Jeffrey Johnson, AIA is the director of the School of Architecture at the University of Kentucky College of Design and a principal of SLAB Architecture. Johnson’s work and research focuses on the intersection of architecture and the city. Prior to joining the University of Kentucky, Johnson taught at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at Columbia University where he was founding director of China Lab. He has also taught at the Illinois Institute of Technology and at Tongji University in Shanghai. Johnson was the Curator and Co-Academic Director of the 2013 Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture in Shenzhen, China.

The talk will focus on research conducted over the past ten years on large-scale urban development in China. That research was published as a book entitled, China Lab Guide to Megablock Urbanisms, spring 2020 by Actar Publishers/GSAPP Publications.

The default solution for accommodating the millions of new urban inhabitants in China is large-scale superblock development. Superblocks are spatial instruments with social, cultural, environmental, and economic implications, operating between the scales of architecture and the city. Superblock developments are constructed at a rate of over 10 completed each day housing populations that range from the thousands to hundreds of thousands. These large-scale residential enclaves, which can reach sizes of 40 hectares and larger, are taking over the fabric of Chinese cities. This trend is not only prevalent with new developments at the expanding periphery of cities, but also in existing city centers at times highly contrasting their historical urban fabric.