



Urban Theories Across Borders

UTAB 2024

Researching the ordinary
city

BANGKOK,
Chulalongkorn University,
4th-14th June 2024

Photo credits: Pak Khlong Talat, Rattanakosin © Prin Jhearmaneechotechai,
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Faculty of Architecture,
Chulalongkorn



What is UTAB?

Urban Theories Across Borders (UTAB) is a recurring intensive training for early career researchers who aim to pursue knowledge production about cities and urbanisation in Southeast Asia, with a grounding in the social sciences. UTAB helps the students in three domains: A. engage with the most recent debates in the urban studies field ; B. produce fieldwork-based urban research ; C. learn and apply key methodological tools for writing a sound PhD dissertation.

Why Southeast Asia?

Cities in Southeast Asia face unprecedented development challenges related to massive, rapid, privately led, urbanisation processes. Entangled with conflictive urban politics at various scales, these processes generate pressing management and environmental problems that require contextual urban policies and patterns of governance. In trying to unpack the complexity of these processes, contemporary urban research has analysed the development trajectories of Southeast Asian cities with a solid grounding in the social sciences and postcolonial theory. Although regional boundaries have often been taken for granted, critical research in urban studies and geography has started to submit them to critical exam. It has been suggested that a closer look should be taken at circulations, processes, and networks, in order to determine the relevant scale for studying cities and urbanisation. UTAB aspires to contribute to unbound Southeast Asia as a region, all while drawing on solid historical, political, cultural, and linguistic knowledge about countries and societies located in this region. UTAB locates urban transformations and urbanization in Southeast Asia within processes and interactions that intersects, but exceed, the region. Furthermore, it asks how processes of territorial transformations in contemporary Southeast Asia rejoin broader questions about the future of cities and urbanization in the world. UTAB winter and summer school deal with more specific themes which contribute to this agenda. UTAB's first edition (5-17 December, 2022) developed questions related to urban comparisons within and beyond Southeast Asia, drawing on the cases of Chiang Mai (Thailand) and Yogyakarta (Indonesia).

UTAB 2024 : researching the ordinary city

UTAB's next edition (4th-14th June 2024) will produce knowledge and research on the theme of the ordinary city, drawing on the case of Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand.

Urban studies have defined the ordinary city in two ways. Jennifer Robinson (2006) argued that all cities are ordinary. Henceforth, urban research shall move beyond the long-lasting focalisation on global cities and Northern metropolises (Bunnell and Maringanti, 2010) and examine urban diversity around the world. In this wake, urban studies have looked at the

contextual expressions of urban modernities in cities with secondary or subaltern status (Chen and Kanna, 2012; Qian and Tang, 2018; Mukhopadyyai, Zeras and Denis, 2020), the majority of which are located in the postcolonial world and the Global South (Legg and MacFarlane, 2008).

Another avenue of investigation on the ordinary city has drawn on research in anthropology, ethnography, and history, which has granted special attention to « local knowledge » (Geertz, 1983), the practices and places of everyday life, and the attachment of the local people for these places (Upton, 2002 ; Miae Kim, 2015). Built environments are seen as complex systems transformed by the inhabitants' « innately familiar » (Habraken, 2000). Within this analytical framework, the ordinary city is the result of regular procedures of urban shaping that do not necessarily refer – even if they often act to – urban planning (Backouche and Montel, 2007 ; Clemençon, 2015). It is composed of « plural, articulated, and fragmented » urban tissues (Mareggi, 2011) that made the object of diffused and recurring transformations (Pareglio, 2014). It is also made of non-built spaces and everyday practices (Mareggi, 2011) that are fundamental in the construction of local identities (Lanzani, 2003 ; Byrne, 2008). Ordinary heritage takes into account the qualities of the built environments that are used as backdrop for everyday activities (Podder, Hakim et Bosu, 2018). Safeguarding the ordinary heritage implies, of course, conserving the buildings, but also and even more, transmitting the spiritual, symbolic and traditional knowledge that allow the residents to be actively engaged in its maintenance and reproduction (Appadurai, 2003 ; Byrne, 2008). Urban spaces, as ordinary heritage, are concerned by continuous and fluid transformations and negotiated spatial occupations that are sometimes ephemeral or temporary. They produce specific formulations of urban modernity that contribute to determining the originality of ordinary cities.

Drawing on the case of Bangkok, UTAB 2024 will study the ordinary city in Rattanakosin, the historical core of the royal capital founded in 1782. The monumental heritage of Rattanakosin has been extensively documented and conserved with the support of Thai authorities. Yet the « ordinary urban » of the daily life of residents, urban dwellers, and tourists remains, with few remarkable exceptions, understudied. The young researchers who will participate to UTAB 2024 will be involved in the ongoing research conducted by the Faculty of Architecture of Chulalongkorn University in cooperation with the CREMA network, which is aimed at bringing ordinary Rattanakosin into the landscape of urban knowledge.

They will produce knowledge on three interrelated sub-themes:

1. collective memories and identities embedded in the urban space ;
2. the analysis of urban rhythms and flows in the urban environments ;
3. formalities and informalities in the commercial neighbourhoods.

UTAB's activities

UTAB's format involves three types of activities.

- Lectures provided by a team of urban researchers from diverse disciplinary and geographical background.
- Methodological workshops that increase the students skills in various tasks, including critical analysis of academic literature and the writing of a sound state of the art and research proposal.
- Fieldwork activities based on social sciences' research methods. They will be implemented in close association with researchers from Chulalongkorn University and the CREMA network. Maps and documentation on Rattanakosin will be provided by Chulalongkorn University.

Where and when

UTAB 2024 will take place in Bangkok, between June 4th and 14th 2024. Classes and workshops will be held at the Faculty of Architecture of Chulalongkorn University. Students will be housed on campus.

How to apply

Three categories of candidates are eligible :

1. PhD students and candidates ;
2. Students who hold a master degree and would like to enroll as PhD students ;
3. Master students who would like to enroll as PhD students after completion of their master ;

Candidates shall submit their application at the latest on February 29th 2024. Successful applicants will be notified on March 31st 2024.

The application file shall be composed by :

- cover letter outlining the student's motivations to attend UTAB 2024;
- updated curriculum vitae ;
- research project (between 700 and 1000 words) that the applicant develops / may want to develop during his.her doctoral studies;
- names and email address of 2 referees ;
- copy of master degree or academic transcript (in case the applicant does not yet hold his.her master degree at the time of the application).

The application shall be sent to the following email address: utabdoctoraltraining@gmail.com

Fellowships for participants

Funding is available to sponsor trips and daily living costs for a limited number of successful applicants coming from low-income countries.

Registration fees

A registration fee equivalent to 80 euros will be required to successful applicants. This fee will be duly refunded to each participants on Day 1 of the winter school.

If you have questions

Do not hesitate to write to UTAB 2024's coordinator : utabdoctoraltraining@gmail.com

For further information about UTAB 2022, please visit our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/winterschool2022>

For further information about UTAB and CREMA, please visit our website : <https://utab-crema.parisgeo.cnrs.fr/>

Lecturers & members of the scientific committee

- **Sirintra Aursirisub**, Lecturer, Chulalongkorn University
- **Pymporn Chaiyaporn**, Lecturer, Chulalongkorn University
- **Bundit Chulasai**, Professor Emeritus, Chulalongkorn University
- **Boonyakorn Damrongrat**, PhD Student, Chiang Mai University
- **Rémy Delage**, CNRS Researcher at CEIAS
- **Adele Esposito Andujar**, UTAB Scientific Coordinator, CNRS Researcher at Géographie-Cités
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- **Pijika Pumketkao**, researcher and lecturer, ENSAPB and UMR AUSser
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