



## **Promised Happiness**

### **—What I expect from China’s 13th 5-Year Plan**

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Night falls in Beijing, a city where I chose to stay after graduating from college. Winter just came; cars and people on the street are now not that crowded. I am standing at a bus stop, waiting for my bus. Lately, the most talked about news is the 5<sup>th</sup> Plenum of CPC Central Committee, which is popular among people because it passed “Suggestions on Drafting the 13<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan”, introducing over 100 new policies. Even a music video was made about it and went viral on the Internet. The bus finally comes. I put on my headset and my thoughts start wandering: this plan, quite a big deal not only for the central leadership but also for common people, what will it bring to me? Should I have any expectations out of it? In five years, I will witness the realization of completing building a moderately well-off society. Will my plain dreams come true by then?

**My city instead of just a metropolitan**

“The true lonely are like duckweed; they never talk about the deep sorrow because it hurts so much.” This sentence in Chinese poem can be used to describe the “floating population” in Beijing. Some envy them because they manage to stay here after graduation; but we live a life quite different from that of locals. High living costs leave us “vulnerable” after paying electricity, water, mobile bills and rent. Housing price keeps rocketing, so we never dream of buying a house here. Strict household registration systems in Beijing and Shanghai, namely crowded metropolitans, are like thresholds keeping people out. Some young people from other cities, if not all, choose to become a civil servant who can get a *hukou* once employed. Without *hukou*, one cannot buy house or car; they have to go back to home cities to apply for passports. Though small things, they remind us now and then that we do not belong here. This is just a city where we live and work. In five years, household registration system will be replaced by the more liberal and flexible residence permit system and people from other provinces can enjoy the same services with locals. Illegal traders of *hukou* will lose their job; all people contributing to urban development share the same public services; we no longer feel estranged for the lack of *hukou*. Medical bills within the same province can be settled directly; medical insurance can be used in other provinces; house purchase limit will

be lifted; more elites can settle here without *hukou*. Schooling will also be less troublesome and costly with more universal kindergartens. Livelihood of the aged will be more guaranteed and secure; we do not worry ending up one and alone after a lifetime of hard work.

### **High life quality instead of high living costs**

Life in Beijing is no easy piece. Haze is now so common that blue sky always make the headline once it appears. People have to wear masks and look forward for Beijing to host international conferences or big events, because then pollution will be less severe thus cleaner air like “APEC blue”. “Singles Day Shopping Craze” is coming, and I better grab some PM2.5 masks online for the haze is sure to worsen after heating by coal started. Nowadays, people do not trust homemade milk powders anymore; instead they would rather spend more on foreign brands. It is the same for home appliances. Why? For better quality. Beijing does not have a lot of rain; but due to inadequate draining system, whenever it showers, the city becomes a “sea”—miles between work and home can be extremely difficult. I knew no wealth management before; and when I finally made up mind and invest all savings in the stock market, the market crashed. I called my parents last night telling them my plan to visit them on New Year vacation, but I intentionally left out the

fact that I did not get a seat-ticket because I missed the 60-day beforehand booking window. My mom told me not to buy instant food from supermarkets for they are not safe. I promised her and then persuaded myself to take it easy, because basically no food qualifies as safe: they always contain preservatives or modified genes...

Five years from now, these problems will be gone, or at least leaving us. Pollutant standards will no longer stay merely formal, temporary or rent-seeking tools. PM 2.5 concentration will be lower; more people choose electrical cars; more charging poles will be built; military parade celebrating 2019 National Day will not shut down factories so that we can see blue-sky background. “Made-in-China” will change its image. Chinese people no longer rush to Japan to buy electric rice cookers or toilet lids. Food safety will not be a stain any more and you can have safe food at supermarkets, small restaurants or roadside stalls. The old underground drainage system built a dozen years ago will be finally renovated; rain, be it light or heavy, will no longer create problems. When vacations come, we do not have to queue up and grab tickets online; tickets will be cheaper and more trains will be used to take people back to hometown. Thanks to incentives for Internet development, “Internet+” keeps bringing us surprises. Online concepts and modes shape more modern and

healthy consumption behaviors. Off-line services and experiences render higher life quality. Safe Internet environment and sound regulation lead to revolution of life styles, changing way of doing things like waste recycling, taxi booking, medical services and elderly care. There will be more safety nets to “encourage people to do business creatively and drive innovation”; young companies will spend less time on excessive procedures and red tape. With more diverse financing platforms, capital is less challenged and a more open and tolerable environment will make them feel respected and embraced.

### **From to the city to back to countryside**

Immigrant workers are never absent from media coverage and news cameras. Discussions around them also never stop. Besides their awkward identity and worrying circumstances, the home left behind calls for more attention. Their children have to face life without adults’ guidance or care; the elderly, in 70s or even older, have to take care of a family when they should be enjoying retired life. Patches of land are left unfarmed; teachers in rural schools often teach three or four subjects due to lack of staff; some villages are thrown into new chaos after receiving relocation compensations...The 5<sup>th</sup> Plenum of CPC Central Committee mentioned new measures that directly benefit rural development

and residents, such as poverty-alleviation project, all-society social security plan, skill training of new-generation immigrant workers, ownership reform of land, etc. Once these measures are implemented, immigrant workers will have no worries behind. Land can be rented out and create income; they will not feel awkward or unwelcome; living and working conditions will be improved; their children will attend the same schools as local children do; they can always find places to receive training and then find a good job. Many urban residents will then prefer living in the countryside, engaging in eco-agriculture, family sightseeing or landscape economy. Resources are thus fully used and local economy gets stronger drivers. With such interaction between rural and urban areas, the dual economic system will lost soil and root.

### **From “too tired to love” to “smell the roses”**

Whenever life gets me and makes me feel tired, I will close my eyes and picture a bright future. After that I am re-charged and keep going. In my imagination, five years from now, I have a small apartment and a lovely family. My baby boy goes to kindergarten right at the corner of our block, quite convenient to pick him up. There are more shopping choices and no need to rush on “Single Day Shopping Craze”, because foreign designer brands

will not be as expensive as they are now. We use more goods made in China for they are of better quality and more popular than foreign ones. “Second-Child Policy” has been adopted for some time, and now having a baby is not a bad choice. I am planning to have another one and make a bigger and happier family. My parents rent our land out and come live together with us. They can use rural medical insurance here and no longer say such things are a headache. Illegal websites are rare and they learned computer in spare time. Sometimes they order discounted and free-delivery eggs online and seem more addicted to the Internet than us. My cousin chose to return to the countryside after graduation and started some high-tech gardening; now she earns more than I do in the city.

I get off the bus and feel more assured about future. The 13<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan may be high above the ground, a blueprint, a strategy and general thoughts that lead China to prosperity and growth. It may also be specific, a promise or hope that assure us. “Suggestions on Drafting the 13th Five-Year Plan” actually responds to our discontent, complaint, aspirations and expectations. Hidden between the lines are our pursuit of sense of belonging, better life quality, social fairness and more rights and interests. Though details of the 13<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan are yet to be disclosed and specific measures

figured out, I believe in one old Chinese saying: as long as you follow the river, you can reach the ocean. So I believe that in five years when the Xiaokang dream is realized, my simple dreams will also come true. By then, life will be cozier, and happiness easier.