

# Lost in the new beijing: the old neighborhood essays example

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



China's unbelievably rapid segue into modernization is producing an effect seen in other parts of the world, perhaps very close to home: that of destroying history to encourage progress. Capitalism looms ominously overhead; as it enables China's advancement, it also seems to come with a terrible price to the peoples' soul.

Historical architecture is being eradicated wholesale, but not only is it becoming steadily stamped out; it is being altered to remove entire swathes of Beijing's vibrant past. This isn't a new thing, of course. During the population expansion of the 50s and 60s, an ancient stone bulwark encircling old Beijing was destroyed to allot for Communist housing developments.

There is also a problem beyond the loss of a peoples' history: the widening gap between the rich and poor. Capitalism strikes again. With such changes, more crime happens and there is a "growing sense of insecurity in Beijing". Recognizing the value of historical districts - such as the hutongs - has drawn the interest of the elite for use as status symbols. The paradigm has transmogrified from community-based to cash-cow. The neighborhoods are losing their rustic charm, their personality is being sucked dry by consumerism, and the frantic bid to play the part of a modernized city is destroying the heart of the city. The results of this are predictable: neighborhoods are losing everything which made them valuable to a people, being supplanted by tourist-traps and "phony cultural atmosphere".

The final thought is striking, "In a saner world, of course, the powers that be would have the patience to appraise this history layer by layer, street by street, building by building, one voice at a time, before plowing forward."

China's amazing leap into modernity has seen accomplished in but a fraction

of the time it took the west many decades to organize. They're following the same schemata, in many ways, but have the opportunity to approach this from an enlightened, 21st century perspective - with preservation and innovation intertwined. Or, they could simply steamroll the pastleaving disillusioned historians to pick up the pieces.

## **Frank Gehry**

Frank Gehry utilizes a remarkable approach towards architectural design, one centered on acquiescing to his sense of wonder and intuition. It is mentioned that he uses a personal philosophy based on seemingly ephemeral concepts whilst interviewing clients. This permits him reaching into his imagination to compose shapes and forms which would fit the needs, and liking, of clients perhaps even without them knowing fully what it is they prefer. His statement, " The creative spirit flows from my childlike sense of the world, my sense of play and wonder," speaks tomes about his unique approach.

The innovation doesn't stop with his intuitive predilection. The philosophy of Gehry's architectural approach reaches even into the socio-political climate of our era. He claims the rigidity of Victorian cities is not applicable to our time. Democratic incursion has created a cityscape of clashing designs, an organic take on architecture. Gehry uses this thought-process in conjunction with a sense of utility whilst composing his designs. He is well known for the incorporation of materials such as chain-link, or titanium, into his structures. Aestheticism is just as important as functionality in creating modern architecture.

Frank Gehry's philosophy could very well change the face of architecture for

generations to come. As with many aspects of the rapidly-evolving world, people are focused more than ever before on self-actualization, and the freedom to expression beyond traditionally dictated social norms.

## **Innovations for the Developing World**

Dean Kamen embraces the significance of the entrepreneurial spirit in his work to bring light to the darkness in developing countries. According to his studies, well over two billion people are without either electricity or clean drinking water today. Mention is made of nighttime satellite maps, which most of us have seen at some point, and the noticeable clusters of the Near East and Africa bathed in total, inky darkness. Kamen seeks to change that. His two innovations are relatively self-sustaining: a water pump - called the Slingshot - and a power generator fuelled by none other than cow dung. The first is a straightforward system, utilizing a process of vaporizing the impurities within contaminated water (even raw sewage), and producing something potable. His second design is brilliant in its simplicity. The power generator has already been tested extensively in Bangladesh, with great success. Each machine creates a kilowatt of energy, which may not seem all that much, but it is sufficient to give people in developing parts of the world something we have come to take completely for granted - lighting.

Perhaps the most interesting part of Kamen's projects is the manner in which he approaches his work. He has championed simplicity, logic, and a penchant for entrepreneurial originality to realize his dreams. Enormous, modernized power plants and water treatment systems would make very little sense in places riddled with small villages, and developing peoples. All

that is required for Kamen's approach to work is one thing: the entrepreneur. Apparently, this spirit is already alive and flourishing within the areas he's working. He has joined efforts with the largest mobile phone company in Bangladesh, Quadir, in using their established business model. The model is simple: loaning telephones to village entrepreneurs, who in turn charge a service fee for other villages to make use of the device.

In the end, Kamen's noble quest could produce a number of incredible things for the developing world. Not only will they have access to the necessities of electricity and clean water, but they will also grow as innovators.