

BEIJING SEEN BY...

Anthony Bechu

Architect and son and grandson of architects, Anthony-Emmanuel Bechu is mad about the history and identity of places. His contemporary research is all about trying to express his inspiration which stems from his analysis of the culture, the morphology and the history he is dealing with: renovation projects, buildings but also campuses and towns. The overriding aim is to link history with eco-friendly projects which meet both today's and tomorrow's issues. On these lines and on the strength of widespread travel experience, this is how the Anthony Bechu Architecture Agency contributes to different scale projects in France and the rest of the world.



“Beijing is now undergoing rapid change and city planning”

“When I wander around Tiantan or the Forbidden City, I am always moved by the mass of iconic Chinese cultural elements which form a balance of colour and volume in a timeless, harmonious landscape and where time and space are beyond our western conceptions. There seems to be no past and no future, just the present moment...”*

After the incredible spread of senseless construction in the 90s and the 2000s, Beijing is now undergoing rapid change and city planning. The capital is moving back to tradition and history while dreaming up new urban codes to reintroduce the Chinese spirit into a controlled, modern urban environment.

In China, the fundamental human right to breathe clean air has been added to the list of liberties to defend. The environment is a sign of modernity and leaving a blue sky to the next generation is one of the State's priorities.

Born from an area formed by the Forbidden City, Beijing mainly developed eastwards to the sea. Its building gradually grew into more or less western-type towers of various styles. Even if the city turned into a wonderful test-ground for ideas which interest me as an architect, this senseless and unplanned development brought Beijing to the verge of suffocation. Too many people, too much traffic and too much pollution of all kinds have set off the danger signals just in time. The 2008 Olympic Games were a real incentive to revamp the city, put it back on a human scale and make it into a place which takes Man and the Environment account.

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Beyond the 6 rings which already exist, the city has a plan for “Greater Beijing” just as we have “Grand Paris”. Conceived as an organic solution, Greater Beijing relies on a central axis which will connect Beijing to Tianjin, the city's port and air vent. Along the lines of the small artists' villages which developed around the airport to the north-east, satellite towns around the city will create breathing space and act as eco-towns where life can get back to a human scale. A

high-speed train already links Beijing to Tianjin in a 140 km, 30-minute journey. On the way is the local version of “Camp David”, Huairou, which will soon host the world's most important leaders and politicians and house all foreign embassies.

To be sustainable, the city of the future must not eliminate the past: the geometrical form of its historical centre is to be rounded off by the curves of the future...

*Tiantan or Temple of Heaven in the south of the city.

