

NYU Stern at Ecosperity 2015

Hosted by Temasek

In September of this year, three MBA candidates from NYU Leonard N. Stern School of Business, Caitlyn DeWitt, Amy Yazdian, and Katherine Shinkareva, had the opportunity to attend Temasek's [Ecosperity 2015](#) conference in Singapore. The conference's focus was urbanization and developing sustainable cities.

On September 18, 2015, the students attended the main conference at the Shangri-la Hotel. They listened to panels with topics including: Policy and political dilemmas: Balancing sustainability and rising urbanization, Urban planning for sustainable cities, The role of capital and partnerships, Urbanisation and utilities, The future of cities. The panelists included:

Prof. Jan Peter Balkenende, the Former Prime Minister of the Netherlands

Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for the Environment and Water Resources of Singapore

Hon. Felipe Calderon, former President of Mexico

Mochamad Ridwan Kamil, Mayor of Bandung, Indonesia

Representatives from Peking University, World Resources Institute, Housing and Development Board of Singapore, Changi Airport Group, Centre for Liveable Cities, Ministry of Finance of Nigeria, World Bank Group, Goldman Sachs, Agricultural Development Bank of China, Harvard Business School, General Electric Company, Stanford University, Arup, and Bloomberg.

One of the most impactful statements that students heard during the panelists' discussions was Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan's suggestion that the reason Singapore was able to achieve such a high level of sustainable design throughout the city was because the constraints that the natural and political implications at the time forced them to. He suggested that if the geography of the city and the political climate didn't leave them with such a clean water deficit, they might not have been motivated to create the sustainable systems that are in place today. This prompted discussion among the students as to whether or not any other cities, not facing the same motivating constraints, would be able to replicate Singapore's level of sustainability. This discussion led into our breakout session later that day.

Later on in the afternoon, as a part of the Young Leaders' Dialogue program, 140 students from over 15 countries came together at the National University of Singapore to speak further about the conference topics. To facilitate the conversation, the students were joined by three of the conference panelists:

Mr. Khoo Teng Chye, Executive Director of the Centre for Livable Cities, Singapore

Dr. Chris Luebke, Director for Global Foresight, Research and Innovation at Arup

Mr. Jordan Schwartz, Head Global Infrastructure Faculty in Singapore, World Bank Group

The students discussed the development of sustainable cities and whether first-world countries or third-world countries were responsible for funding the effort to bring developing nations to a higher sustainable level. Students were asked to suggest methods for motivating the implementation of

sustainable systems. Groups of students presented their recommendations, prompting further conversation and input from the panelists. The National University of Singapore created this [video](#) to showcase the collaboration of the students.

On September 19, 2015, the students were taken on a tour of the city. They visited the Urban Redevelopment Centre where they learned about the history of the transformation of Singapore. The center houses a full model of the city which was used to explain the growth of the city and demonstrate future development plans such as the relocation of one of Singapore's airports to allow for the loosening of building height restrictions in the city.

Later they visited the Cooled Conservatories at Gardens by the Bay. They were given passes to visit the Flower Dome (the dry conservatory) and the Cloud Forest (the moist conservatory), award winning attractions that are unlike any other greenhouses, and then ate lunch at the nearby hawker center.

The program had originally included a visit to Marina Barrage, a dam which creates a reservoir at the heart of the city. Unfortunately, forest fires and north-winds from Sumatra, Indonesia, casted hazy conditions over Singapore that were harmful to anyone who was outside in them for an extended period of time. The visit was cancelled but the students still did learn about how water is a precious resource in Singapore because the city has little land to store and collect rainwater. The city now uses local catchment, imported water, highly-purified reclaimed water known as NEWater, and desalinated water to meet the needs of its citizens. More information about Singapore's water can be found [here](#).