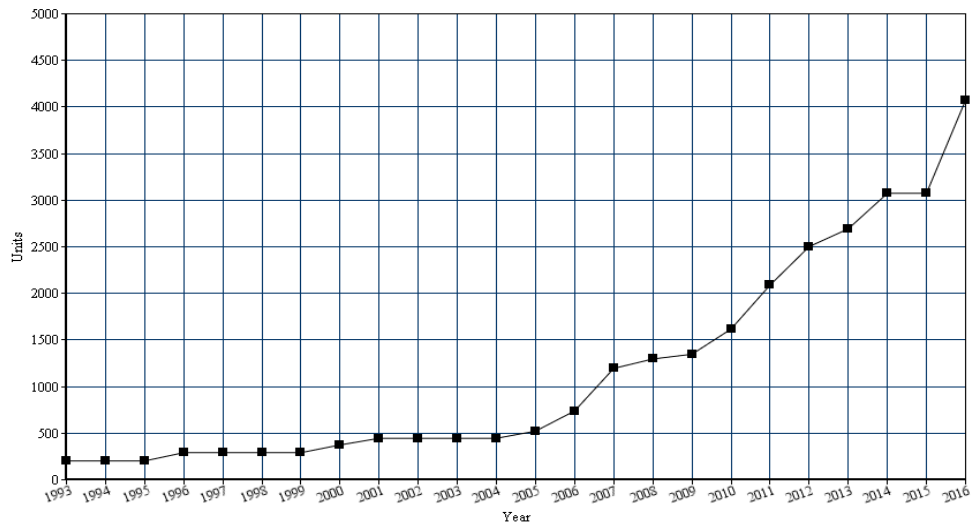***(Source: Author)***

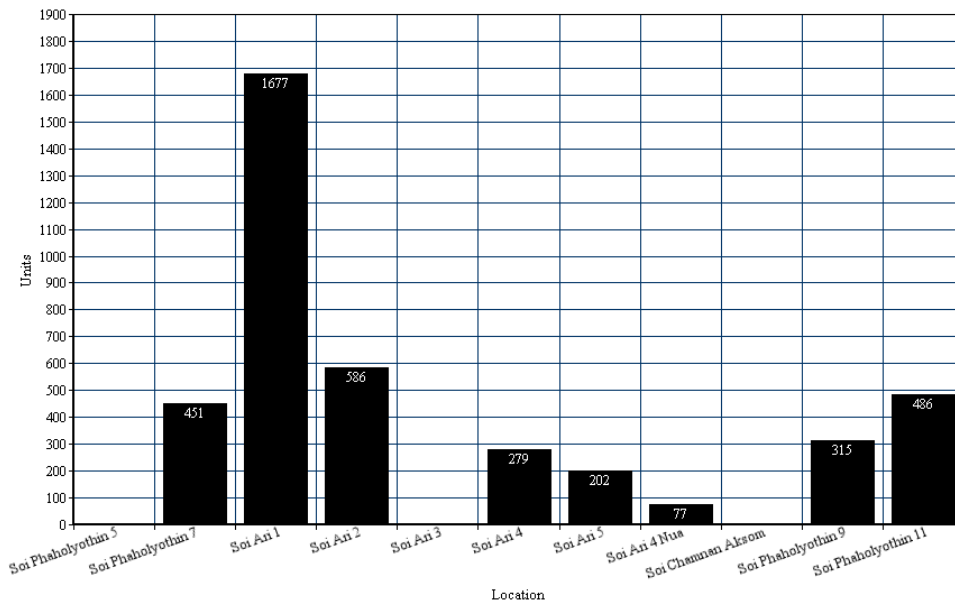*Figure 9: Cumulative unit supply 1993-2016*

(Source: Author)

Figure 10: Units by location
(Source: Author)

The earliest condominium building in Ari – the 202 unit Centurion Park – was completed in 1993 on Soi Ari 5. Three years later, in 1996, an additional two buildings were completed on Soi Phaholyothin 7 (Soi Ari) and Soi Ari 4 respectively, bringing the neighborhood's total unit count up to 291. No buildings were completed from 1997 to 1999. 2000 and 2001 saw the completion of two buildings which brought the unit total up to 445 where it remained until 2005.

Between 2005 and 2010, a total of eleven buildings were completed which brought the total number of condominium buildings in Ari up to sixteen. During the same period the number of units more than tripled from 522 to 1,617.

From 2011 to 2015, an additional nine buildings have been completed in Ari and the number of units has grown to 3,074. As stated previously, two large projects are scheduled for completion in 2016, and once completed an additional 999 units will be added to the neighborhood's cumulative unit supply (Figure 7).

In terms of location, there are significant differences between the eleven *sois* included in the survey (Figure 8). Three *soi* are entirely without condominium buildings, and among the remaining eight, three *soi* – Soi Phaholyothin 7, Soi Ari 1, and Soi Ari 2 – account for 67 percent (2,714 units) of Ari's total unit supply and 52 percent (14 buildings) of the neighborhood's condominium buildings.

Photo 5: Noble Reflex on Soi Ari. Completed in 2011
(Photo by Author)

Photo 6: Aaari Ba Bar in Soi Ari. Located in a typical shop house
(Photo by Author)

4.2.3 Analysis

When comparing the results of the survey with the larger context of Bangkok it is obvious that Ari was never hit by the big condominium wave of the 1990s. Indeed, as the survey shows, only five buildings were completed prior to 2005. This corresponds with Askew's observation, that during the 1990s condominiums in Bangkok were primarily being developed in the entertainment and business districts of the center of the city (Askew 2002: 234). While not a business district per se, since the 1980s Ari has in fact gradually become home to several office buildings, and today large private companies such as Kasikornbank, IBM, AIS, EXIM Bank, as well as the headquarters of the governmental Revenue Department, are all located in the neighborhood.

As previously stated, the next cycle of condominium launches began in 2002, and it appears that Ari has been considered a desirable location by developers from around this time. Thus, from 2005 and onwards the supply of units has been growing rapidly. Where the total unit supply in Bangkok roughly doubled between 2004 and 2012, the number of condominium units in Ari increased by more than 460 percent during the same period.

It is also from 2005 onwards that we see a tendency towards buildings clustering in the streets closest to the BTS station: Soi Phaholyothin 7, Soi Ari 1, and Soi Ari 2. Accordingly, Soi Ari 1 – which is currently the soi with the greatest number of condominium units in Ari – had its first condominium building completed in 2006. In 2016, ten years later, the number of units in Soi Ari 1 will have increased by more

than 670 percent. Again, this trend appears to follow the patterns of the second condominium cycle in which developers have increasingly aimed to build close to existing transit lines and stations and along their planned extensions. It thus seems safe to conclude that the overall patterns of condominium construction in Ari have roughly followed the general trend in Bangkok since 2002.

4.2.4 Place-identity

There are, however, points where Ari stands out from the wider context of Bangkok. Moore describes how new condominium projects located near the extensions of the BTS line are marketed by their developers by constructing a "place-identity" which associates the buildings with the icons of the city center while ignoring their immediate surroundings (Moore 2012). Thus, Moore argues, marketing is "an exercise in place-making that positions the condominiums squarely within the world of the Skytrain and its facilities, whilst clearly differentiating it from and overlooking its local context and the negative attributes of a large city" (Moore 2012:110).

The condominium buildings of Bangkok, then, are serene and hassle-free nodes on a fast and efficient mass transit network extending all the way to the airport. Dislodged from local context and participating in a global network of similar sites, they resemble non-places: un-relational, ahistorical, anonymous (Augé 1995).

The condominiums of Ari are also marketed through the construction of place-identity. In contrast to Moore's cases, however, developers in Ari often refer explicitly to the local context of the buildings. Thus, SC Asset promises the prospective buyers of their 516 unit Centric Ari Station on Soi Ari 1, which is scheduled for completion in 2016, a "slow and cozy life under shady environment of big trees perfectly combined with aesthetic feelings of Ari neighbourhood". Further up the street, Noble Development's Noble Red is described as being a "quick step from the distinguished flavors of Ari living" while Sansiri's The Vertical Aree from 2011 simply states, "It's Aree. It's me."

In other words, Ari has become its own brand, and a particular aesthetic and a certain distinguished lifestyle and cosmopolitan identity is ascribed to the neighborhood. Ari's brand is made visible through its new restaurants and is, as **(Ilkucan and Sandıkcı 2005)**note, further enhanced in the stories and images articulated about the neighborhood in social and conventional media (Ilkucan and Sandıkcı 2005).

In fact, Ari's brand has become so established that apparently it can even be used to market condominiums in other neighborhoods. In March 2015, to market its 841 unit and 43 storey mega-project The Line near Mo Chit BTS station, Sansiri sponsored an article in BK Magazine about bicycling culture in Ari. In the article, Nueng, the owner of the bicycle shop Tokyobike, explains why his company chose Ari over other locations:

"We were looking at different locations, from Hua Lamphong to Silom
and Thonglor – places we were more familiar with – and we finally
realized that even though those places are bustling with urban energy, Ari
stands out for its community. The atmosphere here is of a small, friendly,
livable village. There are hip events and new happenings – not as many or
as flashy as those in Thonglor, but just enough to keep the neighborhood
lively" (BK Magazine March 30, 2015).

While the article extolls the qualities of Ari, Mo Chit and Chatuchak are barely
mentioned except for their relative proximity to Ari. On the project's official
webpage, The Line is described as a "lifestyle hub set amidst Ari, Chatuchak
Weekend Market and Central". It appears, then, that Ari has joined the ranks of the
iconic places of the city to which more mundane locations must provide fast and
efficient transportation in order to be considered desirable residences.

4.2.5 Continuity, Change, Resistance

In the BK Magazine interview, Neung refers to Ari as a "small, friendly,
livable village," and indeed, the neighborhood is characterized by its quiet, tree-lined
residential sois. Except for the shophouse buildings lining the main commercial artery
of Soi Ari (Soi Phaholyothin 7) , until recently most housing in Ari consisted of large
villas set in lush gardens and inhabited by families with longstanding military and
government connections. A case in point is the so-called 'Ratchakru Group', a
conglomerate of six related families whose influence stretches back to the military
coup in 1947. The Ratchakru Group boasts a prime minister, several deputy prime

ministers and numerous ministers and is named after the street in Ari where most of its members resided: Soi Ratchakru (Soi Phaholyothin 5) (Rangsivek 2013: 49).

In an interview conducted for this thesis, author Philip Cornwel-Smith characterizes Ari as a traditionally privileged and affluent neighborhood. "In Ari," he notes, "you would have among the highest concentrations of people who would send their children abroad, along with, say, middle Sukhumvit between Nana and Thong Lor."

It appears that a large part of Ari's appeal lies in its particular, traditional landscape: its built environment exemplified by the prevalence of houses over other types of residences. Prae Piromya, co-owner of the neighborhood restaurant Pla Dib, explains:

> "I've been told there's a certain mathematical ratio to measure the friendliness of a neighbourhood. The height of the average building should be the same as the width of a street – and it's quite so in Ari. [...] In other parts of Bangkok, there are lot of tall buildings, but Ari has kept more of a Thai identity, and even with all its international influences, it still looks very much like the neighbourhood I grew up in" (Eichblatt 2014: 67).

With reference to Thanon Sukhumvit, a Bangkok street well-known for its nightlife and high-rise buildings, a 2006-article points to the connection between Ari's traditional inhabitants and its landscape:

"Many old and respected Thai families live in the area; their generations-old compounds keep many building projects from breaking ground. Otherwise, Ari would likely be developed into a second Sukhumvit" (Altman January 5, 2006).

However, as evidenced by the results of the survey of condominium buildings in Ari, the landscape of the neighborhood has gradually been changing its character. Thus, in 2009, an article in BK Magazine observed:

"Ari has long been known as a residential neighborhood popular with the city's well-to-do residents in search of a quiet village feel, wide choice of restaurants and excellent links to the rest of the city. But is that peace and quiet under threat? Take a walk around the area and you can't help notice the rash of new condos sprouting up, replacing the stately family homes of old. Does it spell the beginning of the end? We can't predict the future but some locals are already beginning to grumble. We say head there now to enjoy the unique vibe before it disappears forever" (Sarita Urupongsa 2009).

The 27 condominium buildings which have been constructed in Ari since 1993 are, in other words, viewed as alien to the neighborhood and perceived as a potential threat to its traditional appeal: the "peace and quiet" found amidst the "stately family homes of old".

One senses in these statements and quotations a desire to protect what Zukin refers to as 'authenticity' – the continuity of everyday experience in a given place (Zukin 2010). Loss of authenticity, or origins, Zukin argues, happens a result of neighborhood gentrification, that is, the movement of wealthy people into working class neighborhoods and the ensuing upgrading or demolition of existing housing.

Ari is not a working class neighborhood, however, and residential change is voluntary and pragmatic. As an informant reasoned, its old houses sit on very valuable land, and when new generations inherit such property from their parents the land is sold to divide the inheritance among the siblings. In short, there is no evidence of residential displacement.

Still, there is little doubt that the condominium buildings which have been constructed in Ari have altered the neighborhood, and for some residents the changes are not welcome. Thus, in 2012, a developer's plan to construct a 37-floor and a 20-floor condominium building with altogether 555 units on Soi Ari 4 Nua was brought to a halt by local residents citing the Building Control Act which at the time prohibited the construction of buildings higher than 23 storeys on *soi* less than 10

metres wide (The Nation 2012). As of 2015, the plot of land still remains undeveloped.

Besides the visible impact on the neighborhood, the rapid growth of condominium buildings is also likely to alter the demographics of Ari considerably. Ari is located in Bangkok's Phaya Thai District which in 2013 had an average population density of 7,555 per square kilometer (Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) 2013). With the completion of the 999 units in Soi Ari 1 in 2016 the number of condominium units in Ari – which measures roughly 1 square kilometer – will have increased by 1,380 since 2013. Assuming that each new unit is occupied by at least one person and that Ari's population density mirrors the average of its district, in 2016 the neighborhood's population will have increased by more than 18 percent in just three years.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This study has been an exploration of two highly visible signs of urban change in the Bangkok neighborhood of Ari: the emergence of new types of restaurants and cafés and the construction of condominium buildings. Being, to the best of our knowledge, the first research ever conducted on the forces at work when a neighborhood in Bangkok rises to prominence, in popular cultural terms, the modest aim of this study has primarily been to document, identify, and relate, and not to overly theorize.

5.1 Summary of the Study

Chapter 2 served as a general introduction to Ari and the origins of the neighborhood. Chapter 3 documented how Ari has witnessed a remarkable increase in the number of restaurants and cafés characterised by particular cuisines and aesthetics since 2009, and how media attention has contributed to branding the neighborhood as a culinary destination for Bangkok's young and affluent. It was also suggested that the process of change was in fact initiated as far back as the late 1990s and early 2000s when certain groups of creative individuals took up residence in Ari. The modern restaurants and cafés which have emerged in the neighborhood are generally characterized by a hip atmosphere and an innovative, or at least highly aestheticized, design aimed at attracting a particular set of customers and media attention. Likewise, it was shown how cuisines other than Thai are served in the majority of the new establishments.

While a distinctly modern and cosmopolitan foodscape has thus evolved in Ari, the neighborhood has, however, retained a traditional, local, foodscape in the area around the BTS station. Here, price and convenience, not aesthetics, are the main concern. While the rest of Ari is rapidly changing, the street-food stands and basic shop house food-shops lend the neighborhood an authenticity the new restaurants and cafés are unable to provide.

However, it was also suggested that the traditional foodscape evolved into its present, 'authentic' form as a response to the increasing demand of office workers employed in buildings were constructed in the area in the 1980s and 1990s.

Next, Chapter 4 documented the emergence of condominium buildings in Ari and showed how the supply of units in the neighborhood has increased rapidly since 2005. It was demonstrated that the neighborhood is considered a desirable location by developers because of its proximity to a BTS station but also because Ari has become a valuable brand in terms of lifestyle, thanks in large part to the neighborhood's new restaurants and cafés but also due to Ari's reputation as a quiet and safe environment in the midst of a busy city, as exemplified for instance by its 'bikeability'. Indeed, it was further shown how condominium projects in other neighborhoods now market themselves on the basis of their proximity to Ari.

5.2 Discussion

Who, then, we may ask, are the agents facilitating the changes described above? The first part of the hypothesis for this study states that external factors, such

as the completion of the BTS in 1999 and the emergence of office buildings, acted as initial facilitators. As we have seen, the office buildings have played a large part in shaping Ari's present-day traditional foodscape. Likewise, the neighborhood's location on the BTS line has undoubtedly encouraged condominium developers to build in Ari. Additionally, the BTS offers visitors quick and convenient access to Ari's modern foodscape.

The latter part of the hypothesis for this study states that subsequent stages of change in Ari (e.g. the emergence of the modern foodscape and the rapid increase in condominium units) have been driven and characterized by more intangible phenomena such as atmosphere, style, social class and values. As we have seen, the restaurants and cafés of the modern foodscape are created by entrepreneurs, the majority of whom are acutely aware of the importance of aesthetics and cuisine in attracting style-conscious and affluent customers. And at the same time, stories and images from Ari in the press function as propagators of an undefined, yet apparently highly desirable, ideal Ari lifestyle. The creative community of the 1990s and early 2000s, and the opening of the art hotel Reflections, have arguably also contributed in shaping the neighborhoods special appeal.

However, as to the decision of condominium developers to build in Ari, while projects certainly benefit from Ari's brand there are simply too many 'tangible' factors at play to ascribe it to atmosphere, style, social class and values. Thus, as to

whether the hypothesis has been proved correct or not, the answer must be – largely – yes.

The case of Ari is fascinating in that it is difficult to match entirely with existing models of urban change. Many of the dynamics at play are similar to gentrification, but given that Ari has always been a privileged and affluent neighborhood there has been no displacement of an original disadvantaged population. Indeed, the condominium buildings are not replacing slums but stately family homes. The emergence of Ari's modern foodscape, however, so closely resembles commercial gentrification that this may be indeed what is occurring. While Ari's traditional foodscape is apparently largely unthreatened, retail space along the main commercial arteries of Soi Ari and Soi Ari 1 is becoming increasingly expensive, and it seems highly unlikely that traditional businesses – food as well as retail – will not eventually be taken over by new entrepreneurial capital.

Finally, how does the case of Ari relate to previous studies of 'place' in Bangkok? If one accepts O'Connor's proposition that to the Thai, Bangkok consists of named places that come into being through the activities associated with them, then Ari certainly has become such a place. Or, perhaps it always was, and what has changed is simply what happens there.

5.3 Contribution to Thai Studies

If it is true, as Marc Askew contends, that to understand Bangkok is to understand Thailand (and vice versa), then any study that opens up new ways of thinking about the city, or draws scholarly attention to contemporary urban phenomena in the context of Bangkok, implicitly adds to the body of knowledge in the field of Thai Studies. However, in more specific terms: While the general theme of urban change is certainly not alien to Thai Studies, studies of privileged neighborhoods undergoing change, and documentation of the processes at work when a place in Bangkok catches the attention of real estate developers, entrepreneurs, the media, and a young, cosmopolitan élite, have – until now – been non-existent. Additionally, it is believed that this thesis represents the first considerations of commercial gentrification as an explanatory model of contemporary urban change within the context of Thai Studies.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

The case of Ari raises a number of tantalizing questions. For instance, who are the young, affluent, BK Magazine-reading, English-speaking, cosmopolitan, design-conscious urban Thais, and what are their values, hopes, and dreams? There can be little doubt that they represent one of several important cultural, political, and financial, élite segments in urban Thailand, but at present they appear to be documented only in BK Magazine's media kit. Likewise, why does an affluent, quiet, slightly conservative, privileged neighborhood like Ari emerge as one of Bangkok's

hippest destinations? Indeed, this thesis has attempted to describe elements of the process, but the question as to *why* still remains.

In the West, emerging neighborhoods are often associated with a working class past which confers an aura of authenticity, or 'realness', on the less gritty present. These neighborhoods are the prototypical sites of gentrification. But in Bangkok, such places do not appear to possess the same allure as in the West. As Zukin has demonstrated, the roots of the West's preoccupation with working class authenticity can be traced back to particular ideas about the self which evolved in 18th century Germany and 19th century France, but that these ideas should have penetrated the Thai psyche cannot be considered very likely. What, then, if anything, does authenticity mean in Bangkok, and to whom?

Meanwhile, in other parts of Bangkok, such as the area between Hua Lamphong, the city's central railway station, and Thanon Charoen Krung, which is among the oldest streets in the city, bars, restaurants, and exhibition spaces are opening in converted shophouses. A sign, perhaps, that Ari's suburban charms will soon be challenged by more 'authentic' locations. With each emerging neighborhood, opportunities for new knowledge about the city abound. It is to be hoped that this study may serve as inspiration for further research.

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APPENDIX

VITA

Born in Aarhus, Denmark, in 1977, Mr. Jonas Hove Doctor received his bachelor's degree in Anthropology from the University of Copenhagen in 2002. Between 1999 and 2002, he studied Tibetan Buddhism and Himalayan languages at the Center for Buddhist Studies at Kathmandu University, Kathmandu, Nepal, and continues to participate in the translation and publication of Tibetan Buddhist texts into Danish and English. Since 2013, he has been enrolled in the international M.A. program in Thai Studies at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand.