



WORLD CITIES SUMMIT

4th YOUNG LEADERS SYMPOSIUM REPORT



Liveable & Sustainable Cities:
Embracing the Future through Innovation and Collaboration

18 MAY 2017 SUZHOU CITY, JIANGSU PROVINCE, CHINA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The 4th edition of the World Cities Summit Young Leaders Symposium was held on 18 May 2017, in Suzhou City, Jiangsu Province

CURATING THE CITY: HERITAGE AND CULTURE

Culture and heritage are increasingly being recognised as vital elements in the building of liveable and sustainable cities. On this topic, different positions can be held. At one end of the spectrum, development can bulldoze its way to a dizzying future, destroying under-appreciated cultural beauty and value. At the other extreme, adherents of heritage can assert themselves, or even agitate, to cling on to the past, at times blocking progress. Somewhere in the middle, cities need to find a good balance between preserving and integrating the best from the past, while fostering a viable and meaningful future for the benefit of all.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Along the way, the preservation of culture and heritage must be managed to align well with other key aspects of development:

- How technology can help, rather than hinder, this process
- How economic competitiveness can also be served, in favour of the greater good that includes employment and other economic benefits
- How planning can best take into account heritage and cultural considerations for the long term, and
- How culture can assist in, and benefit from, the pursuit of internationalisation

Culture, which gives people a distinct identity and is meant for generations to enjoy, can certainly create long-term value. Ultimately, culture and heritage will always be vital for the economy, as they form a vital part of the basis for business, trade, tourism and international exchange. For example, a healthy appreciation of culture defines creativity, and so, fosters an innovative society.



Pang Yee Ean, Director-General (Investments) of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), moderating the WCS Young Leaders Symposium 2017

In the rush of development, however, there are real dangers of “Disney-fying” culture and allowing a theme park approach and mere cosmetic cultural change to mar the face and character of the city. This often comes

about from a failure to truly understand the genuine spirit and cultural resources of people and communities.

Discussions on liveable cities would benefit from greater attention and priority to “social sustainability”, which extends beyond economics and the environment to cover social aspects such as equity and ethnic harmony, and also to include culture and heritage. If culture and heritage are as fundamental as the very reason for existence and hence the basis for everything else, then they are also absolutely crucial as part of the foundations for liveability in the city.

The World Cities Summit Young Leaders Symposium is an annual by-invitation-only event for young leaders from public and private sectors related to urban development and governance. The Symposium is a highlight of the biennial World Cities Summit, co-organised by Singapore’s Centre for Liveable Cities and Urban Redevelopment Authority. This report was authored by Koh Buck Song of the Centre for Liveable Cities.

FIVE KEY DISCUSSION INSIGHTS

1. Culture and economic competitiveness: Culture creates jobs, counters unemployment

Culture can play a seminal role in spurring economic rejuvenation and growth. In Bilbao, Spain, focusing on aspects of culture in promoting new economic activities has helped the city to nurture more culture-related enterprises, which today make up 6 per cent of Bilbao's businesses and contribute 5 per cent to the economy. To do this, one priority area for Bilbao was to retain talent by creating jobs that are sensitive to culture, which young job-seekers typically find more attractive.

2. Culture and development: Preserving and integrating culture in the modern city needs fine balancing

Weaving culture with development is often a balancing act that calls for sensitivity, innovation and wisdom. For example, Chinatowns in cities such as New York, London and even Singapore can have run-down squatters that need to be managed and renewed to help spur economic growth. But on the flip side, when gentrification occurs, the process can easily lead to loss of character and even to the creation of tourist traps.

Suzhou in Jiangsu province, China, sets a good example of how to bring back the city's ancient glories, while implementing plans to protect and prettify old buildings. Serving the needs of 12 million citizens with a growing influx of tourists poses substantial challenges. Most of these revolve around upgrading and retro-fitting infrastructure such as enhancing transportation through old city lanes and improving living conditions in areas like the Pingjiang historical district, where the original residents can stay on. A careful plan to balance cultural preservation with redevelopment to benefit the people is vital.



Welcome speech by Wu Xiaodong (吴晓东), Vice Mayor of Suzhou, Jiangsu Province



Xabier Ochandiano, Councilor for Economic, Trade and Employment of Bilbao speaking on culture and economic competitiveness



Technology can enhance culture by recreating and preserving heritage, and thus, also modernising it to make it closer to the younger generation.

- JASON SI
Dean of Tencent Research Institute, China



FIVE KEY DISCUSSION INSIGHTS

3. Culture and planning: Fostering trust in the government is necessary to move forward

Building a foundation of trust in the authorities can help to pave the way for the planning of a city well to balance culture with development. Strong motivations to protect heritage can block progress, for example in cities like Yangon, Myanmar, where heritage was left for some 30 years without adequate planning or investments, until the recent building of a new capital in Naypyidaw opened up interest in redevelopment. Moving forward will require addressing issues such as access to financing and maintaining transparency, not to mention other issues such as ethnic instability.

At Georgetown in Penang, Malaysia, trust was fostered through efforts to preserve traditional arts and crafts. The true value of this UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2008 extends beyond its 5,000 buildings dating back to 1786 in British colonial times to the intangible, living heritage today where people still practise ancient trades. Enlightened planning measures include a Special Area Plan gazetted in 2016 to preserve heritage sites by requiring developers to gain the approval of a technical review panel, and to meet other development guidelines that also take culture into account.

4. Culture and technology: Culture, aided by technology, enhances life in the city

Technology can help bring culture to the people in both concrete and abstract ways. It can also be applied together with aspects of culture even to enhance the living environment. In the Netherlands, technology from the field of clean energy is serving culture by beautifying the city while promoting environmental sustainability. One example is the Van Gogh Path near Eindhoven, a cycling path with magical ground lighting, inspired by the Dutch artist's painting *The Starry Night*.



“ With technology... you can combine poetry and pragmatism together.

- DAAN ROOSEGAARDE
Founder, Studio Roosegaarde, The Netherlands ”

“ Culture is vital to the economy because it compels people to work towards a common goal.

- RUBY TEO SIEW KIM
CEO, Stalford Education Group, Singapore ”

FIVE KEY DISCUSSION INSIGHTS

Technology can also energise communication. A living heritage needs a narrative that a society has to weave together itself. Hence, communication through clever use of technology is vital, especially among people who today are perpetually in a virtual world, in which QR codes, for example, are replacing first-level interaction. People-centred engagement in public spaces that can enhance liveability could benefit from applying technological advancements to blend the sometimes divergent aims of heritage and technology.

5. Culture and internationalisation: Assimilation needs time and good pacing

The ongoing tussle between culture and internationalisation creates constant tensions between preserving what is old and pushing towards the new. Among the key questions: Is culture more about the environment, or more about the people and their behaviours? Cities like Suzhou and Penang are attractive because they are built from “a fusion of immigrants”, and such openness is clearly a crucial facet.

However, in collections of different communities with less of a melting pot effect, people who are less exposed to diversity might be the ones most fearful of it. To address this, ensuring good pacing will help in blending culture into new city developments. This means allowing cultural assimilation to take its course rather than trying to push it ahead overnight. This is becoming more important in cities like Sydney in Australia, or London in Britain, where, despite decades of multiculturalism, communities may still be segregated by geography in some pockets. By contrast, a feature of cities where multiculturalism thrives is that, in history, they have tended to be located at the crossroads of trade and exchange, such as Rotterdam, Shanghai and Singapore.



Our aim is to encourage people to practise their cultural trades like making joss-sticks or songkok within the heritage site, and not to Disney-fy the area.



- VISHANTINI KANASAN
Principal Assistant Secretary (Local Government Division), Penang State Secretary Office, Malaysia

MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE

with **LAWRENCE WONG** | Minister for National Development, Singapore

Culture and heritage is an increasingly important aspect of developing liveable cities of the future. It should not be seen narrowly only in terms of visible representations like Bilbao's Guggenheim Museum or Singapore's Botanic Gardens. Instead, the topic can be much broader, including how to address loss of identity, the sense of alienation, and disconnection arising from economic anxieties and insecurities. This has led to protectionist and even anti-globalisation sentiments around the world. As Mr Wong said: "If we want to stop this tide, we must resist the temptation to turn inward and close off borders. The way to do this is to invest in culture and think about ways to strengthen our cultural anchors and broaden the common space we all share together".

Even as cities continue to build new skyscrapers, it is vital not to neglect old aspects of culture and heritage that are crucial for progress. To this end, there may be a need to make a distinction between nostalgia and heritage. Generally, what is worth keeping to an individual is often nostalgia, whereas heritage is more for the whole community. An area of activity like sports, paid for by taxpayers' monies, may be "highly manicured" by the government and runs the risk of serving motives of vanity. But sports can be a powerful means of creating shared memories, and these should be curated to become part of a nation's heritage.

Increasingly, culture is found in the intangible, including attributes of the people and society such as clean government and reliable public administration, trust in the rule of law, and being efficient, diligent and gracious. In Singapore, a common foundation is built on cultural institutions including national service and public housing, where some 80 per cent of Singaporeans live. This shared culture, however, is evolving, with about a third of new couples now culturally mixed. A danger to guard against is an attitude towards culture that is more exclusionary, especially in the current, more inward-looking global context.

Cultural anchors, however, should stay open and inclusive, so that a society can welcome whoever shares similar norms and ways of life. To counter exclusionary forces, it is vital to stay humble and to retain qualities such as curiosity and the spirit to learn. Cities need to nurture cultural anchors to provide ballast against the possibly destabilising forces of globalisation and, more recently, anti-globalisation sentiment. Social capital is built on trust, which forms from relationships.

“

Culture is ultimately about who we are and how we relate to one another.

”

- **LAWRENCE WONG**

Minister for National Development, Singapore

YOUNG LEADERS OPEN MIKE SESSION



TAN SZUE HANN
Surbana Jurong
Singapore



ALAN LAI WOON SIONG
IHDpay Group
Singapore

Looking for international mentors in the Youth Career Network mentorship programme, which allows participants to gain access to professional mentors from different industries. This would contribute to making cities more liveable and sustainable, by fostering a healthy culture of responsibility and care for the next generation.



JORIS VAN ETTEN
Asian Development Bank
Philippines

Call for collaboration on a think-piece perhaps to be shared at the World Cities Summit 2018: How can cities work together with a variety of financing agencies in order to support the building of smart urban infrastructure?



SHAISHAV DHARIA
Lodha Group
India

A search for ideas to build a job creation ecosystem, especially for greenfield cities like Palava City in India. This would include dealing with the design and planning implications for knowledge cities.

YOUNG LEADERS OPEN MIKE SESSION



CHINTAN RAVESHIA
Arup Singapore Pte Ltd



MARCUS FERNHOUT
Cambridge Innovation Centre
The Netherlands



RUBY TEO SIEW KIM
Stalford Education Group
Singapore



JASON SI
Tencent Research Institute
China

Open for collaboration with government agencies in places like Singapore and Jakarta to design 21st-century cities for walkability. Change will come with designing streets for people and personal mobility devices rather than roads, and fostering behavioural change to promote a walking culture.

Call for partners to set up innovation ecosystems to support startups working in related areas of city sustainability. The ambition is to open 10 new innovation districts worldwide within the next five years in future-oriented world cities.

Already with a campus near Suzhou, Stalford aims to take the style and approach from the Singapore education system, as well as e-learning methods, to other parts of Asia.

Digital economy is getting a bigger share of GDP and employment. Tencent is actively exploring ways to grow the digital economy in China, especially using data to boost innovation and entrepreneurship, to develop a wide range of applications.

CONCLUSION

Whereas heritage is essentially about the past, culture is more about the future and requires more engagement of the people. What is old is not to be torn willy-nilly. But it is also not to be clung on to, regardless. More people now agree on the importance of culture as a valuable resource for cities, where identity and a sense of belonging are embedded. Indeed, cities that preserve and profile their culture best – like Bilbao, Spain or Suzhou in Jiangsu province, China – are those that stand out in the arena of economic competitiveness.

Just as promoting culture itself can be double-edged, so too can internationalisation. However quickly skyscrapers may rise in global cities, they need time for cultural shifts and new cultural influences to be assimilated. At the same time, there is value in preserving the heritage of traditional indigenous trades such as silk production in Suzhou, re-fashioning them to serve new economic roles or to enhance domestic and international tourism.

In this process, technology can help, such as has been done near Eindhoven, in the Netherlands, to revitalise public spaces with inspiration from artistic heritage. Such technology should be accessible and easy to use, to engage older residents as well as the young, and to cater to economic, ethnic and other aspects of diversity.

Those who plan and manage cities must recognise that they are also responsible for curating its culture and heritage. From the earliest stages of planning, finding and mastering the best ways to blend the celebration of what is valuable from the past with what will spur a brighter future will be the key to building truly liveable and sustainable cities.

WE THANK THE FOLLOWING YOUNG LEADERS FOR THEIR VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO THE SUCCESS OF THE WORLD CITIES SUMMIT YOUNG LEADERS SYMPOSIUM 2017:

Alan Lai Woon Siong

Group Assistant CEO and
Executive Director
IHDPay Group

Alex Ling Yang Tong

Regional Finance Director, Asia
Garlock Singapore Pte Ltd

Ambassador

Dr Long Nguyen Hoang

General Director
Department for Foreign Affairs of
Provinces, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Vietnam

Anabelle Wang

Private Wealth Management
Morgan Stanley

Ang Kok-Yong

Business Opportunity Integrator
Shell Eastern Petroleum (Pte) Ltd

Chan Yau Fei

GM of Jinghope Holdings,
Sanya Subsidiary

Chintan Raveshia

Cities and Transit Development
Leader
Arup

Daan Roosegaarde

Founder
Studio Roosegaarde

Daniel Cook

CEO
Landscape Institute

David Chua

CEO
National Youth Council

Du Xiaogang

Deputy Party Secretary and Mayor
Kunshan Municipal Government

Hamdan Abdul Majeed

Director
Khazanah Nasional Berhad

Jason Si

Dean
Tencent Research Institute

Joris van Etten

Senior Urban Development Specialist,
Sector Advisory Service
Division, Sustainable Development
& Climate Change Department
Asian Development Bank

Joseph Koh Han Xiong

Director
Ping Siong International Ltd

Koh Boon Pin

Senior Vice President, Capital
Markets
DBS Bank

Li Luhong

Executive Assistant to the Chairman
of the Board of Management
TÜV SÜD

Lien Choong Luen

SEA Head, McKinsey Centre for
Government
McKinsey & Co

Liu Feng

Chief Planner of Gaoxing District
Management Committee
Suzhou Municipal Government

Liu Hua

Director
Suzhou Industrial Park Investment
Promotion Bureau

Marcus Fernhout

Executive Director
Cambridge Innovation Centre,
Rotterdam

Maryam Ahmed Haroun

Head of Planning Section
Fujairah Municipality

Michael Budig

Assistant Professor, Architecture and
Sustainable Design
Singapore University of Technology
and Design

Nawal Yousif AL Hanaee

Director of Engineering and Land
Department
Fujairah Municipality

Nthato Minyuku-Gobodo

President
South African Planning Institute

Pablo Viejo

CEO
PTGem Ltd

Pang Yee Ean

Director General (Investments)
Asian Infrastructure Investments
Bank

Ruby Teo Siew Kim

Founder and CEO
Stalford Education Group of
Companies

Saito Nobuaki

Director
City of Yokohama Representative
Office in Shanghai

Shaishav Dharia

Regional CEO
Lodha Group

Shang Hui Jie

Vice President of Siemens Ltd., China
Siemens

Shubhrendu Khoche

Vice President, Enterprise
Partnerships
Mastercard

Tan Eng Kiat

Principal Planner, Manager, Urban
Planning and Design (South East Asia)
Surbana Jurong Pte Ltd

Tan Sein-Way

CEO
Green World City

Tan Szie Hann

Head, Sustainable Urban Solutions
and Principal Architect
Surbana Jurong Pte Ltd

Tan Yinglan

Venture Partner
Sequoia Capital

Tey Soon Heng

Chief Executive Officer
Camomile Spring Pte Ltd

Tom Verbelen

Managing Director
Government Affairs, Antwerp

Vishanthini Kanasan

Principal Assistant Secretary
(Local Government Division)
Penang State Secretary Office

Wei Yang

Chairman
Wei Yang and Partners

Wu Zhixiang

CEO
Tongcheng Travel

Xabier Iñigo Ochandiano Martinez

Councilor for Economic Development,
Trade and Employment
Bilbao City Council

Yap Kwong Weng

CEO
Leap Group

Yumiko Noda

Partner, Head of PPP and
Infrastructure Asia Pacific
PricewaterhouseCoopers

Zhang Yang

Vice Director and Chief Planner
Research Center for Heritage
Conservation, Beijing Tsinghua
Tongheng Planning & Design Institute

Zhao Yixin

Vice Dean
China Academy of Urban Planning
and Design



The biennial World Cities Summit (WCS) is an exclusive platform for government leaders and industry experts to address liveable and sustainable city challenges, share integrated urban solutions and forge new partnerships. Jointly organised by Singapore's Centre for Liveable Cities (CLC), and the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), the key highlights of the summit include the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize, the World Cities Summit Mayors Forum, and the World Cities Summit Young Leaders Symposium. The next edition of the World Cities Summit will be held from 8 to 12 July 2018 in Singapore.

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