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Nanjing Railway Station - Marc Keller - R.R.

Nanjing or the assertion of cities

By the end of this year, for the first time in history, more than half of humanity will live in a city, and this proportion is expected to increase in the coming decades, making the twenty-first century the “century of cities”. Does this mean that we have a clear vision of, and, even more importantly, genuine control over, the social, financial, urban planning, energetic, spatial, climatic and environmental consequences of this vast and unstoppable process of global urbanization? The 4th World Urban Forum, which was organized by the United Nations’ Habitat agency and took place in the Chinese city of Nanjing, attempted, through the prism of the “harmonious urban planning” so dear to the Chinese, to produce some partial answers to these questions. In our opinion, which is shared by others (in particular the geographer Jacques Lévy), a city only has a meaning if it is perceived simultaneously as a “geographical concept” and a “political entity”. We therefore think it is important to assert the following ideas:

- the power of cities should be strengthened as they are the entities that are best able to create a society in a globalized world;
- the city of tomorrow already exists. Because the city is a “located good”, therefore in principle unmovable and durable by its very nature, rather than favouring unlimited urban growth we should encourage the regeneration of existing urban tissues. To do this, it is necessary to strengthen urban centres and breathe life into peripheral areas so they all possess the benefits of the city, namely diversity, a role as a centre, the opportunity for travel, and mixing;

- the promotion of “context-based urban planning” means that it is possible to intervene without aggression or timidity at a site in order to anchor the city in its time. This attitude, which combines prudence and audacity, means we should mistrust models and theories which frequently remain mere paper and prefer reversible evolutionary processes which are firmly focused on action, because we should never forget that a good project is one which comes to fruition;

- public space must constantly be placed at the heart of urban action. As it is often the case that only a small proportion of urban space is genuinely under control, public spaces must be perceived as unifying elements of communal life and stimulate, to variable degrees, the feeling of belonging to a common space (because of the quality of their facilities and the nature of the activities which can take place in them). These are some of the ideas which we have attempted to develop in the framework of the 4th World Urban Forum as a French, or perhaps, European, conception of the city, rather than that of a “universal geography”, which probably does not exist, but much more of a “poetic of cities” like, for example, when the novelist Julien Gracq discovered Nantes on a whim, “without any desire to classify its components in order of excellence”. ■

Jean GERMAIN

Mayor of Tours,

*President of the Conurbation Committee of Tour(s)plus,
Honorary President of the University of Tours*

Harmonious urbanization ?

Notes on the 4th World Urban Forum¹

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Harmonious urbanization was the ambitious goal displayed on the pediment of the impressive brand new exhibition centre on the edge of the new districts of Nanjing in early November 2008. UN-Habitat organizes a World Urban Forum every two years, and the Fourth followed the 2006 Forum in Vancouver. This time the event attracted slightly fewer participants and many locals crammed into the spectacular halls that praised the building feats the future has in store for the region and the country's major cities.

The Forum's theme subtly combines a political message from the leaders of urban China on the march with the desire to "do the right thing": harmony is fundamental to Chinese philosophy and is brandished against the unprecedented challenges faced by urban political leaders and managers in the form of social, economic and urban transformations.

Nanjing, with its population of 7 million, provides a very good insight into the situation. As a historical capital city, Nanjing still contains a large number of attractive historical and natural sites (a lake and a wooded hill) that nestle among its modern towers and shopping centres. An international airport, interlacing motorways, a recently built railway station from which TGV services run to Shanghai in two hours, one metro line that serves the forum site and a second under construction: it is clear that efforts are being made to apply the principle of simultaneous construction of infrastructure and urbanization. Of course, there is heavy traffic and life is tough for pedestrians, but a large number of electric two-wheelers travel the streets,

and the roofs are equipped with water collectors and solar panels... The wide avenues lined with plane trees were decked with flags for the occasion and stretch out into the new suburbs that continue out of sight.

During the discussions, the complex nature of cities and the need to combat the exclusion and inequalities generated by the rapid urbanization of the developing world were highlighted. A call was made for regulation on the part of the authorities, with improved links between different levels of power. Some present wondered if this has been expressed forcefully enough.

Since Vancouver, major cities have set out to present a generally positive view, which marks a turning point with cities now being seen as a source of progress. This approach includes providing support for basic community organizations², with particular attention being given to women's groups in order to set up cooperatives and foster local solutions.

Another major concern is climate change, which means that a review of planning practices is now a priority. In connection with this, some participants were con-

cerned about the possibility that this issue may take primacy over ever-present problems such as shanty towns. The realization that there is a dominant model of urban development that threatens the equilibrium of the environment places sustainable development at the heart of the urbanization debate. But "harmonious urbanization" doubtless remains a partial interpretation of these ideas, which is more focused on environmental than social and economic matters.

In spite of this, belief in the positive role of the market and rising property prices as a means of financing urban development was restated, in particular in the number of events that were so efficiently staged by the World Bank, without any modification in the rather too systematic nature of this "economist's" approach as a result of the current crisis.

In the profusion of workshops, roundtables, seminars and training sessions³ proposed by the participating delegations – countries, international organizations and institutional networks or NGOs – we nevertheless cannot fail to notice that the French presence was very minor in spite of the efforts of the Ministry of For-

eign and European Affairs (MAEE) and ISTED. The principal parts of France's participation consisted essentially of the following: a workshop organized by the Association of French Cities (Association des Grandes Villes de France) on the integrated approach to urban planning which involved several elected officials from France, Africa and Cambodia, a speech in a "Dialogue" on the role of planning for territorial balance in urban development, another in the closing session by the representative of Veolia on behalf of firms that are committed to responsible practices, and a side event at the Alliance Française on restoring the heritage of a small town.

Nevertheless the sixty-strong French delegation led by Yves Dauge, the senator for Chinon, was larger than the minimal presence that was criticized at Vancouver. With coordination by the MAEE, good coverage of the event was ensured. France had a stand that was designed by ISTED in the foreign representatives pavilion (where it was next to a considerable Scandinavian presence and a very large stand from Bahrain, which helped fund the event) and presented the Chinese translation of the book "Emerging cities" which was another highlight of the four day event.

Nevertheless, greater mobilization on the part of French bodies would be welcome at future Forums. These events provide an opportunity to

take part in exchanges and demonstrate one's know-how. Our country has skill and expertise in the area of urban and strategic planning. The existence of a demand for expert appraisals and training in French was underscored, at times forcefully, by some of the African delegates. However, it is necessary for the accounts of our experience to target the issues in the host country more effectively. In addition to the topics that have already been mentioned, such as urban management by large departments or the safeguarding of heritage, France should make its views clear with regard to the issues of land, the anticipation of climate change, environmental appraisal and security... These are all topics that play an important role in making conurbations – which are often not very harmonious on a day-to-day level – more bearable. Making the “French touch” in the area of harmonious urbanization clearer is therefore a challenge we



The new exhibition centre which housed the IVth World Urban Forum Nanjing, China.

must take up for the rendez-vous in Rio de Janeiro in 2010! See you there! ■

1. *This summary was based on accounts by Marcel Belliot, Secretary General of the FNAU, Jean-François Benhamou, AFD-*

CLD, Patrice Berger, Agence Urbaine de Lyon, Nicolas Buchoud, Région Île-de-France and the SFU, Alain Durand-Lasserve, CNRS, Laboratoire SEDET, Françoise Ged, Observatoire de l'architecture de la Chine contemporaine, IFA, Cité de l'Architecture

et du Patrimoine, Anne-Marie Roméra, Paris Region Planning Institute (IAU - Île de France), brought together by Olivier Mourareau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

2. *“Empowering the poor”*
3. *“Networking events”, “Side events”.*

IVth World Urban Forum, Nanjing 2008

The UN-Habitat IVth World Urban Forum was jointly organized with the Chinese authorities and held in Nanjing in early November 2008. It was attended by about 8000 people from 155 countries, making it the largest world meeting of the United Nations in China since 1995.

The Forum is a biennial gathering that constitutes the United Nations' consultative body on urban issues. Its sessions, particularly the Dialogues and Roundtables, generate proposals that are transmitted to the UN-Habitat board of directors. It is therefore vital for representatives from member states to be present in order to make their voices heard.

The theme of the Nanjing Forum – “Harmonious Urbanization: the Challenge of Balanced Territorial Development” – provided an opportunity to examine the urban challenges facing the world, in a context where the crisis threatens the world with a recession to which the poorest groups, in particular the world's one billion shanty town dwellers, are the most vulnerable. Arguing for more equitable urban growth, it succeeded in placing the issue of climate change on UN-Habitat's agenda and highlighting the central role of cities and local authorities and the impact of urbanization on communities, cities, economies and policies. However, its themes and organization seem to have been restricted by the Chinese authorities, in particular as regards the limit on the number of NGO workshops. The importance given

to the concept of “harmonious” societies and cities, which was also promoted during the 16th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, gave the impression that the local co-organizers were attempting to control the debates and reduce the coverage of issues such as the democratic representivity of local authorities, decentralization and citizen participation.

It nevertheless highlighted the importance of strategic planning that brings together all urban actors and urban public policies, particularly in the area of housing. Its final recommendations stressed the need to adopt more participative approaches, to engage in genuine partnerships with certain social groups such as women and young people, particularly with regard to improving living conditions in shanty towns.

The MAEE (French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs) with the support of Senator Yves Dauge and the backing of the French urban cooperation community sent a sixty-strong delegation that ensured our country achieved the presence it lacked at previous Forums. The fact that the Forum took place in China, with which France is becoming involved in a large number of economic and cultural exchanges, was undoubtedly an additional factor that helped to bring about this engagement.

Olivier Mourareau, MAEE

Is the Chinese urban model virtuous?

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2008 will be remembered as the year that saw the consecration of Chinese urban policy: the success of the Beijing Olympic Games, the UN-Habitat prize awarded to three cities in Jiangsu Province during the Nanjing World Urban Forum, a highly flattering report from the World Bank, etc. Have the last thirty years of reform succeeded creating a process of urbanization which is sufficiently balanced to avoid the horrors of urban embolism? Are Chinese cities strong enough economically to cope with the influx of migrants from poor rural areas? Are the modes of urban governance sufficiently sophisticated to deal with the contradictions of a "socialist market economy"? More crucially, will the urban model be able to withstand the world economic crisis?

The World Bank report, *China Urbanizes*, that was published in early 2008, presents a very positive picture of Chinese urbanization. The authors take the view that China has succeeded in an area where every other developing country has failed: urbanizing the population while avoiding urban embolism, which is principally characterized by the failure of urban management in the face of informal development (housing, the economy, etc.). The report states that the success of the Chinese model stems from ambitious decisions to support the economic development of cities. On one hand, the creation of a context that encourages the concentration of productive capital has made it possible to absorb the workers from the countryside. On the other, support for investment in urban infrastructure is both helping to create jobs and bringing about a general improvement in living conditions. In 30 years China has gained more than 360 million city dwellers at an extremely rapid pace as urban growth stands at an annual rate of around

4%, which means the urban population is increasing by about 30 million a year. At the same time, China is spending 20% of its GDP on infrastructure, mainly housing and facilities. In short, the economic growth which is more or less controlled by the political authorities is transforming cities into areas of opportunity. Today, some Chinese cities are at the top of the list of the metropolises of emerging countries in terms of the productivity of capital and support for business creation¹.

The Chinese liberal model of growth is based on what seems to be a fairly successful recipe. But is it possible to speak of a model for development? Perhaps not: while it is of course true that economic growth is taking place with a resulting improvement in living conditions, we cannot emphasize too strongly the absence of a system of social protection which places much of the urban population – particularly migrant workers who have come from rural areas – in an unstable situation. Of course, overall, the

number of people in China living below the poverty line has been falling all the time. But it is not certain that in qualitative terms actual living conditions have not been marked by other problems which have resulted from the reforms: harsh working conditions, disintegration of social care systems, disorientation and the danger of marginalization, etc. Moreover, the increase in the supply of urban infrastructure is frequently based on speculative behaviours, particularly with regard to land and property, which do not always appear to match the needs of the population and the criteria of sustainable urbanization. While the "ghost towns" that are springing up on the edges of the metropolises are increasing the figures for the average surface area occupied by each inhabitant, they are still empty due to speculation, at a time when rural immigrants are crammed together in urban slums under appalling sanitary and functional conditions, or simply living – where they work. We therefore need to go beyond the fairly positive macroeconomic analyses

and look at the reality of life in Chinese cities in a more sensitive way: it emerges that the cities are more complex than they seem and marked by fault lines that are every bit as disturbing as before the reforms. It is obvious that the changes do not mean we are moving to a better situation, rather towards something different, as has been made clear by the sociologist of China Jean-Louis Rocca².

In the context of the increasingly unstable socio-economic situation brought about by the global economic downturn, the most optimistic commentators feel that the Chinese government will succeed in putting in place the types of regulation which are needed to foster a truly "harmonious" urban model, it is just a matter of time. There appear to have been some signs of this in 2008; the reform of the hukou system which makes it easier for migrant workers to obtain a temporary document that allows them to access certain social services locally, the application of the Urban and Rural Planning Law which is intended to improve the management of urban spaces, etc. The most pessimistic commentators see the lack of a social, economic and environmental policy as the Achilles' heel of a growth model that is too sensitive to a major weakening of the dynamic of growth itself. Some early warning signs already point to the weakness of the model: about 20 million migrant workers have been forced to return to their rural homes

after the closure of a large number of factories on the coast, the jobs market is shrinking, putting a great deal of pressure on the middle classes and young graduates, several construction projects have been halted and property prices have fallen dramatically (by 16.5% in Shenzhen in 2008, for example).

There is no doubt that the China of tomorrow is being created in the cities, and it is certain that the changes made to move from a growth model to a development model give an idea of what the future has in store. But does this mean we can praise the model without reservations? Does China have the potential to present

itself as an example for other developing countries, particularly in Africa, to follow? Can we already envisage replicating the Chinese urban model? If today we feel the need to question the Chinese approach to urbanization it is because we are expecting a great deal from China – perhaps more than ever before. ■

1. Cf. *Mastercard Worldwide Centers of Commerce : Emerging Market Index*, Mastercard, October 2008.
2. See *La condition chinoise chez Karthala (2006)* and *La société chinoise vue par ses sociologues* published by Les Presses de Sciences Po (2008).

Sustainable urban development in Greater Wuhan

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In innovative partnership for the implementation of a large-scale energy efficiency programme in existing buildings in Wuhan (Hubei Province, China).

Global warming and tension on the fossil fuel market mean that energy conservation is becoming an important aspect of sustainable urban development. Global energy consumption is rising, and the housing sector alone accounts for almost 40% of the world's final energy consumption. The urgency of the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is increasing and the International Energy Agency (IEA) considers that 40% of our reduction goals can be achieved through energy efficiency.

This is the context in which three years ago the research department at the French Development Agency (AFD), with support from the French Energy Conservation Agency (ADEME), set up a particularly innovative partnership with the Hubei Province Construction Committee that focused on

the energy efficiency of existing buildings. While it is true that much development aid work has already been taken place in this area, it has frequently involved sectoral approaches which, due to a failure to provide supporting finance for projects, have been more demonstrative than long-term.

The partnership in question is the outcome of a demand from the Province arising from the highly ambitious goal in China's 11th five-year plan to achieve a 20% reduction in energy consumption over the period 2006-2010 and a shared awareness of the scale of the problem and the potential represented by a reduction in energy consumption in existing buildings.

The implementation of a large-scale energy efficiency programme in existing buildings faces three major types of difficulty. These



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Nanjing, China.

are financial, as the amount of investment is astronomical (to give an idea, the estimated sum for France is between about 800 and 1000 billion Euros.), institutional, as it is very difficult to

coordinate the large number of actors involved (ministries, administrations, the private sector, decision-makers, etc.), and technical, because of the large number of projects with each cate-

gory of building needing an appropriate solution. Many questions are added to these difficulties: how can agents be encouraged to undertake rehabilitation work? How can the emergence of a new rehabilitation market be assisted (capabilities of actors, necessary training, firms, new materials) etc? Thus, in order to create large-scale operational programmes it is necessary to consider energy efficiency comprehensively.

The Chinese party to the partnership, which finances its own teams, has created a thirty-strong multidisciplinary team drawn from municipal and provincial departments and universities. The bodies include the Construction Committee and Academy of the Province of Hubei, the City of Wuhan's Bureaux of Finance, Construction, Energy Savings in Buildings and Property Management, the School of Public Administration at Huazhong University of Science and Technology, the Sustainable Development Department at the Wuhan University of Science and Engineering. Experts from private firms (Escos), banks and investment companies also worked with this team, on a case-by-case basis according to demand.

The team was divided into three groups, working respectively on institutional aspects, technical and economic aspects and financial aspects. Each of these groups received support – and, if necessary, training – from one or more French experts. Sector-based working groups have been set up which has led to the development of the cross-cutting dynamics that are essential for the success of programmes of this type.

The methodology was developed jointly by the Chinese

and French parties to the partnership. The project was divided into groups of tasks and single tasks, for each of which the nature, content, goals and method were detailed. The programme was centred on public and tertiary sector buildings, which represent a total surface area of 70 million m² for the city of Wuhan alone. It focused on identifying appropriate financial mechanisms to cover some or all of the investments that are required to make the energy savings.

In order to meet the operational objectives, these financial mechanisms have been developed with reference to the technical, institutional and financial context. In addition, they are part of a comprehensive approach that takes account of the economic, social and environmental constraints (costs, benefits, impacts) and includes the necessary accompanying and incentive measures.

Of course, this programme also draws on the experience and good practice of a

number of countries in the North, in particular France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States and Japan. A survey of the institutional context, strategies, major players, financial tools and mechanisms and their impacts has been carried out with the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETH), the Fraunhofer Institut für System und Innovationsforschung (ISI) and the International Energy Agency. This work has resulted in the joint publication of a book by the AFD and the IAE in May 2008 with the title *Promoting Energy Efficiency Investments - cases studies in the residential sector.*¹

This cooperation programme has made it possible to identify the technical and economic stakes, not only for the city of Wuhan (eight million inhabitants) but also for Hubei province. These have been extrapolated for the entire Yang-Tse climatic region. It is already apparent that energy savings could reach between 20 and 30% with rehabilita-

tion which does not affect the outer shell of buildings and which will pay for itself in less than four years. The results of this programme will be the subject of a status seminar in Wuhan on 12 and 13 May 2009.

At the operational level, this cooperation programme has encouraged the city of Wuhan to work towards the development of a rehabilitation programme for 600,000 m² of buildings.

The innovative nature of this programme lies in the fact that it is one of the only cooperation programmes which approaches this topic from a comprehensive standpoint with the goal of setting up a durable operational system. In this respect, the partnership remains an experimental one for the AFD, as for the other donors. This programme nevertheless represents a promising direction for cooperation or development aid in the area of sustainable urban development.

¹ Presented on page 8.

Entrance of the Wuhan Science and Engineering University (a participant in the research programme).



Nils Devernois - R.R.

The teaching of architecture and urban planning in China today

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In the first part of the article, Zou Huan explains three principles which characterize the teaching of architecture and urban planning in China.

In the second part, Liu Jian describes the role of the teachers and the bridges between the academic and the real worlds.

China's first training course in architecture was set up in the late 1920s, and training in urban planning first became available in the early 1950s. In recent decades, particularly since the 1980s when China adopted policies of reform and openness, there has been a considerable increase in architectural and urban planning studies, alongside large-scale urban and rural construction which has led to an enormous demand for architects and urban planners. As construction started to play an important role in China's socioeconomic development, the training of architects and urban planners has gained in importance, both in the academic and practical spheres.

There are currently about two hundred institutes of further education offering courses for architects and approximately a hundred for urban planners. Several tens of thousands of graduates are produced each year. However, production is unable to meet demand, because of China's rapid development and the number of major construction projects. At the end of 2006, the country had 11,044 practising architects and 9,313 practising urban planners, i.e. 8.5 architects and 7.2 urban planners per million persons,

which shows that there is a shortage of architects and urban planners.

In response to the challenges raised by rapid socioeconomic development, large-scale urban and rural construction, and the shortage of practitioners, a great deal of effort has been put into training architects and urban planners in order to provide society with additional competent practitioners. I shall highlight three principles which may be considered as specific to training in architecture and urban planning in China.

The first principle is the integration of urban planning and landscape planning within architecture. In view of the scale and the speed with which the building sector is developing in China, the construction of a single building may involve all three disciplines; it is therefore necessary to extend the traditional scope of architecture to include landscape and urban planning.

The second principle is linking practical experience with architectural studies and research. The present-day construction boom is creating considerable demand and providing many opportunities for research and training. Architectural and urban planning studies therefore include real projects as well as academic

research in order to ensure that the students have both a theoretical and practical approach.

The third principle is the development of transdisciplinary studies as has been done in the human sciences. In view of their complexity, human settlements are not simply perceived as a physical environment, but in a comprehensive way that takes in all aspects of society, including the economy, society, history, culture, technology, aesthetics, etc. This explains why transdisciplinary studies are strongly encouraged, as in the human sciences, in order to promote balanced and sustainable development of the residential environment in China.

In the current context of globalization, another important issue in Chinese training in architecture and urban planning is to provide students with an international perception of their discipline. The policy of openness provides students with more and more opportunities of taking part in an exchange and international collaboration both in China and abroad. These are indispensable for those wishing to gain a comprehensive vision and operate at the forefront of the field at a world level. (Z.H.)

China today provides architects and urban planners with enormous scope for experimentation. The same is true for teachers.

The challenges are obvious with regard to the two very different time scales, that involve the very rapid rate of development and construction and the very slow rate at which knowledge is transmitted. We must strike a balance between theory and practice, between the ideal and the real, and between tradition and modernity.

How to adapt as well as possible to the real world ?

The aim of the teaching of architecture and urban planning is to train practitioners who can make a high quality contribution to present-day and future constructions, and respond rapidly to the growing number of demands. Consequently, it is necessary for future Chinese practitioners to gain an understanding of society.

Alongside Chinese schools of architecture, there is very often an institute that provides a bridge between the academic sphere and the real world. The teachers carry out research in them and conduct projects for governments or property developers in these institutes. This experience enables them to present current problems and appropriate solutions to their students.

At the same time, the students can take courses in the institutes to learn about the real world and the dilemmas facing China today.

What assets do teachers of architecture possess?

Those who teach architects are in a strong position as a result to their awareness of current developments in architecture, their international ties and involvement in multidisciplinary exchanges. Combining theory and practice, they can cover the most recent topics in architecture and urban planning such as sustainable development, the protection of heritage or digital design (CAD). Although these concepts are sometimes utopian, they feature as much as possible in projects. In particular, academics have set up the first centre for research into the protection of

urban heritage¹ and the first HQE² building in China.

The school of architecture and the institute combine teaching, research and practice and act in an advisory capacity to governments for their urban policies. The projects carried through by the teachers of architecture have frequently won prizes and become models for future practitioners.

Local or global architecture?

In these areas, teaching is based on western theories dating from the start of the 20th century, and new ideas still come from the West. The break with Chinese tradition is not only apparent in architecture but in all ar-

reas. Nevertheless, in recent years, the idea of exploiting the wealth of traditional architecture has become a major focus of Chinese teaching. Project workshops have been set up specially to discover and study traditional know-how. In view of the strong influence of globalization, this is without doubt the ideal way of moving towards a Chinese style of architecture and urban planning. (L.J.)

1. *National Historical Cities Protection Centre, Tongji University, Shanghai*
2. *Architecture Energy Saving Technical Research Centre, Tsinghua University, Beijing*

News on cooperation

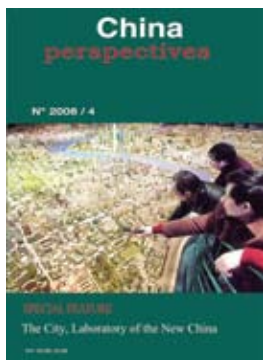
Research and exchange workshop on Climate, the city and the Méditerranéan

Marseille, 27 and 28 June 2009

The Caisse des Dépôts, which is the French funding body for public works and housing, with support from the World Bank, the City of Marseille and the Etablissement Public Euro Méditerranée, has decided to organize a research and exchange workshop on cities and climate change, which is the first stage in the creation of a regional exchange network. Isted has been asked to organize the workshop.

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Information and registration: www.isted.com



China perspectives No. 4, 2008.

The city, Laboratory of the new China. This very comprehensive special issue of the journal China Perspectives pays special attention to new urban planning practices, the emergence of new public spaces, the privatization of land and property ownership, and the struggle against urban poverty. The political impact of the privatization of the residential sector and the environmental impact of urban growth are also subjected to useful analysis.

Can be ordered from: perspectiveschinoises.revue.org/



Promoting Energy Efficiency Investments.

International Energy Agency, 2008.

Available in PDF format, 324 p.

This new joint publication from the IEA and the French Development Agency sets out the experience and knowledge

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