Sustainable planning for a rural community, Beijing, China

Project data
Type of project
Urban planning
Estimated start of construction
October 2007

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Comment of the Holcim Awards jury Asia Pacific
The dominating highlight of this project is the innovative and unique approach to the overall land use planning for the development of the rural community that is based on a sound field survey and the establishment and scientific analysis of a comprehensive database. The anticipated transformation of this community consists of the overall improvement of the circulation network, public utilities and public services as well as the stringent consideration of ecological and energy saving technologies for newly built buildings and for newly built facilities. The whole renewal process is driven by public participation and started by the local authorities. The project is a joint effort of a multi-disciplinary team consisting mainly of academics and government officers.

This work is an enjoyable idea and represents a very comprehensive approach at the urban level. All five “target issues” for sustainable construction as defined by the Holcim Foundation are addressed strongly. The project has been commended because it demonstrates in an ideal way the smart combination of heritage preservation, traditional knowledge and habits, local materials and modern technologies and last but not least professional project management. It has a high potential to become a role model for the sustainable development of rural communities and urban districts in emerging economies experiencing rapid change.

Project description by author
The project is a rural planning design for a Beijing suburban village. This multidisciplinary joint research is appointed for using such inputs efficiently and democratically.

Challenges:
- Environmental pollution, construction expansion, encroachment of cultivation land, poor living conditions, lack of infrastructure, very low income, unemployment, aging population, loss of government subsidy, absence of planning and management.

Approaches:
The project tries to determine practical ways for achieving sustainable development of rural Chinese villages, according to the current economic/social situation: to improve environmental quality by using adaptable low-budget ecological techniques; renew democracy through a concept of micro-mapping; to spread knowledge among villagers by public participation; and training on how to build/maintain eco-facilities.

Ethical standards and social equity
- The aim is to improve rural living conditions and to narrow the gap between urban and rural areas. Public participation during the entire process guarantees policy transparency. Circulation/infrastructure renewal will be achieved with a minimum impact on residents’ daily life. All house-holds influenced by the construction will be compensated and can choose all their own discretion to either move into a new house or add eco-facilities with government subsidies. Several new housing prototypes provide more choices for residents. The entire village renewal will be in the longer-term for a better emotional reception, the situation that some residents would not move or change is also considered: Local labor is favored for job opportunities that arise from construction work.

Ecological quality and energy conservation
- A boundary of construction growth is set to preserve natural resources and cultivated lands, and carry out a micro-spreading renewal to release more space for public welfare and economic development.

Eco-strategies in house design.
- Public participation and first action.
- Field survey and database build.
- Design thinking outline.

Circulation design.
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