

**SPPD China Lab:  
River Transformation in Foshan**  
USC School of Policy, Planning, and Development

**PPD 613b; Summer 2009**

*Lec 51321; 3 units*

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(Photo depicts part of one exhibit at the  
Foshan Ceramics Museum)



**Meeting dates**

Intensive:

25 May 2009  
through  
26 May 2009  
(in Hong Kong)

27 May 2009  
through  
5 June 2009  
(Foshan, China)

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**Introduction, background and learning objectives**

This is a 3-unit intensive field course that builds on the pre-requisite companion 1-unit preparatory course offered earlier in the spring term. Together, they comprise the SPPD China Lab for 2009. Although the two are closely coupled, they are technically two distinct courses, and so a separate syllabus is available for each component.

As with all SPPD International Labs, the learning objective is to learn how to translate “classroom knowledge” into professional practice, and to do so in a setting outside the United States. Emphasis is therefore placed on having students develop a deeper understanding of the contextual dimensions of knowledge and practice. The pedagogical model draws on a professional consulting paradigm, with a clearly identified client and terms of reference for the students’ work.

This year, the client for the SPPD China Lab is Foshan Municipality in Guangdong Province. Although not as well known as nearby Guangzhou, Shenzhen or Hong Kong; Foshan Municipality boasts a population of six million persons, and is an integral part of the urban conglomeration that covers much of the Pearl River delta region, an area that has undergone a remarkable transformation over recent decades, as evidenced by the satellite images in figure 1.

One unfortunate result of this urbanization has been significant environmental degradation, and environmental upgrading has thus been a major focus of World Bank project lending in China. One locus for WB activity has been Foshan, and it is through WB mediation that Foshan has agreed to be a client for the SPPD China Lab. Foshan plans to host an international roundtable forum later this year through the auspices of the Pacific Rim Council on Urban Development, an

NGO for which I serve as founding PRCUD Executive Secretary, and Foshan is inviting our SPPD Lab to assist them in preparing for the event.

Figure 1: Urbanization of the Pearl River Delta



January 10, 2003



October 19, 1979

Source: NASA Earth Observatory

Foshan is asking PRCUD to assemble a group of international experts who will advise the municipality on actions it can take to foster a more harmonious relationship between urban society and its natural environment, with a specific focus on the Fenjiang River, a minor branch of the immense Pearl River that traverses the heart of the municipality.

Our task is to help Foshan prepare briefing materials that will be distributed in advance to dozens of international and domestic experts who will be invited to participate in the PRCUD Foshan Forum later in the year. The invited international participants in the PRCUD Forum will have outstanding and relevant scholarly or professional expertise, but in most cases will not have deep prior knowledge of Foshan. Conversely, colleagues at Foshan are of course intimately familiar with local conditions, but are not always fully aware of conditions or relevant experiences elsewhere.

## Course structure

### Topical focus

The focus of this year's SPPD Foshan Lab is tightly linked to five key issues that Foshan Municipality has indicated are its top priorities in this regard:

1. International experiences regarding river control and urban transformation
2. Fenjiang River and socio-economic transformation
3. Ecological restoration of the Fenjiang River area
4. The potential role of land markets in effecting transformation of the area
5. Reconciling renovation and cultural preservation in the Fenjiang River area

These issues will also be the focus of the PRCUD Forum in Foshan, and they go to the very heart of the relationship between urban society and its natural environment. In the case of Foshan, as is so true for almost all of China, this relationship has been subject to extreme distortions that are reflective of the dramatic and unparalleled changes that have occurred within China as a whole.

During the 1-unit preparatory course during the spring semester, students examined case studies featuring river restoration projects from the United States and elsewhere. These constitute a foundation for the work to be done in this course, where the focus is on whether and how lessons

drawn from elsewhere may (or may not) apply in the context of Foshan. From the perspective of our Foshan clients, this is the comparative advantage that we can bring to bear.

### **Assignments**

The primary focus of this Lab is the preparation and presentation of a professional quality report to Foshan Municipality. This report is to be presented in text form on the morning of Friday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, with a parallel powerpoint presentation given that same morning. This report draws on lessons learned from case studies of urban river restoration projects elsewhere in the world and examines the extent to which they may (or may not) apply in the specific context of Foshan. The various elements account for one half of the academic credit for this class. Other grade components include class participation, preparation of individualized journals, a photo “contest”, a basic record of this Lab and a group-level review of a major professional report on Fenjiang River restoration recently prepared by Foshan Municipality.

### **Determination of grades**

Final grades for this 3-unit course are based on the following items:

- Class participation (**10%**)
- Individual journal (**10%**)
- Initial presentation – group grade (**10%**)
- Final report – group grade (**15%**)
- Final report – individual grade (**15%**)
- Final presentation – group grade (**20%**)
- Web-based record of this Lab – group grade (**5%**)
- Review of report prepared by Foshan – group grade (**10%**)
- Photo contest (**5%**)

### **Schedule**

The course begins at 8am Monday, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009, with an introductory meeting in the lobby of the Hyatt Hotel at Chinese University of Hong Kong. After two days of field trips and lectures by guest professors from Chinese University of Hong Kong and the University of Hong Kong, the Lab then migrates to Foshan, China. Local arrangements in Hong Kong are being organized by the Hong Kong – America Center, where I was a visiting Fulbright senior scholar while on sabbatical leave last year. HKAC is also facilitating local arrangements in Foshan, together with colleagues at Foshan Municipality.

Beginning Wednesday afternoon, May 27<sup>th</sup>, students will participate in an intensive series of meetings, field trips and information sessions in Foshan continuing through Sunday, May 31<sup>st</sup>. Included in this is an initial presentation by students on Thursday morning, May 28<sup>th</sup>, to Foshan municipal officials summarizing the preparatory work done prior to arrival (in the 1-unit companion class). The week of June 1<sup>st</sup> is devoted to intensive preparation of the report to be presented on Friday, June 5<sup>th</sup>. During this period working meetings will be arranged with the instructor and with Foshan officials on an as-needed basis. A separate document provides more details on our schedule of meetings and activities.

## **Plagiarism**

Academic integrity is a core value of our School and of this course. The penalties for plagiarism are tough, and rightly so, and they apply immediately upon the first instance. The guidelines located at [http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/ug\\_plag.htm](http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/ug_plag.htm) are very helpful, and I strongly admonish you to review them with all due diligence. Neglect them at your peril. The basic principle is simple: *never provide the reader with an opportunity to give you credit for someone else's work*. When in doubt, clarify.

## **Course Readings**

### **Scholarly works**

Bottelier, Pieter (2007), "China and the World Bank: How a Partnership was Built", *Journal of Contemporary China*, vol. 16(51), May, 239 – 258.

Heikkila, Eric J. (2007), "Three Questions Regarding Urbanization in China", *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, vol. 27, Fall, 65 – 81.

Lo, Carlos W.H. and Shui-Yan Tang (2006), "Institutional reform, economic changes, and local environmental management in China: the case of Guangdong province", *Environmental Politics*, vol. 15(2), 190 – 210.

### **Professional reports**

Foshan Municipality (2009), *Fenjiang River Remediation Report*:

- Chapter 1: Report on the Survey of the General Conditions of the Fenjiang River Basin
- Chapter 2: Report on the Survey of the Environmental Conditions of the Fenjiang River Basin
- Chapter 3: Report on the City Development Survey and City Reformer Research of the Fenjiang River Basin
- Chapter 4: Report on History and Culture Survey and Reconstruction Research of the Fenjiang River Basin
- Chapter 5: Survey Report on the Present State and Improvement Measures of Industries in the Fenjiang River Basin

Esposito, Adèle and Sylvia Nam (2008), *Siem Reap: Urban Development in the Shadow of Angkor*, Briefing Document for the 2008 Pacific Rim Council on Urban Development Forum; J. Paul Getty Trust.

Rabé, Paul (2008), *Siem Reap: Urban Development in the Shadow of Angkor*, Final Report of the 2008 Annual Forum of the Pacific Rim Council on Urban Development, Los Angeles.

SPPD Foshan Lab (2008), *Final Report: A Clean Water Future for Foshan*, USC School of Policy, Planning, and Development.

World Bank (2007), *Project Appraisal Document* (Second Guangdong Pearl River Urban Environment Project), WB East Asia and the Pacific Region.