

## **A4575 City and Countryside in China**

**Fall 2016**

**W 11:00 am-1:00 pm, 200 Buell N**

**Instructor:** Ou Ning (no2223@columbia.edu)

### **Course Description:**

The aim of this course is to explain how China grasped the land and labor from the countryside for the city expansion, raised the spatial production in urban area, brought the economic to a new scale meanwhile produced a lot of social problems. Special attention will be paid to the critical thinking and practices in the New Rural Reconstruction Movement led by some Chinese intellectuals. Finally we will examine how “ruralism” worked as the opposition to urbanism.

When China joined the WTO in 2001, it had become part of the global economy. The Chinese government embraced the globalization warmly, and drove the process of urbanization more radically forward. The urbanization was a kind of redistribution of social resources, including land, property amongst others; it was in some sense more radical than a revolution. The urbanism policy offered a lot of opportunities for the starchitects from all over the world to design iconic buildings but also produced social problems like the slums or urban villages in the cities, the depopulation in the rural area, the environmental crisis, the food risk, and especially the political conflicts caused by the lack of social justice.

Even the Chinese government launched the “Building New Countryside” policy later, but all the official practices in the rural area were still running in the urbanism way, a lot of funding was invested only to transform the villages into towns or small cities. In contrast, some Chinese intellectuals started the New Rural Reconstruction Movement which focus on the “Three Rural Problems”(rural people, rural society and the rural agriculture), to deal with the rural situation on the background of globalization, working more on social and environmental justice, activating the local economic and cultural life in villages but not gentrified, making them more like their original looks but not the urban style. The “ruralism” behind these unofficial practices quoted a lot of thinking resources and historical experiences from all over the world, criticized the excessive urbanization

in China, tried to build a new model for rural development, was then becoming the driven force of an anti-urbanization movement in the country.

When looking into the mutation in urban and rural China, we will ask more questions in this course: Why were the Chinese peasants always the victims? How to empower or animate the grass root people? As a professional, how architect or urban designer can promote the social change? Is a practical utopia possible in the reality?

### **Films and Readings:**

Some films will be on reserve at the Butler library. In case you have to miss the film screening, make sure that you watch the film *before* class on Wednesday.

Required and suggested readings can be accessed through the course website as well as through library reserves. Please finish the reading assignments *before* coming to class.

### **Course Requirement and Grading:**

- Attendance and class participation (10%)
- 6 weekly postings (20%). Topics are suggested each week. Students are also welcome to work on their own topics after consulting with the instructor.
- Midterm paper (20%): 1500-2000 words, due October 26 (Wed), 12 noon.
- Term paper (35%): 3000-4000 words, topics must be discussed with the instructor by November 16 (Wed).

### **Online Platforms:**

All assignments are submitted online through *Canvas*.

### **Course Schedule**

#### **Week 1**

## September 7 (Wed)

### Introduction: From City to Countryside

#### *Required Readings:*

Jeffrey Wasserstrom, "Interview: Peter Hessler on His Surprising First Trip to China", Asia Society, 2012. <http://asiasociety.org/blog/asia/interview-peter-hessler-his-surprising-first-trip-china> (Links to an external site.)

#### *Suggested Further Readings:*

- \* Xiaotong Fei(Hsiao-Tung Fei), *From the Soil, the Foundations of Chinese Society*, University of California Press, 1992
- \* Ray Huang, *Broadening The Horizons of Chinese History: Discourses, Syntheses, and Comparisons*, Routledge, 1999
- \* James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, Yale University Press, 2010
- \* Peter Hessler, *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*, Harper Perennial, 2006.
- \* Peter Hessler, *Oracle Bones: A Journey Through Time in China*, Harper Perennial, 2007.
- \* Peter Hessler, *Country Driving: A Chinese Road Trip*, Harper Perennial, 2011.

#### *Recommended Films:*

- \* *Big Fish & Begonia* (Liang Xuan and Zhang Cun, 2016, animated epic fantasy film, 90 mins)
- \* *Let the Bullets Fly* (Jiang Wen, 2010, action comedy film, 132 mins)

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*Weekly Assignment 1 (due September 13, Tue, 12 noon): Write 3 paragraphs to describe what you know about China or Peter Hessler (in case you've read his books before). Submit through Canvas.*

## **Week 2:**

### **September 14 (Wed)**

## **The Purpose-built Cities: Radical Urbanism before and after the Culture Revolution**

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### *Required Readings:*

\* Ou Ning, "A City Called Shenzhen", *South of Southern: Space, Geography, History and the Biennale*, publication of 2009 Shenzhen and Hong Kong Bi-city Biennale or Urbanism \ Architecture, edited by Ou Ning, published by China Youth Press, Beijing, 2013.

### *Suggested Further Readings:*

\* Jingting Fan and Ben Zou, *Industrialization from Scratch: The Persistent Effects of China's Third Front Movement*, August 30, 2015.  
[econ.msu.edu/seminars/docs/TF\\_Draft\\_20150830.pdf](http://econ.msu.edu/seminars/docs/TF_Draft_20150830.pdf)

\* Bryan Tilt, *The Struggle For Sustainability in Rural China: Environmental Values & Civil Society*, Columbia University Press, 2010

\* Chuihua Judy Chung, Jeffrey Inaba, Rem Koolhaas and Sze Tsung Leong, *Great Leap Forward/Harvard Design School Project on the City*, Taschen, 2002.

\* Philipp Oswalt, *Shrinking Cities: Volume 1: International Research; Volume 2: Interventions*, Hatje Cantz, 2005-2006

### *Recommended Films:*

\* *Shanghai Dreams* (Wang Xiaoshuai, 2005, color feature film, 115 mins)

Library reserve: <https://clio.columbia.edu/catalog/7755005>

\* *24 City* (Jia Zhangke, 2008, color docudrama, 107 mins)

Library reserve: <https://clio.columbia.edu/catalog/7468327>

*Weekly Assignment 2 (due September 20, Tue, 12 noon): Find 1-3 purpose-built cities or shrinking cities in your country and give a paragraph description to each. Submit through Canvas.*

## **Week 3:**

**September 21 (Wed)**

**Social Flux and Urban Villages**

*Required Readings:*

\* Ou Ning, "Shadow of Time", *Yishu*, Volume 3, Number 1, March 2004, edited by Ken Lum in Vancouver, published by Art & Collection Group Ltd. in Taipei, 2004.

\* Ou Ning, "Floating Water and Splitting Land: The Social Flux and Spatial Politics of the Pearl River Watershed", *The River Project*, edited by Binghui Huangfu, published by Campbelltown Arts Centre, Campbelltown NSW, 2010.

*Screening:*

\* *San Yuan Li* (Ou Ning and Cao Fei, 2003, black+white documentary, 40 mins)

Library reserve: <https://clio.columbia.edu/catalog/7002584>

*Suggested Further Readings:*

\* Ling Zhang, "Digitizing City Symphony, Stabilizing the Shadow of Time: Montage and Temporal-Spatial Construction in *San Yuan Li*", *China's iGeneration: Cinema and Moving Image Culture for 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, edited by Matthew D. Johnson, Keith B. Wagner, Kiki Tianqi Yu and Luke Vulpiani, published by Bloomsbury, New York, 2014.

\* Chris Berry, "Imaging the Globalized City: Rem Koolhaas, U-thèque, and the Pearl River Delta", *Cinema at the City's Edge: Film and Urban Networks in the East Asia*, edited by Yomi Braester and James Tweedie, published by Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, 2010.

\* Julia Lovell, *The Opium War. Drugs, Dream and the Making of Modern China*, The Overlook Press, 2014

\* David Bandurski, *Dragons in Diamond Village and Other Tales from the Back Alleys of Urbanising China*, Penguin, 2015.

\* Doug Saunders, *Arrival City: How The Largest Migration in History is Reshaping Our World*, Vintage, 2012.

*Recommended Films:*

\* *Last Train Home* (Lixin Fan, 2009, documentary, 85 mins)

Library reserve: <https://clio.columbia.edu/catalog/8326487>

*Weekly Assignment 3 (due September 27, Tue, 12 noon): Did you visit any slum or urban village in any country? Write 3 paragraphs about your observation. Submit through Canvas.*

## **Week 4**

**September 28 (Wed)**

### **The Event-driven Cities - Architectural Practices in an Eyeball Era**

#### *Required Readings:*

\* Ou Ning, "Shrine of Knowledge, Palace of Aesthetics, or Theater of History: Museum Design in China", *Making a Museum in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, edited by Melissa Chiu, published by Asia Society, New York, 2014.

#### *Suggested Further Readings:*

\* Ou Ning, "City Mobilization: Towards Another Kind of Biennale", *South of Southern: Space, Geography, History and the Biennale*, publication of 2009 Shenzhen and Hong Kong Bi-city Biennale or Urbanism \ Architecture, edited by Ou Ning, published by China Youth Press, Beijing, 2013.

\* Ou Ning (ed.), *Odyssey: Architecture and Literature*, publication of 2009 Shenzhen and Hong Kong Bi-city Biennale or Urbanism \ Architecture, China Youth Press, Beijing, 2009.

\* Oliver Wainwright, "China's Strangest Buildings, from Pairs of Pants to Ping-pong Bats", *The Guardian*, October 23, 2014.

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/architecture-design-blog/2014/oct/23/-sp-chinas-strangest-buildings-from-pairs-of-pants-to-ping-pong-bats> (Links to an external site.)

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*Weekly Assignment 4 (due October 4, Tue, 12 noon): Find 2-3 post-Olympic or post-EXPO cites and write 3 paragraphs about your observation for each. Submit through Canvas.*

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## **Week 5**

**October 5 (Wed)**

### **The Demolition and Grass Root Politics**

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*Required Readings:*

- \* Ou Ning, "City Regeneration and Its Opposition", *Spectacle and the City: Chinese Urbanities in Art and Popular Culture*, edited by Jeroen de Kloet and Lena Scheen, published by Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2013.
- \* Ou Ning, "What Wukan Means", *China File*, edited by Susan Jakes, published by Asia Society, New York, 2012. <https://www.chinafile.com/what-wukan-means> (Links to an external site.)
- \* Ou Ning, "Street Life in Da Zha Lan", *Regenerating Culture and Society: Architecture, Art and Urban Style within the Global Politics of City-Branding*, edited by Jonathan Harris and Richard J. Williams, published by Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2011.
- \* Ou Ning, "The Story of Zhang Jinli", *Volume 8: Ubiquitous China*, edited by Ole Bouman, published by Stichting Archis, Amsterdam, 2006; *Totalstadt: Beijing Case, High-Speed Urbanization in China*, publication of the exhibition at ZKM, Karlsruhe, edited by Gregor Jansen, published by ZKM, Karlsruhe and Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Köln, 2006.
- \* Clara Galeazzi, "A Retrospective of a Demolition: Meishi Street Six Years Later: A Conversation With Ou Ning", *Yishu*, Volume 11, Number 4, July/August 2012, Vancouver/Taipei.

*Suggested Further Readings:*

- \* Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums*, Verso, 2007
- \* Di Wang, *Street Culture in Chengdu: Public Space, Urban Commoners, and Local Politics, 1870-1930*, Stanford University Press, 2003
- \* Di Wang, *The Teahouse: Small Business, Everyday Culture, and Public Politics in Chengdu, 1900-1950*, Stanford University Press, 2008
- \* Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*  
Stanford University Press, 2010
- \* William Foote Whyte, *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of An Italian Slum*, University of Chicago Press, 1943

*Screening:*

- \* *Meishi Street* (Ou Ning, 2005, color documentary, 85 mins)

Library reserve: <https://clio.columbia.edu/catalog/7002586>

*Recommended Films:*

\**Tai Shi Village*(Ai Xiaoming, 2006, documentary, 114 mins)

\**Three Days in Wukan*(Ai Xiaoming, 2012, documentary, 100 mins)

Library reserve: <https://clio.columbia.edu/catalog/10277386>

*Weekly Assignment 5 (due October 11, Tue, 12 noon): Write 1 page review about the film Meishi Street. Submit through Canvas.*

**Week 6**

**October 12 (Wed)**

**City Regeneration and Historical Preservation**

*Required Readings:*

\* Malaika Byng, "Beijing Design Week 2013: Remapping the City", *Wallpaper*, October 7, 2013. <http://www.wallpaper.com/design/beijing-design-week-2013-remapping-the-city> (Links to an external site.)

\* Robert Bevan, "From Ruth Glass to Spike Lee: 50 Years of Gentrification", *The Guardian*, February 27, 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/feb/27/ruth-glass-spike-lee-gentrification-50-years> (Links to an external site.)

\* Kelefa Sanneh, "Is Gentrification Really A Problem?", *The New Yorker*, July 11 & 18, 2016 Issue. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/07/11/is-gentrification-really-a-problem> (Links to an external site.)

*Suggested Further Readings:*

\* Michael Meyer, *The Last Days of Old Beijing: Life in the Vanishing Backstreets of a City Transformed*, Walker & Company, 2008

\* Lance Freeman, *There Goes the 'Hood: Views of Gentrification from the Ground Up*, Temple University Press, 2006

\* Lance Freeman and Frank Braconi, "Gentrification and Displacement: New York City in 1990s", *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 2004

\* Kathe Newman and Frank Elvin Wyly, "The Right to Stay Put, Revisited: Gentrification and Resistance to Displacement in New York City", *Urban Studies*, 2006.

*Weekly Assignment 6 (due October 18, Tue, 12 noon): Write 1 page to express your understanding about the term “Gentrification”. Submit through Canvas.*

## **Week 7**

**October 19 (Wed)**

### **The Crisis of Radical Urbanism**

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#### *Required Readings:*

\* Ou Ning, “Crisis and Experiment of Commons: The New Rural Reconstruction Movement in China”, *Crisis Mirror*, edited by Timo Takatalo, published by Crisis Mirror, Copenhagen, 2014. <http://www.crisismirror.info/library/articles/the-crisis-and-experiment-of-the-commons-the-new-rural-reconstruction-movement-in-china-2/> (Links to an external site.)

\*Ou Ning, “China’s Disappearing Family”, *Harvard Design Magazine*, Family Planning Issue, No.41-F/W 2015, edited by Jennifer Sigler, published by Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, Cambridge, 2015.

\*Ou Ning, “Beijing’s Climate Politics”, *WdW Review*, edited by Defne Ayas and Adam Kleinman, published by Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, 2013. <http://wdwreview.org/desks/beijings-climate-politics/> (Links to an external site.)

#### *Recommended Films:*

\* *Beijing Besieged by Waste* (Wang Jiuliang, 2011, documentary, 72 mins)

Library reserve: <https://clio.columbia.edu/catalog/10078035>

*Weekly Assignment 7 (due October 25, Tue, 12 noon): Write 1 page on this topic: How the Crisis Can Become an Opportunity? Submit through Canvas.*

## **Week 8**

**October 26 (Wed)**

### **The Depopulated Countryside and the Collapsed Rural Society**

*Required Readings:*

\* Ou Ning, "Timekeepers", *Matjaž Tančič: Timekeepers*, edited by Yanyou Di Yuan, published by Jiazazhi Limited, Hong Kong, 2014.

*Suggested Further Readings:*

Xiaotong Fei, *From the Soil, the Foundations of Chinese Society*, University of California Press, 1992

*Weekly Assignment 8 (due November 1, Tue, 12 noon): Write 1 page on this topic: How can the villages be rescued? Submit through Canvas.*

**Week 9**

**November 2 (Wed)**

**The New Rural Reconstruction Movement**

*Required Reading:*

\* Ou Ning, "Social Change and Rediscovering Rural Reconstruction in China", *New Worlds From Below: Grassroots Networking and Informal Life Politics in Twenty-First Century East Asia*, edited by Tessa Morris-Suzuki, will be published by The Australian National University Press, Canberra, 2017. Will upload a PDF on *Canvas*.

*Suggested Further Readings:*

\* Philip A. Kuhn, *Origins of the Modern Chinese State*, Stanford University Press, 2003

\* Philip A. Kuhn, "The Rural Reconstruction Movement," in John K. Fairbank and Albert Feuerwerker, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 13, Republican China 1912-1949, Part 2, Cambridge University Press, 1986.

\* Guy S. Alitto, *The Last Confucian: Liang Shu-ming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity*, University of California Press, 1986.

\* Alexander F. Day, *The Peasant in Postsocialist China: History, Politics, and Capitalism*, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

\* Arif Dirlik, Alexander Woodside and Roxann Prazniak, *Global Capitalism and the Future of Agrarian Society*, Routledge, 2012

\* International Institute of Rural Reconstruction records, 1914 -1999

Library reserve: <https://clio.columbia.edu/catalog/4079905>

*Weekly Assignment 9 (due November 8, Tue, 12 noon): Please analyze the political spectrum of the Chinese intellectuals in the NRRM and tell the reason. Submit through Canvas.*

## **Week 10**

**November 9 (Wed)**

### **The Bishan Project: A Case Study**

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*Required Readings:*

\* Ou Ning, "The Bishan Project: Restarting the Rural Reconstruction Movement", *Post City: Habitats for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, publication of Ars Electronica 2015, edited by Gerfried Stocker, Christine Schöpf and Hannes Leopoldseder, published by Ars Electronica, Linz and Hatje Cantz Verlag, Ostfildern, 2015.

\* Ou Ning, "Rethinking the Urban-Rural Interactions", *The Interactions*, publication of 2012 Yixian International Photo Festival, edited by Peng Yanhan, published by Yixian International Photo Festival, Yixian, 2012.

\*Ou Ning, *Bishan Commune: How to Start Your Own Utopia*, OVO Press and Antipyrine, Aarhus, 2015. (In Chinese, Danish and English)

Read Mai Corlin's introduction here:

<https://ovopress.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/introduction.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

The publication can be purchased from OVO press' webshop:

<http://ovopress.tictail.com/product/ou-ning-bishan-commune> (Links to an external site.)

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*Screening:*

\* *Down to the Countryside* (Leah Thompson and Sun Yunfan, 2012-2017, Color Documentary, short version, 30 mins)

See the video here in case you missed in the class:

<http://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/asia-china-beijing-bishan-countryside-culture-art-economy-environment> (Links to an external site.)

*Weekly Assignment 10 (due November 15, Tue, 12 noon): Write a review on the Bishan Project. Submit through Canvas.*

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## **Week 11**

**November 16 (Wed)**

### **Agritopia: From The Well Field to the Whole Earth**

#### *Required Readings:*

- \* Book 3, page 32-41, *Mencius*, translated by Irene Bloom, edited and with an introduction by Philip J. Ivanhoe, Columbia University Press, 2009.
- \* Ou Ning, "Autonomy: Utopia or Realpolitik", *Zizhiqu: Autonomous Regions*, edited by Hou Hanru, published by Times Museum, Guangzhou, 2013.
- \* Akash Kapur, "Couldn't Be Better: The Return of the Utopians", *The New Yorker*, Oct.3. 2016.

#### *Suggested Further Readings:*

- \* 12 Southerners, *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1930.
- \* Erik Reece, *Utopia Drive: A Road Trip Through America's Most Radical Idea*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016.
- \* Chris Jennings, *Paradise Now: The Story of American Utopianism*, Random House, 2016
- \* David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5000 Years*, Melville House, 2012.
- \* Helen and Scott Nearing, *The Good Life: Helen and Scott Nearing's Sixty Years of Self-Sufficient Living*, Schocken Books, 1970
- \* Stewart Brand, *The Whole Earth Catalog*, 1968-1998
- \* Diedrich Diederichsen and Anselm Franke, *The Whole Earth: California and the Disappearance of the Outside*, Sternberg Press, 2013.

*Weekly Assignment 11 (due November 22, Tue, 12 noon): Find 5 utopian architecture project in the history and write a review for each. Submit through Canvas.*

## **Week 12**

**November 23 (Wed)**

### **The Contemporary Architectural Practices in Rural China**

#### *Required Readings:*

\* Amy Qin, "Architects See Potential in China's Countryside", *The New York Times*, June 17, 2016, New York.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/18/arts/design/architects-see-potential-in-chinas-countryside.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/18/arts/design/architects-see-potential-in-chinas-countryside.html?_r=0) (Links to an external site.)

#### *Suggested Further Readings:*

\* Lloyd Kahn and Bob Easton, *Shelter*, Shelter Publications, 1973

\* Paul Oliver, *Dwellings: The Vernacular House World Wide*, Phaidon, 2003

\* John May, *Buildings without Architects: A Global Guide to Everyday Architecture*, Rizzoli, 2012

\* Pete Nelson, *Treehouses of the World*, Abrams, 2004

\* Pete Nelson, *New Treehouses of the World*, Abrams, 2009

\* Terunobu Fujimori, *Architecture* (English and Japanese Edition), Toto, 2007

\* Terunobu Fujimori, *Architect*, Hatje Cantz, 2012

\* Andrea Oppenheimer Dean and Timothy Hursley, *Rural Studio: Samuel Mockbee and An Architecture of Decency*, Princeton Architectural Press, 2002

*Weekly Assignment 12 (due November 29, Tue, 12 noon): Give a proposal if the villagers need you to build a small tea pavilion near a river in the mountain (please include draft drawings and a description. Submit through Canvas.*

## **Week 13**

**November 30 (Wed)**

### **Conclusion: Ruralism versus Urbanism**

*Required Readings:*

Rem Koolhaas in the country. *ICON Magazine*,  
2014.<http://www.iconeye.com/architecture/features/item/11031-rem-koolhaas-in-the-country>