

Shanghai Roundtable Discussed Sustainable Cities in Europe and China

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“How did the concept of ‘sustainable cities’ appear?” “What strategies for low-carbon cities in urban planning?” “To learn from the folk and traditions in urban planning”, “Newtowns around Shanghai”, “urban public space”, and “urban community”.... All the above were topics discussed in the roundtable entitled “Urban Harmonious and Sustainable Development in Europe and China” which was held in Tongji University (Shanghai, China) on March 23, 2012.



The roundtable, initiated and supported by China Europa Forum and organized by Tongji University, was a continued exchange of workshops T41a, T41b, T41d, T41e and T46c whose themes are related to City, Territory and Sustainable Development.

At the beginning, Prof. Zhang Renbiao, Chinese Prime Mover of T41d “Urban development and governance” reviewed the 2010 discussions which touched upon issues of “space justice in urban and rural planning”, “economic development rights and ecological environment protection”, “population mobility and culture shock”, “community governance and public participation”, “risky society and urban disaster prevention” and “money-driven motivations and resource constraints”. In the end, he indicated that “Do not do to others what you would like yourself” by a minor modification to a famous saying, in the hope that the dialogue between Chinese and European participants could be always based on mutual understanding.

Prof. WU Jiang, Vice President of Tongji University, gave a speech of welcome in English. He pointed out that land use and the handling of land resources were thorniest problem in China’s urban development and expansion.

The over-eight-hour meeting included four sessions, chaired by Prof. ZHANG, Ms. Pascaline Gaborit (European Prime Mover of T41a “The design for harmonious residence community and urban governance”, Director of The European New Towns Platform, ENTP), Prof. Pan Haixiao (Chinese Prime Mover of T41e “City, Traffic and Energy”, Professor at College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Tongji University) and Mr. Julien Woessner (European Prime Mover of T41a, and programmer officer of FPH) respectively. (See attached Programme)

Mr. Woessner expressed his gratitude to Prof. Zhang, Pan and others on behalf of the China

Europa Forum and FPH, and introduced the appearance of the concept of “sustainable cities” by combing out some key elements of the debate about cities development in Europe from Athen’s Charter (1933) to Aalborg’s Charter (1994).

Mr. Lin Dong, Chinese Prime Mover of T41a and GM of Yousimeidi Design Institute, called on to learn from the folk and return to the Chinese traditions for a sustainable urban future. Prof. Pan gave a professional and impressive presentation on “Sustainable Chinese Cities: Research on the Planning Strategy for Low-Carbon City.” Ms. Gaborit, together with Mr. Edoardo Guglielmetti (Network and Project Manager of ENTP) introduced challenges and opportunities of European new towns.

Prof. CHEN Shuo, Chinese Prime Mover of T41b “Conservation and renewal of old cities” and Vice President of Fuzou Urban Planning Design Research Institute, shared his ideas on the planning of China’s cities of tomorrow by the emphasis on the inclusive growth of cities and granting equal rights to citizens. He also echoed Mr. Lin Dong’s idea of attaching great importance to Chinese traditions in this process.

Mr. Qiao Yanjun, participant of T41d and Deputy Director of Information Office of the Shanghai City Development Research and Information Centre, expressed his “excessive” concerns about safety and security problems in Shanghai in his opening remarks, and led to his suggestions on dealing with these issues.

It also attracted new faces from Chinese, European and American sides. Professor Roger Trancik of Cornell University, an educator and practitioner of urban design and author of famous book *Finding Lost Space*, made a speech on “Urban Design for Public Life - principles and practices.” Professor Edwin CHAN from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University introduced “Green Buildings for Sustainable Dense City” and shared specific cases in Hong Kong. Harry Den Hartog, designer, researcher and editor who is currently based in Shanghai, showed three cases of new towns around the City. Shanghai is taking a lead in China’s public housing development. “Population spatial distribution and public housing planning of Shanghai” was presented by Ms. Huang Yi, Associate Professor at College of Architecture and Urban Planning of Tongji University. Mr. Remi Ferrand presented the international workshops – Les Ateliers.

Besides, urban community was also a concerned topic. Mr. Peng Bo, participant of T46c “Role of inhabitants in the management of urban communities”, and Professor at School of International and Public Affairs of Shanghai Jiaotong University briefed several key issues in urban community. Mr. Zhang Jun of Research Institute of Urban-sociology Society at Tongji University also shared his studies on sidewalk public space and community construction. Prof. WANG Zhenguo also briefed urban public space from the perspective of sustainability.

The presentations were followed by a heated Q&A session. And the roundtable was concluded by the discussion on further collaboration, including joint publications and possible cooperation in projects.

“This meeting was excellent and I hope it will be the first step of a long-term and fruitful collaboration.” said Mr. Woessner.

Another two roundtables on urban development were held in Brussels and Paris on March 8 and 9, 2012.