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Beyond Blueprints: Reimagining Climate-Resilient Cities through Living Labs and Digital Democracy

Date: *Wednesday 5th March 2025*

Time: *1400 Hrs to 1530 Hrs / Group C*

Venue: *Jacaranda 2 / India Habitat Centre*

Format: *Panel discussion*

As cities stand on the frontline of the climate crisis, traditional urban planning approaches—often **rigid, top-down, and fragmented**—struggle to keep pace with the escalating frequency and severity of climate shocks. With **growing urban populations, rising emissions, and expanding climate vulnerabilities**, there is an urgent need to **redefine governance models** that foster agility, inclusivity, and real-time decision-making. The time has come to move beyond **static blueprints** and embrace **dynamic, participatory, and technology-driven frameworks** that enable **adaptive, citizen-led climate action**.

This session will explore how **Urban Living Labs (ULLs), open-data platforms, and digital democracy tools** are transforming cities into **climate-resilient, people-centric ecosystems**. Urban Living Labs serve as **innovation hubs**, enabling multi-stakeholder collaboration between policymakers, researchers, private sector actors, and communities to co-develop climate solutions. At the same time, **digital governance mechanisms—such as AI-driven climate analytics, real-time data monitoring, and civic technology platforms—are democratizing climate decision-making**. By leveraging **crowdsourced data, blockchain-enabled transparency, and participatory digital forums**, cities can move from **reactive responses to proactive, citizen-driven climate governance**.

This discussion will highlight **how cities can harness digital democracy and Living Labs to bridge governance gaps, empower citizens, and scale climate-sensitive urban transformations**.

Key objectives include:

1. **Rethinking Climate-Resilient Urban Planning** – Moving beyond **static master plans** toward **adaptive, participatory, and technology-enabled approaches**.
2. **Leveraging Urban Living Labs** – Showcasing how **ULLs act as innovation hubs** for co-developing and piloting climate solutions in collaboration with diverse stakeholders.
3. **Harnessing Digital Democracy for Climate Governance** – Exploring how **open-source data platforms, AI-driven analytics, and civic tech tools** can democratize decision-making and enhance transparency.
4. **Bridging Policy and Implementation Gaps** – Identifying ways in which **digital governance mechanisms** can enable **scalable, data-informed urban climate policies**.

5. **Defining Success in the Digital Age** – Examining metrics for measuring the impact of **Living Labs and digital participatory governance** in shaping **climate-resilient, people-centric cities**.

Guiding Questions:

1. Rethinking Urban Planning: Moving Beyond Static Master Plans

- How can cities transition from **rigid master plans** to **dynamic, adaptive urban planning** that integrates climate resilience?
- What institutional and governance reforms are necessary to make urban planning **more responsive to climate risks**?
- How can cities ensure that **spatial planning frameworks** align with climate adaptation and mitigation goals?

2. Expanding the Role of Digital Democracy in Urban Climate Governance

- In what ways can **digital tools and open data platforms** empower both policymakers and communities in urban climate governance?
- How can digital platforms facilitate more **inclusive and participatory** urban planning processes?
- What are the **challenges** in ensuring **equitable access to digital tools**, especially for marginalized communities?
- How can digital democracy help bridge the gap between citizens, urban planners, and policymakers in decision-making?
- What lessons can Indian cities learn from global experiences in **leveraging digital democracy for climate resilience**?

3. From Pilots to Systemic Change: Scaling Urban Living Labs

- What key lessons can be drawn from **Urban Living Labs** that have successfully piloted climate solutions?
- How can we **institutionalize** the learnings from these pilots to drive **citywide transformation**?
- What role can **multistakeholder collaboration**—between government, private sector, and communities—play in scaling Living Labs?

4. Financing and Policy Enablers for Climate-Smart Urban Governance

- What **innovative financing models** can support the mainstreaming of participatory climate action in urban planning?
- How can **regulatory and policy frameworks** evolve to incentivize the adoption of climate-sensitive approaches?
- What are the major governance barriers to integrating **climate intelligence** into spatial planning, and how can they be overcome?

5. Measuring Success: Metrics and Indicators for Climate-Resilient Cities

- How do we define **success** in climate-resilient urban planning?
- What key **performance indicators and evaluation frameworks** should cities adopt to track progress?
- How can cities ensure that climate-responsive urban planning remains **inclusive, equitable, and sustainable** over time?

About the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS)

The World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) is the annual flagship Track II initiative organized by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). Instituted in 2001, the Summit series has a legacy of over two decades for making 'sustainable development' a globally shared goal. The only independently convened international Summit on sustainable development and environment, based in the Global South, WSDS strives to provide long-term solutions for the benefit of global communities by assembling the world's most enlightened leaders and thinkers on a single platform. The 24th edition of the annual flagship event of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)—the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS)—will be held from 5-7 March 2025 in New Delhi. The Summit deliberations will focus on the umbrella theme: Partnerships for Accelerating Sustainable Development and Climate Solutions.

