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petrochemical and chemical plants, and toxic industrial waste treatment facilities were allowed only if they proposed acceptable measures to mitigate pollution, and comply with regulations. Jurong Island, now a global petrochemical hub, is an example of this approach.

Singapore's government agencies and private firms are active in cities across the region, where they are involved in everything from developing transport networks to building technology parks and residential town-

ships. Complementing these efforts, the Centre for Liveable Cities (CLC) was set up in 2008. Through its Urban Systems Studies, CLC tries to capture tacit knowledge of Singapore's pioneer policymakers. These studies help to distil and transmit useful principles about liveable and sustainable urban development to a new generation of leaders, in Singapore as well as from other cities, as part of CLC's Leaders in Urban Governance programme. CLC also co-organises the biennial World Cities Summit (WCS), which brings

together leading urban thinkers and practitioners to discuss contemporary challenges. Entering its third run, WCS 2012 will take place in Singapore from July 2nd to 5th. [G](#)

This article was contributed by Dinesh Naidu of the Centre for Liveable Cities, with input from Phyllis Teoh, Yang Wen, Grace Lau and Joanna Lim, and information from Singapore's water agency, PUB, the Land Transport Authority, National Environment Agency and Urban Redevelopment Authority.

INFORMATION

ECO-CITIES

Sustainable living: Preserve of the rich?

Many model eco projects are exclusive, premium developments

If the green lifestyle is not equitable, how far is it truly sustainable?

By Siaw Mei Li

As protestors rallied against socio-economic inequality halfway across the globe on Wall Street, participants at the recent Sustainable Cities Asia 2011 conference in Singapore were pondering the issues of access and equity in developing sustainable cities.

Amidst presentations on dazzling upcoming projects such as **Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's** masterplan for Green Tech City in Hanoi, Vietnam, and the BSD City Green Office Park designed by **Aedas** for BSD City in West Jakarta, there was a marked consciousness of socio-economic disparities and uneven levels of development across many parts of the Asia Pacific.

A delegate remarked that many high-rise green spaces still seem exclusive – created not so much for nature's sake as for the financially-privileged. Another wondered how the region's rising middle classes could be persuaded to choose fuel-efficient mass transit over a private car.

Dr Saeed Zaki, managing director of **dwp** Thailand, who raised



GPA PHOTO

Saeed Zaki: Will we be able to build green cities for the lower-income?

the debate bar with his provocative questions, says: "Most of the growth in urban populations will be in developing countries – countries where a significant portion of the population will not be in a position to afford fancy dwellings to live in. There will be an impact on the environment. Will we be able to build green cities for the portion of the population that is middle-income, lower-income?"

Citing high-profile showcase eco-cities being developed in the region at a slow pace and at huge investments,

he questioned whether such projects can ever provide genuine solutions for a burgeoning global population that has just crossed the seven billion mark, most of whom cannot afford "the Masdars of this world".

Democracy and sustainability

Paul James, director of the Global Cities Institute in Melbourne, Australia and director of the **United Nations Global Compact Cities Programme** shares that at most similar conferences he attends, there is a sense of urgency that somehow never gets translated enough into action. He asserts: "The evidence suggests that awareness is not connected to practice."

To this, Robbert Van Nouhuys, director of **ACLA** in Hong Kong, says: "Hope is the only thing we have. I think we are a species that can only correct ourselves out of serious disasters and we're a bit close to the edge and a lot of people are going to fall off. But we have to give hope to the next generation because they have to live in the situation that we created. If we are to help future generations, it's at least by putting the right framework in place, by developing them the way they should be developed."

Van Nouhuys underlines the need for solutions that are "loud, legal and long", referring to policy frameworks that are clear and unambiguous, legally enforceable and long-term in scope and objective. He cites Chongqing in China as one place where visionary leadership has wrought change at a