



Gubei, Wuhan 2018 International UN-Habitat Student Competition

A creative and innovative breath for Wuhan Waterfront Heritage

Jury report

Executive Summary

UN-Habitat, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, and WSP, the Wuhan Land Use and Spatial Planning Research Center, have organised an international student competition to propose creative and innovative solutions for a vacant waterfront site in inner-city Wuhan. The competition is part of the UN-Habitat – WLSPP programme “People Oriented Urban Public Spaces” for China.

General themes: improving and innovating urban public spaces; revitalization of waterfront spaces; revalorizing industrial heritage; socially inclusive and compact inner-city centres; creating new tourism destinations; all in the context of rapidly developing metropolitan cities with historical centres; 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs); transformative implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

UN-Habitat and WSLP collaborate since 2016 delivering the People-Oriented Urban Public Space Programme in China. In 2018, this collaboration centres on three sub-programmes: a focus on heritage (in the context of Wuhan’s 2018 strategy for better heritage conservation and promotion); the Wuhan Placemaking Week 2018; and the student competition, as an invitation to focus the collaboration on issues of public space AND heritage (cultural, built) of a highly important site in Wuhan. The student competition will culminate with bringing 28 students from 15 teams from 7 countries to Wuhan during Wuhan Placemaking Week, to further learn about heritage and placemaking in communities. On December 9-10, during Wuhan Placemaking Week, the three laureates will present their submissions.

a. Laureates Teams (1-3)

No.	Team Leader	Team Members	Nationality	University
00012	Liu Ruoshui	Xu Xiaodi, Xia Liangjuan, Nie Lei, Liu Yiru,	Chinese	University of Michigan, Huazhong University of Science and Technology
00107	Li Yingran	Liao Qi, Chen Ying, Wang Fujing	Chinese	Huazhong University of Science and Technology
00151	Muhammad Syahmi Bin Sallehudin	Hani Nabilah Binti Abdul Rahman, Nabila Shahida Binti Mohammad Shah,	Malaysian	Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysia



b. Finalists (4-10)

00049	YUAN Jingda	Zhang Jili, Cheng Lu, Xie Jieran	Chinese	Huazhong Agricultural University
00050	Yang Kun	Wang Yuxuan, He Linna, Li Binyang	Chinese	Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology
00054	Huang Chi Ho	King Yat Lau, Ho Yin Chui	Chinese Hong Kong	The University of Hong Kong
00094	Daniel Janssen	Solomiia Kurochkina, Daniel Mulcahy Hui En Wong, Justin Storer, Jin Zhang, Maddie Di Prinzio, Isaac McCormack, Oliver Fenner, Robert Walker, Connor Kiss	Australian	Curtin University
00120	Md.Saiful Alam	NUSRAT JAHAN TABASSUM, Shibbir Ahammad, Md. Efti Manna Tonmoy	Bangladeshi	Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology
00143	Gao Tongxi	Wang Fang, Wang Zhexiao, Li Bocheng, Li Changzuo	Chinese	Huazhong Agricultural University
00157	MA Xiaosong	Zhang Sihan, Yu Tan, Tang Yuhan, Li Jing, Zhao Qi, Gao Cheng, Sun Yuexin	Chinese	Beijing Forestry University, Huazhong Agricultural University Peking University

Proceedings

The competition was announced on the 15th May 2015, with submission due by the 31st July 2018.¹ Participation was open to all current students of Urban Planning, Urban Design, Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Urban Economics and other relevant disciplines globally, enrolled in an accredited course at January 2018.

UN-Habitat and WLSP received 53 submissions from 19 countries, which are China, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Uganda and Viet Nam. UN-Habitat and WLSP screened the 53 submissions in September 2018. On the 22nd October, the jury panel² met in Wuhan to discuss selected 18 submissions and identifies the 10 finalists and 3 laureates, as per competition guidelines.

The Challenge



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The competition aimed to address an important area of Wuhan, the Northern area of Guishan (Turtle Hill). The context of the project is extremely complex. The site has a unique role in the urban landscape for its cultural, social and environmental character. The area is at the confluence of the Han

and Yangtze rivers and prone to flooding; Turtle Hill is an important landmark and its image is protected as part of the local natural and cultural heritage. The project area itself is characterised by several industrial heritage buildings that directly testify the important role manufacturing had and has in the social life of Wuhan. The project site is also in close proximity to the consolidated centre of Hankou and crossed by major transport infrastructures. New metro and public transport lines are also planned to serve this area of town.

¹ http://www.fukuoka.unhabitat.org/info/news/20180518_en.html

² The jury was made of local and international experts:

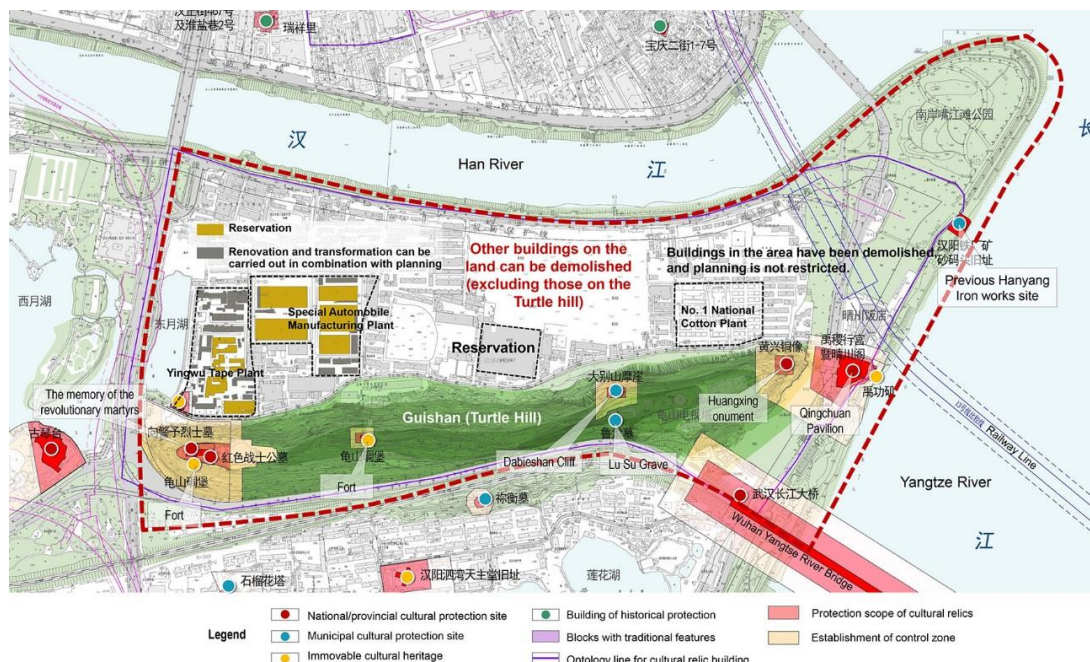
- Mr. Bruno Dercon, Senior Human Settlements Officer, UN-Habitat Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Panel Chair
- Ms. Song Jie, Deputy Director, Wuhan Land Use and Urban Spatial Planning Research Center (WLSP)
- Ms. Zhou Jie, Professor of Wuhan University
- Mr. Zhenshan Zhang, UN-Habitat Programme Manager for China
- Mr. Sheng Ying, UN-Habitat Programme Analyst
- Mr. Jose Chong, Urban Planner, UN-Habitat
- Ms. Katherine Peinhardt, Project Reporter and Communications Associate, Project for Public Spaces
- Dr. Mirko Guaralda, Senior Lecturer, Queensland University of Technology, rapporteur

The site offers an opportunity to redefine an area in the core of the urban structure; the site has currently accessibility and mobility issues, which have so far limited its redevelopment. The important social and cultural role Turtle Hill plays in the urban narrative, requires also an extreme sensitive approach to respect the historic values of the site and its meaning for the local communities. The physical and cultural context imposes limitations in terms of urban density and viability in terms of commercial development. A subtle balance between private interests and public values has to be pursued to protect this area, which on the other hand is extremely strategic in offering opportunities to redefine and strengthen Wuhan sense of place and identity.

The competition was seen as an opportunity to gather innovative and creative ideas to foster placemaking in Wuhan. Participants were requested to reflect on the context, understand its dynamics, and suggest novel placemaking interventions aimed to bring people at the centre. The scope of the competition was to explore new approaches to urban design based on the quality of public spaces as well as on a sound understanding of the complexities of the context, so to develop innovative people-centred urban environments.

Competition Criteria

In the past, several design competitions and masterplans provided suggestions for this strategic area, but no decisions to regenerate this complex site were taken. The aim of the UN-Habitat competition was to identify novel suggestions, calling up the ideas of students in China and internationally. The completion opens a dialogue about what ideas students can provide to Wuhan to inform placemaking and urbanism.



Basic Situation of Northern Guishan (Turtle Hill) Area

To identify finalists and laureates, the jury selected a range of complementary ideas trying to solve the complex issues of the area. Students were evaluated on their capacity to analyse the context and generate new perspectives. Proposals were assessed for the

relationships they proposed with natural features, man-made infrastructures and cultural artefacts. Importance was given to continuity in mobility and urban form, especially in terms of connecting physically and visually the two banks of Han River.

People-centred design, the creation of a public space suitable for the inner-city location and the adjacent communities was also an important. The jury paid particular attention to students able to show the potential of placemaking, where more detailed design can work with and for a variety of communities and stakeholders in order to create truly people-centred public spaces at eye level.

The Chinese jury members put great emphasis on the culturally iconic Turtle Hill, which required that building heights needed to be adjusted. The jury also recognised that the flood defences of the Han and Yangtze rivers are so important for Wuhan and gave more weight to submissions which emphasized no-built areas close to the river, rather than landmarks.

The panel recognized how the site was extremely difficult to address and how entries mainly provided partial answers to a range of complex issues. For this reason, entries were not only assessed on the basis of the quality of their design, but also in terms of innovative ideas proposed, complementarity of propositions, and creativity in address the brief. In making its choices, the panel resorted selecting entries that demonstrated different sensitivities and also a representation of the international character of the competition.

The selected finalists provide a range of ideas about how to achieve sustainable people centred development in urban China, create metropolitan inner city public space. Each selected proposal prioritises specific issues and specific approaches to the brief, providing a collection of promising and interesting ideas for future discussion of the site.

In identifying the laureates, the panel focussed on the overall quality of the submission, its creativity, innovation as well as coherence of the design.

Finalist Overview

The seven finalist all represent different complementary approaches to the complex issues of the site. They provide a range of schemes and programs to address the area; common themes addressed by the majority of the finalist include:

- A novel understanding of how to foster placemaking through a range of different complementary strategies. These strategies include tangible interventions and intangible action to engage locals and visitors in the activation of the site.
- A focus on the natural, cultural, ecological values of the area. These values are recognised as strategic to inform the design of the site and inform a people-centred approach to develop the site as a new tourist node for Wuhan.
- A desire to provide a system of interconnected, walkable public spaces to cater for a variety of city users and visitors. The proposed new systems are based on a sound public space investigation and research.
- An aspiration to take advantage of the local heritage and of the deep meanings of this area to structure schemes around new cultural facilities, community hubs and creative precincts.

In terms of the actual schemes, students have mainly dealt with the linearity of the site with two basic approaches. Some finalists have structured the area with layers parallel to the Han River; these proposals generally have a central spine running East-West and/or a series of routes replicating the forms of the natural landform. The second main approach was to organise the area in a series of precincts, a sequence of highly defined clusters in terms of functions, character and building types. Students that took this approach, generally proposed to articulate the site in 3-4 zones, each with access to the waterfront and generally connected by a central spine or a boulevard running on the edge of the Han River. Some entries have enriched the scheme suggesting urban patterns unique to the Northern area of Guishan, others have instead opted to extend the grid of Hankou creating new visual connections or proposing new bridges.

After deliberation, the jury panel has identified the following entries as finalists in consideration of their creative and innovative approach to the brief:

- *Xingsheng Inheritance and innovation – Chinese traditional landscape cognition and usage*



This proposal provides a sophisticated analysis and understanding of the context. The masterplan provides a variety of interesting spaces aimed to foster placemaking alongside the banks of the Han River. A good range of activations strategies has been provided with a sound grounding in the local heritage.

- *Co-Existence City: a sustainable path to inclusive growth*



This proposal provides a visionary idea for a city layered on different planes and levels, so to respect the local landscape. The proposal demonstrates a good understanding of environmental dynamics and cultural processes to foster people centred placemaking.

- *Cultural Furnace: Creative & cultural hub at North Guishan Area*



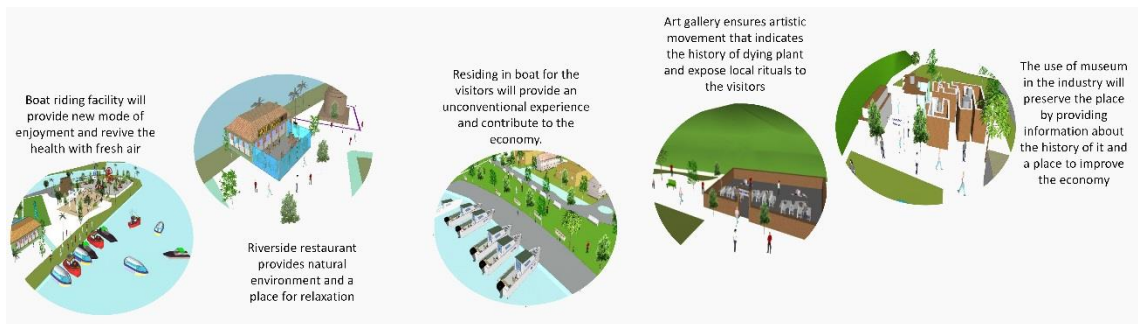
This proposal provides an interesting range of spaces to cater for different social groups, designing an appealing scheme centred on a canal. Creativity and cultural activities are suggested as strategic element to support the development of a new sense of place for the area.

- *Wuhan: city of history*



This proposal provides a sophisticated understanding of the area, its social and cultural dimensions, and its spatial relationship with the context. The project focuses on articulation the site in a series of spaces at human scale, activated by a range of different activities.

- *Approaches and Urban Ideas Developed in Northern Guishan Area*



This proposal provides an interesting structure of the site, articulated through a variety of novel activities. The simple design is enhanced by the stimulation range of uses and users envisioned by the students.

- *Symbiosis with natural and cultural context : planning and Design of Guibei Area under the Symbiosis Concept*



This proposal provides an outstanding analysis of the context, its processes and its dynamics. The design is considerate of the local environmental, social and cultural milieus. The scheme suggests a range of spaces that are easily legible and that can be easily navigated by users.

- *Fluidity and Symbio: the creative and innovative space for people in Wuhan*



This proposal provides an interesting concept to recompose the fragmented nature of the site. The fluid design is enhanced by a series of suggestive landscapes, places and activities to engage different users.

Laureates Overview

The three schemes selected as laureates impressed the panel in terms of their particularly innovative and creative approach, not just for the quality of their design. Laureates provide a range of interesting ideas in terms of approach to the brief and actual design resolution. Students have resolved the complex issues of the area suggesting interesting, sometime extreme, interventions aimed to support the development of a sense of place for the area. Placemaking strategies suggested, aim to layer new meanings to the area and enhance existing values. These schemes have a novel approach to local culture in terms of suggesting food, creative industries, and arts as potential activators of the area. They provide intriguing visions for a complex urban environment characterised by mixed uses and especially appealing to different demographics. They interpret the natural environment in an advanced and sophisticated way to provide suggestive solutions to the issue of the area. Schemes, promote placemaking as core methodology to renew the character, spirit and vibe of the Norther area of Guishan.

The panel recognised none of these proposal is perfect in itself, they are anyway undoubtedly innovative and complementary. The panel has resorted to request laureates to work with finalists and other selected participants to merge, improve and ameliorate the ideas submitted to the competition during the students training event within the Placemaking Week in Wuhan in December 2018. This request is to give participants an opportunity to better reflect on the brief and further discuss their concepts.

The selected laureates are:

- *Wuhan Wilder Heart | Made in Hanyang to Made in Wuhan: AHP Oriented Central Cultural District Region*

This proposal was commended for its in-depth analyses and understanding of the context, for the interesting approach taken in regards to local culture as activator of spaces, and for the overall quality of the proposed scheme. In particular the panel has appreciated the highly legible urban form, the appealing system of public spaces, and the valuable ideas to activate the proposed urban environment.



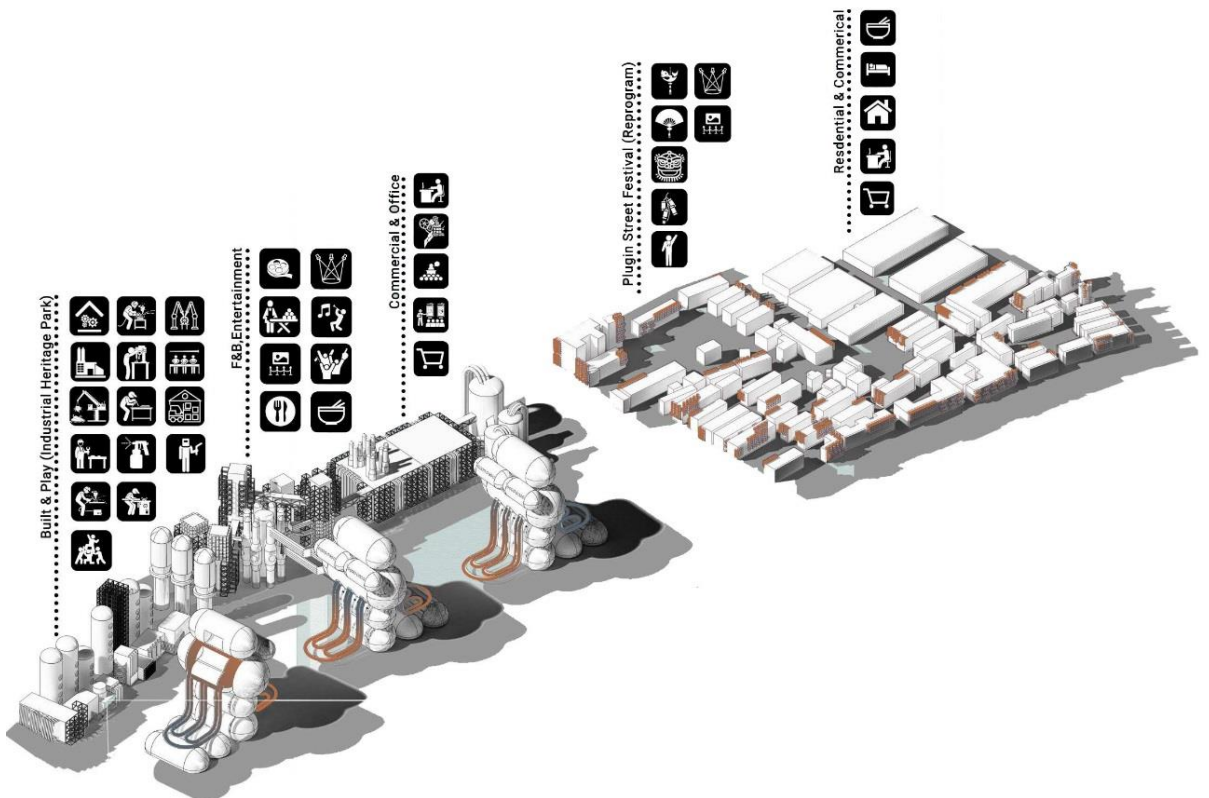
- **Breathing Link**

This proposal was commended for the broad range of activities and spaces provided, as well as for the interesting use of water features, canals, and amenities in defining the character of the area. The panel appreciated the focus on healthy living and healthy environment. The scheme is respectful of Wuhan heritage, values, and ecosystem. The project suggests a really interesting integration of natural and man-made features, fostering a unique sense of place for the Norther area of Guishan.



- *Turtle Hill Creative Industrial Park*

This proposal was selected for the bold vision in using creative industries and arts to activate the space. The scheme introduces new buildings that are meant to be a celebration of Wuhan heritage as well as act as new landmarks in the urban structure as well as in the city popular culture. The clear layout and the provision of spaces that could be freely appropriated by citizens and visitors, so to foster different placemaking tactics, was also appreciated.



Conclusions

The panel commended all participants to the competition. Placemaking and public space investigations have been recognised as important tactics to rethink the Norther area of Guishan and this was reflected in the selection of finalists and laureates. In order to celebrate all the great ideas harvested by this process and also to provide a learning experience to students, the format of the training event planned during the project week has been redefined so to give local and foreigner students the opportunity to work together to brainstorm ideas for the area. Finalist and laureates entries are seen by the panel as opportunities to start a novel discussion on the future of the Norther area of Guishan. Selected participants to the completions have been invited to Wuhan project week to engage with local students and together co-create new scenarios, new vignettes to inform future planning and development of this area.