

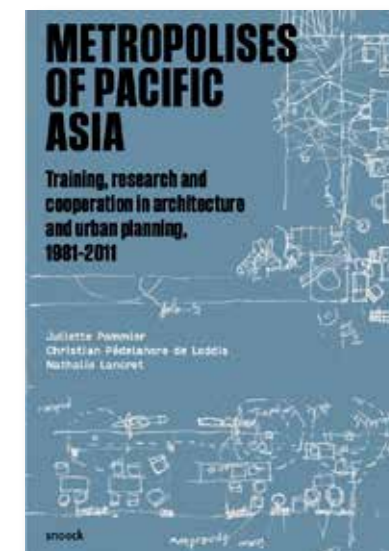


Metropolises of Pacific Asia

The 'Metropolises of Pacific Asia' (MAP) training programme constituted an architectural adventure of astonishing longevity. Heir to the 'Eastern Cities' course founded in 1981, MAP brought together the ENSA architectural schools of Paris-La Villette and Paris-Belleville and the IFU French institute of architecture until 2005, and has been pursued since in separate forms at each institution. Developed by the new generation of teachers and researchers forged by the anti-establishment events of May 1968 and benefitting from a grounding in the humanities and social sciences, the programme participated in a diverse body of architectural and urban studies on non-Western cultural centres and the Pacific Asia region in particular. This innovative educational approach within French academia was

part of a larger geopolitical and societal evolution that proved decisive for the transformation of study subjects and territories, moving from the city to the metropolis, from Eastern Asia to an emerging Pacific-oriented Asia positioned at the very heart of a new global economic system that would profoundly influence the region's accelerated urbanisation.

Gathering together numerous first-hand accounts, interviews and archival documents, this extensive survey presents the history and theoretical positioning of the MAP training within this context of marked mutation. It analyses the training's educational features and facilities, as well as its legacies, to eventually examine, city by city, the work carried out by the students both in situ and in the studio.



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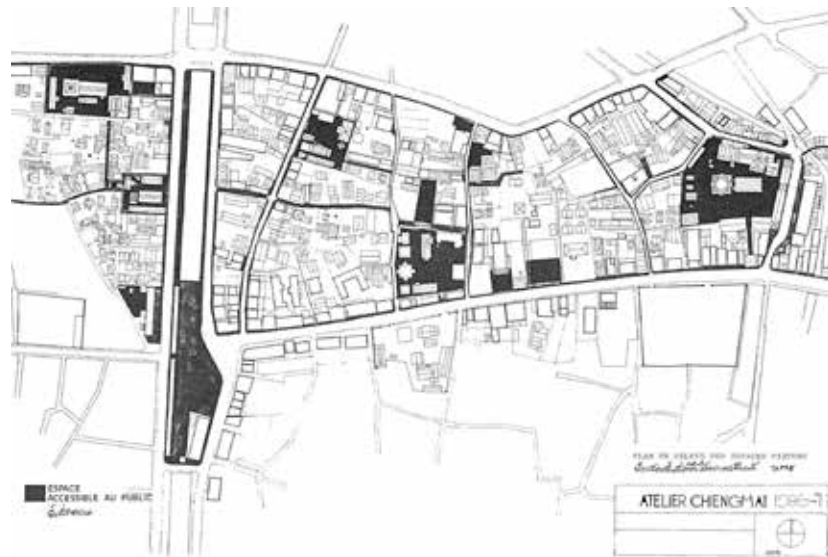


Fig. 3: Map of pedestrian spaces, Chiang Mai, 1986, field workshop, 'Eastern Cities' joint seminar

The educational structure of the new CEAA of 1988 attempted to more finely link together these objectives through instruction. The staff organised their courses according to their nature and to the phases of the studio constituting a central element of the programme. Culture and knowledge concerning Asian cities and architectures, in both the past and the present, were taught in the form of theoretical courses: 'City Monographies' (Clément, Shin), 'Urban Economy and Architectural Project Economy' (Jaupitre, Massiah), 'Urban Politics in South East Asia' (Goldblum), 'Contemporary History of Eastern Architecture' (Taylor), 'Hybrid Spaces' (Shin) and 'Reality of Exportation in Asia' (Massiah, Shin). Technical analytical skills and methodological reflections on methods were transmitted in a hands-on manner via tutorials and seminars: 'Comparative Analysis of Modes of Spatial Structuring' (Clément, Goldblum), 'City Layouts' (Gugenheim, Shin, Tattetrain, Clément) (fig. 3) and 'Methods of Information Acquisition' (Fredet, Gugenheim, Tattetrain).³¹ All of this knowledge was touched upon prior to the field workshop.

The studios served to link together this knowledge and expertise, as much as through

field analyses as through project design. Each studio included three phases: prior, during and following the field trip generally scheduled for January or February. The fieldwork area therefore structured the entire year and, thanks to in situ observations, constituted the training programme's central source of information. It also constituted the most important educational mechanism, since it placed students in a 'learning-conducive situation': they were literally immersed in the information, allowed to observe and digest the data and to draw upon the CEAA's educational tools to comprehend the urban realities and the processes of accelerated development at work before their very eyes. In Chiang Mai as in Seoul, the lecturers had discovered the richness afforded by on-site surveying, anthropological studies and sensitive observations – all things only offered by extended field stays of three to four weeks. Students organised themselves into teams of two or three, mixing together their disciplinary training (architecture/IFU) and nationalities whenever possible: over the years and as the Asian countries opened up, the number of foreign students would progressively grow, to eventually constitute nearly half of the student body.

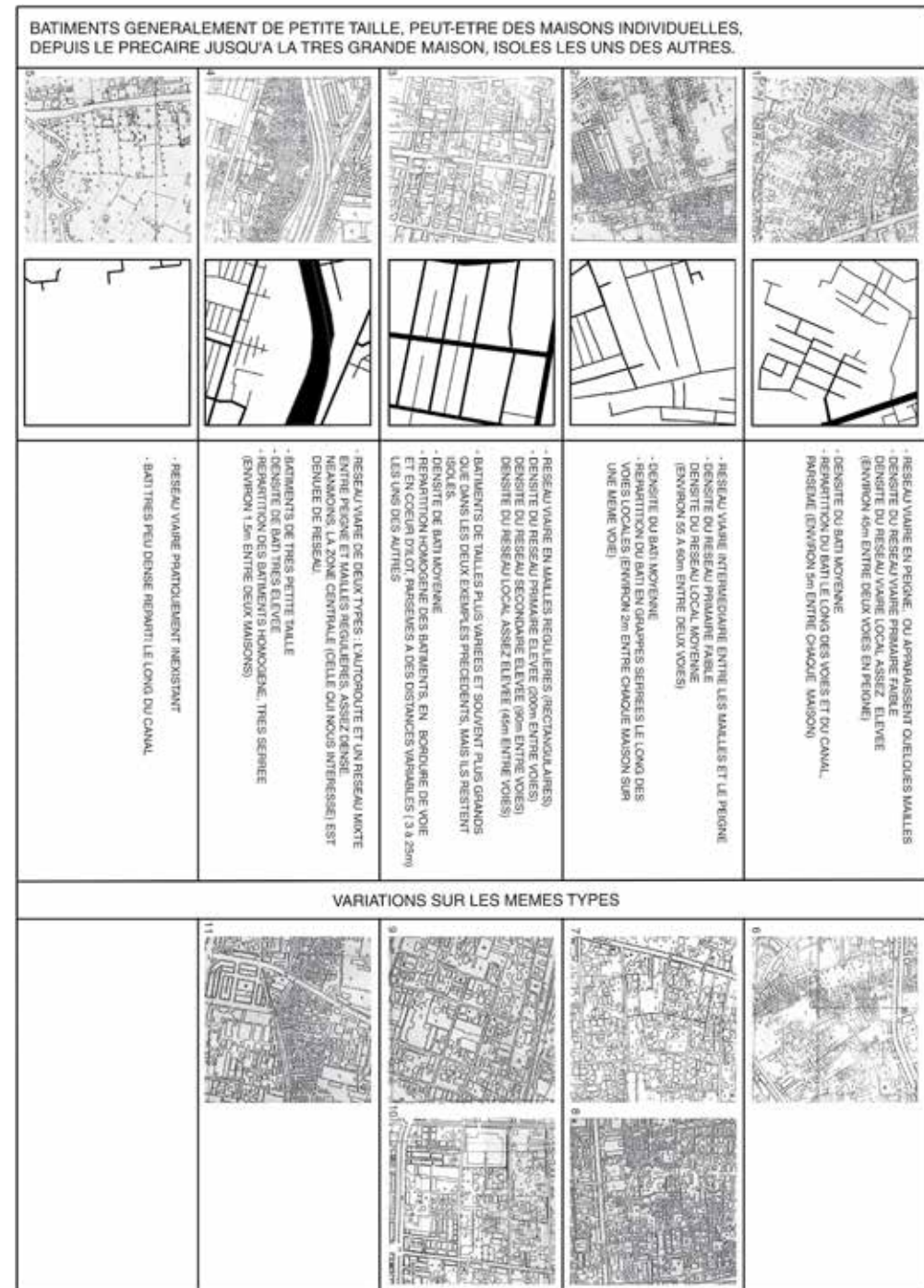


Fig. 4: Comparative analysis of the suburban fabrics of Bangkok, buildings and road network, Juliette Pommier and Chantal Marette, 1999, 'City Layouts' workshop, CEAA MAP

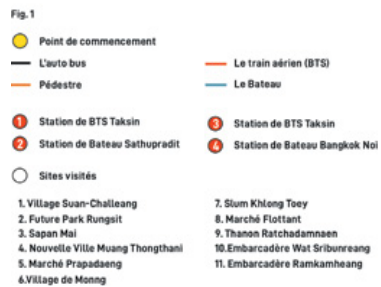
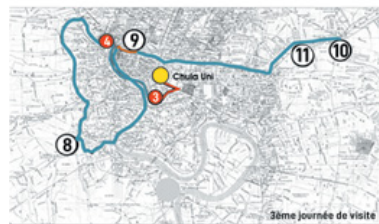
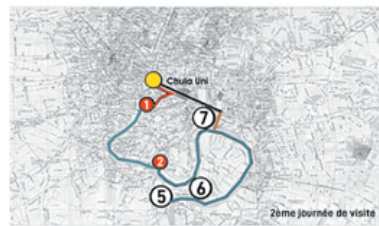
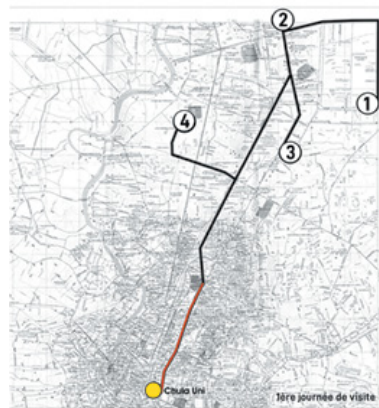


Fig. 1: Global urban exploration of Bangkok. Visiting itineraries, 17–19 February 2005
 Source: Document reconstructed from a panel in the *Métropoles d'Asie-Pacifique: Bangkok Metropolitan – Siem Reap, les coulisses d'Angkor* exhibition, 2–10 May 2005 at ENSA Paris-La Villette and 14–25 October 2005 at ENSA Paris-Belleville

with the lecturers. Each evening, a meeting is organised to gather their impressions – astonishment, incomprehension, amazement, fascination, annoyance etc. – as well as the questions raised by this first encounter with the city, its inhabitants and its users. A map of the urban area is drawn up collectively to locate and characterise the places visited, and to identify urban areas harbouring particular problems that could be chosen as study and project sites.

Take the example of the urban explorations carried out in Bangkok in 2005 (fig. 1). They included a wander through the royal city of Rattanakosin, founded in 1782, and five itineraries using transects²⁸ that cross through the urban territory to reveal its various components and the dynamics that unfold there. These tours made use of several networks and means of transport, to multiply the experiences and observation frameworks and, in so doing, the points of view on the city: waterways, footpaths, ground or aerial road networks, aerial metro lines (Bangkok Skytrain, BTS) or underground (Metropolitan Rapid Transit, MRT).

The tour of the island of Rattanakosin, on foot or by tuk-tuk (auto rickshaw), took in the historic town, its monumental structures – palaces, temples and monasteries, ramparts, gates and fortresses, esplanades and parks, canals, bridges and jetties – and the many places of daily life – villages (*ban*) and residential areas, shopping streets and laneways, markets etc. The students became aware of the uses of space, rhythms and atmospheres; they questioned the future of this composite territory with its many political, social, tourist and heritage issues.

A river bus trip on the Chao Phraya River generated a central transect of seven kilometres, between the two founding areas of Bangkok: on the right bank, Thonburi with its villages dotted along the *khlongs* (canals), its floating settlements and its land of orchards and food crops; on the left bank, Rattanakosin, the royal city and the international metropolis with its business and international trade centres (CBD, Central Business District), whose development had been achieved at the expense of the aquatic dimension by successive backfilling of the canals.



Fig. 2: Buildings along the banks of the Chao Phraya River at Tha Khlong San and Tha Si Phraya piers
 Source: Rozenn Kervella, Prin Jhearnmaneechotechai, Bangkok and maenam Chao Phraya, 2004, right bank of Chao Phraya River between Din Daeng Cross River Ferry Boat and Khlong San pier

'Here stands Bangkok's oldest Chinese pagoda, almost crushed by a thirty-storey condominium. The houses are giving way to more medium-sized buildings. We arrive at Khlong San pier, a small pier at the exit of a market. A footbridge links the pier to the terrace of an unfinished luxury hotel. An old village of wooden houses built on a wetland appears behind this high-rise. A green setting next to a vast area of hangars and a dock.'

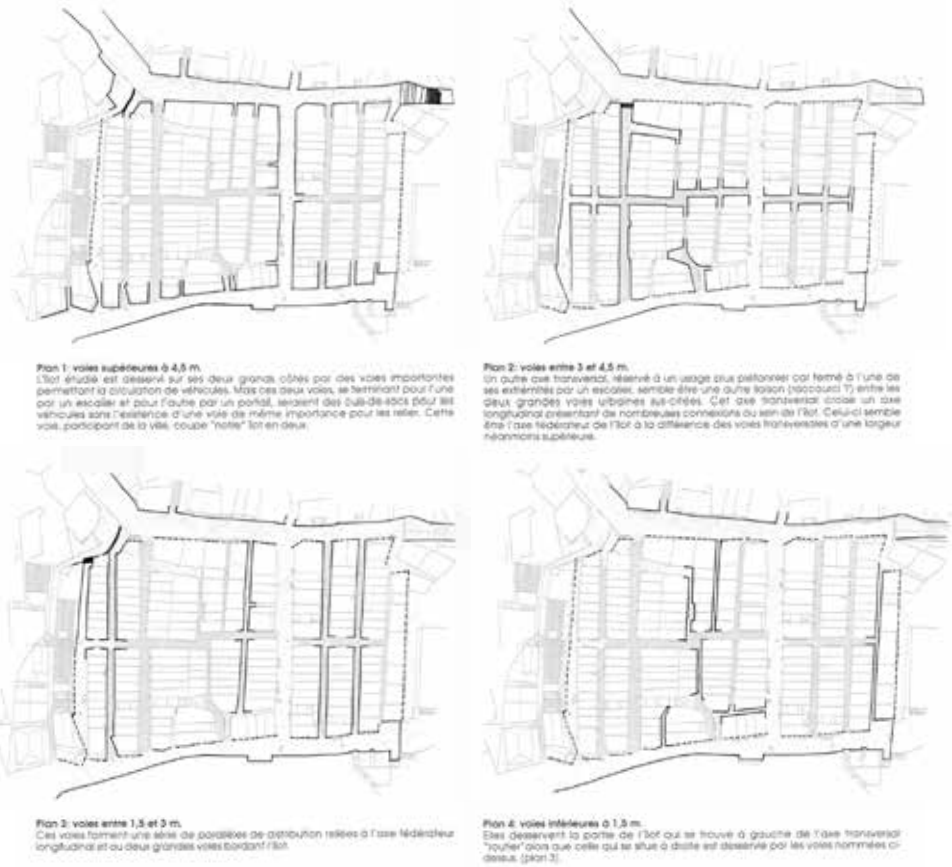
Looking at the city from the river revealed a series of contrasts: between the two banks, one aquatic and the other terrestrial; between the shapes and scales of the buildings that make up the riverside landscape, the house on stilts next to the vertical superblocks of condominiums, office towers, skyscrapers, world-class hotels and malls; between the river, alive and bustling with the transport of passengers – city dwellers and tourists – and goods, and its relatively neglected banks, punctuated by the landing stages of the river shuttles (fig. 2). This visit raised questions about the city's relationship with the river, which the students analysed as paradoxical, and about the issues involved in developing the riverbanks and piers. From 1989 onwards, several study and project sites were chosen on the riverbanks.

Continuing by river bus on the Chao Phraya River, the southern transect reached the

'island' of Bang Kachao, nestled in a river loop. A protected natural area (three square kilometres), comprising nine villages on land that was still farmland in 2005, it was undergoing extensive tourist development, designated by the *Times* in 2006 as 'The Best Urban Oasis in Asia', which calls into question the conservation of this landscape heritage.

The itinerary also included a visit to the khlong Toei district, considered to be the largest sub-integrated housing complex in Bangkok.²⁹ The students discovered a living environment, organised into corporate neighbourhoods or according to the origin or date of settlement of its inhabitants, which was not devoid of neighbourhood solidarity and ingenuity in the construction and layout of space. The experience of this slum (*salam*) prompted reflection on the spatial and social qualities of these complexes and their integration into the modern city.

Hiérarchie des voies par le dimensionnement (largeurs).



Connexions internes.

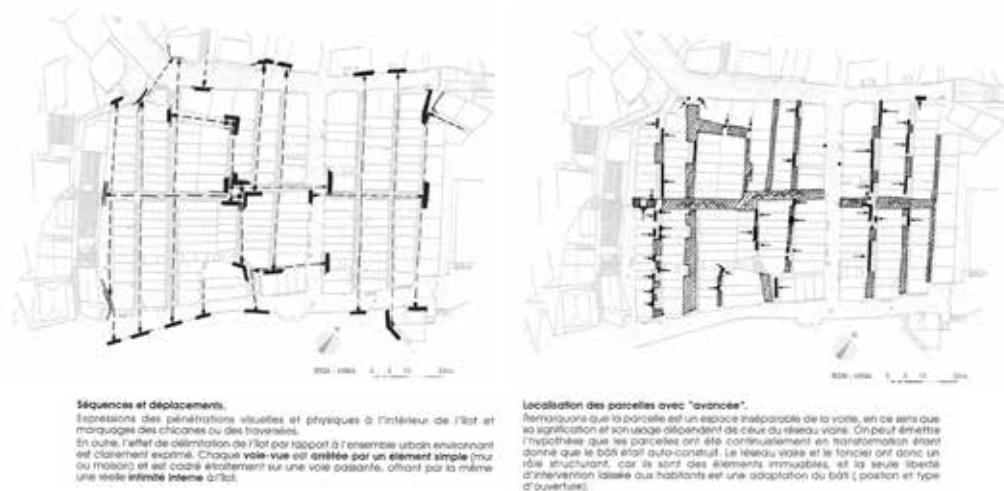


Fig. 7: Analysis extract: Street dimensions; view and movement within the block; plots and their extensions, Elisabeth Pacot, Isabelle Ras, Samuel Sourice, 1995, CEA MAP. Courtesy of AteLab

Logiques d'implantation des parcelles et fonctionnements supposés des voies.

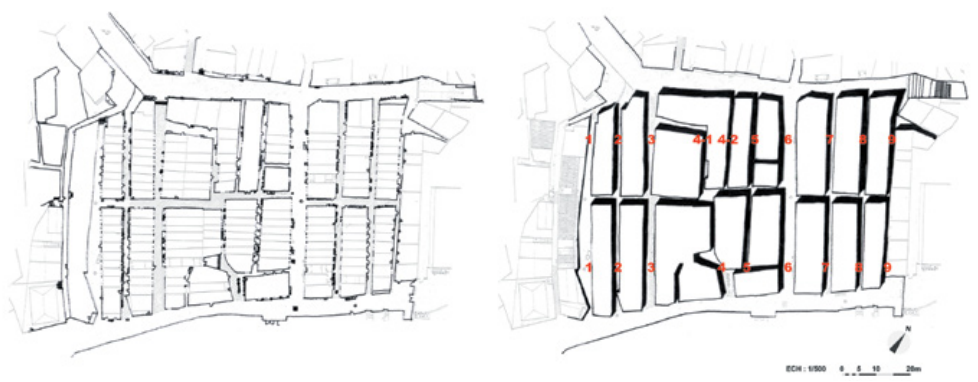


Fig. 8: Sunlight and house orientation, Elisabeth Pacot, Isabelle Ras, Samuel Sourice, 1995, CEA MAP. Courtesy of AteLab

This methodology course also aims to guide research and projects on the contemporary city. In the hypothesis of a renovation project for this housing complex in Sonchon, we realised that in this urban fabric created by the divisions of a refugee camp, the surface area

of each plot was too limited to adapt to current lifestyles while preserving common spaces and social links. On the other hand, it was possible to transfer certain interesting aspects of this system, notably its social dimension, to other urban and architectural forms.

Notes

- 1 The AE005 project unit in the 5th year 'Architecture and Environment' Diploma was initiated by Shin Yong-Hak, Xavier Jaupitre and Christelle Robin, lecturer-researchers at the Laboratoire d'Architecture et d'Anthropologie (LAA) in 1983. 'Hybrid Spaces', the theoretical aspect of this diploma, was associated with the inter-Unités Pédagogiques programme 'Eastern Cities'.
- 2 Rem Koolhaas, 'The Generic City', in O.M.A., Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S,M,L,XL* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers/New York: Monacelli Press, 1995).
- 3 See the interview with Shin Yong-Hak in this book.
- 4 Kimchi is a traditional Korean dish made from chillies and lacto-fermented vegetables and is an essential part of everyday Korean cooking. Kimchi is made and stored in large earthenware jars.
- 5 Pierre Boudieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990). See the appendix 'The Kabyle house, or the world reversed'.
- 6 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1991), pp. 204-205.
- 7 Lefebvre 1991, p. 143.
- 8 See the interview with Shin Yong-Hak.