

Memorandum

To	Jenny Chu	From	Cassandra Kenworthy
Copy	NZCFS	Reference	Project number
Date	2018-12-01	Pages (including this page)	7
Subject	Reflection of Urban Development Delegation experience		

1 Introduction

On 18 October I departed to China with 7 other professionals who work in the urban development realm. We flew Auckland to Shanghai, Shanghai to Guangzhou, and Guangzhou to Qingdao before returning to Auckland on 28 October. My personal goals for the trip were to:

1. Better understand Chinese culture and business;
2. Learn how similar or different the challenges faced in China are compared to New Zealand; and,
3. To have a great time with a diverse group of people from across the urban professions

With my passion and role at Aurecon being transport focused, the following reflection contains a definite bias toward transport systems and the effect issues such as changing demographics have on providing accessible and sustainable transport options.

2 Bike share

Each city had their own range of bike share systems. We met with the Guangzhou Transport Communication Commission (Auckland Transport equivalent), who have showed us the two bike share systems in operation, Ofo and Mobike, Figure 1. At the peak there were 1.2 million bicycles across six companies. This has now reduced to 600 thousand across two companies.



Figure 1 The delegation poses in front of Ofo bicycles in Guangzhou, with the Director of Planning from the Guangzhou Transport Communication Commission

The reduction in operators came about because of the market rather than regulatory schemes. Capital venture firms poured squillions into bike share schemes which led to rapid expansion and with each bike costing around \$400 or 3000 yuan means margins are incredibly thin.

Bike share companies are not required to buy a license to operate however the Commission has asked that the bike share companies purchase insurance for their riders to cover accidents when they happen. In Guangzhou there is a ban on electric bicycles, which are only allowed for delivery purposes because of the speed issues. Surprisingly we also didn't see any electric scooters in any of the cities.

Bike share solves the last mile problems but has caused a lot of problems with urban management. Convenience was both an advantage and a dis-advantage. Initially the commission provided bike share at the BRT bus stops but with the emergence of the private bike share companies it stopped providing these. The advantage of the dockless share systems of Ofo and Mobike is that you can leave them anywhere and you don't have a docking station which takes up a considerable amount of pavement width. These bikes can be unlocked and paid through your mobile phone using Alipay or WeChat which unfortunately means they were not open for use by us as tourists. They are cheaper than public transport, for many users being only 0.5-1 yuan for 30minutes.

Cycling is not a new to Chinese people unlike other places in the world. As the roads in many of china's major cities it makes it easier for people to consider using a bike. In addition, cyclists are given equal priority as a car driver with cycle lanes the same width as a general traffic lane, Figure 2.



Figure 2 Cycle lane in Shanghai

It will be interesting to see how competition in the market changes the cost of the existing OnzO bikes in Auckland. With them being considerably cheaper than Lime scooters they are still a great option for many people travelling shorter distances.

3 Public Transport and BRT

What makes BRT so successful? Previously bus ridership exceeded that of the subway, however with more lines being constructed that has since changed. Guangzhou has one BRT line which was constructed in February 2010. It is 23km in length with 26 stops, an average of 880m apart. It has 4 dedicated bus services and 20 other bus lines which run to other stations. Figure 3 shows the chaos before and the new stations after the BRT system was implemented.



Figure 3 Images on display boards at the station showing bus traffic at stops before and after the BRT system was implemented

Bus stations along the BRT are typically 165m long, with the longest being 285m in length, the longest in the world. This station is located outside two major Universities and received 350 buses per hour in peak making it the highest frequency of arrivals in the world.

The BRT system itself is only 60m wide, with 2 lanes in each direction and grade separated access into all stations. By the end of 2018 all the buses will be electric with batteries which last up to 200km in one charge.

The success of the BRT system is a result of its grade separated access and prioritisation of buses at traffic signals. Access to the stations is via gates, such as in Auckland, however these gates accept either, QR code, phone display and even facial recognition as payment. In addition, you can buy a ticket at a kiosk and pay using cash. These payment options and speed of payment processing through the gates ensure the high frequencies of bus arrivals and departures can be maintained and keeps bus wait time to a minimum. Gates on the front of the platform edge help to ensure passenger safety as shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4 Looking down an empty Guangzhou BRT station and me boarding the bus to ride the BRT

According to the director of the commission, buses are more flexible to operate and cost a lot less than a subway or LRT system. He also mentioned that subway construction is slowing down because land acquisition is becoming harder and there are more environmental protection issues.

4 Urban Planning Exhibition Halls

One thing that stood out to me was the existence of Urban Planning exhibition halls in every city we visited. These centres provided you with an incredible overview of how the city came to be, what challenges it faces and what it has planned for the future. For me it was an awesome opportunity to visually see and understand everything I had heard in the meetings over the previous days but for a member of the public, it would provide them with an incredible way in which to better understand their city.

Each centre had a combination of technology to present the Masterplan for the city along with other cool digital technologies such as:

- holograms to present how the previous dwellings and number of people looked
- train driving simulation
- LED lit 3D scale models

It would be, in my opinion and incredibly valuable tool in stakeholder engagement and consultation in New Zealand and would allow everyone to interact with and be a part of city planning and urban development.



Figure 7 Qingdao Urban Planning Exhibition Centre scale model of Qingdao City

5 Chinese culture and business

I was struck by how many senior female women we met on the trip at each of the organisations we visited. In China women in senior leadership positions seemed very common. Despite those who we met, women in make up 17.5% of the senior managers at firms in China, 22% of the chief financial officers and represented only 9.2% of those on boards. Comparatively, New Zealand with our 17% women in senior leadership teams, is on par; china also has a gender imbalance working against it with more men than women in the population, so we really need to step up our game in New Zealand to get more women into STEM and into city shaping leadership roles.

We heard how many middle-class families were still only choosing to have one child even with the relaxed 'one-child' policy allowing up to two children per family, because it is too expensive to bring up two children, so parent would rather channel their time and money into one child. I also found it interesting that for government workers such as our hosts you got more annual leave if you were single than you did if you were married. A most unusual concept to which I was not able to confirm the reasoning for.



Figure 8 Myself and other delegation members posing for photos with some of the women from the organisations we were meeting with

Through meeting (and dining) with many Chinese business people as well as discussions with the Kiwi's at the Consulates in Shanghai and Guangzhou I came to understand:

- Work attire is relatively casual, not dissimilar to New Zealand's
- Meeting rooms are typically more formal and that most local government organisations have teams or departments specifically to host delegations from around the world such as ours.
- The speed of change is considerably higher and New Zealand is putting a lot of work to calibrate the expectations of Chinese constructions companies
- China is not one market, it is many. Therefore, for New Zealand firms to make it in China, they need to target and understand what market it is going into.
- We are very lucky to live in such a safe green place as New Zealand free from the smog which is generated by all the heavy industry and coal fired energy plants.

Overall the trip was an incredible experience. Although I have only touched on the most important aspects for me, in this summary, from my role in Transport, I learned so much more than I could have ever imagined. About life in another country, technology, urban planning schemes, ageing populations and changing land uses and how things can be more or less accessible than what we are used to in New Zealand.