

# **Idea Notes from Class 22, Nov 25, 2013**

## **Note #01.**

I'm still curious what the employment prospects – particularly formal sector ones – of relocated farmers are. Is this negotiated in the relocation process?

Why is there so much emphasis on south-facing apartments with air flow? Does the resulting ?? of ?? in the apartment undermine the normal accessibility of apartments?

I'm clueless but curious how the farmer relocation process in the U.S. works. Obviously, the density (and density) is lower, but what happened to farmers in the part as cities expanded in a dense area, and were recently as they have ?? After calling farmers, do farmers move farther out or into the city?

## **Note #02.**

Design/technology => social problems?

Affordable housing:

1 Individual construction right?

(Designed-huge community VS. Individual houses)

2 Family style (Big family VS. nuclear family)

3 Villages => make money (work opportunity)

4 a potential way of living low-costly

(water, electricity, property management fee )

## **Note #03.**

Using design as a solution to solve social problems. This seems more applicable in terms of the talent apartments project rather than the affordable housing for displaced farmers. Like the Indian case presented, what could be the mechanisms to help protect, or guide these displaced farmers live after the gentrification of the area? What is it in terms of holistic development? Nevertheless, very interesting projects to learn from.

## **Note #04.**

It was a very interesting subject about affordable housing. But I'm just wondering about the trade off: quality beauty VS cost price. The projects showed in the class are very beautiful, but they look expensive.

It would very very interesting to see the different price per sq. meter of different solutions of affordable housing in China.

## **Note #05.**

I'm not sure how much I believe the idea for not having farmer's housing that looks like farmers' housing is complete. Do we want to give them an investment or a place to live? If the answer is the latter we might have to design better farmer's housing but not necessarily high class condos.

If the answer is the former I believe it is crucial to create opportunities of living/working in the space with a mix of housing and residential uses. That will ease the transition for the farmers from country-side to city and not necessarily their revenues.

## **Note #06.**

Dr. Yi Dong showcased some great projects towards "spatial justice " in Ningbo – I was impressed by the creativity and good design of his firm's projects.

However, I am concerned that these projects don't achieve spatial or social justice as much as they claim to. Both the formers resettlement and the young talent project are so nice precisely because the city hired a very good architecture firm to design a project that would be more expensive than average (and very subsidized to the end uses). It's easy to build something nice if you are willing to spend more money, but to the extent that the supply for these projects is less than the total reward, some farmers (or young graduates) end up with a much better bargain than others – I don't see this as justice.

Instead, I believe one could only achieve this kind of social/ spatial justice if we can find a model that's affordable enough to become the norm and be available to all, not just a lucky few.

## **Note #07.**

I was surprised by some of the comments regarding architecture's ability to

influence social integration (lifestyle, namely), I feel that architects are able to play a very essential role in facilitating and/or increasing integration. The layout and aesthetic of a space can have a very significant and direct impact on lifestyle choices.

The notion of design and technology being less controversial mechanisms for social change is also a useful one to keep in mind. I wonder, since design and technology tend to have smaller impacts (in scale), is there a way for policy-makers to create policy that enables the dissemination or adoption of beneficial design/technologies for social change? This may help to move around the significant challenges of large-scale, top-down social policy-making.

## **Note #08.**

What is more scalable than design strategy it seems is the attitude towards resettlement projects. When the government or development agency recognize the “solf” values of buildings/design.

I think more so than less about strategies. I felt it could be a much richer debate about attitudes and philosophical values of different political economy manifested ??...

## **Note #09.**

The lecture today provides an example of solid research at the micro level for intervening migrants work environment in cities. I have also been amazed by power divide between urban residents, village government, and the rural migrant workers shown in the photo of distinct spatial contrast. Perhaps the huge power divide makes our research address more the needs of the disadvantaged group from the social justice point of view. However, by solely condemning the cruelty of developers, the economic rationale and the benefits should not be neglect. Like Elena has mentioned in the class, perhaps senior policy makers and some citizens have their reasoning to promote such redevelopment. Economic forces have finally been the unstoppable driving force for urban renewal and redevelopment. The question is then how to ensure the citizens' need to be addressed appropriately and how to contain the abusive power of the advantaged group.

## **Note #10.**

Good affordable housing projects for migrants were really rare in China. I think Dr. Dong made a nice sample of using design as a method to solve the affordable housing problem. Using the spatial resources in a maximum way and giving everyone the fair opportunity to take part in the environment are crucial for spatial justice. Although changing the migrants' lifestyle could be hard and may not be architects' responsibility, good design and affordable technology can offer migrants better choices of living and working.

## **Note #11.**

The presentation focused on affordable housing in urbanizing people in rural communities into new cities or towns. Then he said some people want rural Hukou now because they can own land. Do the prior rural residents own their property after resettling in the new housing? How does collective ownership get allocated afterwards? And are these people now on their way to an urban Hukou?

## **Note #12.**

One of the larger take-aways from today's class for me is relatively narrow range of typical Chinese urban residential architecture. We talked about the different typologies of design and the influence of design in class, but the two examples that Dr. Dong showed seem to me more or less slight variations on the typical Corbusian / urban Chinese model of a dense and tall building.

We talk about the influence of design on behavior, development, value, etc. My initial conclusion from the class was the little influence that design has on the function and performance of the space, but rather, factors such as government policy, zoning, and land values seem to have a larger influence on usage and success. However, on thinking about it further, I realized that this is very often not the case in truly successful design (I think a very good example of this is Snohetta Oslo Opera House, which created a new public gathering space achieved largely through the design). Rather, I don't think the examples we saw in class really stray too far from the conventional high-rise organization to really be impactful through design itself. Even so, that may not be the overall goal in

China currently. The two-week design turnaround that Dr. Dong had was a very pointed indication to me that, rather than "architecture" itself, Chinese cities are mostly in need of "buildings" due to their current quick growth.

## **Note #13.**

Professor Dong has created a set of impressively photogenic and thought-provoking projects, and I am looking forward to following the co-evolution of his reflections and experiments. Most of the questions I had (below) were already raised in class, but they may always result in unsatisfying answers.

Is "normal" enough? A two-week design turnaround is a good excuse, but will the agenda of making "market-like housing" constrain future design possibilities for resettlement housing?

And if this is the solution, then why aren't a critical mass of architecture firms making their marks with exemplary social housing? "We are scaling up ourselves" is only a start; instead of codifying this "market-like housing" approach, how can architects share knowledge about creating conditions for more socially sustainable housing?

However, the "market-like housing" strategy seems to run counter to the agenda of enabling a sustainable community, if most of the resettled residents are going to abandon their centrally-located apartments and end up on the urban fringe anyway. At least "typical farmers' housing" creates less incentive for the original residents to move out--although they do contend with another form of tenure insecurity: their housing could be the first to be demolished when the land value becomes irresistible (i.e. the 'twice-resettled communities' in Shanghai).

Farmers were able to adapt the neighborhood to their "old lifestyle"; so does that mean any design could have been adapted? "Typical farmers' resettlement housing" may have even more potential for adaptation; it may appear provincial and sterile from bird's-eye renderings, but it is often intimate and well-cultivated at ground level.

I was happy that one of my favorite "adaptive architecture" issues was brought up: Prof. Dong was amused by the reappropriation of his tea room into a laundry drying space, but I find it surprising that architects often don't consider this essential, performative practice in their designs. Conversely, the politics of clothes drying--the "machine drying" class encountering the "air drying" class in dense urban environments--are often a determinant of livability. Architects have been compelled by government officials and developers alike (all "machine drying"/maid class) to take extreme measures to conceal the unsightly habits of the "air drying" class, so that high-value estates can coexist harmoniously with the resettled farmers. This was a key concern of the Shanghai Jiading government at the resettlement housing within the Jiading New City, resulting in a dysfunctional design with hermetically-sealed and darkened facades.