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NICE METROPOLIS AND HAIKOU JOINTLY EXPLORE TOURISM, SMART MONITORING, ACADEMIC COLLABORATION AND MORE

The Métropole Nice Côte d'Azur (France) and City of Haikou (China) have been cooperating since July 2018, working together in the areas including tourism, e-health, and smart monitoring in urban areas. The pairing is also developing an innovative academic collaboration, and establishing partnerships in the fields of athletics and culture.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Métropole Nice Côte d'Azur and Haikou began their collaboration in July 2018, driven by their shared interest in smart tourism. Through exchange, the pairing expanded their areas of focus to include a range of topics spanning e-health (healthcare services provided electronically via the Internet), digital urban monitoring, and more. To date, this work has been facilitated by two official study visits, with additional in-person and virtual exchange.

At the outset of the pairing, the cities devised a matrix that detailed potential areas of cooperation, and identified which city possessed more knowledge on each topic, allowing them to take a mentor-mentee approach specified by topic area. Further areas

for potential collaboration in which neither city has experience were also identified, with the intention to jointly explore these topics through the IUC programme.

Challenges have come in the form of the language barrier and differences in governance structures, making technical exchange more difficult. These issues are being addressed with the help of staff from the IUC Asia team.

The planning matrix also helped overcome challenges, and ultimately supported the pairing to achieve results such as a proposed academic collaboration between French and Chinese universities and a proposed joint institute on smart cities.



CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Nice and Haikou entered their IUC pairing with a common interest in smart tourism. Nice has a strong tourism sector, with visitors attracted by the city's excellent weather and location along the Mediterranean coast, while Haikou is a coastal city in China's Hainan province also well known for its tourism industry. Furthermore, both cities act as a transport hub for the surrounding region and are renowned for their well-preserved rural areas.

Initially focused on tourism, the two cities have since agreed on additional collaboration topics. The discussed areas cover broad ground, from e-health to the digital monitoring of city activities (particularly environmental monitoring in urban areas).

Although they face many similar challenges, the cities have significantly different governance structures. The primary counterpart of the Métropole Nice Côte d'Azur – in terms of territorial development strategies – is the regional Chinese Development and Reform Commission, rather than peers within the Haikou local government. It took some time for both partners to fully wrap their heads around the other's governance structures and to establish a mode of working that takes this into account.

Two official IUC study visits in China were quite formal, with knowledge primarily shared through plenary presentations. This did not encourage informal and personal exchange, which made it more difficult to dig into questions raised. The official meetings thus required complementary follow-up meetings.

To help ensure common priorities were identified and acted upon, Nice welcomed an IUC Asia delegation in September 2018, including delegates from Haikou and the Development and Reform Commission. Then, in mid-2019, staff at Nice Métropole secured finances from the IUC Asia "Competitive Fund" to host a follow-up workshop with Haikou to dig deeper and define concrete implementation steps to achieve results. The meeting was held in October 2019 as part of Nice's "Innovative City Congress."

The IUC Asia team has been instrumental in helping to address challenges, providing translation and advice on bridging cultural and governance differences

A lot of progress has been made in 18 months, but the cities feel that more time is necessary to make the most of the cooperation. *"It takes time to establish the areas in which you can collaborate,"* says Alain Chateau of the Métropole Nice Côte d'Azur. *"The pairing needs to establish the optimal framework for the project in terms of the team and the governance structure, and only then can you go ahead with the actions identified."*

Through identifying collaboration areas early on, and a strong mutual desire to work on specific items, the pairing has nonetheless seen success. Beginning with internal reflection on challenges faced in overseas collaboration is instrumental to ensuring that realistic partnership topics and goals are promptly identified. Success was also dependent on choosing areas of focus for which internal working teams warmly welcomed international collaboration.





RESULTS AND IMPACT

It took careful effort to establish a productive working mode within the pairing. However, some of the early challenges faced ultimately had the positive effect of leading partners to put a range of topics on the table for discussion, rather than being overly narrow in their focus.

Cooperation was planned through creating a matrix of priority areas for exchange in the respective cities. Topics and activities of interest were identified whereby one city could effectively learn from the experience of the other. The matrix led the pairing to expand from a strict tourism focus, to address a range of topics, with a focus on smart tourism, economic development, and digital monitoring in an urban setting.

This matrix has proved to be an extremely useful tool for identifying focal areas for the cooperation.

A second category was created within the matrix outlining new activities that neither city has experience with, but where each city faces similar challenges. These neutral topics are considered potential areas for the cities to investigate together.

The core of the pairing continues to be tourism. On this topic, Haikou has expressed its interest in bringing the "Nice Carnival" to Haikou in 2020. A delegation from Haikou was welcomed in Nice on 14-18 October 2019 to participate in the Innovative City congress and further discuss this concrete collaboration opportunity.

On the topic of smart cities, issues addressed by the partnership include how to deploy the 'Internet of Things'; how to best collect, manage and use data; and how to responsibly share this data with private companies to stimulate enterprise.

The pairing has discussed a possible collaboration in the field of academia. Many students study abroad, taking a number of courses in their host university. When they return, however, the diploma is issued by their native university only. Nice and Haikou are considering offering courses completely shared between universities, with a combined diploma presented at the end of studies. This diploma, issued by two universities, would be fully recognised in both countries.

The pairing has also discussed a joint institute that would focus on smart cities and help to bring academic work closer to the challenges facing industry. *"The institute can help to ensure the needs of the market are understood. For example, those that study energy would learn about gaps and needs regarding smart grids,"* explains Mr Chateau. Such an institute already exists in Nice, but the pairing is considering replicating it in Haikou.

Furthermore, it was proposed that professors from each city spend time teaching in their pairing city, or contributing to lessons via videoconference.

In the area of athletics, Haikou issued an invitation for French teams to play an exhibition match in its newly constructed football stadium. The cities are also discussing launching a joint "Ironman Triathlon," which encompasses swimming, cycling, and running. The similar geographic makeup of the cities means both are potential hosts for such a triathlon.





LESSONS LEARNED



Conduct preliminary internal reflection on challenges relevant to overseas partnership before choosing the areas of collaboration to be discussed with your paired city.



At the outset of collaboration, establish not only areas of mutual interest, but also identify which city is more advanced, and so can better pass on knowledge. This reciprocal mentor-mentee approach helps ensure efficient learning.



If possible, it is best for counterparts from the same department to be in touch. This does not have to be in a formal setting – even having time to chat and exchange is helpful.



Undertaking a cross-border collaboration is challenging, so it is necessary to identify people with the right skills and an open mind whom are willing to manage such a complex partnership.



Given the effort needed to carry out such a pairing, it is better to take a broad focus. Having a range of topics on which to exchange, rather than focusing intensely on one issue, means that cities are likely to gain more from the experience.



Beyond official presentations, go to the field and meet local stakeholders to understand the context, perceive the issues and assess the chances of success of what shall be a long-term cooperation.

THE IUC PROGRAMME

The International Urban Cooperation (IUC) programme enables cities in different global regions to link up and share solutions to common problems. It is part of a long-term strategy by the European Union to foster sustainable urban development in cooperation with the public and private sectors, as well as representatives of research and innovation, community groups and citizens. Through engaging in the IUC, cities will have the chance to share and exchange knowledge with their international

counterparts, building a greener, more prosperous future. The IUC programme is an opportunity for local governments to learn from each other, set ambitious targets, forge lasting partnerships, test new solutions, and boost their city's international profile. Its activities will support the achievement of policy objectives as well as major international agreements on urban development and climate change, such as the EU Urban Agenda, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Agreement.



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