

Chinese – Danish co-operation. ABB2006 Press Conference 28.02.2006

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak here today.

I am the director of the architectural office of UiD and the curator of this project of Chinese-Danish collaboration in the field of sustainable urban development in China. A project which we make together with the Danish Architecture Centre and which will be the national Danish contribution to the Architectural Biennale of Beijing in September 2006.

In September last year I participated in an official delegation with the Danish Minister of Culture to China. Here we met with Mr. Oui Baoxing, the Vice Minister of Construction in China, who told us about the urgent need for more sustainable urban development in China.

The impressive attempt of the Chinese government to radically improve the living standard of China's entire population of 1.3 billion people is putting an enormous pressure on existing natural resources like soil, water, forestry and minerals.

The consumption of these resources has a very direct impact on our living conditions which, in the short term, can be experienced as deteriorated environments plagued by smog and particle emissions, polluted water and water shortage, rising oil and gasoline prices and unstable power supply. But which in the long term may have much more serious consequences.

Thus the question is; how can China proceed with its ambitious project of improving the living conditions of its population without exhausting the very resources needed to sustain a better life?

With 50 % of all construction in the world now taking place in China and an estimated 400 million people moving to the cities of China within the next 20 years, the issue of sustainable urban development is not only important to the Chinese people, but to all of us.

We believe that a sustainable future is the most important agenda in the world today. And that to create this future we need to work together.

During the next six months four of the most talented groups of young Danish architects will collaborate with students and professors of urban planning from four highly acclaimed Chinese Universities. Together they are forming four equal partnerships, each of which will work out a project of sustainable urban development in one of the four mayor cities of China. That is Beijing, Chongqing, Shanghai and Xi'an.

Perhaps the most exciting contemporary project within the field of sustainable urban development is taken place here in China. It is the Dongtan project outside Shanghai, which is being planned by Arup, probably the most renowned engineering company in world. Arup will be our partner for this project and the consultant to our four project teams.

The four project teams will confront a wide range of environmental, economic, social and cultural issues related to sustainable urban development. And they will work together both here in China and in Denmark.

They are not simply to translate Western models of urban planning into Chinese - or to simply apply existing Chinese models. The challenges of rapid urbanization and modernization, and the related problems of pollution and resource exhaustion in China, can not be solved by traditional means.

As the curator of this project it is my hope that together the participants will be able to develop entirely new models of sustainable urban development. Models which can be used as inspiration for the rest of the world.

Thank you very much.

Henrik Valeur