



Competition Theme

Sustainable Development of Cities and Communities

The world is becoming increasingly urbanized. More than half of the world's population has moved into cities since 2007, and this proportion is expected to rise to 60% by 2030. However, many problems caused by rapid urbanization are also emerging, including the increase in the number of slum residents, inadequate or overburdened infrastructure and public services, social inequality and contradictions, environmental pollution and resource consumption, excessive urbanization, etc. Sustainable development has encountered serious challenges. In 2015, Sustainable Cities and Communities were introduced in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). How to build inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and communities has become a significant global issue.

With a population of about 50 million, the Lancang-Mekong basin is one of the most densely populated regions in the world. Nevertheless, the dense population distribution, changeable natural conditions and insufficient infrastructure hinder the urbanization process along the Lancang-Mekong River. Many practical problems lie ahead of the proposition of Lancang-Mekong urbanization such as unbalanced regional development, huge gap between rich and poor, inadequate sustainable infrastructure, traffic congestion and environmental degradation. How to jointly face challenges in the process of urbanization and create a regional environment of peace, stability and sustainable development is the shared responsibility of the six Lancang-Mekong countries. In 2018, the Second Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Leaders' Meeting issued the Five-Year Plan of Action on Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (2018-2022), which aims at contributing to the economic and social development of sub-regional countries,



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enhancing well-being of the people, narrowing the development gap within the region, building a community of shared future of peace and prosperity among Lancang-Mekong countries, and promoting the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The study of climate-resilient cities and communities has also become the theme of the 2023 Green Lancang-Mekong Project, which is expected to provide a model for future urban development in Lancang-Mekong countries.

"Shared river, shared future." Lancang-Mekong countries are linked by water, Lancang-Mekong cities are built on water, and Lancang-Mekong cooperation is prospered by water. It requires the joint efforts of the six Lancang-Mekong countries to explore more practical, influential and creative urbanization strategies and build inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements. Therefore, we should pay attention to regional development disparities, poverty and inequality in residential areas, environmental protection, public health, urban governance, emergency management of sudden disasters and other related issues, and to develop a "Lancang-Mekong solution" for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. We believe that with the convergence of ideas and joint efforts of the young people from the six countries, the cooperation among the six countries will surely become a global model of sustainable development, and the people of the Lancang-Mekong region will have more livable cities and a better future.

I. Prosperous City: Urbanization and Economic Development

The continuous expansion of the urban scale accelerates the process of urbanization, which greatly promotes economic development and industrial structure upgrading. However, unreasonable urbanization may have several negative impacts and lead to the ineffective allocation of resources. Therefore, we need to consider the following questions seriously: How to optimize the urban industrial structure in order to achieve sustainable economic development? How to develop the small town



economy? How to construct an international city? What kind of problems should be avoided during the process of urbanization? What is the ideal urbanization path for the future?

II. Green City: Urban Ecology Protection and Low-carbon City Construction

With the changes of spatial, demographic and economic structure, urbanization has altered the composition and structure of the ecosystem. The increasing carbon emissions have directly or indirectly impacted the regional environment. This has sparked a series of issues worth considering and exploring: Given the rapid urban expansion, how could Lancang-Mekong countries coordinate urban spatial construction and promote environmental governance? How to plan the urban ecological infrastructure construction system and achieve comprehensive resource utilization? How to involve all parties to minimize greenhouse gas emissions during the urbanization process, so to realize carbon reduction goals?

III. Sanitary City: Urban Public Health and Environmental Hygiene

Through the fight against COVID-19, countries have become more aware of the importance of public health safety. Safeguarding the physical and mental health of the public and sanitation management have once again become important issues in the process of urbanization. However, with the accelerating urbanization and the increasing population density, the demand for medical care from the public has rapidly surged. The fast development of cities has led to a shortage of public health and urban medical resources, which means that domestic governance and cooperation among countries become particularly crucial. This has led to two issues, environmental hygiene and medical hygiene: while the economy is developing, the hygiene issues in places such as agricultural markets are obvious. How could we build a good urban hygiene



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environment? How to coordinate the relationship between urbanization and urban environmental sanitation? How to provide sufficient medical and health services? How to improve disease prevention in densely populated areas? How to effectively enhance society's ability to respond to major infectious disease outbreaks and improve the level of social health governance?

IV. Resilient City: Disaster Challenges and Urban Responses

Considering the fact that most of the Lancang-Mekong regions are located around the Circum-Pacific Belt and the monsoons are frequent, geological and meteorological disasters occur constantly. In order to reduce the impact of disasters on cities and maintain the systematization, permanence, safety and flexibility of cities, it is a long-term and arduous task to promote the resilience of the cities. In the process of urbanization, how to better combine the spatial distribution characteristics of cities to build emergency infrastructure for disaster reduction and mitigation? How to flexibly use the emerging information technology to make the urban lifeline system smooth, efficient and effectively connected? How could governments strengthen the establishment of emergency data governance institutions? How should we cultivate citizens' positive and rational emergency consciousness? In order to construct an organically organized resilient city, what kind of consultation mechanism should be adopted by the government, enterprises and citizens to strengthen cooperation? How to overcome the obstacles to the construction of resilient cities caused by high-intensity land development and high environmental pollution?

V. Inclusive City: Poverty Governance and Social Equity

Along with the rapid development of urbanization, a series of social problems are becoming increasingly prominent, such as the polarization between the rich and the poor as well as the unbalanced regional development. It is necessary for all parties to pay attention to the realistic plight of the urban poor, provide reasonable resource



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redistribution plans, and enable all residents to share public services. The following questions are worth pondering: How could we eradicate poverty, and narrow down the disparities of regional development? How to improve basic public services and infrastructure construction? How could we upgrade urban public space to make it more inclusive? How to coordinate regional economic development and realize the industrial reconstruction in the context of new urbanization?

VI. Smart City: Digital Transformation in Urban Governance

Beyond the practical challenges faced by cities in the Lancang-Mekong region during urbanization, refining urban governance structures and achieving a new urban transformation are also crucial issues that cannot be overlooked. Currently, how digitalization empowers urban governance has become a central concern for the United Nations and countries worldwide. Transitioning towards a data-driven urban future is vital for advancing the urbanization process and enhancing the city's economic, social, environmental, and institutional capacities. Exploring and thinking about these issues are key to building cities with more efficiency and happiness. While there are numerous exemplary digital initiatives globally, each city's governance has its unique characteristics. Regarding the digital transformation of urban governance for the six Lancang-Mekong countries, what is the best approach for them? How could we leverage the technological advantages of smart cities and effectively combine them with the urban governance systems of the Lancang-Mekong countries to address the challenges and bottlenecks in their urban governance?