



“EU-Asia Dialogue – Shaping a Common Future for Europe and Asia”

Conference Report

“Sustainable Urban Management – Sharing European and Asian Experiences”

Singapore, July 04, 2012



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Report

EU-Asia Dialogue:

“Sustainable Urban Management – Sharing European and Asian Experiences”

A panel discussion on the topic “Sustainable Urban Management – Sharing European and Asian Experiences” of the EU-Asia Dialogue, was held on July 4th in the context of the World City Summit at the Expo & Convention Centre, Marina Bay Sands, Singapore.

The Event started with an opening speech that strongly emphasized the need for an integrated approach regarding the issue of sustainable urban development. Participation as well as public awareness should be enhanced. Also, partnership among cities and the exchange of experiences were identified as future goals. This panel discussion was a first step towards sharing experiences between Europe and Asia.

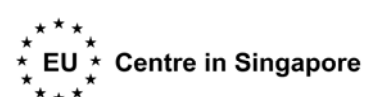
Presentations

The **first speech** reemphasized the importance of sharing practices and the dissemination of knowledge. Close cooperation with strong ties between Europe and Asia would benefit both regions as Europe is inspired by Asia’s dynamic whereas Asia can learn from Europe’s high standard of quality of life. The problems both regions face are in general the same, which is why a common guide with “100 ready and available solutions” was recommended.

Also, the speaker named the city of Copenhagen as a role model in terms of sustainable city development, as the public and the private sectors as well as the civil society work closely together. Finally, the importance of leadership has also been mentioned which means maintaining a long-term perspective despite various short-term pressures.



Photo: The Panelists



The **next presentation** dealt with the role of urban governance. The speaker underlined that there are four main aspects to liveability of cities which are economic vitality, the intelligence of cities and mobility, ecological sustainability and social participation, cohesion and integration. Furthermore, it was emphasized that the necessary technology has already been invented but that the much more difficult part is the implementation of these technologies. Also, the importance to explain the technology to the people was mentioned, contributing to the general argument for more involvement of citizen in urban management.

With regard to the role of governments, it was recommended that they should remove barriers and include sustainability in procurement requirements. In addition, the governments should make sure that the execution is in the hands of a strong project-team.

The **third presentation** dealt with Singapore as an example of successful urban development over the past fifty years. The speaker first outlined the living conditions in Singapore after gaining independence and then contrasted them with the high standard of development that Singapore has reached nowadays.

In the international context, there is a strong correlation between the population density of a city and its liveability with less densely populated cities generally being more liveable. Singapore is an exceptional case with a population that is relatively high. Therefore, it can be considered as a model of a compact city with a high population density that is still very liveable.

The major factors that contributed to the city's success were a strong leadership, capacity, institutions as well as systems that outlasted change and a strong community.

The **final presentation** was on the topic of "landscape intelligence", mentioning that the new scale of cities in the 21st century would require a new scale of planning. According to the speaker, the "world of cities" finds itself in the middle of a major transition. Building a sustainable future for cities therefore constitutes the great challenge of this century. In order to achieve this goal, one must look beyond the boundaries of a city and find out how a city is acting within its region.

Discussion

After the four presentations were delivered, the **discussion session** started. The first discussant criticised the previous speakers' arguments and questioned Singapore's viability as a role model for other cities as it is only a small island which can not be compared to other cities in the world. The respective speaker replied that this was a good point but the model of Singapore still offers some valuable inspirations for other cities,



especially for medium-sized ones.

Then the issue of “top-down”-planning which is used in many Asian countries was raised. It was mentioned that planning in Singapore and other countries in the region is “bulldozed over the population” and the discussant wondered what could be done in order to involve the population more.

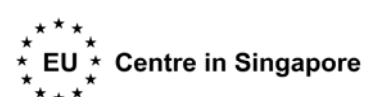
One of the speakers answered that an inclusive approach from the very beginning would be much more effective than involvement in the legislation. The Netherlands are a good example for a collective approach where different streets compete in a neighbourhood.

Next it was questioned whether there is a need for new forms of political participation and involvement of citizens as the traditional mechanisms of participation seem to not work properly anymore. The following discussion highlighted that different regions vary in their same starting point and that the challenges involving participation are different in Europe and Asia.

It was also emphasized that the current economic crisis in Europe does not necessarily mean a recession in sustainable urban planning as the industry tends to focus more on innovation and is favourable towards a more integrated approach during times of crisis.

Finally it was also questioned whether it would be beneficial to make topics such as sustainable development more apolitical. Some participant agreed, while others mentioned that these issues can never be apolitical as politics involves around the competition of different concepts.

While some discussants rejected the idea of a so called “one-size-fit-all” approach where European experiences can easily implemented elsewhere, there was agreement that this kind of bi-regional political dialogues are important to gain inspirations from the other region.



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