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2021 Pujiang Innovation Forum Bulletin X
Collaborative Agglomeration: New Cities and New Spaces

Editor's Note: In 2021 Pujiang Innovation Forum – The Regional & Urban Forum, participating experts had in-depth discussions on the deeper implementation of the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region, the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, the integrative development of the Yangtze River Delta, the construction of the Sichuan-Chongqing Dual-city Economic Circle and other important issues against the profound changes unseen in a century, analyzed and summarized the developments and practices of the coordinated regional development of China and the world, and put forward some constructive and forward-looking suggestions. This bulletin is a summary based on the reports from the participating guests¹, and is intended for reference.

¹ Participating guests include: WU Zhiqiang, Academician of Chinese Academy of Engineering, Academician of German Academy of Science and Engineering, Academician of Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences, Honorary Fellow of American Institute of Architects and Former Vice President of Tongji University; Anthony G.O. Yeh, Academician of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Academician of the Hong Kong Academy of Sciences, Fellow of TWAS (World Academy of Sciences for the advancement of science in developing countries), and Professor of the University of Hong Kong; FANG Chuanglin, Special Professor of Chinese Academy of Sciences and Academician of International Eurasian Academy of Sciences; ZHANG Bo, Vice President of Chongqing Academy of Social Sciences; Bruno Dercon, Senior Human Settlements Officer of UN-Habitat Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific; TU Qiyu, Deputy Director of Institute of Urban and Demographic Studies, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences.

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The world today is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century. Against the backdrop of the accelerated evolution and iteration of the new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation and the increasingly intense and complex global competition in science and technology, it is necessary for China to re-examine and scientifically formulate the layout for the coordinated development of regional economy and science and technology to speed up the efforts to foster a new development pattern featuring domestic and international dual circulations that complement each other with the domestic development as the mainstay.

I. Urban Agglomerations have become an Important Driving Force for Innovation-Driven National and Regional Development

On one hand, it is essential to pay attention to the developments and practices of foreign urban agglomerations. Urban agglomerations are derived from the senior stage of urbanization and industrialization, and they have now become an important driving force for innovation-driven national and regional development globally. According to **WU Zhiqiang**, among the 48 urban agglomerations attracting close and attention, the most important regions, in addition to the Yangtze

River Delta, the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area in China, include the urban belt from Tokyo to Osaka in Japan, the west and east coast of the United States, the Great Lakes Region which has experienced a severe recession recently, the two urban agglomerations in India, especially the Ganges urban belt, as well as the Greater London and the Blue Banana in Europe. As pointed out by **FANG Chuanglin**, from a global perspective, the urban agglomerations around the world have experienced four expansions in the past 120 years, from cities to metropolitan areas, to metropolitan coordinating regions, to urban agglomerations, and then to metropolitan interlocking belts. In the opinion of **TU Qiyu**, at present, apart from urban agglomerations, metropolitan coordinating regions and metropolitan areas which are common in the world, there are also some emerging spaces and concepts, such as the development of adjacent areas and the strategic space. An adjacent area aims to break the boundaries among points, axes and planes to open up the network, and promote transboundary cooperation, while the strategic space in regional integration, a special functional area in general, emphasizes strong interconnection, aiming to become an engine promoting the interconnected development among different regions.

On the other hand, we shall pay attention to the developments of

and experience in the major urban agglomerations in China. China is a late starter in terms of the development of urban agglomerations, but it makes fast progress. The 14th Five-Year Plan has proposed 19 urban agglomerations, and various production elements will continue to gather in urban agglomerations in the next 15 years. **WU Zhiqiang** once again stressed the importance of “mutual complementarity” in the development of urban agglomerations. He believed that integrating the strengths and weaknesses of the cities in urban agglomerations would be helpful to form a strong regional development advantage. The innovation capability of one city may be limited by its weaknesses, but the integration of the strengths and weaknesses of all these cities in an urban agglomeration can reinforce the innovation capability of the whole region. **Anthony G.O. Yeh** objectively analyzed the development stage, characteristics and driving factors of the Pearl River Delta, and summarized the past experience of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. He held that the interconnection mode of “full stream of service and production” in the past has promoted the economic development of the Pearl River Delta, and also promoted the economic transformation of Hong Kong to producer services, bringing about coordinated development and mutual benefit. As pointed out by **FANG Chuanglin**, the cooperation among urban agglomerations may facilitate the sustainable development of the cities. The practices in developing the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region have

proved that urban agglomerations adopting collaborative development and following coordination principles can make great achievements in key areas and achieve the expected results. From the perspective of urban space, **TU Qiyu** spoke highly of the outstanding achievements of the high-quality integrative development of the Yangtze River Delta. He pointed out that the high-quality integration of the Yangtze River Delta has encouraged different cities to adopt different strategies in spatial innovation, and formed the most diversified new space in contemporary regional planning, which not only fully reflects the self-confidence of China, but also sets an important example for exploring the institutional system and mode of the integrative regional development, and realizing the integrative regional development on a global scale.

II. New Challenges of the Coordinated Regional Development in the New Era

Against the new landscape and new circumstances, coordinated regional development is also facing various new challenges.

Firstly, we shall meet the requirements of high-quality economic development. According to **Anthony G.O. Yeh**, the international economic transformation and the rapid development of China's economy have important impacts on the economic and trade cooperation between

the Pearl River Delta and Hong Kong. In the 2020 comprehensive economic competitiveness ranking of the Pearl River Delta, Shenzhen surpassed Hong Kong for the first time, and the synergistic effect of the “full stream of service and production” mode took on a weakening trend. In the new era, we need to positively consider giving full play to the advantage of our huge domestic market under the “dual circulation” pattern. As pointed out by **ZHANG Bo**, the development of the Chengdu-Chongqing Dual-city Economic Circle is facing some challenges, including the weak overall strength of the region, the urbanization layout to be optimized, the dissatisfactory capability in science and technology innovation, and the coordinated innovation to be intensified.

Secondly, we shall cope with the pressure of urban resources and environment. In the opinion of **FANG Chuanglin**, compared with the relatively mature international urban agglomerations which have fewer resource and environmental problems, domestic urban agglomerations are suffering severe resource and environmental pressure due to rapid expansion in the past few years. Currently, the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region, as the one with strongest innovation capability among 19 urban agglomerations in China, is also with the most prominent problems, the greatest environmental pressure, and the most

urgent need for national strategies.

Thirdly, we shall deal with the challenge of population aging.

With the accelerated global aging process, how to provide sustainable solutions through policies and planning to effectively deal with population aging is a great challenge for the development of cities towards a fairer, greener and healthier future. According to **Bruno Dercon**, policies and planning shall provide sustainable solutions to effectively address this issue. For instance, in Japan, new technologies, new plans and new mindsets have been broadly applied in the positive response to population aging in cities. In the past 50 years, Singapore and Hong Kong have been devoted to improving the sustainable housing and elderly care for the old, helping them live a better and harmonious life.

III. Some Suggestions on Promoting High-quality Coordinated Regional Development

Firstly, we shall seize the new opportunities presented by the “dual circulation” development pattern. As pointed out by **Anthony G.O. Yeh**, in the new era, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area shall seize the development opportunities to realize mutual complementarity, and promote close cooperation and coordinated development. We shall grasp the opportunities presented by the “dual

circulation” development pattern and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) to fully tap the domestic market; give full play to Hong Kong’s advantages in scientific research and take high-tech cooperation as a new pattern of economic cooperation in the future; give full play to the advantages of the Greater Bay Area in international finance and producer services, serve the “Belt and Road” Initiative, overcome obstacles, build bridges, realize mutual complementarity and mutual benefit, and promote the close cooperation and coordinated development in the area. In opinion of **TU Qiyu**, under the “dual circulation” development pattern, it is of far-reaching significance to give play to the role of regions as the most reliable and most basic small circulation unit and accelerate the upgrading of regional circulation system, which makes spatial planning even more important.

Secondly, we shall advocate and practice the sustainable development strategy. As expressed by **WU Zhiqiang**, with the CiMA database as the tie, we will work with scientists around the world on some ambitious goals, including achieving the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, coping with the challenges of urban climate change in daily life, promoting the harmonious development of urban and rural areas and nature, improving the safety, health and resilience of urban life, and boosting the knowledge and experience exchange among managers, the

academia and institutions across cities. As stressed by **Bruno Dercon**, “making cities more friendly” is a major practice for city planners and policy makers. He pointed out that the United Nations advocates “Leaving no one behind”, whose purpose is to make the economy and cities benefit both the young and the old, and finally materialize green and healthy cities for all.

Thirdly, we shall continuously optimize innovation space and coordinated development. **ZHANG Bo** put forward three steps towards the high-quality development of the Chengdu-Chongqing Dual-city Economic Circle. The first step is to actively promote the early implementation of the national S&T strategic deployment for the Dual-city Economic Circle. The second step is to strengthen horizontal cooperation to promote the construction of the coordinated innovation corridor of the Yangtze River Economic Zone and reinforce the collaboration between the Yangtze River Delta and the urban agglomerations in the middle reaches of the Yangtze River. The third step is to intensify internal collaboration to promote the co-construction and sharing of innovation resources between Sichuan and Chongqing and accelerate the construction of the ecological service circle of coordinated innovation. In the opinion of **TU Qiyu**, from the perspective of improving spatial scale collaboration and facilitating the development of

urban agglomerations, we shall extensively study the potential of the base with the reserve of strategic spaces, strategic corridors and strategic plans as the entry point to study, predict and deploy the coordination directions. Meanwhile, as the institutional mechanism of regional scale and organizational innovation are stepping towards an active period, the national land use shall be guaranteed in time. To deepen the understanding of regional scale and spatial innovation, we shall promote planning innovation.

Summarized by Chen Zhu