Critical Issues Confronting China Series featuring Xuefei Ren —
Governing the Urban in China and India, December 1, 2021

- [William] Hello everyone, and welcome to today's lecture. We'll get
started momentarily. We're just going give a minute or two to give
people a chance to log on. We thank you very much for joining us.

- Okay. Well, I'll get things going. And I'm very pleased to welcome
Xuefei Ren to this virtual version of the Fairbank Center. And I hope
we can follow this up with an in-person visit sometime soon. Professor
Ren teaches sociology at Michigan State, and she received her PhD at
the University of Chicago. She was also a participant in the Public
Intellectuals Program at the National Committee on US-China Relations,
that Ezra Vogel helped to establish. So it seems very fitting to
invite her to speak in this lecture series, which he also established
here at Harvard. Professor Ren has published three very interesting
books about urbanization and globalization in China, focusing on how
these processes have transformed China's built landscape, its class
structure, and local governance. And today she's gonna speak about her
most recent book that you see here on the screen, "Governing the Urban
in China and India." So welcome to this virtual Fairbank Center. And
Xuefei, I'll turn it over to you.

- Okay, Nara, thank you for the introduction, and thank you for
inviting me to be a part of the series. For the last two months, I've
listened to many of your events, and I've learned a lot from almost
every talk. So I feel really honored to be a part of the same
curriculum series. So today I'm going to talk about my book, which
came out last year. The book compares cities in China and India, and
specifically urban governance in these two countries. So my field is
global urban studies, which is I think a little bit different from
China studies. But I believe that in both fields, these two countries
are frequently compared, China and India. Different people compare the
two countries for different research questions. And if we read the
literature, the scholarship on China-India comparison, you will see a
clear trend, which is the focus of the comparison tends to be on
regime types, or political regimes. So a lot of people argue that the
two countries are different because China is not democratic and India
is. And therefore, for example, cities or urban policies work
differently in the two countries. So part of the reason or motivation
for me to start working on this project was to challenge that
assumption a little bit, which is all the differences between the two
large countries can be explained by regime types. I think regime
types, democracy versus non-democracy, can certainly explain a lot of
variations, but there are other kinds of differences which require
different explanations. So that's my entry point to the project. So
first of all, I think I will just walk you through a brief overview of
the different urban trajectories of China and India. Both countries
have urbanized quite rapidly over the last three or four decades, but
the driver for urban population growth is quite different. So for

China, I think all of you are familiar with the story. For China, the main mechanism or driver for urban population growth has been migration. And that has been the case since the 1980s, early 1980s, for the last four decades. If we look at the most recent census from 2020, one of the biggest surprises from the 2020 census is migration has not slowed down. So the 2020 census recorded 55 million more migrants compared to the 2010 census, which is really a big surprise for demographers because before the 2020 census, the social scientists relied on the national sample surveys. So China conducts one, 1% national sample survey in 1990, every five years from 1995. And then for each year, the country also does 0.1% national sample survey. So these are not census. So those surveys before the 2020 census suggested a rapid slowing down of migration. So the numbers released last year are quite surprising. People have not stopped migrating, and one out of three people in China lives in a place where their hukou is not registered. So the big story is migration has been driving China's urban population growth for the last four decades. And for India, that is not the case. So the main driver for India's urban population growth has been natural population growth. So India has a much higher fertility rate than China, not surprisingly. China had the One Child Policy for so long, so its fertility rate is one of the lowest in the world. So there are three things that have been driving urban population growth in India, natural population growth, migration, and then in-situ urbanization. So here I have two pictures from one of my field work sites in India. It's a small town called Singur in the state of West Bengal. Singur, so what kind of place is it? And why did I choose to study Singur? It's an urbanized small town. Most of the people are residents in the town. They're not farmers. They don't work in the agriculture sector. They work in manufacturing, services, transportation, or other non-agriculture sectors. So it's a good example of an urbanized small town. And in India, they have a name for these places. They're called census towns. So for the census purpose, the people, residents living in Singur are counted as urban. But in terms of governance, the place doesn't have a city government, no municipal government. And some people estimate that 20%, at least 20% of India's urban population can be traced to census towns, which means 20% of India's urban population lives in cities that have no local government. So these places are managed by village councils. And in India, village councils don't have the same power as municipal governments. They don't have the power to tax. And without taxation, they don't have revenue. So they can't even provide the most basic services, such as street cleaning or garbage collection. So that's the census town phenomena. It's probably one of the biggest challenges for India. How can you run cities without local governments? And in the book, I discussed a little bit why the central and the state governments are so resistant or reluctant for giving or granting the municipal status to these places. There are all kinds of reasons. One of the factors is the upper level governments just don't want to share power with localities. If they make a village or town into a city, then it means local leaders would have more power. So they perceive

the relationship as a zero-sum game. If we give the locals more power, then we lose power as state governments. So that's one of the factors. So to summarize, for China, migration has been driving China's urban population growth. And for India, it's a combination of three things, natural population growth, in-situ urbanization, and also migration. And in-situ urbanization means people are not migrating, but the places where they live are urbanizing because people are leaving agriculture for other jobs. So for the book, I was mainly interested in just one big question. Besides political regimes, what are other major differences in the way China and India ran their cities? And my main argument is the territorial versus associational logics of urban governance. I argued that, for China at least, if we look at how urban policies are made and also implemented, they are pretty much shaped by a very strong layer of local territorial institutions, such as the hukou system, or the system by which China promotes local officials. And I describe this as territorial because they have strong links to localities. They distribute rights, benefits, also responsibilities, also social welfare, according to administrative jurisdictions. So in that sense, these are territorial institutions. For India, we don't, at least I don't observe or see a similar set of strong territorial institutions. And instead, policy making and implementation is more fluid, and also contingent upon coalition building between state bureaucracies, the private sector, and also civil society groups. So I describe that arrangement as associational. And that's the main finding from the project. And for the rest of the book, I basically told three stories, very different stories. The first story is on housing, specifically informal housing. So I compared urban villages in Guangzhou and slums in Mumbai. And then I also looked at land grabs in Singur, the two pictures I just showed you, and then Wukan in Guangdong Province in China. And then the last story is air pollution reduction or air pollution campaigns in the two capital cities, in Beijing and Delhi. So I basically used these three very different stories to illustrate the difference between the territorial and associational logics of governing cities. So today, I will not talk about all three. I think that will take too much time. So very briefly, I will just share with you some of the highlights about the housing chapter, and then the story on air pollution control. If you have questions on land grabs, I will answer all your questions at Q&A. So for housing, I'm an urban sociologist, and all urban sociologists love writing about housing. So I decided to compare the urban redevelopment, how that works in Guangzhou and Mumbai. So here, the focus of the comparison is the politics of compensation. When urban villages and slums are demolished or redeveloped, who gets compensated? How much? And who is included? So that's the empirical question for the comparison. And before I get to the finding, I just want to make a quick note about informal, what informal settlement means. So the word informal means very different things in the Chinese and Indian context. In China, at least in Guangzhou, informal doesn't mean illegal land ownership. The land ownership is rural, collective. So it's pretty clear, straightforward. The villagers are legal

landowners. So informal mostly means illegal construction. In Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and other Pearl River Delta cities, local governments often only allow three stories to be built on rural, collectively-owned land. But to maximize rents, these urban village landlords often build more than three stories. So the extra floors are illegal. So in that sense, these are informal settlements. And for India, almost everywhere, informal often means lack of legal ownership over land. So the slum developers, most of them are squatters. So they occupy often public land belonging to the central government or state governments of different municipal bureaucracies. And then they build structures. So it implies the lack of legal land ownership. So there's a big difference in the way, what informal implies. So, back to the story on urban village redevelopment. So from my field work, I found that the amount of compensation really depends on three local territory institutions. The first one is hukou. The second one is rural land ownership. And the third one, which is the most interesting finding for me, is the ownership in village companies. So all of the, almost all, probably not 100% but close, most of the urban villages in the south of China have been incorporated as shareholding companies. And the villages have different businesses, such as cinema parking lots, hotels, and other rental businesses. At the end of a fiscal year, the village company would give money back to the villagers based on their share, and different families have a different number of shares or stocks in the village company. So the number of shares also determines how much compensation they would get when their apartment buildings get demolished. So the compensation really boils down to land ownership, hukou status, and the membership in the village companies. For Mumbai, it works completely in different ways. So Mumbai is in the state of Maharashtra. And for many years, almost 20 years ago, the state government picked a random date, January 1st, 2000, as the cutoff point. If the slum residents can prove that they've lived in their communities since January 1st, 2000, then they're eligible for compensation. But now we are already in 2021, so that's a long time. It's a very high bar. Most residents can't qualify, because they haven't lived there in their community for 20 years. And even for the long-term residents, they often don't have the proper paperwork, proof to show they're eligible. So therefore, slum redevelopment in Mumbai and also in other cities is very controversial, because most of the slum dwellers are not eligible for any compensation. So when redevelopment happens, most people simply get evicted without any compensation. But the cutoff point, in the case of Mumbai, is often negotiated between residents and the developers. And sometimes the state bureaucracy also intervene. So it is a hard, strict cutoff point. But if we look at the practices, the cutoff point often didn't matter for many of Mumbai's slum redevelopment projects. The developers sometimes would actually give compensation to a resident because once they move, then the land is available, then they can quickly build and sell the new apartment buildings or apartment units at the market price. So it's a much more fluid situation. And in the case of Mumbai, the compensation doesn't

depend on any local territory institutions or authorities. So that's the story about housing. And now, very quickly, I'll tell you a little bit about the story on air pollution. And I think this is an even better illustration of the difference between the territorial and associational approaches to urban governance. In this case, to environmental protection. Both capital cities are polluted, but that's not why I picked these two cities, because the smaller towns in the two countries are often much more polluted than the two capitals. So I chose Beijing and Delhi because most of the legislation, the clean air campaigns or legislation, Five-year plans or different local action plans, they often took place, they were launched in the two capitals first, and then other cities would follow what happened in Beijing and Delhi and draft their own plans. So for Delhi, from the early 1980s until today, the main actor in the field of air pollution control has been environmental NGOs. And they're different. There's not that many, but there's a few very powerful and resourceful environmental NGOs based in Delhi. And for the last 40 years, their main strategy has been mobilizing the Supreme Court of India, and then also different ministries and bureaucracies within the central government, and also the Delhi government. And also, they reach out to the private sector. So they, over time for the last 40 years, they had different agendas or different goals for air pollution reduction. And each time, they had to assemble a network of actors. Most of the time, that network included the Indian Supreme Court, and then they tried to achieve their goals. And not every time they were successful. The biggest victory was in the late 1990s, when they managed to persuade the government to alter all the public wheels in Delhi, to change to clean fuel. So that's the biggest victory in the late 90s, early 2000s. So the environmental NGOs have been driving Delhi's clean air campaign. And for China, Beijing has many, many environmental NGOs, but they're not the leaders. The leaders are municipal government and the subordinate district governments. And in general, Beijing is not the exception. Almost everywhere in China, the cities follow the same approach, which is, in Chinese it's called the target responsibility system. So the central government would mandate a time bond pollution reduction target. For example, reducing PM 2.5 level by 30% in the next five years. So that's the national target. And then all the provinces, cities, towns, also districts, down to the district level, all these sub-national units would follow the suit and then choose a target for their own jurisdiction. And then every year, the local officials are evaluated by their supervisors, upper-level governments, to see if they've met the target or not. And if they don't meet the target, then they would be in trouble. At least, they won't get promoted anytime soon. So it's a high-pressure system. The central government would exert a lot of pressure on the provinces, and then the provincial chiefs would add pressure for local officials. So the local officials, they are held responsible for meeting air pollution control targets. That's how it works. And I use the word territorial to describe the target responsibility system because the performance, because local officials only care about their environmental

performance within their jurisdictions. So for Beijing, they pay a lip service and they say, "Okay, we will work together with Hebei, Inner Mongolia, Shanxi, Shaanxi, these surrounding provinces." But in reality, there is no incentive for the Beijing officials to really collaborate with these other surrounding provinces. And that's true for the Pearl River Delta and Yangtze River Delta. There are mayors' forum in all these mega urban regions. So the mayors say, "Okay, we will work together with other cities to reduce air pollution," because air doesn't follow administrative boundaries. So they say that, but in reality, there is very little action. So that's why I think the air pollution example is a good case, demonstrating how the territorial approach to environmental protection works in China. So that's another case study I did for the book. And today, I have just one slide on COVID. This is not in the book, but it's related to urban governance. I just want to share with you some of my reflections over what China has been doing to achieve COVID zero, or zero tolerance toward COVID-19. So if we look at the most effective measures China has been using, lockdown, grid governance, which translates as Mass testing, digital surveillance, and also the closed border. All of these main COVID-19 measures are territorial. Lockdown and border control are obviously territorial because they basically freeze an entire region of a country. And grid governance is also territorial. The cities, not only cities, also even the rural areas now, they've been using the grid governance system to track infections and send people to the quarantine centers. Every jurisdiction is divided into tens of thousands of small cells with GPS technology. And every cell is about one or two square kilometers. And then government employees, and also citizen volunteers, they work as grid managers to watch everything within their cell. So that's how grid governance works. And mass testing, so a lot of Chinese cities have done mass testing. So they've tested almost everybody living in their city limits. But the question is, why is it possible for a city like Shenzhen, more than 10 million people, to finish testing everybody within a week? That's really amazing. And the answer is, again, grid governance. So the city would install testing centers, multiple testing centers in each grid. And then, excuse me, then the grid managers are held responsible to finish their quota. So that's how and why mass testing within the week, even for the mega cities, is possible. So my sense is that the territorial logic of governing cities, of containing the pandemic, controlling COVID-19, has further strengthened over the last two years, and it will probably continue. We have the Olympics in a few months, and then an important political meeting in late 2022. So it will go on for a while. So last slide, just to summarize the talk. So basically, the book addresses an old-fashioned question, which is who governs the Chinese and the Indian city? And I've argued that for China, it's a safe layer of local territorial institutions and authorities. So they make policies, and then they pretty much decide how the policies can be or should be implemented. And for Indian cities, there is a vacuum of power at the local level because the municipal institutions are so weak. They don't have the power, physical capacity, and also sometimes

they don't have the legal authority to make urban policies. Because the Indian constitution, it's written in the Indian constitution that housing, land use planning, urban transportation are domains of state governments, not municipal governments. So in the vacuum of powerful municipal institutions, we see a multitude of actors competing with each other for power and for influence in Indian cities. So I described that situation as association. To make things happen, whether it's a policy or legislation or program, the main leader or actor has to build around itself a successful coalition. That's the only way to move forward. So nobody governs the Indian city. There are so many players, and it's really case-by-case. And then I will just stop by saying a few words about the question. So what? So why does it matter if some cities are territorial and other cities are associational? I think there are two levels here, at the every day very concrete level and then at a more abstract level. So for the every day level, the territorial-associational approach to urban governance really affects the way people live their lives in Chinese and Indian cities. So one good example is the COVID measures. There's nobody in China who hasn't been affected by China's territorial approach to achieve zero infection. And for India, it's a very different situation. And at the abstract level, I think the territorial and associational logics of urban governance have produced different forms of inequality in the two societies. Both countries are very unequal places, but the forms or patterns of inequality look very different between the two countries. In China, inequality has a strong spacial or geographic dimension. For example, the widening regional disparity between the coastal provinces or between the top-tier superstar cities, Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, and everybody, or other cities. So that gap is widening. And for India, inequality is less geographic. There is regional disparity, of course, but not as obvious as what we see in China. And instead, inequality is more structured by networks. So for example, for the middle class, urban middle class, and also for the rich, they are more likely than the poor to succeed in building networks and coalitions with politicians, with the municipal institutions, to get a water connection, to get stable electricity, and other amenities. And for the poor, they want to do the same, but they probably, their best chance is right before elections when politicians want their vote. And the other times, they are less successful in building networks or coalitions with the politicians. So I think at the higher level, not the every day level, these two approaches to governing cities have led to different forms of inequality in the two countries. So I'm going to stop here. Thank you for listening. And I look forward to your questions.

- Thank you very much for a great talk. And all our participants can put questions into the Q&A box, and I will help Xuefei field those questions. So feel free to put them in there. But I wanted to start off with a question of my own. I think it was in your second book. You made this argument that India and other developing countries were

learning the wrong lessons from the China model, particularly the Shanghai model, and that you thought that they were taking the worst aspects of China's urbanization strategy as a basis for their own policy. And so I'm wondering now, after you've done this extensive field work and research on both countries, if you still feel the same way, or if you've changed your mind or India has changed its approach to these policies. And I'm wondering what you think the two countries can learn from each other in terms of urban governance.

– Right. That's a very big question. I think the situation has definitely changed from the time when I showed my second book, called "Urban China." The relationship between the two countries has become very intense. There was a border conflict not long ago, and some Indian soldiers were killed. And also, I think there was casualty on the Chinese side. I think, in general, the attitude towards China within India has become quite negative. And I haven't been back in India for two years, but my impression is probably there's less willingness to learn from China. And also China has become so aggressive on so many fronts, and China has so few friends in the international community. I think it's not only for India, also for other parts of the world. The regions, countries used to admire what China has achieved, but over the course of the pandemic, I think that perception has changed quite a bit. And for the second part of your question, if there are indeed some lessons that can be learned, what are they? I think this is not, I think I've discussed it in the book, but this is an obvious point for most people writing about Indian cities. The main weakness for Indian cities is the lack of municipal power. So the city governments don't have any substantial power. The mayors in India have only one year. So their term is often one year, and it's not, it's mostly like a symbolic post. So for the mayor of Mumbai, many times people don't know who's the mayor of Mumbai, because it's not a powerful position like the Chinese mayors. So India really needs to strengthen their municipal institutions. But it's easier to say than to be done. Because India is a democracy, there is a lot of competition between different political parties. So if the state government is ruled by BJP, and the local municipal government is dominated by the Congress Party or other regional party, then there's almost no chance that the state governments would want to share power with the local municipal governments. But India needs to find ways to empower the local municipal institutions. For example, to make municipal jobs more attractive to people with higher education. So that's one thing I can think of.

– Great. Bill, do you have a question?

– Yes, thanks. Thank you for a wonderful talk. I spend a lot of time looking at both countries, and I learned a lot. I'm interested in probing the limits of what these government models can do. And I have a question about the limits for each country. Given its informal associational approach to problems of pollution, is the problem of

cleaning up pollution in India hopeless? I look, for instance, at the promises to clean up the Ganges River. This was a big commitment of the Prime Minister, and nothing has happened. On the Chinese side, I wonder if the effort to totally control COVID means that China will have to close itself off for the indefinite future, as we get new variants and you don't have as much of the population exposed. Are these limits for what these two models can do?

— Yes, I think there are severe limits for both models. So for air pollution, for example, I don't think the territorial mentality is helpful for reducing pollution in the long-term. If there's no incentive for Chinese mayors to collaborate, work together with other cities, with other provinces, then China will not have blue sky in the long run, for obvious reasons. Air pollution doesn't recognize city limits, administrative lines, and jurisdictions. But that is actually very easy to fix. If the central government can put in some incentive, for example, in the annual evaluation sheet. And right now it's economic performance, environmental performance, social stability, and then COVID control. If they can add something like a small incentive to encourage local mayors or party secretaries to collaborate and then add some concrete measures to assess their collaboration, then I think the local policymakers will be much willing to, they would feel more pressure to work together with the other cities. And for India, is it really hopeless? I'm always optimistic, so I don't think it's hopeless. I live in Chicago, actually, on the campus of University of Chicago. I'm not affiliated with the Public Policy School, but I know that there are many professors, faculty, students, they have been working with the different state governments in India. And they try to introduce some market-based mechanism to encourage the private sector, the big polluters, to reduce emission. So there has been a lot of grassroots-level exchange between India and different parts, other countries such as US, University of Chicago. And I think over time, it's a cumulative. Over time, there should be, I hope there will be some substantial progress in terms of pollution reduction. But the key actor, the municipal governments, for example, Delhi government, I think they should play a more proactive role. When I did research for the book, mostly around 2015-16, I just didn't sense any urgency on the part of the daily government. Only in the last two years or maybe three years, because of the rising pressure from the public for demanding for cleaner air. So the Delhi government has become just a little bit more responsive to the public pressure, but still they don't have, the funding they allocate for pollution control, it's so little. And with that little funding, you just can't do much. So I think the local authority should play a more dominant role and work more closely with the NGOs, not against the NGOs. They've been working against the NGOs. But thank you for your question.

— Great. Well, we have a question in the Q&A that sort of builds on Bill's question. Sam K. asked, "Is it possible that a comparable level of lively contestation, negotiation, and competition between different

societal actors and interests is happening in the governance of Chinese cities, but happening behind closed doors or inside the party itself? If so, how can your territorial classification account for this kind of politics? And how do you think that is different from the kind of associational politics that you saw, that you see in India?"

— Thank you for another great question. First of all, let me say this. I think in both countries, you will find examples of both approaches of urban governance. Even in China, there are many examples of associational models or logics of managing urban affairs. And I can give you a small example. It's about mass testing, a COVID test. So some of the testing sites in the south of the country, the Pearl River Delta, are actually located in village temples. So the point is, people go to the temples and they all have big families. So it's by putting pressure on family members or relatives. So the local authorities hope to get more people tested as quickly as possible. So I think that's a great example of associational type of mobilization. So in both countries, we can find both types of urban governance. But if you ask which one is more dominant, I think very clearly the Chinese approach is much more territorial than the Indian approach. It's not an invention from 1949. So in the book, I traced back some of the territorial institutions to the 13th century, also to the republican period. So there's a long tradition of the territorial way of managing local affairs far before 1949. And I think that explains why the mentality of the system is so deep-rooted. So if something happens, then China would crack down on localities, close off neighborhoods, and then send people to conquer and control each cell. That's their default reaction to any crisis. And for India, I'm sure there are many examples of the territorial approach or ways of managing our urban affairs. But in general, the territorial institutions at the city level are so weak. And because they are so weak, that creates space for other actors, private sector, business, community, journalists, activists, to intervene and to influence policymaking. Thank you for your question.

— Great, thank you. We also have another question about how land is valued in the two places, and how that affects the informal settlements that you saw in both places, and different kinds of informality. So Lu Jung says, "Thanks for the fascinating talk. Could you please talk more about the land price that developers pay to the local government, in exchange for developing the land for commercial purposes in Guangzhou and Mumbai? And then how are these land revenues distributed and used in the two different cities?"

— From Jung Lu. Thank you, Jung Lu, for another big mega question about land revenue. There's a huge literature on land revenue. My impression is, so there's an auction. So for example, if there's a piece of land in the middle of Shanghai up for auction, then different developers or investors can bid for that piece of land. And then everything's transparent. The land would go to the highest bidder. So

that's one track. But there are other tracks, which are probably behind the stage, behind the door negotiations. And I think there are multiple tracks for land transactions and how land revenue is used by local governments. As we all know, the local Chinese governments, the municipal governments are in deep debt. I think they spend out of their revenue, if not more, to build infrastructure, expand. So every Chinese city has built new towns. They may not be called new towns, new districts, development zones. But cities in China want to expand, because if they expand they can have more land, and all the extra land is automatically urban land. So the municipal government is the owner, landlord for the towns that are merged by the main, the central cities. So they want to expand. Then to expand, they also need to build infrastructure, roads, subway lines, extension of lines. So I don't have the numbers, but I think they probably spend a good portion of their land revenue on the infrastructure, but not on social welfare. I'm sure maybe Nara knows this better than me. So if we look at how the pandemic has affected, for example, migrant workers in the early months of 2020, a lot of migrant workers were not able to work because they couldn't leave their hometowns due to lockdowns. So the central government policies have, most of the policies in early 2020 were about how to support enterprises. So they used the word stabilize. They wanted to stabilize enterprises. And by doing that, they hoped that these enterprises can keep jobs, so migrant workers can benefit from the trickle-down effect of these policies. But there's almost no direct cash payment program for migrant workers. There is a little bit. I don't remember the number, but the amount is so small, so it doesn't mean much. So the question is, if the migrant workers in the first half of 2020 were the most affected, why in China did so little to help the migrant workers. Maybe they, one answer is they don't care. They care more about businesses. But the more plausible answer is probably because they can't. The local governments don't have the money to extend, for example, unemployment insurance benefits to the migrant workers who lost jobs during those months. So over the national total expenditure, let's say it's 100%. So 85% of the national total expenditure was made by local governments. So it means if there are policies, for example, social welfare policies announced or mentioned of leaders, then the local governments need to implement them. But they have so many responsibilities, so they probably don't have the revenue to make it happen. So to come back to the land question, I think Zheng Lu asked how the land revenue is spent. I would say it's probably spent mostly on infrastructure, and very little is spent on welfare programs for the urban poor or the migrant workers. I don't know the numbers. I don't have the numbers, but that's my impression.

- Okay, great. We have another comparative question from Ran Mei. Says, "Thank you, Xuefei, for a great talk. For the past decade, there have been several mega sustainable city or green capital projects in China and India. What do you think are the key similarities and differences between these eco city movements in China, in India?"

– Hi, Mei Ran. I can't see you, but I know Mei Ran very well. She's a student at GSD, and she's done some work for me, actually, last year. Thanks for the question. Eco cities. What's the difference between China and India? Many differences. I think first, maybe the scale and the speed. So the eco city initiatives or programs, I think half, almost more than 10 years ago, if not 20 years ago, some have failed. But a lot of cities, even the smaller provincial capitals, they use eco city or other terms with the word eco for branding. So in terms of the scale, it's happening in China at a much larger scale. And also, the speed of building, construction, implementation. And for India, actually I hear the word smart city more often than eco city. But you are in the field of architecture design and sustainability. You probably know better than me. So a lot of the, China also uses the word smart city. And to be honest, I still don't know what's so smart about the smart cities. I think smart means digital surveillance? That's just my understanding. So India has this smart city program. I think one of the goals is to encourage local reforms or innovation in governance. So for example, if a small city wants to digitize their municipal website or different services, so people can apply for permits not in person, but online, then they can get a small grant from the central government. But again, even for India, a lot of places have used the word smart city or eco city to do other things. Many times, when researchers go to the sites of smart cities or eco cities, they find nothing, just an empty field. There's not even one sign, the smallest sign showing you the smartness or sustainability. So that's my impression. It has potential, but to date it's been used in many cases to achieve other goals, not sustainability.

– Well, great. Thank you. Well, we're out of time now. We have many more interesting questions here. So I encourage people who posted the questions to follow up by email and send them to you directly. But I really wanna thank you for a really interesting presentation and discussion. And again, I hope we can do this in-person sometime soon.

– Sure, yes Thank you for inviting me.

– Thank you for coming.

– Okay, bye-bye.

– Bye-bye. Is there anything else we need to–