UrbaChina *Sustainable Urbanisation in China*

Lisbon, 10 October 2014
Urban Futures-Squaring Circles: Europe, China and the World in 2050

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European-Chinese project

- An EU funded programme (2011-2015)
- 11 institutions from EU and China
  - CNRS, LSE, SERU-UoB, University of Lisbon, ISIS
  - RenDa, HuaDa, DRC, CASS, CAS, AAESR
- A comparative approach

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Four workpackages

Institutional foundations and policies for urbanisation

Territorial Expansion & Accommodating Greater Population

Urban development, traditions and modern lifestyles in cities

Environment and health infrastructure and services
Four cities

- 4 Chinese cities:
  - Shanghai,
  - Chongqing,
  - Kunming,
  - Huangshan

Methodology

- interviews with officials, businessmen, land developers...
- scenario building based on workshops and surveys (scenarios depending on economic growth and possible reforms)
- immersion in neighbour communities
1. Urban planning

• Functional top-down approach to urban planning

• Urbanisation based on land conversion and land finance => Urban sprawl

• Implemented in a technocratic fashion

• Lack of public debate during the process of urban planning: participation of residents in the decision making process
2. Land property reform

- Quantitative vs. qualitative urbanisation
- Land finance is causing wasteful urban sprawl
- Urban land primary market monopoly hampers rural self-development and increases urban-rural gap
- Towards a more market-driven allocation of land resources: equal share of urbanisation benefits in the community

3. Dual citizenship system reform

- Rising inequality (official data: Gini coefficient of 0.47)
- Greater equity in the right to residence: towards a more inclusive model that improves mobility of labour
- New system not origin-based but residence-based that fosters migrants integration into the host city by providing access to welfare services (portability of social security), and access to housing finance
4. Fiscal system reform

• Tax sharing system causes imbalance of local and central revenues
• Local governments need to increase their revenue base
• Introduction of a property tax on housing, increase of the tax on the increase of the value of land, increase other charges for municipal services (water, energy, etc.)
• Allowing local governments to issue bonds to put an end to the so-called “local government finance vehicles”

5. Pollution challenges

• High dependency on coal: 70% of total energy supply
• Water pollution: more than 30% of major rivers seriously polluted (Ministry of Environmental Protection)
• Increase in health problems linked to pollution
UrbaChina *Strengths and limitations of the EU-China cooperation on urbanisation*

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**Strengths of EU-China cooperation in research**

- Cultural diversity brings about different research outlooks
- Creation of solid partnerships for future joint research initiatives
- Local academic institutions benefit from strong local networks that enhance efficient field work
- Beijing academic institutions are knowledgeable about central policies and procedures and have access to funding channels
Limitations of EU-China cooperation in research

• Cultural diversity demands the involvement of actors with long exposure to China and able to work in Chinese. However, papers written in English require editing and interpretation work.
• Lack of Chinese funding in certain research areas
• More operational approach to research
• Size matters in Beijing

Limitations (cont.)

• Collaboration on ad hoc basis instead of continuous: research teams’ tasks need to be very detailed from the outset
• A limited access to data (Europeans struggled to get the stats they wished to study) and to interviewees (local residents)
• For the Chinese, EU funding mechanisms may remain obscure
Some suggestions

• Collaboration is better enhanced using a comparative approach. Strong interest in learning about sustainable urbanisation in the UE
• Necessary pre-screening of potential participants in collaborative projects by looking at their underlying interest
• Need to identify common challenges for both regions so as to prompt networking actions and facilitate joint funding

Some suggestions (cont.)

• Promote periodical mapping exercises of research questions and activities to enhance collaboration on a continuous basis
• Promote the organisation of workshops to increase dynamism
• Create EU-China funded research programmes (not only EU funded ones)
• Thank you!

• 谢谢！