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Princeton-Fung Global Forum sparks international focus on 'The Future of the City'

Posted February 11, 2013; 12:00 p.m.

by Dan Day, Office of Communications


Gyan Prakash, the Dayton-Stockton Professor of History at Princeton, asks a question from the floor during one of the Princeton-Fung Global Forum sessions.
In the bustling megacity of Shanghai, architects, engineers, urbanists and other scholars gathered at the Princeton-Fung Global Forum to discuss population growth, social trends, climate change and determining "The Future of the City."

Nineteen Princeton faculty members from various fields joined professors and policymakers from other institutions to research, identify challenges that cities face and begin a dialogue to find solutions.

"It's really intended to spark conversations," President Shirley M. Tilghman, forum Jan. 30. "We hope that this will be the beginning of a wonderful series of conversations in which Princeton engages important questions facing our world."

With a population of 23 million people and the largest city in China, Shanghai was an apt location. The conference was held in Pudong district, which a mere two decades ago was mostly farmland. Today, Pudong and all of Shanghai project a skyline of cranes erecting even more towers and high-rise housing.

"By all accounts, China is urbanizing at the rate of about 14 million people a year," in essence creating a new Tokyo an William Fung, Class of 1970. Fung is chairman of the Li & Fung Group, a Hong Kong-based Li & Fung group of export and retailing companies. His $10 million gift to Princeton established the forum and the Fung Global Fellows Program.

Speakers at the forum represented universities, governments and organizations from Asia, Europe and North America.

"Gandhi was wrong about the future of India being decided by its villages, not cities," said Edward Glaeser, Class of 19 Harvard University. He said cities have always drawn people away from rural areas because they offer pathways out of the century, instead of spreading out, we're clustering in," Glaeser said, noting a paradox that even as technology and social communicate over long distances, they still congregate in urban areas.

Daniel Bell, professor of arts and humanities at Jiaotong University in Shanghai and a professor of ethics and political University in Beijing, said citizens often identify more with their city than their country. "The need for community is a freedom," he said.
Juan Du of Hong Kong University gestures while speaking during the Princeton-Fung Global Forum. She was joined by (left to right) Jiang Wu, vice president of Tongji University, Shanghai; Ananya Roy, University of California-Berkeley; Alison Isenberg, professor of history and co-director of Princeton’s Program in Urban Studies; and Christine Boyer, the William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Architecture and co-director of Princeton’s Program in Urban Studies. (Photo by the Office of Communications)

Princeton Provost Christopher Eisgruber and Guy Nordenson, a structural engineer and Princeton professor of architecture, review a map showing China's Yangtze River Delta at the "Resilient Cities" exhibition during the Princeton-Fung Global Forum. (Photo by Dan Day)

The clustering doesn’t come with:

"What is the creation?" asked Max Page, history at the University of Amherst, on a panel with a population of more than 1.3 billion they’ve created.

Ye Qi, a professor of Tsinghua University Management in own homes and air and deal with us the freedom of suffering from "resilience"?

Forum participants: Shanghai traffic historic center at the tops of some of the city's tallest buildings.

Denise Mauzerall (http://www.princeton.edu/~mauzerall) environmental engineering (http://www.princeton.edu/woodrow), Denise Mauzerall is the deteriorating air in China. The foul air causes acid rain is so severe, she said, that "the feature away" at Chinese historic sites.

The balance and interrelation of the world's ecosystems, were frequently addressed during forum discussions.

Michael Oppenheimer (http://www.princeton.edu/oppenheimer), the Albert G. Milbank Professor of International Affairs (http://www.princeton.edu/wwws/) and International Wilson School, cited the damage Hurricane Sandy to action over climate change. "We clearly need measurement" to forecast the effects of shrinkage, he said. Calling for smarter public policy and urban adaptation, he said. And if we don’t do better, it’s going to be worse.

François Gemenne, a research fellow at the Inistitut für Entwicklung und Internationale Beziehungen in Paris, said cities will need to adapt to the environmental and demographic pressures of the coming decades. "There are too many people living in regions that are way too exposed to climate change," Gemenne said. pre
Alejandro Zaera-Polo, dean of Princeton's School of Architecture, makes a point during the forum's welcoming conversation with Tilghman, who moderated the session, and (at left) Rupali Gupte, an architect and urbanist from Mumbai, India. (Photo by the Office of Communications)

Tilghman and William Fung (center), Class of 1970, chat with Yi Wang, Class of 2009, during the Princeton-Fung Global Forum in Shanghai. Fung's $10 million gift to the University in 2012 made

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possible the forum as well as the Fung Global Fellows Program. (Photo by the Office of Communications)

[Image: Photo of Michael Oppenheimer, the Albert G. Milbank Professor of Geoscience, speaking at the forum.]

Michael Oppenheimer, the Albert G. Milbank Professor of Geoscience in Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, discussed climate change. (Photo by the Office of Communications)

[Image: Photo of Jeremy Adelman, director of the Council for International Teaching and Learning, and two other Princeton faculty members at a conference.]

Plans for the 1914 Princeton-Fung Global Forum, to be held in Paris, are in the making under the direction of Jeremy Adelman, director of the Council for International Teaching and Learning. Adelman, who is also a professor of history and the Walter San Spanish Civilization and Culture, was the lead organizer for the Shanghai forum.

While Tilghman moderated the forum’s opening session, Provost Christopher Eisgruber discussed leader for the final session, "Urban Challenges for the 21st Century."

"We are grateful to William Fung for making possible a conference that launched conversations across fields and across the world's most pressing problems, including problems about the future of cities, are international and interdisciplinary positioned to contribute to the solution of those problems, but we will have to forge new partnerships and collaborative efforts," Eisgruber said. "That is a major achievement. Jeremy Adelman's leadership was crucial to that good result, as were William Fung’s vision and support."

[http://www.princeton.edu/history/people/display_person.xml?netid=prakash], the Dayton-Stockton Professor of History at Princeton, they discussed how cities play a significant role as settings in the movies they've made.

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"Many of the Princeton faculty attending the conference mentioned to me that the conference put them in contact with their peers to think about issues and places that were not previously a focus of their research," Eisgruber said. "That is a major achievement. Jeremy Adelman's leadership was crucial to that good result, as were William Fung’s vision and support."
Stephany Xu, Class of 2012, presents a fan to Tilghman as David Wu, Class of 1979, looks on. (Photo the Office of Communications)

The Oriental Pearl Radio and TV Tower, the signature building of the Shanghai skyline, pokes into the fog on Feb. 1, 2013. Scholars attending the Princeton-Fung Global Forum got a view of the tower during a tour of the city. (Photo by Dan Day)
Alison Isenberg, professor of history and co-director of Princeton's Program in Urban Studies, speaks during the "Planning and Equity" session during the Princeton-Fung Global Forum. (Photo by the Office of Communications)
Attendees at the Princeton-Fung Global Forum had this view of classic buildings along the Bund, Shanghai’s fabled district along the Huangpu River, during a tour Feb. 1, 2013. (Photo by Dan Day)