

Beyond a Post-COVID-19 ASEAN Recovery: Towards the Sustainable Urban Future

YALPI 2024 Theme

YALPI's goal is to create a community of youths whose interests are aligned with the social issues of ASEAN member states and the Southeast Asian region and encourage youths to become aware of their potential for change. This year, following the on-going recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, YALPI 2024 sets our sights onto the equally pressing issues of environmental crises which have destroyed biodiversity enmasse and the poverty crisis which has erased indigenous identities, all of which rapid urbanisation is a causing factor of. With that, YALPI 2024 is committed to urging youths to design projects with an aim to circumvent these pressing issues, integrating the solutions to future urban planning.

The South East Asian region, with the goal to exponentially develop its economy, has also been a region to rapidly urbanise and gentrify its city spaces, the pacing of which has caused these growths to be unsustainable by disregarding human life and urban ecology. The result of this unsustainable development has greatly affected the environment and marginalised groups even further, the negative impact also being an obstacle for regional growth as a whole. It is necessary for these issues to be addressed regionally to be a catalyst for designing a framework for development which prioritises the environment, social equity, the economy and cultural diversity through the shared goal of prosperity, stability and sustainability.

In accordance to YALPI 2022 and YALPI 2023, which explored the inequalities within and the recovery of a Covid-19 and post-Covid-19 society through proactive socioeconomic policies from the youth under the themes "ASEAN After COVID-19: Towards Building an Inclusive and Caring Society" and "Rethinking a Post-COVID-19 ASEAN: An Equitable and Resilient Socio-Economic Recovery," YALPI 2024 strives to continue these efforts in supporting the youth in bringing positive change and development in cities and the communities within them, through project designs for a recovered post-Covid-19 society to continue in its pace for development, prioritising greenness, inclusiveness and sustainability.

With that in mind, YALPI 2024, under the theme "Beyond a Post-COVID-19 ASEAN Recovery: Towards the Sustainable Urban Future," aims to identify key components of diverse strategies in development for cities and for communities, to aid the youth in designing projects for sustainable and equitable ASEAN city development, focusing on green urbanism and integration of the displaced.

Subtopic 1: Green Urbanism

Due to the population's rapid growth, urbanisation has turned cities into hubs for the flow of resources. Such expansion is therefore the representative of change, development, and economic drive of the country, which serves as a motive for the population to relocate and settle down. Nevertheless, higher immigration rates are likely to result in unsustainable development since cities are forced to accommodate and provide sufficient resources and energy to meet the hastily increasing population and social needs such as sanitation, transportation, etc. In addition, urbanisation, through the burning of massive amounts of

fossil fuels and the release of pollutants, inevitably affects the environment and the population's quality of life as a whole. It can be said that urbanisation has effects on the environment and is also affected by such impacts. Thus, the foundation for sustainable urbanisation must focus on human settlements, planning and designing urban spaces to support sustainability in new urban development projects, and the modernization of existing urban areas under the challenge of managing the impacts of urban growth.

The idea of green urbanism, or principles for fostering communities and city plans that are constructive to both people and the environment, has emerged for the reasons mentioned. The concept encourages the sustainable expansion of cities and communities under the consideration of being environmentally friendly, setting the framework for an integrated city plan that will help adjust and enhance the environment on all scales. The green urbanism idea has, however, not received the attention it deserves from society as a whole in practice despite being highly appreciated. Government and private agencies themselves have not implemented this principle deliberately, particularly in ASEAN countries which do not aim to redress environmental and urban planning complications efficiently and sustainably. Consequently, YALPI 2024 has a strong desire to support the projects developed by ASEAN youth, the majority of whom are from developing countries that are going through comparable rates of rapid urbanisation. These projects will bring together youth from different city plans and architectural styles that are located in the related geographic and climatic zones to collaborate on problem-solving, learning, and exchanging about urban design and environmental change challenges while initiating the possibility of long-term problem-solving and development together to make this idea more than just an abstract concept but a project that can be achieved in society and be able to adapt to the reality without hindering economic growth and development or have as little impact as possible.

Subtopic 2: Integration of the Displaced

Urbanisation, a process involving the resettlements of the population from rural to urban, is an inevitable phenomenon commonly experienced by the world, Southeast Asia included. The region's urbanisation is closely aligned with economic expansion, resulting in the economic transition from being primarily reliant on agriculture to being more centred around industry and services. Urban areas serve as key drivers of economic growth, drawing millions of people from rural areas and ultimately lifting many out of poverty. However, this rapid urbanisation also triggers forced migration, displacing marginalised groups from their home and leading to social inequality. One of the primary concerns when it comes to forced migration is the dreadful fate of the displaced populations. Displaced communities tend to end up in informal settlements or slums with poor conditions, for instance, overcrowding and inadequate sanitation. On top of that, these areas mostly have limited access to basic needs and social services such as education, healthcare, and clean water, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage and social exclusion and raising humanitarian concerns. Moreover, this displacement also leads to identity discontinuity as displaced communities commonly struggle to maintain their traditional cultural practices in the new settlements, leading to a gradual erosion of their cultural identity. This phenomenon extends to language, with native tongues sometimes fading into obscurity as individuals adapt to new linguistic environments.

To address these challenges, it is necessary to foster an environment where entrepreneurs ensure economic growth, while considerations for livability prioritise the well-being of the residents; inclusivity narrows the socio-economic disparities frequently associated with the process of urbanisation; policies simultaneously are environmentally friendly to mitigate the environmental impact from the rapid urban expansion. As a regional association, ASEAN should cooperate with each other in order to tackle the problem, whether through providing aid or sharing information. If ASEAN fails to address these issues, emerging from urbanisation, the overall well-being, stability, and growth prospects of ASEAN nations could be jeopardised, negatively affecting the region's sustainable development and prosperity. Thus, YALPI 2024, as a youth-led organisation, aspires to encourage a project, emphasising on creating a city that is simultaneously entrepreneurial, habitable, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable.