Introduction

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IN THE SUMMER OF 2004, a multi-national, multi-university, and multi-disciplinary group of students led by faculty of the University of Washington’s College of Architecture and Urban Planning spent twenty-four days in the Chinese city of Quanzhou, Fujian Province, learning and demonstrating how tools of spatial analysis and participatory research can help to articulate diverging stakeholder interests in development at the community level, and can help municipal policy-makers acknowledge this diversity of interests. Their ultimate goal was to assist the Municipal Planning Bureau in its effort to establish a public discussion on appropriate development goals for the city’s diverse communities, in the hope that the urban planning decision-making process could become more explicitly inclusive of community concerns.

THE STUDENTS worked directly with two communities in Quanzhou (pronounced in Mandarin like "Chwen-Joe"), a coastal prefectural city with approximately 400,000 population in its urban core. One community is a neighborhood designated for preservation in an economically and demographically declining corner of the city’s historic center; the other is a burgeoning village at the city’s expanding and increasingly industrial periphery.

IN THE FIRST of these communities, Quanzhou’s "Cheng Nan" (South End) students encountered a problem that faces many historic inner-city environments: the differential assessment by various residents and municipal authorities of the historic value of the neighborhood’s buildings and spaces. They proposed a process of discussion and decision-making designed to resolve conflicts between residents’ aspirations for comfortable "modern" living conditions, local government and merchants’ desire for improved business conditions and higher-level government and cultural authorities’ policy to maintain architectural identity.

IN THE SECOND COMMUNITY, Huo Ju Village, new formally planned factories sit adjacent to an unplanned, formerly agricultural settlement that now houses a large population of migrant workers and business owners from distant provinces. Students examined the different concerns and perspectives of local villagers and "temporary" migrants, demonstrated how the process of researching these perspectives could be made a publicly accessible activity, and suggested possible spatial and policy strategies to accommodate both sets of interests in planning for further urbanization in the area.

PEDAGOGICALLY, the studio tested the possibilities of educational exchange between students from Mainland China, Taiwan and North America, and between professional students and social science/area-studies students. Disciplines represented by the student group included: anthropology, architecture, art history, China studies, forestry, geography, landscape architecture, public affairs, and urban planning.

THE RESULT of the studio were presented on July 16 at a national conference on "Democratization of the Urban Planning Decision-making Process," organized by the Urban Planning Society of China and hosted by the Municipal Government of Quanzhou. They are being further formatted for translation and display at a public exhibition in Quanzhou, and for dissemination by brochure to the communities concerned, municipal policy-makers, and urban planning and management professionals throughout China via the Urban Planning Society. The conference and the studio itself was the culmination of a participatory community planning initiative in this city supported by the Ford Foundation since late 1999.

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