

### **China Fund Proposal: GSD Spring 2012 Studio: “Landscape and Ecological Urbanism: Future Alternatives for Beijing – Part 3”**

The Graduate School of Design seeks funding for a studio option to be offered in Spring 2012, entitled “Landscape and Ecological Urbanism: Future Alternatives for Beijing”, headed by visiting Professor Yu Kongjian, assisted by visiting Critic Adrian Blackwell, and Stephen Ervin, and again in conjunction with Peking University. This proposed studio will be third and final in a series begun in Spring 2010, and followed in Spring 2011, with support from the China Fund. The same over-arching issues have been addressed in the past two studios, as in this proposal: the social, ecological, urbanistic, and other impacts of the expansion of Beijing into its periphery. The first two studios, engaging both landscape architecture and urban planning/design students, focused on rather different sites, generally around the Sixth Ring Road: the first, the mountainous region to the northwest (Sujiatuo) , with several relatively intact villages; the second, the low-lying region (to the southeast (Taihu), with a number of villages already or actively being demolished. In both, impacts on agriculture, and issues related to water quality and availability, played key roles. In the recent study of Taihu, transportation infrastructure, in the form a new high-speed-rail station, also was key.

In this proposed final of what has been planned as a series of three studios, the study region will again be south of Beijing, in the Daxing district. This area, also notable for agricultural resources, is the chosen site for the second Beijing Airport, a development that will doubtless have substantial impacts across the spectrum of landscape/urban planning and design considerations. We expect students to build upon ideas and strategies developed in the first two studios, with future visions applicable not only to Beijing and our specific study sites, but more generally to urban expansion throughout China.

The GSD requests \$40,000 to be used to support studio travel to China for a week-long field trip, coordinated with Peking University. The previous two field trips have been immensely valuable to the students and to cross-cultural communications.

We propose to produce one more published book from this studio, that will form a trilogy of sorts with the previous two studio publications.

Attached on the following pages are excerpts from the original (2010) proposal that describe the pedagogic intent of the studio series; as well as the final report from our Spring 2011 Studio (Taihu).

Please let me know if any questions.

Thank you for your consideration,

For the GSD, Departments of Landscape Architecture, Urban Planning and Design,  
and Professor Yu Kongjian, Peking University,

Stephen M Ervin  
Lecturer in Landscape Architecture  
Assistant Dean for Information Technology,  
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From Fall 2009 , Proposal for Spring 2010 Studio Project

Studio teaching is at the core of the design school's pedagogy. As stated by the Dean "Regardless of differences in format, all studios have a specific pedagogical focus, although no attempt is made to comprehensively simulate office practice. Rather all studios operate within a thematic pedagogical framework with specific educational, as distinct from strictly professional, objectives. To make an analogy with certain ideas from other disciplines, the explicitly exploratory nature of design studios make them rather more speculative than simply normal or routine in their focal interests. Here advantage is also taken of a strong and broadly based program of visiting critics--another hallmark of the studio experience at the Graduate School of Design. The benefits include an added breadth of perspective, different styles of studio instruction, and a widened design outlook on the part of participants."

Recently the opportunity arose for a distinguished alum, Kongjian Yu, to offer an advanced studio in Spring 2010 that will relate to an existing program at Peking University. Prof Yu states in the course description " As part of a multi-year research and design program, the studio series will explore the most advanced critical thinking regarding landscape and urban planning and design, especially theories and methods of ecological sustainability and landscape urbanism. These theories and methods will be evaluated across multiple sites and scales when exploring alternative future scenarios for the Beijing metropolitan area. The Beijing Alternatives Studio Series will be carried out in cooperation with Peking University, Beijing Land Bureau and Beijing Planning Bureau...." This is the first opportunity the school has had for a landscape architect from China to conduct a studio and lead a site visit in China.

"Students are expected to: (1) perform site analysis integrating various techniques including GIS, and social and economic questionnaires; (2) develop various urban and landscape strategies for the region based on thorough analysis of the landscape and ecosystems, social economic context, and regional and global comparative studies; (3) develop alternative landscape and urban design strategies for one village in the region using each of the scenarios which has been cultivated through the team's site analysis."

Professor Yu, an alumnus of our Doctor in Design program, is one of the foremost landscape architecture educators in China. He is the founder and dean of the Graduate School of Landscape Architecture at Peking University, the single most important training program for landscape architects in the country. He is also the founder and president of Turenscape, which is an internationally awarded firm with more than 400 professionals and is one of the first and largest private landscape architecture and architecture firms in China. Yu participated in the school's conference on Ecological Urbanism in Spring 2009 in the roundtable discussion: *What Next? How to Bring About More Sustainable Cities*. As a landscape practitioner and academic whose interest and influence extends to planning and urban design, Prof. Yu will provide an exceptional cross-disciplinary learning opportunity for students in these three fields.

He is an influential advocate at the national, provincial, and municipal levels for ecological and environmental planning. His research with students and his associates informs the recommendations that he makes. The results of this studio will contribute to the body of knowledge that supports this advocacy.

If this studio is funded, it is our intention to have the students travel to Beijing - to get an

overview of the city's urban environment and then become familiar with the project site's physical landscape. Site analysis will be comprised of natural, social, economic, historical and cultural processes. GIS and computer modeling techniques will be an integral process for inventory and analysis. There will be opportunities for interaction with the students, faculty and officials from the consortium of Peking University, Beijing Land Bureau and Beijing Planning Bureau. Members of the consortium will make presentations for the benefit of the students, and the students in turn will present their work and ideas.

The school has had a fruitful relationship with China which includes many different types of engagement. During the 1990's, we had a funded program of visiting scholars from Tsinghua and several other Chinese Universities with architecture programs; our faculty have engaged in research and teaching on China; several architecture and urban design studios, seminars and architecture thesis projects have focused on various aspects of design and planning in China, and we have offered executive education programs related to development in China, specifically for Tsinghua University. We have approximately 200 alums in China, many who are now in important academic and design leadership positions. This studio will help expand these relationships, especially into the field of landscape architecture.

If this studio is successful, there is a possibility for further collaboration in future years.