

Beijing Forum 2019

Science and Technology, Health and Society in the Context of Science Culture (III)

In the afternoon of November 2, 2019, the panel 10 of the Beijing Forum (2019), “Science and Technology, Health and Society in the Context of Science Culture” continues in the Yangguang Hall of the Yingjie Center at Peking University. The session 3 focuses on “Economy, Environment and Health” and five professors of the United States give academic speeches. The session is hosted by Prof. David Magnus from Medical School of Stanford University.

The topic of Prof. Kim Fortun from University of California at Irvine is “Environment and Health in Late Industrialism”. In her view, “late industrialism” refers to both a historical period (since the mid-1980s) and an analytic framework that draws out ways environmental public health is produced through tight coupling of historically socio-technical, political-economic, eco-atmospheric, cultural and discursive systems. Late industrialism is both empirical and evaluative, drawing out system dynamics and harms -- with special attention to cultural dimensions. She, as a cultural anthropologist, draws from her research to describe the dynamics of late industrialism, extending usual ways of thinking about public health, environmental governance and our changing world.

The speech of Prof. William Hsiao from Harvard University, “Health and Economic Development: A Comparison of USA and China”, deals with the possibility of international cooperation on health issues. He points out, in this era of increasing tension among nations and economic competition, we need to have more open dialogues and harmony. Health is one area of basic human needs where people in different regions can cooperate regardless of ideology or rivalry. Concentrated on several critical health issues for international cooperation, he analyzes and interprets specifically.

Prof. John Heritage from University of California at Los Angeles gives a speech entitled “Reducing Inappropriate Antibiotic Prescribing: A US Perspective with Implications for the PRC”. He concludes that antibiotic-resistant bacteria are a menace to human populations worldwide. Excessive prescribing in pediatric care has been shown to be a major factor contributing to the increase of such pathogens. He has studied a successful communication intervention in

the US (involving data from 56 providers and 78,628 office visits by 29,333 pediatric patients) which significantly reduced inappropriate prescribing rates for both first and second line antibiotics. Moreover, recent research on Chinese pediatric primary care visits suggests that similar communication factors may play a role in inappropriate prescribing, which means the intervention in the US may therefore have implications for Chinese health care practice.

Yang Liwei, the Curator of Pacific Rim Collections of The Huntington Library, discusses “Chinese Exclusion and Scientific Racism in the United States, 1882-1943”. He examines the history of Chinese Exclusion in the United States through documenting white nativists’ use of unproven scientific theories to argue against Chinese immigration. By utilizing primary sources preserved at The Huntington Library and elsewhere, he argues that scientific racism played a crucial role in maintaining the enforcement of federal Chinese Exclusion laws. In particular, his study focuses on primary sources such as nineteenth century publications on racial inferiority/superiority and Los Angeles-based attorney You Chung Hong’s immigration case files from the 1920s to the 1940s.

The speech by Prof. Yang Hong from Bryant University, “Climate Crisis in the Changing World: Unprecedented Rate and Unmatched Impact on the Future of Civilizations”. He argues that the current rate of global climate change is a monumental crisis at our times. The rapid accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere due to human activities has accelerated climate change that impacts on every aspect of modern human life in the current changing world with severe economic, social, and political consequences. From the increasing frequency of extreme weather to the inevitable rise of sea level, from regional flooding to the burning of the rainforest, from reduction of biodiversity to the increase of tropical diseases, the unprecedented accelerating rate of climate change has already threatened our civilization and will certainly shape the future generations of humankind.

After the presentations of the speakers, under the host of Prof. Magnus, they answer the questions raised by audiences.