

# 2025 WORKSHOP FOR THOUGHT LEADERS

Digital Technology: Accelerating the Local  
Implementation of the Global Agendas

3-6 June 2025  
Guangzhou, China



A Joint Undertaking by Metropolis & Guangzhou  
Institute for Urban Innovation (GIUI)

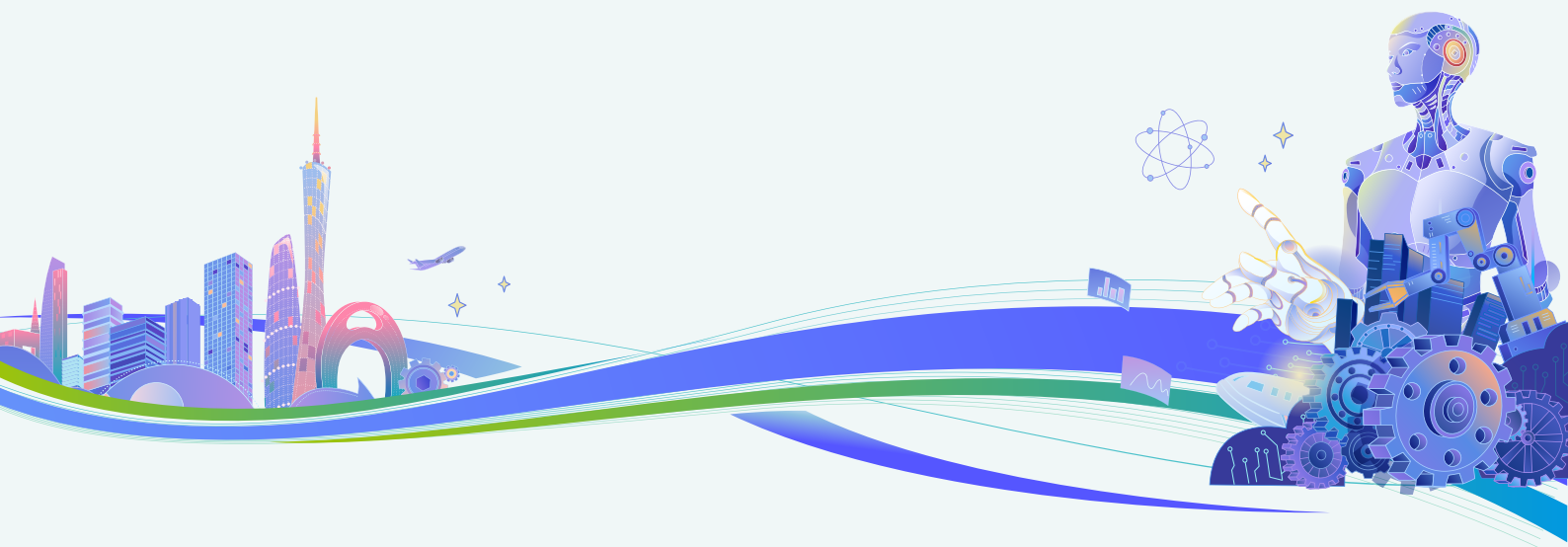
## Background

The global effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 has encountered significant challenges, with progress in many areas lagging behind expectations. Urbanization continues to accelerate, and cities worldwide face mounting pressures from climate change, inequality, and rapid technological disruption. As hubs of innovation and governance, cities play a pivotal role in advancing the SDGs, and digital technology has emerged as a powerful force in this process. Cities worldwide are leveraging AI, digital twins, and other innovative tools to improve governance, enhance sustainability, and foster inclusive communities. The successful integration of these technologies demands collaboration, knowledge sharing, and a commitment to turning possibilities into action.

**The 2025 Workshop for Thought Leaders**, co-organized by **Metropolis** and the **Guangzhou Institute for Urban Innovation (GIUI)**, will center around the theme: **How can cities effectively harness digital technology to accelerate the local implementation of global development agendas?** This workshop aims to respond to the urgent need for practical strategies that leverage digital technology to enhance public administration, urban sustainability, resilience, citizen engagement, and service delivery.

With its dynamic, solution-oriented approach, the workshop seeks to inspire participants to reimagine their cities in the digital age — where technology is not just a tool but a catalyst for creating smarter, more resilient, and inclusive urban futures. The event will spotlight emerging practices that enhance community resilience, promote sustainability, and strengthen citizen-centered governance in an era of rapid technological transformation.

Since 2014, the Workshop for Thought Leaders has been a flagship platform under the Guangzhou International Award for Urban Innovation, providing a unique space for global dialogue on urban challenges and innovative solutions. Through four successful editions, the workshop has brought together city leaders, urban practitioners, and private sector stakeholders to exchange ideas, share knowledge, and collaborate on actionable strategies.



## Objectives

The primary objectives of the Workshop for Thought Leaders are:

**1. Knowledge Exchange:** Create a vibrant space for exchange, encouraging city leaders, urban practitioners, and stakeholders to share experiences, best practices, and lessons learned.

**2. Collaborative Learning:** Provide a platform for peer-to-peer learning, facilitating discussions on innovative approaches and lessons drawn from the initiatives of the Guangzhou Award and other global urban initiatives.

**3. Accelerate Implementation of Global Agendas:** Promote meaningful discussions on approaches that leverage digital technology to locally implement the SDGs and other global agendas. Emphasize the critical role of urban innovation in advancing these global objectives and driving sustainable urban transformation.

**4. Inspiration and Action:** Inspire participants to take action by showcasing impactful digital innovations. Encourage city leaders to share insights and co-create actionable solutions to address current and future urban challenges.

## Thematic Streams

The workshop is structured around three inter-connected streams, each addressing a critical aspect of urban governance in the digital age. These streams reflect the pressing challenges and opportunities cities face today, offering a holistic framework for discussions and collaborative problem-solving.

### 1. Digital Tools for a Better Planned and Resilient City

Urban areas are increasingly confronted with multifaceted challenges such as climate change, rapid population growth, and inequality. To address these intricacies, cities require innovative, adaptive, and forward-thinking planning strategies. Digital tools, such as Metaverse technologies and digital twins, offer transformative potential to tackle these challenges, enabling cities to plan smarter, respond faster, and build more resilience for the future.

This stream will delve into how cities can leverage such technologies to enhance urban management, optimize urban planning processes, improve disaster preparedness, and foster resilience against future uncertainties. Discussions will focus on practical applications, use case studies, and best practices that demonstrate how digital tools can create more sustainable and more resilient urban environments.



## 2. Digital Tools for a More Caring and Inclusive City

The COVID-19 lockdowns revealed several structural weaknesses in urban environments, highlighting systemic issues across various dimensions of city life. These weaknesses underscore the urgent need for cities to build more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable systems to withstand future crises and challenges. They also underscore the pressing necessity for cities to prioritize the well-being and quality of life of all of their residents—becoming cities that leaves no one and no place behind.

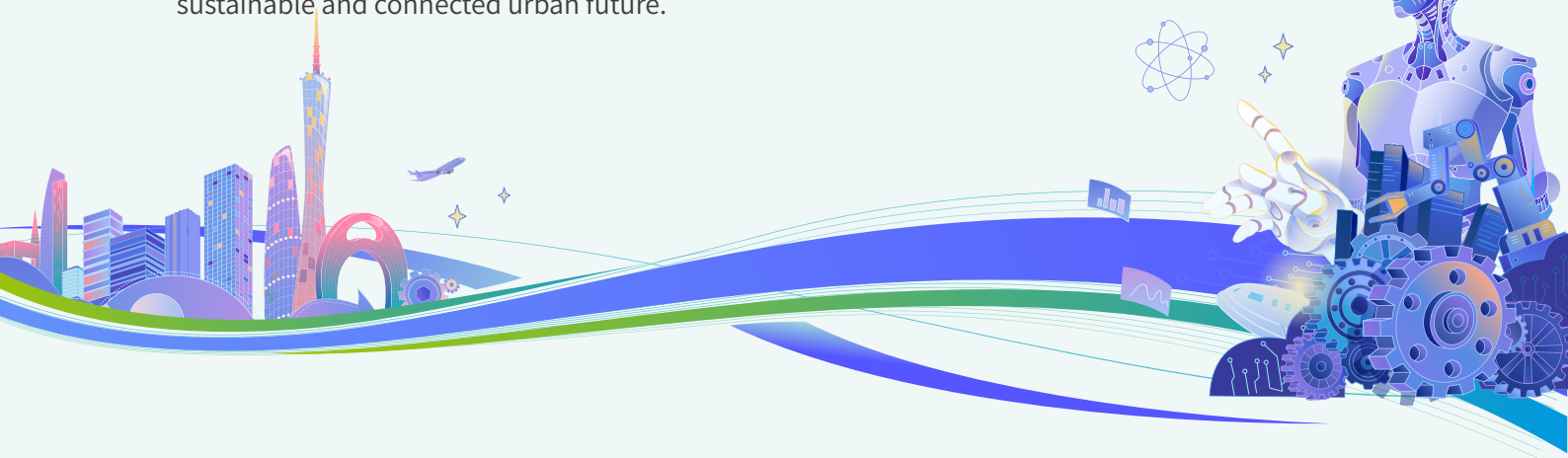
This stream will highlight how local authorities should prioritize the integration of technology to enhance citizen participation and improve service delivery, to foster a caring and inclusive city in the digital age. By leveraging digital tools, cities can better meet the needs of vulnerable populations, bridge equity gaps, and create inclusive environments. Simple yet impactful technological solutions have the power to transform community well-being, offering tangible benefits to residents and enabling local governments to respond proactively to emerging challenges. Discussions aim to inspire local government to actively seek and adopt innovations that enhance the quality of life for residents and develop actionable strategies for creating an inclusive and caring urban environment for all residents.

## 3. Embracing the Future of Transport, Energy, and Mobility

Advances in science and technology are transforming transportation, reshaping urban mobility, and revolutionizing urban planning. From carriages to motor vehicles, high-speed rail, autonomous systems, and low-altitude drone deliveries, these innovations are redefining how people move and how cities are designed and built. The integration of digital tools and innovative solutions is set to transform urban mobility, offering unprecedented opportunities to create sustainable, safer, efficient, and interconnected urban ecosystems.

To harness the full potential of these advancements, cities must establish robust regulatory frameworks for emerging technologies, and collaboration between stakeholders is essential to drive the adoption of new solutions, enhance inclusivity, and scale technological innovations.

This stream will explore cutting-edge approaches, inspiring cities to reimagine transport, energy, and mobility for a smarter, safer and more sustainable urban future. Participants will examine strategies to embrace smart technologies, improve accessibility, reduce environmental impacts, and support the transition to cleaner energy and transport solutions. By focusing on future-ready innovations, this stream will provide actionable insights into how cities can lead the way toward a sustainable and connected urban future.



# Format

The **2025 Workshop for Thought Leaders** is designed to provide a **scenario-based learning environment** to facilitate exchange, foster collaboration, and provide practical takeaways for all participants. The programme is organized around **3 inter-connected streams**. Each stream includes site visits to technology companies, utilities or social organizations, use cases presentation and roundtable discussion. All sessions will be conducted in **English**.

## Programme (TBC)

Morning:   
Afternoon:   
All Day:

Date	Programme
June 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2025	Arrival and Registration
June 4 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	Introductory Session and Panel Discussion
	Stream 1: Digital Tools for a Better Planned and Resilient City
June 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	Stream 2: Digital Tools for a More Caring and Inclusive City
	Stream 3: Embracing the Future of Transport, Energy and Mobility
June 6 <sup>th</sup> , 2025	"Civitas Novus" Assessment Methodology Workshop
	Wrapping up Session
June 7 <sup>rd</sup> , 2025	Departure

For inquiries or further information, please don't hesitate to reach out to the Guangzhou Institute for Urban Innovation at [info@guangzhouaward.org](mailto:info@guangzhouaward.org).

