TRANS-URBAN-EU-CHINA

Transition towards urban sustainability through socially integrative cities in the EU and in China

Deliverable

D6.10 European Policy Brief No. 1

WP 6 Project Management

Deliverable type:	Report
WP number and title:	WP 6: Project Management
Dissemination level:	Public
Due date:	Month 24 – 31 December 2019
Lead beneficiary:	TUD
Lead author(s):	Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Bernhard Müller (TUD)
Reviewers:	All partners

POLICY BRIEF

NUMBER 1, January 2020

TRANS-URBAN
EU-CHINA
Research & Innovation
on Urban Transition

Contents

TRANS-URBAN-EU-CHINA POLICY BRIEF

NUMBER 1, January 2020

Contents

Elaborated and published by the TRANS-URBAN-EU-CHINA project consortium:

Project coordinator: Bernhard Müller, TU Dresden

Note: The following texts partially contain excerpts and quotations of the publications mentioned at the end of each paragraph. We gratefully thank the respective authors for their inspiring contributions.

1. Urbanisation in China:
Between Unprecedented Growth and Challenges for Sustainability

China's urban growth is unprecedented in speed and scale. While the urbanisation level was less than 20 % in 1978, the urban population exceeded the 50 % threshold in 2011 (see Figure 1). The urbanisation rate is expected to reach 80 % in 2050. Since the early 1980s, the country has experienced fast urban construction. In 2017, total built-up area was 4.4 times higher than in 1990, while urban population increased by factor 2.7 from 301 million to 813 million during the same period.

Rapid urbanisation has been closely linked with fast economic growth and the relaxation of rural-urban migration regulations in order to meet employment demands in major cities. However, the rather strict household registration system ("hukou") – dating back from the 1950s through which urban and rural residents were clearly separated – has made it difficult for rural migrants, including "young talent", to become "urban citizens" and to enjoy the privileges of the place where they live, such as education and health.

Moreover, due to the prevailing incentives to generate local revenues through land-leases, local governments paid little attention to use land efficiently. This did not only threaten food security due to massive land use changes, but also impeded environmental sustainability and financial security. Along with land speculation, the rapid urban growth led to an excessive housing supply outpacing the demand. "Ghost towns" emerged as a result of the "land-centred urbanisation". Urban growth fuelled by rural in-migration, rapid industrialisation and changes in consumer demands, has led to a transformation of urban lifestyles and an increasing demand for natural resources (e.g. clean water, clean air and green energy) and municipal services (e.g. waste disposal and urban transport), which become more and more difficult to be met.

In response to the named sustainability constraints, the National New-Type Urbanisation Plan (2014–2020) provides strong policy support for strategic decision-making, aiming at innovative, coordinated, green, open, socially integrative, inclusive and shared solutions. It emphasises decentralised local government-led urban development following a "people-centred urbanisation". It supports new preferences, especially of younger generations, related to density-induced mixed-use liveable communities. And it also promotes an urban-regional perspective and the establishment of city clusters.

Read more: Müller et al. (2019): Report on the current framework and situation of urban renewal, urban expansion as well as land management and banking (incl. land administration) in China and Europe. Deliverable D3.1. http://transurbaneuchina.eu.
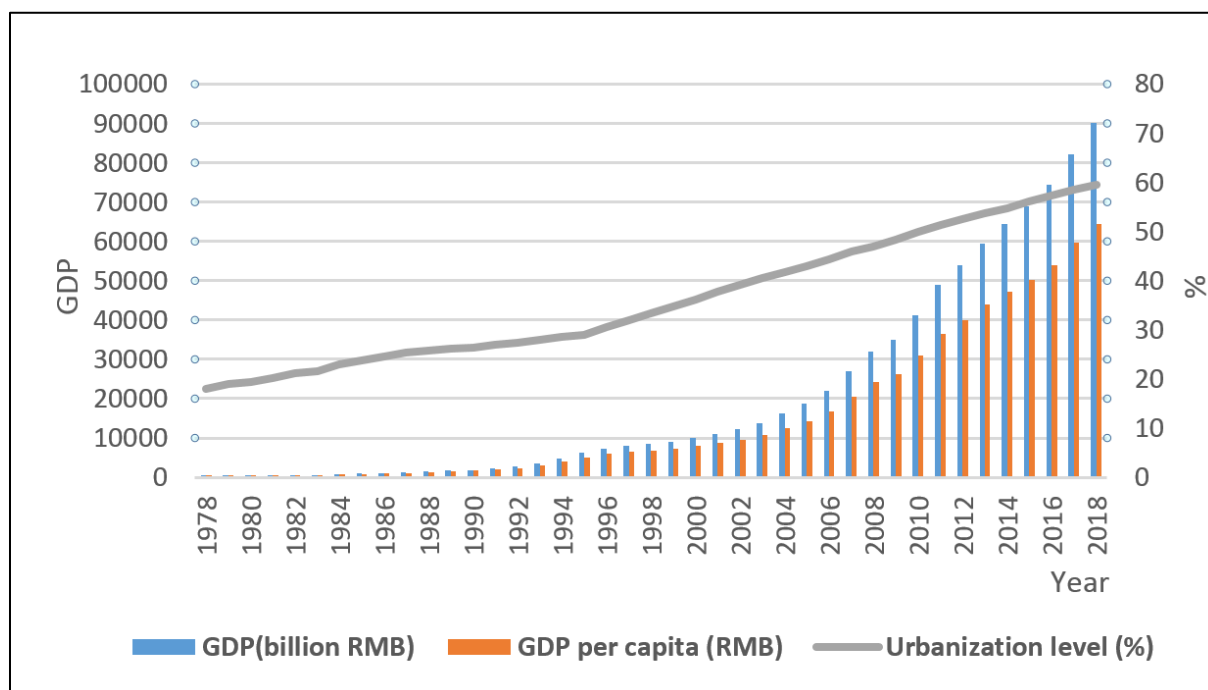
Figure 1: Growth of China's GDP and urbanisation level between 1978 and 2018 (Source: China National Bureau of Statistics)

## 2. China's Global View on Urban Development: Global Cities in the Vision of the Belt and Road Initiative

In its report on "Global Cities in the Vision of the Belt and Road Initiative", published in November 2019, the China Academy of Urban Planning and Design (CAUPD), the Chinese Co-lead partner of TRANS-URBAN-EU-CHINA, has formulated a new Chinese global view on urban development. The vision is based on the "Belt and Road Initiative", which according to the report is expected to advocate "inclusive globalisation" and to inject "new power and vitality" into the global economy. Cities are seen as decisive nodes in an interconnected world based on peaceful cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, as well as mutual learning creating mutual benefits and win-win situations.

Based on an impressive global database of 485 cities, the report argues that "the century for Asia" and Asian cities "is set to begin". China is becoming a new global "hub" in a changing world characterised by a "bi-circulating hierarchy" between "developed countries in Europe and America" on the one side, and "developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America" on the other (see Figure 2). It also shows that the share of China among global cities is rapidly rising. Moreover, according to the "Index for 'Belt and Road' Potential Cities" the same is true for cities along the different routes of the Belt and Road. The index measures the role of cities regarding the five major fields of the initiative, i.e. policy communication, infrastructure connection, barrier-free trade, financing, and people-to-people bond. From a Chinese perspective, these features will determine the future potential pattern of global cities.

In summary, the report underlines the special concern China is giving to urban development, and the level of competitiveness and inclusiveness which Chinese cities are achieving. It is timely to intensify the dialogue between China and Europe in this field. The *Urban Agenda for the European Union* and *The European Green Deal* may be solid foundations for this dialogue on the European side.

Read more: CAUPD (2019): Global Cities in the Vision of the Belt and Road Initiative. Beijing.
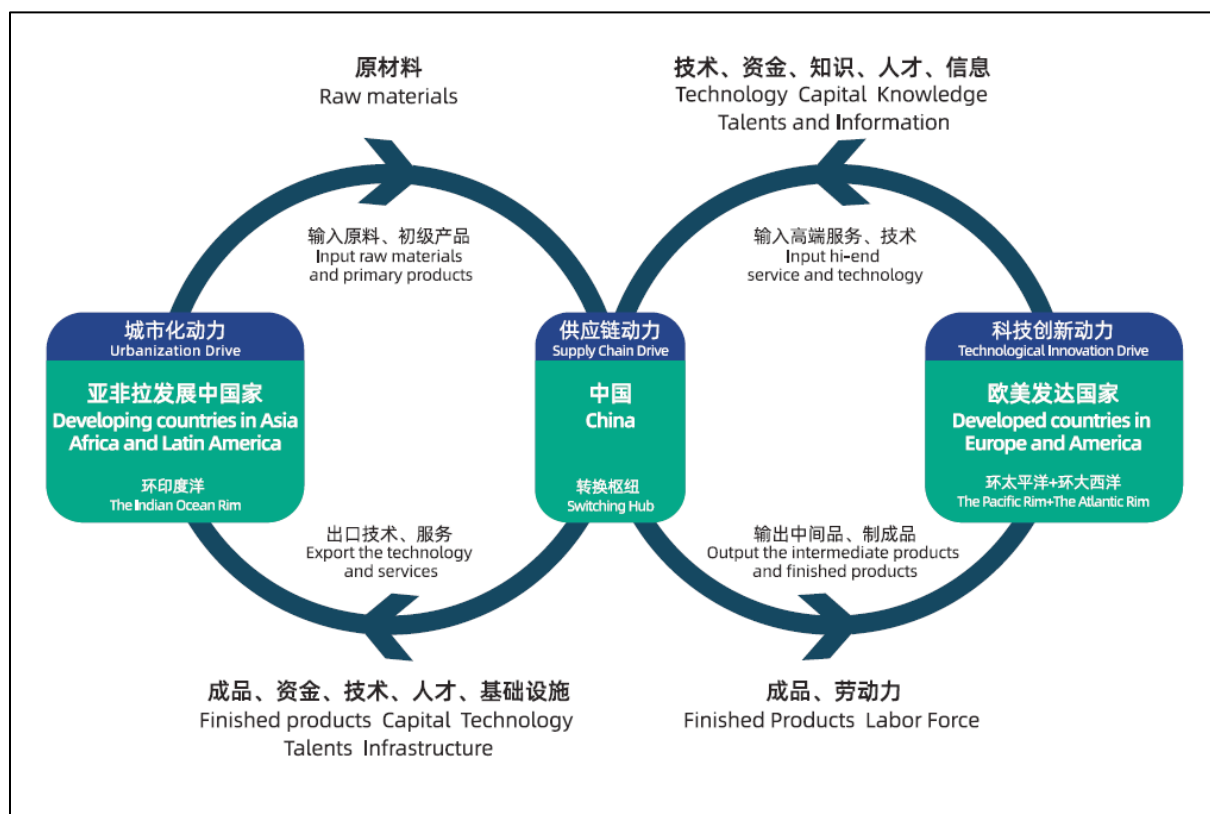
Figure 2: Bi-circulating hierarchy with China being the new global "hub" (Source: CAUPD 2019)

3. Strategic Research & Innovation Agenda for EU-China Cooperation on Sustainable Urbanisation

In Europe, the "Urban Agenda for the European Union" and "the European Green Deal", the forthcoming research and innovation framework programme HORIZON Europe, and member states' partnering urban initiatives are setting the scene for concrete cooperation in urban development. In China, a number of existing policies and strategies, such as the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development and the National New-Type Urbanisation Plan (2014–2020) as well as forthcoming ones are doing the same. The 14th Five-Year Plan will prioritise climate change and sustainable development. In the frame of China's Ecological Civilisation policy, clear targets are set for sustainable development. They are already tested in several provinces that are defined as experimentation zones. Moreover, China's Belt and Road Initiative and the European Union's Europe-Asia Connectivity Strategy bear the potential for synergies that still need to be utilised.

In December 2019, the Horizon 2020 URBAN-EU-CHINA Innovation Platform for Sustainable Urbanisation presented its "Strategic Research & Innovation Agenda for EU-China Cooperation on Sustainable Urbanisation, Volume 2". It is based on the joint work of seven European and five Chinese partners from industry, policy, and academia, including more than a hundred events and workshops, over a period of three years between 2017 and 2019.

The Agenda aims to provide a predictable and long-term reference framework for cooperation between EU and China on sustainable urbanisation, enabling urban decision makers and entrepreneurs to develop, test, validate and implement innovative solutions within four main areas (see Figure 3): (1) Cities of People & Culture, (2) Ecological Cities, (3) Smart & Innovative Cities, and (4) Collaborative Innovation (see below). The Agenda includes arguments why specific areas should be addressed and which kind of actions should be undertaken.

Read more: URBAN-EU-CHINA (2019): Strategic Research & Innovation Agenda for EU-China Cooperation on Sustainable Urbanisation. https://www.urbaneuchina.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Deliverable-1.2-Strategic-RI-Agenda-volume-2.pdf

1 Cities of People & Culture

Creating people-driven sustainable cities and communities will require long-term societal trust and acceptance. To improve citizens' quality of life, it is crucial that we create liveable cities for all, integrating heritage with current and future needs, and ensuring social equality participatory decision making. Finding a balance between preserving cultural values and modernisation will be key.

2 Ecological Cities

To be truly attractive places for people to live and work, cities need to provide clean air, clean water, clean energy solutions and clean transport methods. Integrated assessment, design and management of climate mitigation and adaptation strategies are required for China and Europe to create ecological cities faster.

3 Smart & Innovative Cities

Digital innovation in the public sector, participatory approaches and public-private-people partnerships will enable cities and communities to develop better urban services and infrastructures, de-risk, become more adaptive to external change, and alleviate policy implementation bottlenecks. Through open urban innovation, cities and communities can find new ways to meet these challenges and meet the needs of the citizens.

4 Collaborative Innovation

China and Europe should cooperate more closely on city-to-city partnerships as well as on larger-scale clustering mechanisms at city and regional level, with trusted collaboration between cities, citizens, industry partners, and academia.

Figure 3: Summary of major recommendations of the URBAN-EU-CHINA Innovation Platform for Sustainable Urbanisation (Source: URBAN-EU-CHINA 2019)

4. Socially Integrative and Inclusive Cities: Cornerstone of EU-China Cooperation in Sustainable Urban Development

In 2015, the United Nations called for making cities and human settlements inclusive (Goal No 11 of the "Sustainable Development Goals"), and in 2016, the "New Urban Agenda" put emphasis on "leaving no one behind", thus promoting social integration and inclusion. Following these strategic orientations, TRANS-URBAN-EU-CHINA is promoting socially integrative and inclusive cities in the EU and in China.

Based on literature and practical experiences in a number of countries, as well as taking the rather complex nature of urbanisation in China into consideration, socially integrative and inclusive cities are understood here in a rather wide and comprehensive way as socially mixed, cohesive, liveable and vibrant communities. Compactness, functional mix, and intra-urban connectivity play an important role. Environmental quality, the quality of public spaces and quality of life contribute to the well-being of the population. Strengthening a sense of community and fostering a sense of place as well as preserving cultural heritage shape the city's in- and outward-bound image. Investments into neighbourhood improvement, service delivery, infrastructure and the quality of housing are important supportive measures. Empowerment and participation as well as social capital are indispensable.

With more detail and in a more systematic way, 5 categories with 12 features and fields of action have been identified to characterize socially integrative and inclusive cities and regions as well as related policies (see Figure 4). The categories are: (1) collaborative urban planning and design, (2) urban environment and living conditions, (3) local economy and labour market, (4) socio-cultural development and social capital, and (5) institutional development and urban finance.

It has been widely acknowledged that such defined socially integrative and inclusive cities and neighbourhoods are crucial to foster urban sustainability. The features provide a comprehensive basis for EU-China cooperation on socially integrative and inclusive cities and regions. Socially integrative and Inclusive cities should become a cornerstone of EU-China cooperation in sustainable urban development.

Read more: Müller et al. (2019): Report on the current framework and situation of urban renewal, urban expansion as well as land management and banking (incl. land administration) in China and Europe. Deliverable D3.1. http://transurbaneuchina.eu.

Collaborative urban planning and design
1. Reducing urban sprawl and promoting well-balanced land conversion from "rural" to "urban" and appropriate access to urban land
2. Involving the different stakeholders in collaborative and participative planning and design processes on the different politico-administrative levels

Urban environment and living conditions
3. Improving the environment and living conditions in urban areas
4. Upgrading the physical environment in distressed areas
5. Promoting efficient and affordable urban transport
6. Assuring equal access to municipal services

Local economy and labour market
7. Strengthening the local economy and labour market
8. Strengthening (technical and social) innovation in cities and neighbourhoods opening up new possibilities for the local population

Socio-cultural development and social capital
9. Fostering proactive education and training policies for children and young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods
10. Preserving cultural heritage and fostering the identity of neighbourhoods and their inhabitants
11. Fostering social capital and engagement of local stakeholders

Institutional development and urban finance
12. Supporting adequate institutional and financial conditions and mechanisms

Figure 4: Fields of action to promote socially integrative and inclusive cities (Müller et al. 2019)

5. Paving the Way for Sustainable Urban Development: Recommendations for Further Action

Based on activities of TRANS-URBAN-EU-CHINA, first insights and recommendations have been derived. Chinese urbanisation processes and policies of the past four decades have been very complex in nature, and they have had far-reaching implications for development in China and in other parts of the world. The Chinese urbanisation model has been oriented towards developing original urban development approaches and instruments based on the specificities and requirements of fast growth. It has also been open to integrating good practice experience from elsewhere, and testing new approaches in large urban experimentation zones before upscaling good practice to the national level.

Urban development in Europe has diverse cultural roots and has followed rather distinct pathways in history. Nowadays, there is a great variety of different legal settings, policies, strategies and instruments for urban development. The wide variety of experiences to manage distinctive urban development processes and to establish respective legal frameworks as well as appropriate strategies, tools and measures provides a rich pool of good practice examples which can be tapped and made use of in international cooperation. Comparable to the urban experimentation zones in China, urban laboratories have become Europe's instrument for testing new approaches in urban expansion and urban renewal, generating a myriad of good practice examples in different countries and under distinct conditions.

China and Europe have compatible strengths and are leading in complementary sectors of urban development. Despite many differences, e.g. regarding the general setting, the policy and planning instruments, as well as the speed and scale of urban development, both are strongly committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the ambitions of the New Urban Agenda. Social integration and inclusiveness are regarded as essential urban policy components on both sides. This provides ample opportunities for successful cooperation on an equal partnership basis and with mutual benefits. China's new view on urban development within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative on the one side, and the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities and its forthcoming advancement in 2020, the EU's Urban Agenda and the Joint Communication on Connecting Europe and Asia on the other side, could provide a basis for intensifying the policy dialogue between both sides on sustainable, socially integrative and inclusive urban development.

In order to better utilise the potentials of EU-China cooperation with regard to creating socially integrative and inclusive cities and regions, the following recommendations should be taken into consideration:

(1) To give attention to "sustainable urban development" in a more comprehensive way instead of focusing just on "sustainable urbanisation", e.g., the increasing share of the urban population in the country and its impact on sustainability;

(2) To put stronger emphasis on the needs and experiences of medium-sized and smaller cities and towns, e.g. third and fourth tier cities, and cities which are challenged by demographic change, such as population decrease;

(3) To place sustainable urban development and the elaboration of comprehensive and integrated strategies for socially integrative and inclusive cities as a permanent topic on the agenda of EU-China policy dialogues;

(4) To regularly assess good practice in Europe and China regarding urban renewal and urban expansion, especially regarding projects of social integration and inclusion;

(5) To discuss the importance of the human scale and cultural tradition in urban design and sustainable urban development;

(6) To jointly support the digital transition in urban development, e.g., by promoting informed evidence-based local decision-taking with the help of new tools related to big data analysis and artificial intelligence, and the use of new technologies for establishing community oriented services;

(7) To promote the regular exchange of experience regarding tested good practice in "urban laboratories", involving respective local stakeholders;

(8) To enhance education and training regarding sustainable urban development and the promotion of socially integrative and inclusive cities;

(9) To integrate regional development perspectives, urban-rural relations, including the integration of migrants, and urbanisation-oriented rural vitalisation into urban development debates;

(10) To put stronger emphasis on regional and urban-rural governance in order to promote more regionally balanced and just development, to better steer and manage social integration and to enhance inclusiveness.

The creation of socially integrative and inclusive cities should become a cornerstone of EU-China cooperation in sustainable urban development. TRANS-URBAN-EU-CHINA is currently developing a compendium of tools and measures for the acceleration of respective transformation processes which are apt to support sustainable urbanisation in both parts of the world.

Read more: http://transurbaneuchina.eu

Further information **www.transurbaneuchina.eu**

© B. Müller 2019

Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development

isi NOVA
Innovation for sustainability

EURO CITIES

TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT DRESDEN

CHINA CENTER FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT
国家发展和改革委员会城市和小城镇改革发展中心
中国城市和小城镇改革发展中心

AIT AUSTRIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

NTNU

中国城市规划设计研究院
CHINA ACADEMY OF URBAN PLANNING & DESIGN

同濟大学
TONGJI UNIVERSITY

POLITECNICO DI TORINO

CASTED
中国科学技术发展战略研究院
Chinese Academy of Science and Technology for Development

Israel Smart Cities Institute

清华大学建筑学院
School of Architecture, Tsinghua University