



Inventorying the Documentation of the Ordinary City: A Case Study on the City of Chiang Mai (Thailand)

PIJIKA PUMKETKAO-LECOURT 

RESEARCH PAPER



ABSTRACT

This article describes the constitution of a detailed inventory of the research documents produced from 2010 to 2019 within the teaching programme entitled “Studio Chiang Mai/Siem Reap - Angkor: Heritage, Tourism and Contemporaneity” of the École nationale supérieure d’architecture de Paris-Belleville (ENSAPB), in collaboration with Chiang Mai University and Chulalongkorn University (Thailand). It provides the context within which the research documents were produced, how they were arranged and described in three languages (French, English and Thai), and how they can be potentially used to develop knowledge on the ordinary neighbourhoods of the city and their heritage, the evolution and dynamics of the urban fabric, as well as the relationship between its materiality and the inherited spatial practices of the inhabitants. The objective of the archival work was to transform the “field notebook” into an archive available for scholars and practitioners who are interested in the city’s establishment and evolution. This inventory resulted from the cooperation between the documentalist, teachers-researchers in architecture of the ENSAPB, and the archivists in the framework of the Archival City programme. The archival standard ISAD(G) was adopted for working on an application Access to Memory (AtoM) which allowed inventorying and describing the data.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Pijika Pumketkao-Lecourt

École nationale supérieure
d’architecture de Paris-
Belleville, Paris, France

pijika.pumketkao@paris-belleville.archi.fr

KEYWORDS:

Chiang Mai; Thailand;
architecture; ordinary city;
ordinary heritage; AtoM

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Pumketkao-Lecourt, P.
(2024). Inventorying the
documentation of the ordinary
city: a case study on the city of
Chiang Mai (Thailand). *Journal
of Open Humanities Data*, 10:
32, pp. 1–12. DOI: [https://doi.
org/10.5334/johd.185](https://doi.org/10.5334/johd.185)

(1) INTRODUCTION

In the framework of the Archival City project, the Chiang Mai study-field¹ aimed to provide academics and practitioners with new documentary resources related to the city of Chiang Mai, the economic capital and tourist centre of the northern region of Thailand. The project entails inventorying, describing and archiving the documents produced from 2010 to 2019 within the teaching programme entitled “Studio Siem Reap-Angkor/Chiang Mai: Heritage, Tourism and Contemporaneity”,² opened for Master’s degree students of the École nationale supérieure d’architecture de Paris-Belleville (ENSAPB). This studio examined the processes of the formation and evolution of the architecture and urban fabrics of the cities studied over a long period of time. It focused on the “ordinary city” – the inhabited spaces (residential neighbourhoods and informal settlements) that are spontaneously built outside the scope of the authorities’ master plans and undergoing constant transformation (Cléménçon, 2015). The study approach was based on the assumption that the ordinary cities are complex, contested and dynamic, endowed with the ability to create their own distinctive ways of being urban (Robinson, 2006). This approach sees the ordinary city as the product of the inventiveness of urban dwellers. Thinking about cities through this lens allows emphasising the role of inhabitants in the making of the city, and to move beyond the institutional vision of cities (Backouche & Montel, 2007). This helps to develop contextualised knowledge of cities and turn attention to the unprecedented potential of ordinary cities to explore and experiment (Ros, 2024).

Fieldwork has played a central position in this teaching programme since 2010 when the first workshop was organised in Chiang Mai with the cooperation of the École Française d’Extrême Orient, the Faculty of Architecture of Chiang Mai University (CMU), the Faculty of Architecture of Chulalongkorn University (Chula), and with the participation of the Arsom Silp Institutes of the Arts in 2018.³ During the fieldwork, the researchers and students were confronted with the scarcity of documents for analysing urban space. Unlike the long archival tradition of European cities, the documents providing information on the physical components of ordinary Southeast Asian cities are very few. The ordinary architectural and urban elements (such as dwellings, streets, markets) that constitute the majority of the built-up areas of cities, are poorly documented and represented in the maps and plans. The cartography of the city takes into account the infrastructures and the monumental compositions (royal palace, fortifications, religious edifices). Consequently, to overcome the lack of data, the French and Thai students conducted architectural and urban surveys to enhance the documentation on ordinary architecture and neighbourhoods.

The students produced three kinds of research documents. Before the fieldwork, they produced a **Thematic Atlas** to build a corpus of knowledge on the city. During the fieldwork, they conducted an **Urban Analysis** of their study site and **Measured Drawings** of the old timber houses for studying the inhabited spaces and the inhabitants’ ways of life. Through these exercises, they produced various kinds of research documents (maps, building drawings, sketches, photographs, video recordings, texts interviews) at different scales (individual house, street, neighbourhood, city), allowing them to produce insightful knowledge and data about the ordinary city in its material, social, cultural and symbolic dimensions. The data production sought not only to acquire architectural and urban knowledge, but also to highlight the local knowledge and everyday practices of the urban dwellers who participate in the formation and evolution of the city.

These documents constituted an original collection of urban surveys and analysis, but they were not yet arranged, described or accessible to the public. The objective of the Archival City – Chiang Mai programme was to transform the “field notebook” into an archive available for scholars and practitioners. This article aims to explore this process. It is structured in three main parts. The first part provides the context within which the research documents were produced

¹ The working team of Chiang Mai study-field was composed of Nathalie Lancret (CNRS research director, CASE), Pascal Fort (documentalist, ENSAPB), and Pijika Pumketkao (postdoctoral researcher, ENSAPB, researcher associated with the UMR AUSser/IPRAUS).

² Cyril Ros (ENSAPB) heads a teaching team of this studio: Pijika Pumketkao (in charge of the research part of the studio and the fieldwork in Chiang Mai since 2012), Mirabelle Croizier (in charge of the fieldwork in Chiang Mai), Aline Hétreau-Pottier and Ivan Tizianel (in charge of the fieldwork in Siem Reap).

³ The ENSAPB organises each year the fieldwork of the Chiang Mai Studio with Komson Teeraparbwong (CMU), Pranom Tansukanun (CMU), Prin Jhearmaneechotechai (Chula).

(study approach and study sites). The second part deals with the processing of the documents: the way how they were arranged and described in a database. It also addresses the issues of the translation of the archival description into three languages (French, English, Thai). The third part concerns the application of documents: the ways how they can be potentially used to develop knowledge on the ordinary city.

(2) PRODUCTION CONTEXT

(2.1) STUDY APPROACH

The first workshops of the Studio Chiang Mai took place from 1985 to 1989, within the teaching programme entitled “Métropoles d’Asie Pacifique” (MAP) co-developed by several French institutions.⁴ The studio has been involved in longstanding cooperation between Thai and French professors since the 1980s.⁵ The primary aim of MAP was to train future architects to be able to cooperate with others, to open to otherness and cultural diversity, and to be able to adapt to complex situations of a moving world (Pommier, 2024). The teaching approach has its roots in the ethno-architectural and urban research on Southeast Asia initiated in the 1960s by Pierre Clément, Charles Goldblum and Shin Yong-Hak (Lancret & Clément, 2024). Three theoretical and methodological orientations underpin the teaching. Regarding the ethno-architectural approach, the study analyses the architecture as a spatial project, by seeking to understand the ways how individuals and societies – producers of places – construct, inhabit and transform their architecture (Clément, 1982). Influenced by ethnography, the approach is based on fieldwork which allows collecting raw data by questionnaire and drawings. Regarding the historic and geographical perspective, the study focuses on the long-term evolution of the spatial arrangements developed by the societies that live in a specific territory. The investigation is based on urban surveys carried out to document the present situation of the city, and the analysis of cartographic documents from different periods which allow tracing the evolution of the city. This approach allows considering the architecture and urban tissues in their historical stratification and territorial integration, so as to better assess their role and value in the construction of the contemporary city. Concerning the architectural and urban approach, the study focuses on the interactions between physical spaces and social spaces. By considering the city as “total social fact” (Goldblum, 1977 – with reference to the works of Marcel Mauss), the analysis examines the material space in its relations with social organisations, cultural representations, and political, economic, institutional determinants that intervene in urban production. Building on these research orientations, the pedagogical methodology focused, on the one hand, on the least details of urban arrangement and, on the other, on the city as a whole (Clément-Charpentier, 2024).

The main themes of the first workshops were related to historic urban components: the agrarian royal city, shophouses and urban villages that constitute the city. In this perspective, Chiang Mai was chosen as the study site, since its historic centre had been until then well preserved. However, the workshops took place at a pivotal moment when the development of mass tourism and speculative construction engendered a profound socio-economic and urban transformation. The exchanges between French and Thai colleagues were thereby focused on the preservation of the city’s character. In this perspective, the students conducted urban and architectural surveys to study and record the specificities of urban spaces and architecture. The objective was to produce new cartographic documents and to contribute to the production of knowledge on the historic city. The surveys conducted in the 1980s provide valuable information on the urban pattern (organisation of urban blocks and land plots) of the historic royal city, typologies of shophouses on the main roads (such as Tapae road), as well as the architectural surveys of Chedi Luang, the religious monument situated at the centre of the royal city.

The teaching was organised in three phases. During the first phase, in Paris, the students carried out the preparatory work: analysis of the maps and the types of dwellings to understand the

⁴ Post-graduate course in architecture and urban planning organised by the Écoles d’Architecture de Paris-La-Villette, Paris-Belleville, Paris-Villemin and the Institut Français d’Urbanisme (IFU) of the Université de Paris VIII-Saint Denis (1987–2005).

⁵ On the Thai side, the teaching team was composed of Chanvudhi Varavarn, Bundit Chulasai, and Mmes Nengnoi Suksri, Tiptus and Khanjanusthiti. On the French side, Pierre Clément and Charles Goldblum with the participation of Michel Bancon, Sophie Clément-Charpentier (EHESS) and Kunwadee Jintavorn.

city at different spatial scales – from the city to its architecture. The students also attended the course and the conferences on the culture and urban issues of Southeast Asian cities. At the crossroad of various sources, the students developed investigative tools and methods that they tested later in the field. The second phase consisted of the fieldwork: the students (nine from Paris and fifteen from Bangkok) worked together for about fifteen days. In the field, the Franco-Thai cooperations generated mutual teaching and learning practices for conducting the **Urban Analysis**, the **Measured Drawings** of the inhabited space, and for developing their project (Pommier, 2024). During the third phase, based on the findings from the fieldwork, the students developed their architectural project adapted to the study site and urban issues that they had identified and analysed in the field. For this teaching process, the fieldwork took a central position. It was the time and place for contrasting theoretical knowledge and speculative thought with the material realities observed and experienced on the ground (Lancret & Clément, 2024). It was also the time to work with others, learn from other cultures, and explore other ways of seeing and creating architecture (Pommier, 2024).

The Chiang Mai Studio started again in 2010, in cooperation with the Institut Parisien de Recherche: Architecture, Urbanistique, Société (IPRAUS) and the Unité Mixte de Recherche “Architecture Urbanisme Société : Savoir Enseignement Recherche” (UMR AUSser). Building on the pedagogical methodology of MAP, the ethno-architectural approach and the fieldwork have remained the cornerstone of the studio. However, the teaching approach has evolved around the notion of project, which is considered as a process rather than an artefact (Ros, 2024). According to this view, the teaching of the project requires a slow development and needs to be experienced. The new teaching approach has thus encouraged students to work on their project through the whole process of the studio. During the first phase, the students conducted the research work (**Thematic Atlas**) and developed the approach and position of their urban project. These two works (research and project) were set up as the hypothesis to be tested in the field. Thus, the objective of the field survey was two-fold: to document the specificities of urban spaces and architecture, and to verify and rearrange the hypothesis of their research and project. After the fieldwork, the students finalised their project by illustrating the case study for reflecting on ways to build the city of tomorrow. This teaching approach allowed going beyond duality between the research (understanding for carrying out a project) and the conception of a project. It has encouraged students to conduct their research and the project for learning the city and shaping their ethical positions.

During the 2010s, the heritage-related issue was raised with great acuity in response to the rapid urban and social transformation in Chiang Mai. Its citizens and local experts took into consideration the heritage of the ordinary neighbourhoods, such as domestic architecture, living spaces shared by the residents, local knowledge and know-how, and cultural practices which characterise neighbourhood life. This shows the increasing power of citizens’ movements to defend the “heritage of the communities” (*moradok chumchon*)⁶ which has been excluded from official heritage definitions proffered by the national authorities. This trend of heritage has led to different programmes of heritage conservation,⁷ including the Chiang Mai World Heritage Initiative Project. Taking these local dynamics into account, the UMR AUSser/IPRAUS, in collaboration with the CMU, have developed the collective research programmes⁸ and teaching theme relating to the creation of the ordinary city and its heritage. The author of this article also conducted a doctoral thesis on this topic (Pumketkao-Lecourt, 2019). The analysis focused on how dwellers inhabit a place steeped in history and tradition, and how they continually

6 *Moradok chumchon* (heritage of the communities) is a new expression created to differentiate this kind of heritage from the term *boransathan* (ancient monument). The latter refers to the monuments, artefacts and archaeological sites associated with royal and religious history. It is created and promoted by the national authorities for supporting the building the nation’s cultural identity.

7 The city of Chiang Mai has recently adopted a conservation approach that is in line with the international systems of heritage identification promoted by UNESCO. In 2015, Chiang Mai University, in collaboration with the municipality, created a tentative list: an inventory of monuments, sites, and cultural landscapes for inclusion on the World Heritage List. Komson Teeparabwong, the CMU reference professor for the Chiang Mai Studio, has participated in this project as project manager. In 2017, the city was registered in the Creative Cities Network in order to highlight the traditional craftsmanship of local communities, and to include them in ‘sustainable’ urban development.

8 The Southeast Asia Neighbourhoods Network (SEANNET) programme is about research, teaching and the dissemination of knowledge on Asia through the prism of the neighbourhood. It supports the development of contextualized knowledge on the spatial-human environment of neighbourhoods of Southeast Asian cities. Pijika Pumketkao (ENSAPB, UMR AUSser/IPRAUS), Komson Teeparabwong (CMU), Pranom Tansukanun (CMU) are in charge of the case study of Chiang Mai (Wua-Lai neighbourhood). <https://www.ukna.asia/seannet>.

shape and reshape the built and social fabric of the city. Special attention was paid to the ability of the inhabitants to cope with the socio-economic change and development dynamics which endanger their survival. For this reason, the studio has chosen to study the following neighbourhoods that have initiated collective actions to protect their livelihoods and urban heritage: Wua-Lai, Wat Ketkaram and the popular neighbourhoods along the Mae Kha canal.

(2.2) STUDY SITES

Wua-Lai and Wat Ketkaram, historic neighbourhoods located outside the royal walled city

The city of Chiang Mai is situated in the valley basin of the Ping River. Established in the late 13th century, the historic city lies between the Doi Suthep mountain to the west and the Ping River to the east. It is surrounded by a square inner moat and embraced by a semi-circular outer moat (Mae Kha canal) to the southeast. Monks, nobles and families of soldiers resided within the square walled city. The artisans were settled in groups around the southern and western perimeters of the square royal city in segregated villages. The Wua-Lai neighbourhood is situated inside the outer moat to the south of the square city. It is well known for its silver craft skills, inherited from Tai Shan silversmiths who immigrated in the 19th century from the Salween river valley in Shan State to Chiang Mai. Almost every household in Wua-Lai had their own workshop for producing silverware, including the household goods and the prestigious items for ritual and ceremonial occasions. Wua-Lai reached its highest point in the 1980s, becoming the famous “Silver Village” through the promotion of the Tourism Authority of Thailand. However, the development of the new artisan centre for receiving busloads of mass tourism, caused the decline of Wua-Lai’s craft trades in the 1990s. Many craftspeople from Wua-Lai were hired to work at the factories in the new centre, situated 13 km east of the city. Fearing a loss of livelihood and local identity due to socio-economic changes, the members of the neighbourhood (craftspeople, silver shop owners, monks) have initiated a number of collaborative projects – the creation of a community museum, a craft study centre and a weekend craft market – to promote their unique craft skills as local heritage and a resource for surviving in an era of globalisation (Pumketkao-Lecourt, Teeraparbwong & Tansukanun, 2022).

Regarding the Wat Ketkaram neighbourhood, it is situated on the east bank of the Ping River. By the late 19th century, the growth in British teak exportation in northern Thailand gave Chiang Mai a new role as a centre of a commercial network. The Ping River acted as the main channel of transportation to Mawlamyine Port in Burma. The port area around the temple Wat Ketkaram then became the city’s first international business district (Chulasai & McGrath, 2017). A number of low-rise, small-footprint buildings, such as masonry Chinese shophouses, wooden commercial shophouses, colonial-style offices, Buddhist temples and Christian churches, were constructed along the main road of the neighbourhood. In the 1920s, the railway replaced the Ping River as the region’s trading and transportation lifeline. The railway terminal was situated east of Wat Ketkaram, allowing urban growth in this area. During the 1980s, land and property development led to the construction of many large foot-print buildings, particularly hotels and condominiums, on the banks of the Ping River. In 2006, the third revision of the comprehensive plan for Chiang Mai proposed by the the Department of Public Works and Town and Country Planning opted to reclassify the Wat Ketkaram area from a “Medium-density residential area” to a “High-density residential and commercial area”. The revision also proposed a project to expand the local roads, including the main road of the neighbourhood, for accommodating rising traffic volumes on the tourist routes in the city. This created strong reactions from the residents who raised concern about the destruction of ancient buildings that testify to the international trading that took place in the 19th century. They organised several local forums for raising public awareness about the protection of the old urban fabric of Chiang Mai. After several years of community action, the project to expand the roads was abandoned. The comprehensive plan for Chiang Mai 2012 finally defined the Wat Ketkaram area as “Land conserved for residential purposes” and restricted the size and height of constructions in order to preserve the character of the old residential area of Chiang Mai (Sangawongse, Fisher & Prabudhanitisarn, 2021).

Both neighbourhoods still conserve the old urban fabric of Chiang Mai. The neighbourhood’s main roads are bordered by the rows of shophouses – narrow buildings of three or four stories with a shop on the ground floor and living spaces on the upper floors. The low-rise shophouses

create a solid urbanized wall, concealing the calm neighbourhood behind them from the busy traffic (Scheer & Scheer, 2002). The neighbourhoods are composed of individual timber houses with gardens and alleyways (*soi*) in organic form that connect the clusters of houses to the main roads, creating an intimate residential space between neighbours. The *Wat* (Buddhist temples) – the moral, social and symbolic centre of a lay community – are situated among the clusters of houses and complete the urban ensemble. The urban pattern of these neighbourhoods encourages daily interaction, resulting in close social relations among neighbours (Tansukanun & Daungthima, 2017). However, in the 2000s, a number of old wooden houses were sold to new landowners. Some were transformed into hostels or coffee shops for tourists. Some were replaced by a concrete apartment building. In order to collect data on these ordinary neighbourhoods undergoing rapid change, since 2011 the studio has conducted surveys, in particular the Measured Drawings of the old timber houses and shophouses located in these two neighbourhoods.

The popular neighbourhoods along the Mae Kha canal

Since the 1960s, the economic growth of Chiang Mai has attracted rural migrants who have settled on the fringes of the historic city. They have squatted on public land, in the area between the outer moat (Mae Kha canal) and the city's outer wall. The dwellers have had very limited access to education. They were mostly employed as non-specialised labour and had limited earning capacity (Ribeiro & Srisuwan, 2005). Since the 2000s, the inhabitants have been under threat of eviction due to the projects developed by the municipal and central authorities to restore the outer fortification, and create a park and a promenade along the Mae Kha canal to boost tourism. To avoid eviction, a network of squatter communities was set up to work with the NGO, People's Organization for Participation (POP), and the Community Organization Development Institute (CODI), a public organisation operating under the aegis of the National Housing Authority. For the housing issue, the CODI and POP have worked on the relocation of the houses on the outer wall to a neighbouring site, the improvement of housing conditions, and the provision of land tenure to urban squatters. These organisations have also proposed projects dealing with the environmental deterioration of the canal, such as the restoration of the canal embankment, building new bridges, and canal cleaning. By adopting a bottom-up approach, the inhabitants have played a major role in the process of decision-making, project design, management and implementation. They have explored and experimented many different ways to maintain the canal and protect the embankment from erosion. This has strengthened the organisation capacity of the communities. In the 2010s, these communities continued to improve their environmental conditions, in collaboration with the advocate group Mae Kha City Lab which acts as a mediator between the local communities and the public authorities.

The studio has conducted surveys against this background in the neighbourhoods along the Mae Kha canal, in particular the Urban Analysis, since 2011. Its committed approach is underpinned by issues of spatial and social justice and is part of a recent strand of studies that considers underprivileged housing areas as crucibles of architectural and urban experimentation and innovations, drawing on local resources (Lancret, 2023 – translated by Turiano, 2023). These territories conceal solutions cobbled together by their inhabitants in situations of precariousness and vulnerability, who deploy technical and spatial knowledge and know-how while ensuring an economy of means and resources.

(3) DATASET DESCRIPTION

OBJECT NAME

Archival-City-Inventory of Documents of the Ordinary City

<https://doi.org/10.34847/nkl.fbddhceh>

FORMAT NAMES AND VERSIONS

PDF

CREATION DATES

2023-02-14

DATASET CREATORS

Piika Pumketkao-Lecourt, Nathalie Lancret, Pascal Fort, Elsa Camus, Carole Lamoureux

LANGUAGE

French, English, Thai

LICENSE

The Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial Alike 4.0 International (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0)

REPOSITORY NAME

Nakala

PUBLICATION DATE

2023-11-15

(4) METHOD

(4.1) TYPES OF RESEARCH DOCUMENTS TO CLASSIFY

In the framework of the Archival City programme, the Chiang Mai field study working team compiled an inventory of three kinds of research documents that were produced and digitalised by the students from 2010 to 2019. In all, 83 documents (41 measured drawings, 12 urban analyses and 30 thematic atlases) were inventoried and described.

Thematic Atlas

The urban thematic analysis called Thematic Atlas was carried out by the students of ENSAPB before going on site. Through this work, the group of three or four students developed the methodological tools and modes of representation to put forward a hypothesis relating to the issues in which they were particularly interested. From 2010 to 2014, the students could choose between seven topics: topography/hydrography, infrastructures, landscapes, historic evolution and permanent features of the city, urban morphology, public spaces, and typologies of dwellings. Since 2015, based on the works developed in previous years, the students have been encouraged to construct new topics related to the contemporary issues facing the ordinary city, such as ordinary urban heritage, spatial and social inequality, capacity of self-organisation and self-construction. Through these topics, the students could identify the power relations between the parties and the interests of various stakeholders.

The Thematic Atlases were produced in the form of booklets presenting the research questions, the analytical approach and case studies. They were composed of various kinds of data (texts, maps, drawings, photographs) and different kinds of representation (cartographic analysis, sections, transects, mind maps) for raising research questions and presenting the analysis results. In all, 30 Thematic Atlases were produced and digitalised from 2010 to 2019. This collection shows the variety of subjects and urban issues raised and the diversity of representation modes (cartographic and iconographic).

Urban Analysis

During the first week of fieldwork, the Thai and French students in groups of four or five, conducted the urban survey and analysis of their study site together. For teaching purposes, this was the moment for contrasting their research and project hypothesis developed before the fieldwork with the reality observed in the field. This work allowed the students to adjust and refine their analysis and discourse for their urban project. For the purposes of documenting the city, the Urban Analysis provided valuable information on the Wua-Lai and Mae Kha

neighbourhoods at the time of the analysis and as they were being transformed. The analysis topics were related to spatial organisation and relationships between various urban elements (dwellings, alleyways, canals, city walls, vegetation, etc.), shared spaces and multi-purpose spaces of the neighbourhood, usages and the accessibility of the banks of the Mae Kha canal, and flooded areas.

The Urban Analyses were produced in the form of booklets or presentation plates showing the investigation results through a series of drawings and interviews, cartographic analyses, transect, sections, maps and photographs. Some booklets were accompanied by a video produced on site, which recorded the images and sounds of the spaces of everyday life, such as the markets and alleyways of the neighbourhood. In all, 12 urban analyses were digitalised by the students.

Measured Drawings

In the second week of the fieldwork, the French and Thai students undertook the survey of inhabited space over three days. In groups of four or five, the students made sketches of the timber houses that had been selected by the professors, who had discussed in advance with the owners to obtain permission to enter these houses. The students recorded and represented the building structures, their materials, and the spatial organisation generated by daily uses and customary practices. Each group conducted an interview with the residents for gathering information on their lifestyles: who lived here, what was their occupation, what social ties existed between neighbours, how the houses had been extended or transformed over time. The drawing was used for linking architectural knowledge with ethnographic observation in order to produce insightful knowledge on both the materiality of inhabited space and the inherited spatial practices of the residents. The Measured Drawings were produced in the form of presentation plates showing plans, sections and elevations of the building, drawings of building structures and construction techniques, graphic presentations of family trees and changes made to houses, and sketches of scenes of daily activities and artisanal work.

In all, 41 Measured Drawings were produced and digitalised from 2010 to 2019.

The first collection of drawings of timber houses resulting from the architectural survey of the Chiang Mai Studio was published in 2020 by the French and Thai professors in charge of the fieldwork (Teeraparbwong et al., 2020).

The three kinds of data were deposited at the centre for documentary research of IPRAUS/UMR AUSser, located at the ENSAPB.

(4.2) CLASSIFY THE DOCUMENTS

To build up an inventory of research documents, the working team of the Archival City - Chiang Mai project addressed the question of how to classify our source. The research documents of the Chiang Mai Studio had been classified by year of production, and documents of each year had been sub-classified by groups of students (producers of documents). But our aim was to sort data, not according to the types of recorded objects/artefacts and or in a chronological order, but by the approaches underpinning the data production. To this end, the working team reorganised the Chiang Mai Studio series (Atelier de Chiang Mai) into three subseries: Thematic Atlas (Atlas thématiques), Urban analyses (Analyses urbaines) and Measured drawings (Relevés architecturaux). Each subseries was sub-classified by year of production and study topic. To create the reference code, the team indicated the country code (FR) with the initials of the institution holding the documents (IPRAUS), the series of documents (TH-atelierCM) following by the type of research work, the year of production, and the study topic or case study area/neighbourhood. For example, FR-IPRAUS/TH-atelierCM/atlas/2017-2018/Le temple: d'un générateur urbain à un générateur économique. FR-IPRAUS/TH-atelierCM/analyses/2019-2020/Le tissu urbain et les mailles de Ban Wua Lai.

This way of classifying better reflects the specific teaching approach and scope of study of the Chiang Mai Studio. It also shows the context of data production and how students and academics in architecture document the ordinary city.

(4.3) DEVELOPING THE ARCHIVISTIC DESCRIPTIONS

During this work, the team raised the question of how to describe research documents: What elements should be transmitted to permit *a posteriori* the critical reading of these sources, and evaluate the status and validity of the knowledge generated by these sources? How far should we go in describing the sources? These questions resulted from the fact that the team played a dual role: as producers of documents (or closely involved with the data production by students) and as archivists (collection, organisation and description of data). The objective of our archival works was to transform the “field notebook” into an archive available for other scholars and practitioners. These reflections have led to examining the data from an archival perspective, in view to highlighting the research approach and research topic of the producers of documents (students in architecture). In this perspective, to develop the description of each research work, the team decided to provide information about the approach taken for the work, and the types and features of documents. For the Thematic Atlas and Urban Analysis, each file (the work of each student group) was described by identifying the study topic, the analysis approaches and hypotheses raised by the producers of the documents, the case study or objects of study, the nature of the data, the amount of items (work documents) and the names of the students who produced the work documents. For the Measured drawings, the team decided to identify the works undertaken for studying and presenting the inhabited spaces and architecture (title of drawing: plan, elevation, section, etc.) with the scale marked on the drawing, the number of items and the names of the students who produced the work documents.

To be able to work with the archivists of the Archival City programme, the team adopted the archival standard ISAD(G) for working on the application Access to Memory (AtoM) – a web-based, open source application for standards-based archival description and access in a multilingual use – which allowed inventorying and describing the data.

(4.4) LIMITATIONS

Concerning the description of the measured drawings, the research and archival research work revealed a number of personal data (e.g., names of homeowners, house addresses) concerning the inhabitants. Hence, the team needed to anonymise the description by removing all of the personal data and label each house studied by number.

(4.5) LANGUAGES OF ARCHIVES AND TRANSLATION ISSUES

The works carried out to develop archivistic descriptions have led to reflection on the languages of archives and the issue of translation. This reflection was related to the team’s scientific position in the wake of the works of Jennifer Robinson (2006) and others, who have participated in the “Southern Turn” movement. The latter has called for decentralising the longstanding focus of urban studies on world cities and large metropolises in order to take into account the original and contextualised expressions of modernity that take shape in every city, and more specifically in secondary cities. Regarding the recent research on the ordinary city and its heritage in Southeast Asia,⁹ the objective was to decentralise the production of knowledge in the fields of urban studies and heritage studies which has so far been conceived on the basis of the European perspective, approach and languages. This scientific position encouraged us to reconsider the ways of naming and defining spatial arrangements. Southeast Asian vocabulary, in Thai language in this case, was not easy to translate. There is no equivalence between languages. Sometimes the universal categories/vocabulary of spatial arrangements cannot reflect complex local realities. Our archival works dealt with the “untranslatable – not in the sense of what does not get translated, but rather of what is always in the course of being translated” (Wozny & Cassin, 2014). For example, the Thai word *Ban* or *Baan* cannot be simply translated as “house”. This term designates both the house (family unit) and the village (group of dwellings). It also refers to the two religious markers: *Wat* (Buddhist temple) and *Ho phi* (shrine of the guardian spirits of the village), which express the unity of social and spiritual life of the village community. Thus, *baan* (village), means the group of families who

⁹ CREMA stands for « Creating and Mapping the Heritage of the Ordinary City in Southeast Asia ». It gathers together 11 institutional partners and more than 50 researchers and practitioners with the shared objective of producing knowledge about the ordinary city and its heritages in Southeast Asia. Nathalie Lancret is a member of the scientific committee. <https://utab-crema.parisgeo.cnrs.fr/>.

live in the area of influence of the Buddhist temple(s) and in the territory protected by guardian spirits (Davis, 1984; Clément-Charpentier & Clément, 1990; Condominas & Gaudillot, 2000). In attempting to provide the best possible insight into local cultural specificities, the team decided to designate in Thai the objects of study in the description of each research document, and initiated a glossary of key terms in Thai for providing detailed information and cultural context that reflect the cultural and morphological specificities of ordinary Southeast Asian cities. This approach could avoid mobilising preconceived categories and concepts and bring to light the characteristic features of the local architecture and urban practices.

Our scientific position on the decentralisation of knowledge production also led to developing the archivist descriptions in three languages: Thai, French and English, in order to facilitate sorting and searching for data without language barriers.

(5) IMPLICATIONS/APPLICATIONS

This inventory provides a set of iconographic and cartographic documents resulting from the *in situ* investigations conducted in the 2010s on different scales (city, neighbourhood, dwelling). These documents can be potentially used to produce contextualised knowledge based on the lived experiences, local know-how, local perception and urban practices of the inhabitants of Chiang Mai. The variety of urban issues raised, the multi-dimensional aspects of the city presented in the documents, and views from the field could raise new research questions in the field of urban studies and heritage studies. For those who work on the cultural heritage of the city, the dual approach of data production that combines architectural and anthropological viewpoints could enable specific works to be carried out on the relationship between the materiality of the city and inherited spatial practices. This may lead to new ways of considering the heritage of the ordinary city. Furthermore, this dataset could be used as an object of study for those who work on the modes of representation of the city and its heritage. However, it should be noted that these documents were produced by French students who were learning and exploring a typology of architecture that they were not familiar with (Southeast Asian wooden houses and shophouses). Thus, it is important for users to verify the reliability of the data, in particular those relating to architectural structures and building techniques.

The inventory of the ordinary city of Chiang Mai can enrich the existing databases created by French and Thai institutions, such as the digital photographic collections of the Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient and Chiang Mai University. The working team aims to continue the archival work for the other sets of data that have not yet been inventoried and described, such as the iconographic and cartographic documents produced within the framework of the Chiang Mai Studio organised in the 1980s, and the photographic collections produced by French researchers in the 1980s.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Chiang Mai project is part of the Archival City programme, funded by Gustave Eiffel University. I am grateful to my colleagues, Nathalie Lancret, Pascal Fort, Vincent Lemire, Elsa Camus, Carole Lamoureux, Annalaura Turiano and Paul Lecat, who provided insight and expertise that greatly assisted the development of the methodology for inventorying and describing the documents. I would also like to show my gratitude to Cyril Ros and our partners from Chiang Mai University – Komson Teeraparbong, Pranom Tansukanun – and from Chulalongkorn University - Bundit Chulasai and Prin Jhearmaneechotechai, for sharing their wisdom and cooperating with us during the course of this project. I thank the anonymous reviewers, the copyeditor, as well as Annalaura Turiano and Carole Lamoureux for their suggestions and comments on this manuscript.

FUNDING INFORMATION

The Chiang Mai project was funded and supported by Archival City programme and École nationale supérieure d'architecture de Paris-Belleville (ENSAPB)/ Institut Parisien de Recherche : Architecture, Urbanistique, Société (IPRAUS).

The author has no competing interests to declare.

AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS

Pijika Pumketkao-Lecourt  orcid.org/0000-0003-2608-2828
École nationale supérieure d'architecture de Paris-Belleville, Paris, France

REFERENCES

- Backouche, I., & Montel, N.** (2007). La fabrique ordinaire de la ville. *Histoire urbaine*, 7(19), 5–9. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3917/rhu.019.0005>
- Chulasai, B., & McGrath, B.** (2017). La trilogie de Chiang Mai. La conservation de la forme urbaine en questions. In Peyronnie, Goldblum, & Sisoulath (Eds.), *Transitions urbaines en Asie du Sud-Est, De la métropolisation émergente et de ses formes dérivées* (pp. 309–329). Marseille: IRD, IRASEC. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.irdeditions.21410>
- Clemençon, A. S.** (2015). *La ville ordinaire. Généalogie d'une rive, Lyon 1781–1915*. Marseille: Parenthèses Editions.
- Clément, P.** (1982). Architecture comparée. *Les Cahiers de l'ADRI*, 6–7, 8.
- Clément-Charpentier, S.** (2024). L'atelier de Chiang Mai: aux origines de la formation. In Lancret, Pommier, & Pédelahore de Loddis (Eds.), *Métropoles d'Asie-Pacifique, Formation, recherche, coopération en architecture et urbanisme, 1981–2011* (pp. 274–276). Paris: Snoeck.
- Clément-Charpentier, S., & Clément, P.** (1990). *L'habitation Lao dans les régions de Vientiane et de Louang Prabang*. Paris: Peeters.
- Condominas, G., & Gaudillot, C.** (2000). *La Plaine de Vientiane : étude socio-économique*. Paris: P. Geuthner & Seven Orient.
- Davis, R.** (1984). *Muang metaphysics. A study of Northern Thai myth and ritual*. Bangkok: Pandora.
- Goldblum, C.** (1977). Singapour : fondation d'un espace social coutumier. *ASEMI*, VIII, 2, 129–162.
- Lancret, N.** (2023). Ordinary city documentation. Questionnement à partir des documents produits dans le cadre de programmes d'enseignement et de recherche, 1985–2019 (Ordinary city documentation as part of urban courses and researches on Chiang Mai, 1985–2019). [Seminar session: Chiang Mai Urban Archives: Diversity of Experience]. Seminar "Documenting the Ordinary City in Southeast Asia. The Case of Chiang Mai", Faculty of Architecture, Chiang Mai University. https://archivalcity.hypotheses.org/files/2023/02/ProgramSeminarCM-BGK_19-22February.pdf
- Lancret, N., & Clément, S.** (2024). Faire du terrain en architecte. In Lancret, Pommier, & Pédelahore de Loddis (Eds.), *Métropoles d'Asie-Pacifique, Formation, recherche, coopération en architecture et urbanisme, 1981–2011* (pp. 106–123). Paris: Snoeck.
- Pommier, J.** (2024). La formation « Métropoles d'Asie-Pacifique » : construction d'une pédagogie de l'altérité, 1981–2005. In Lancret, Pommier, & Pédelahore de Loddis (Eds.), *Métropoles d'Asie-Pacifique, Formation, recherche, coopération en architecture et urbanisme, 1981–2011* (pp. 26–45). Paris: Snoeck.
- Pumketkao-Lecourt, P.** (2019). *Conservation et évolution de la notion de patrimoine à Chiang Mai – Du monument national au patrimoine ordinaire de la communauté locale (Construction and Evolution of the Concept of Heritage at Chiang Mai – From National Monument to Ordinary Heritage of Local Community)*, [Unpublished doctoral dissertation], Université Paris-Est Marne-la-Vallée. <https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-02610768>
- Pumketkao-Lecourt, P., Teeraparbong, K., & Tansukanun, P.** (2022). Silver Craft and Buddhist Temple in the Shaping of Local Project and Community Museum in Wua-Lai Neighbourhood, Chiang Mai (Thailand). *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 63(3), Special Issue: City Building Knowledge from Neighbourhoods in Asia Pacific, 379–395. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/apv.12355>
- Ribeiro, G., & Srisuwan, A.** (2005). Urban development discourses, environmental management and public participation: the case of the Mae Kha canal in Chiang Mai, Thailand. *Environment & Urbanization*, 17(1), 171–182. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/095624780501700116>
- Robinson, J.** (2006). *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development*. London: Routledge.
- Ros, C.** (2024). L'héritage sans testament du studio « Asie » de l'École d'architecture de Paris-Belleville. In Lancret, Pommier, & Pédelahore de Loddis (Eds.), *Métropoles d'Asie-Pacifique, Formation, recherche, coopération en architecture et urbanisme, 1981–2011* (pp. 222–229). Paris: Snoeck.
- Sangawongse, S., Fisher, R., & Prabudhanitisarn, S.** (2021). From centralised planning to collaborative urban land use planning: The case of Wat Ket, Chiang Mai, Thailand. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 4(1), 1–10. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2021.100154>

- Scheer, B., & Scheer, D.** (2002). Towards a sustainable urban form in Chiang Mai. In Romanos & Auffrey (Eds.), *Managing Intermediate Size Cities: Sustainable Development in a Growth Region of Thailand*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-2170-7_13
- Tansukanuna, P., & Daungthima, W.** (2017). A 'Sense of Place' of the Neighbourhoods in Historic Cities: The Case of Chiang Mai, Thailand. *Built Environment Inquiry Journal (BEI): Faculty of Architecture, Khon Kaen University*, 16(1), 85–107.
- Teeraparbong, K., Croizier, M., Tansukanun, P., & Pumketkao-Lecourt, P.** (2020). *Discovering the Living Space : Field Experiences of Wooden Houses and Neighborhoods in Chiang Mai, Thailand*. Chiang Mai: Pattrara Prepress.
- Turiano, A.** (2023). *Documenting the "Ordinary City" in Southeast Asia. A report of the mission to Chiang Mai and Bangkok*. Retrieved from <https://archivalcity.hypotheses.org/3020> (last accessed: 22 March 2024).
- Wozny, D.** (dir.) & **Cassin, B.** (dir.) (2014). *Les intraduisibles du patrimoine en Afrique subsaharienne*. Paris: Demopolis. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.demopolis.515>

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Pumketkao-Lecourt, P. (2024). Inventorying the documentation of the ordinary city: a case study on the city of Chiang Mai (Thailand). *Journal of Open Humanities Data*, 10: 32, pp. 1–12. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/johd.185>

Submitted: 17 November 2023

Accepted: 25 March 2024

Published: 25 April 2024

COPYRIGHT:

© 2024 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

Journal of Open Humanities Data is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Ubiquity Press.