



ARCHITECTURAL SYMPOSIUM IN SHANGHAI MOVING TOWARDS LARGE SCALE URBANISM

How to harmonize infrastructure and landscape in the gigantic urban complexes which are the cities of the 21st century? This key question stimulated the debates at the Shanghai Symposium on November 12-13, 2005. Initiated by Lafarge and organized in collaboration with the prestigious Tongji University in Shanghai and the School of Architecture of Paris Belleville, the Symposium hosts debates and exchanges over 2 days and is the 2nd largest architectural event in the world.

Urbanism at the heart of the Symposium's concerns

Three key words – urbanity, infrastructure and landscape – mobilized some 60 architects, urban designers and government representatives from Europe and China around the issues of large-scale urban development.

Their goal was to compare European experiences of the last few years with those of large developing cities, particularly in China. The unprecedented growth of these cities is compelling urban planners to rethink the “spatial framework of urbanity”.

Increasing urbanization at a global level

Our societies are becoming increasingly urbanized. Since 1950, the urban population has grown from 25% to 50% of the world population. This trend is accelerating and the figure could hit 60% by 2020. In China, cities will have to cope with an influx of around 250 million people from rural areas over the coming years.

Reinventing the urban landscape: a 21st century challenge

This major change in the history of urbanism raises fundamental questions concerning the creation of a new spatial framework. The challenge is now to take the growth of cities into account in order to invent – or reinvent – a coherent and harmonious urban landscape.

The Symposium's 4 main urbanization projects

The transformation of a territory should be based on an understanding of the traces which history has left on it. The 4 urbanization projects presented evoked the possibility of redrawing an urban landscape in harmony with its architectural heritage and history.

1) The Barcelona urban project

Speaker: Manuel de Solà Morales, Spanish architect, key player in Barcelona's urban renewal.

Theme: harmonization of landscape and urbanity.

Goal: reaffirm Barcelona as a port city while remodeling infrastructures, especially the old port and the adjacent roadway. This project renewed the city's relationship with the sea.

2) Athens 2004 Olympic games

Speaker: Yannis Tsiomis, Greek architect, professor in Paris.

Theme: development of areas rich in historical remains.

Goal: new airport, motorways, renewal of a number of downtown neighborhoods... The 2004 Olympic Games drove a reorganization of the urban landscape. The project has succeeded in respecting the city's historical patrimony and its numerous protected sites.

3) The Shanghai 2010 World Fair

Speaker: Zhou Jian, Chinese architect, head urban designer for the 2010 World Fair projects.

Theme: elaboration of a coherent urban project.

Goal: welcoming an event as important as a World Fair involves requires a lot of background preparation. Improvement works have already started, notably with the construction of a new southern rail station for the city. The challenge is to integrate welcome infrastructures and housing areas.

4) The Paris tramway

Speaker: Antoine Grumbach, French architect, coordinates the development of areas through which the new Paris tramway will pass.

Theme: improvement of public spaces and urban mobility.

Goal: the project addresses public space issues and opens up neighborhoods with poor public transport by creating a tramway on the boulevards that encircle the capital.

Shanghai 2010: revival through culture

Shanghai, host of the 2010 World Fair, is undergoing a profound architectural revival. To welcome the Fair, the city has chosen to completely rehabilitate the old industrial zone near the Huangpu River – an ambitious transformation project!

Rehabilitate industrial zones

The aim is to develop this neglected area and take advantage of the river that passes through the city. The old textile factories have been demolished and replaced with about fifteen new blocks of apartments. The electricity and coal factories will be moved near the airport and the shipyards will be relocated north of the city.

Long-term development

While Chinese urban designers are transforming this area for the World Fair, their ambition goes much further. Their long-term aim is to create a living space, with the muddy banks of the Huangpu becoming a riverside walkway for strollers and tourists.