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Reshaping Rural China

Rural and urban have for a long time represented opposite domains in China, mainly due to the dual social structure. Nevertheless, the goals to reduce inequalities and promote harmonious and coordinated planning are reshaping the city's urbanity and the countryside's ruralness toward new hybridized forms of living that put design disciplines at the fore to experiment with new settlements' models and architectural projects. Keeping in mind the interconnectivity and complementarity of urban and rural, this special issue focuses on the countryside as a remarkable frontier of expression in Chinese vanguard architectural movements.

The Rural Revitalization Strategy is just the last step of an array of measures to ameliorate the conditions of the Chinese countryside and its inhabitants. The policy intersects with the Ecological Civilization ideology and, like other sustainable agendas around the world, calls for the invention and experimentation of new aesthetic dimensions, able to mirror technological innovations, cultural richnesses, socioeconomic values, and political narratives. We look at rural China as a fertile testing ground for contemporary design disciplines worldwide.

In 2018, the Chinese participation at the Biennale of Architecture of Venice entitled "Building a Future Countryside" marked a cornerstone in academic and professional circles, bringing contemporary rural architecture under an international spotlight. After five years, 2023 is the occasion to take stock of the situation, examine how architectural design has moved, and portray an updated panorama of Chinese design culture.

This special issue encourages contributions to identify contemporary design attitudes toward the pressing questions of the present, such as mitigating rural-urban inequalities, implementing sustainable strategies and tactics, designing for resiliency, combatting climate change, and strengthening cultural distinctiveness.

Keywords

- Architecture
- Design
- Village
- Urban-rural relationship
- Rural revitalization
- Ecological civilization
- Sustainable development
- Cultural diversity
- Innovation
- Climate change
- Circular economy
- Cross-disciplinarity

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