

“Coastal mega-cities in East Asia: transformation, success and environmental challenges”

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More than 4 per-cent of the total world’s population currently resides in coastal megacities. Coastal megacities in East Asia have expanded rapidly and are heavily stressed by recurrent flood risks and other environmental challenges. Many of these cities have transformed from a primarily agricultural to a manufacturing and processing economy within only the last two decades. Because of some obvious incentives: globalisation, and the geographic favourite concentration of foreign investments (e.g. the “open-door policy” in China), they have undergone significant physical and socio-economic transformations, and experienced rapid economic success. But on the contrary, there are emerging environmental stresses from urbanization and massive population growth, often without strategic planning of coastal land use. With respect to future climate change, projected global sea-level rise and recurrent storms, coastal megacities in East Asia will remain predominantly vulnerable in the foreseeable future. However, present patterns of coastal development are overly focused on socio-economic perspectives, which mostly overlook drought, flood risk and adaptation to climate change, and are simply not sustainable. This talk illustrates some East Asian coastal megacities to discuss the rising challenges. It calls for opportunities to re-think coastal management strategies, with better public participation, education and awareness-raising being the first steps to sustainable progress.

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