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An Analysis of the Application of Cross-Regional Collaborative Governance Models in the Development of the "Guangdong-Guangxi Corridor"

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Abstract:

Cross-regional collaborative governance refers to the governance behavior driven by multiple stakeholders under the guiding principle of collaboration, utilizing cooperative governance methods to build a development framework of shared construction, governance, and benefits, ultimately enhancing the overall interests of cross-regional areas. Based on the classification of collaborative governance types, cross-regional collaborative governance primarily includes three models: vertical multi-level collaborative governance, parallel collaborative governance, and cross-sectional collaborative governance. The ultimate goal of the "Guangdong-Guangxi Corridor" (Yue-Gui Corridor) development is to create a tourism community. The super-network structure of the community closely aligns with the principles of cross-regional multi-level collaborative governance. Therefore, considering the practical aspects of the "Guangdong-Guangxi Corridor" development, the flexible application of different models of cross-regional multi-level collaborative governance is an essential and realistic path to promoting the comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable development of the project.

Keywords:

Cross-regional collaborative governance models; "Guangdong-Guangxi Corridor" development; application

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, promoting coordinated and balanced regional development has become a key strategy in the country’s economic and social development in the new era. The report from the 20th Party Congress explicitly called for the promotion of regional coordinated development, the deep implementation of the regional development strategy, and the full utilization of the comparative advantages of different regions to build a complementary regional economic structure. This aims to jointly advance high-quality regional development and achieve a win-win situation in both economic growth and pollution reduction through green development [1, 2]. President Xi Jinping has repeatedly emphasized the concept of “lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets,” and in his speech at the second session of the 13th National People's Congress in 2019, he proposed exploring a new path to high-quality development guided by ecological priority and green development. Major national strategies such as the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, the Yangtze River Economic Belt, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and the ecological protection and high-quality devel-

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opment of the Yellow River Basin have since emerged and become key priorities in the country's strategic agenda. Against this backdrop, cross-regional governance has garnered increasing attention and interest from researchers.[①] From the perspective of national governance modernization, cross-regional governance is considered a "sub-topic" within the broader issue of national governance modernization, which is an indispensable driver for the advancement of China's national governance. The essence of cross-regional governance lies in the pursuit of high-quality governance performance through equality, communication, consultation, and collaboration among diverse stakeholders. It alters the top-down command relationship between central and local governments, breaks through the geographical boundaries and rigid limitations of administrative divisions, transcends the simple dichotomy between government and market, and bridges the divide between the state and society. This establishes a partnership and collaborative governance model involving multiple actors such as the government, enterprises, non-governmental organizations, and civil society [1]. The term "cross-regional" in the above definition refers to this form of governance. In the practice of cross-regional governance, the diversification of governance stakeholders, the variety of governance issues, the fixed nature of administrative divisions, the competition for administrative powers, and the distribution of governance outcomes, among other factors, have all increased the complexity of cross-regional governance. These factors have also posed many challenges to the practical effectiveness of cross-regional governance. Promoting strong collaboration and close cooperation are distinguishing characteristics of cross-regional governance, and they serve as the fundamental guarantee for achieving the intended goals of such governance. This is one of the reasons why some domestic studies refer to cross-regional governance as cross-regional collaborative governance. However, cross-regional collaborative governance is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Rather, it requires the construction of differentiated collaborative governance models based on the specific governance context to maximize the performance of cross-regional collaborative governance. This paper aims to analyze the different models of cross-regional collaborative governance and explore their application in the development of the "Guangdong-Guangxi Corridor."

1 Conceptual Definition and Model Analysis of Cross-Regional Collaborative Governance

1.1 Conceptual Definition of Cross-Regional Collaborative Governance

Governance falls within the domain of public administration, with its rise on a global scale beginning in the 1990s. James N. Rosenau is recognized as one of the primary founders of governance theory and the earliest proponent of the concept of governance. In 1995, the Global Governance Commission, in its report Our Global Partnership, defined governance as "the sum of many ways of managing the same issues by public or private individuals and institutions" [2]. This remains one of the most representative and authoritative definitions of governance. The essence of governance lies in its focus on mechanisms of rule that do not rely solely on government authority and sanctions [3]. The "secret" behind the popularity of governance theory is its ability not only to compensate for the "rational" mistakes and biases that occur in government bureaucracy but also to mitigate the disorder and imbalance that can arise from market-driven management. The innovation of governance theory is that, without denying the leading role of government in governance, it empha-

[①] In this paper, "cross-regional" refers specifically to the domestic context, not the international dimension.

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sizes the role of multiple stakeholders in society, freeing the government from its traditional singular function and positioning it as the "guide" for diversified social governance [4]. Collaborative governance theory emerged as an interdisciplinary concept in the 1990s. This theory emphasizes constructing an optimal governance structure through the joint participation of diverse stakeholders, with the goal of maximizing overall benefits through cooperation among the stakeholders. The optimal arrangement of these diverse governance actors forms the foundation for the creation of the best collaborative governance model, and this arrangement has a significant impact on the construction of an optimal governance structure. Over time, as cross-regional cooperation has advanced and deepened, the theory of cross-regional collaborative governance has evolved and matured, and the practice of cross-regional collaborative governance has become increasingly robust. Academic understanding and insights into cross-regional collaborative governance have also continued to deepen and expand. In this paper, we define cross-regional collaborative governance as a governance approach in which diverse stakeholders, guided by the concept of collaboration, use cooperative governance methods to build a framework for shared construction, shared governance, and shared development, with the goal of enhancing the overall benefits across regions. Compared to government bureaucratic rule and market-driven management, cross-regional collaborative governance has its own distinctive characteristics and development path.

1.2 Analysis of Cross-Regional Collaborative Governance Models

Based on the current development of domestic cross-regional collaborative governance theory and the latest advancements in collaborative governance practices, this paper categorizes cross-regional collaborative governance models into three main types: the cross-regional multi-level vertical collaborative governance model, the cross-regional multi-level parallel collaborative governance model, and the cross-regional multi-level cross-cutting collaborative governance model.

1.2.1 Cross-Regional Multi-Level Vertical Collaborative Governance Model

This model refers to a governance structure formed by multiple hierarchical governance entities, such as provincial, municipal, county (district), and township (village) levels, within the same administrative region, participating in cross-regional governance under a vertical, unified administrative command. In this model, the vertical hierarchy and governance entities belong to the same administrative jurisdiction, and top-down administrative orders ensure smooth collaboration across different levels and diverse governance bodies with minimal resistance. The effectiveness of this model depends not only on the collaboration at the same hierarchical levels (e.g., provincial, municipal, county), but also on the synergetic effects of close cooperation between vertical governance levels and entities. In other words, it is a coupled governance model that combines government administrative governance, market governance by enterprises, and social governance by other societal organizations [5]. For cross-regional multi-level vertical collaborative governance, the effective operation of vertical collaboration at any specific administrative level within a region complements and supports the overall healthy functioning of multi-level vertical collaborative governance across the region. Together, these layers shape the practical reality of cross-regional multi-level vertical collaborative governance. This model emphasizes collaboration within the same level of governance entities within a region, which requires high governance capacity and competence from different levels of government. It is worth noting that, for cross-regional multi-level vertical collaborative governance, since multiple levels of government are admin-

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istratively under the same province, the willingness to collaborate is less affected by administrative divisions, and the hierarchical relationship between levels facilitates more direct and efficient collaboration. In this model, there are significant differences in the responsibilities and functions assumed by each governance level and entity. The main role of each government level is to provide comprehensive support for the governance process, which aligns with the operational demands of a socialist market economy. Therefore, governments need to formulate favorable policies regarding finance, taxation, land, and other aspects to establish systems and mechanisms that promote horizontal and vertical collaborative governance, thereby optimizing the allocation of resources such as labor, materials, capital, and information. This also involves activating the governance potential of market forces and societal actors, ensuring that both market and social forces align and work together in the collaborative governance process, forming a governance structure where market and social governance play a dominant role, with government governance serving a complementary function.

1.2.2 Cross-Regional Multi-Level Parallel Collaborative Governance Model

In contrast to the cross-regional multi-level vertical collaborative governance model, where governance entities and actions are typically part of the same provincial administrative area, the cross-regional multi-level parallel collaborative governance model involves governance entities and actions that belong to different administrative regions. This introduces additional complexity, as collaborative governance will occur across various administrative jurisdictions, power boundaries, and interest groups, creating more potential for resistance and friction. Specifically, this model faces the challenge of cooperation between diverse governance entities that belong to different administrative regions, as well as conflicts arising from institutional arrangements, power struggles, and differing interests across provincial boundaries. Additionally, the distribution of resources in cross-regional multi-level parallel collaborative governance tends to be uneven, influenced by local protectionism, which leads to regional isolation and semi-closed dynamics in the flow and allocation of governance resources. However, within the same province, collaboration between governance entities at the same administrative level is relatively easier to facilitate. Therefore, a breakthrough can be made by focusing on collaborative governance between diverse governance entities at the same level within a province, which can then drive cross-level and cross-type collaborative cooperation. This, in turn, helps re-couple multiple cross-regional governance entities and promote cross-regional multi-level parallel collaborative governance. Unlike the vertical collaborative governance model, which can directly apply the hierarchical nature of authority and resource allocation, cross-regional multi-level parallel collaborative governance requires a more nuanced approach, with moderate intervention and control by administrative powers to improve collaborative performance. Consequently, governments must actively dismantle regional administrative barriers and engage diverse governance entities, such as enterprises and NGOs, to participate in the collaborative governance process. This involves promoting coupling between governance entities from different regions at the same administrative level, building a cross-regional multi-level parallel collaborative governance community. Furthermore, in the practice of parallel collaborative governance, governments at the same administrative level need to design overall plans, long-term strategies, and policy frameworks for cross-regional collaborative governance, establish scientific, institutionalized, and standardized coordinating bodies and support systems, and create an inclusive, open, and shared governance environment. This will facilitate the flow of cross-regional information, knowledge, and technology and the conversion of research results into actionable outputs. Governments should also guide and streamline the flow of people, capital, and resources across regions, es-

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tablishing reliable governance platforms that attract and unite diverse governance participants. Additionally, the role of social organizations in collaborative governance must be fully leveraged. Typically, collaboration among social organizations can occur both between similar organizations (e.g., enterprise collaborations) and between different types of organizations (which is more complex and broad). Social organization collaboration is an essential component of cross-regional multi-level parallel collaborative governance and an effective means of enhancing overall governance performance.

1.2.3 Cross-Regional Multi-Level Cross-Cutting Collaborative Governance Model

This model involves governance entities from different administrative regions and levels, such as provincial and municipal levels, or county and municipal levels, engaging in cross-regional cooperation. In addition to the cross-level involvement of governance entities, the governance objects, issues, and models often intersect and integrate. As noted earlier, the cross-regional multi-level vertical collaborative governance model emphasizes market and social collaboration, with government governance as a supplementary function, while the cross-regional multi-level parallel collaborative governance model places more emphasis on government collaboration, strengthening the roles of market and social governance. The cross-regional multi-level cross-cutting collaborative governance model essentially combines elements of both vertical and parallel governance models, intertwining them to create a dual cross-cutting governance framework characterized by "multi-party participation, horizontal cross-region, vertical cross-level, and collaborative governance." In fact, most cross-regional governance cases are examples of multi-level cross-cutting governance. In simpler terms, purely vertical or parallel governance models alone may not maximize governance performance. Only through an objective, comprehensive, and fair evaluation of collaborative governance in practice and the strategic, context-sensitive application of multiple governance models can we achieve the organic integration of governance principles and techniques. For further illustration, please refer to Figure 1, which provides a visual representation of the different cross-regional multi-level collaborative governance models.

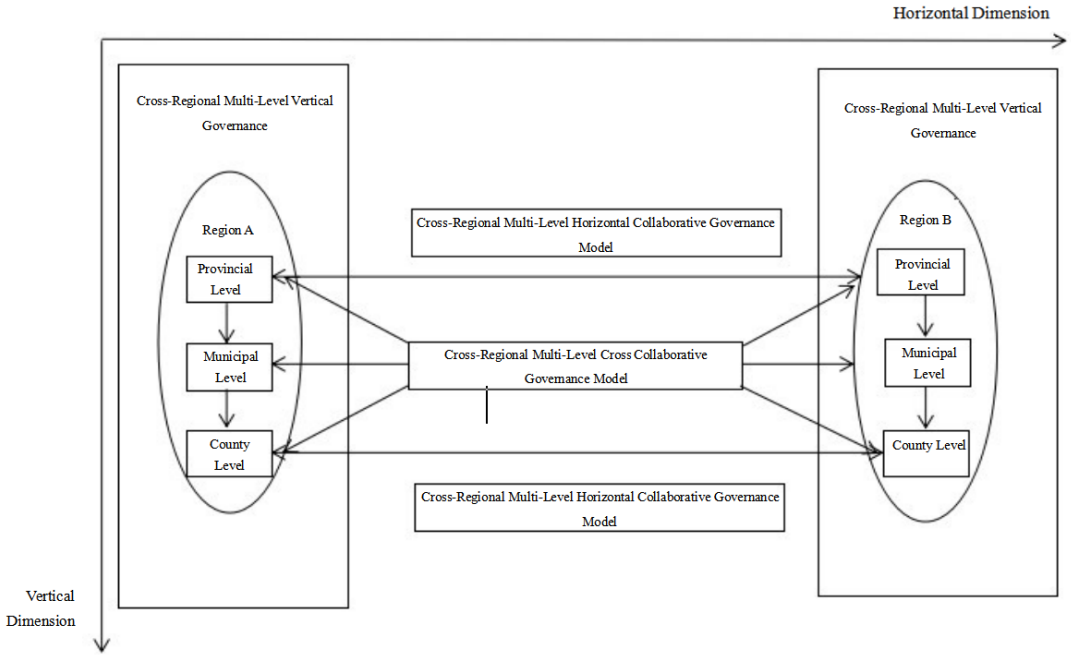


Figure 1 Cross-Regional Multi-Level Collaborative Governance Model

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2. Application of Cross-Regional Collaborative Governance Models in the Construction of the "Yue-Gui Corridor"

In December 2020, the cities of Guilin, Hezhou, and Zhaoqing jointly signed the "Cooperation Framework Agreement for the Construction of the 'Yue-Gui Corridor'" (hereinafter referred to as the "Agreement"). The Agreement emphasizes, "Focusing on cultural and tourism cooperation, deepening collaborative momentum, and using major projects as the focal point, to promote the integrated sharing and allocation of resources and elements. The goal is to jointly build the 'Yue-Gui Corridor,' which will encompass cultural tourism, health and wellness, therapeutic tourism, and industrial integration" [7]. The development goals outlined include, "By 2025, the total number of tourists to the 'Yue-Gui Corridor' will exceed 358 million, with tourism revenue surpassing 490 billion yuan. The corridor will integrate the development of Zhaoqing, Hezhou, and Guilin into a beautiful tourism route for the Guangdong-Guangxi region" [8]. Looking forward, the ultimate aim of the "Yue-Gui Corridor" is to establish a "tourism community" involving the joint participation and integrated development of Zhaoqing, Hezhou, and Guilin. This community will serve as a platform for deep cross-regional cooperation between Guangdong and Guangxi in areas such as cultural tourism, health and wellness, therapeutic tourism, and industrial development.

In this community, the connections between participants are not driven by specific goals alone... Each participant needs to leverage their existing networks to achieve specific sub-goals. This allows the community to transcend a single functional network, with multiple functional networks nested together, leading to a super-network structure that integrates functions through multi-network interactions [9]. The essence of this community structure and its super-network model underscores the importance and necessity of close collaboration among individual participants, which aligns closely with the principles of collaborative governance. As previously mentioned, the long-term vision for the "Yue-Gui Corridor" is a "tourism community." Achieving this vision requires collaboration and consensus between diverse horizontal and vertical stakeholders from Zhaoqing, Hezhou, and Guilin. The collective collaborative power will drive the steady development and eventual realization of the "tourism community." The multi-dimensional governance levels, diverse governance topics, and multi-stakeholder participation present important opportunities for the application of various cross-regional, multi-level collaborative governance models.

2.1 Cross-Regional Multi-Level Vertical Collaborative Governance and the "Yue-Gui Corridor"

In the development of the "Yue-Gui Corridor," the government plays a pivotal role. The municipal party committees and governments have introduced the "Special Work Plan for the Development of the Yue-Gui Corridor" and established a dedicated working team led by senior officials from the municipal government to ensure the smooth progress of construction. This policy-driven approach and high-level leadership reflect the characteristics of the cross-regional multi-level vertical collaborative governance model.

Firstly, the governments of Zhaoqing, Hezhou, and Guilin need to enhance communication and coordination with the provincial governments of Guangdong and Guangxi to secure their understanding and support.

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This collaboration will push for the introduction of strategic, macro-level policies at the provincial level, offering guidance for the joint promotion of the "Yue-Gui Corridor" and providing practical references for the three cities. Secondly, each of the three cities must develop their own overall plans, long-term objectives, and short-term actions for the "Yue-Gui Corridor" construction, focusing on unique industries, creating distinctive villages, promoting regional tourism, and enhancing the integration of public services across counties and townships. This approach will improve the business environment and remove barriers to vertical collaborative governance. Additionally, it is crucial to involve diverse governance participants, including businesses, social organizations, and individuals, to establish a new pattern of vertical collaborative governance, laying the foundation for horizontal and cross-governance cooperation.

2.2 Cross-Regional Multi-Level Horizontal Collaborative Governance and the "Yue-Gui Corridor"

The construction of the "Yue-Gui Corridor" involves Guilin, Hezhou, and Zhaoqing, each of which possesses distinct advantages in terms of resources, geographical location, industrial foundations, and cultural characteristics. Through cross-regional multi-level horizontal collaborative governance, the resources of the three cities can be integrated, realizing complementary advantages and jointly developing the "Yue-Gui Corridor," which combines cultural tourism, health and wellness, therapeutic tourism, and industrial integration.

In this model of horizontal collaborative governance, it is essential that while each city's corridor retains its unique features and styles, these characteristics must also connect and integrate seamlessly. This is a core challenge for cross-regional multi-level horizontal collaborative governance in the "Yue-Gui Corridor" construction. Therefore, there is an urgent need to establish a regularized system for a joint leadership meeting among the three cities, set up a hotline for communication, conduct periodic research on the progress of the corridor construction, and hold on-site meetings to coordinate and resolve issues as they arise.

Moreover, the districts (counties) and townships under each of the three cities must also cooperate in ecological protection, rural revitalization, cultural tourism, heritage preservation, and the development of standard logos for the corridor. Additionally, the three cities should select strong and reputable businesses to form an "enterprise alliance" for cross-regional collaborative governance. These businesses can contribute to the development of distinctive industries that will support the construction of the "Yue-Gui Corridor." Furthermore, the cities should identify influential social organizations and leverage their strengths in policy promotion, theoretical advocacy, field research, and offering suggestions to aid the construction process.

2.3 Cross-Regional Multi-Level Cross Collaborative Governance and the "Yue-Gui Corridor"

In the construction of the "Yue-Gui Corridor," the three cities are not only collaborating in the cultural tourism sector but also in other areas such as sports, health and wellness, rural revitalization, and transportation infrastructure. This multi-domain cooperation fosters a win-win development scenario and promotes the overall economic and social development of the three cities. This is where cross-regional multi-level cross collaborative governance plays a crucial role in the "Yue-Gui Corridor" construction.

Cross-regional collaborative governance emphasizes the joint participation of the government, private sec-

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tors, non-profit organizations, social groups, and citizens. Public and community participation is also indispensable in the development of the "Yue-Gui Corridor." This engagement enhances the project's social impact and sustainability. The model not only facilitates resource sharing and optimal allocation but also promotes policy coordination and unity, avoiding conflicts and redundancy in policy. This fundamentally improves the efficiency and quality of the "Yue-Gui Corridor" construction.

In the long term, creating a two-way cross-collaborative governance structure that integrates vertical and horizontal governance is an inevitable trend for the "Yue-Gui Corridor" to evolve into a "tourism community." Specifically, cross-collaborative governance requires the fusion of vertical and horizontal collaborative models, utilizing modern technologies such as big data and cloud computing to establish smart, digital governance platforms. These platforms will create a flat, information-driven governance architecture where diverse governance participants from the three cities can interact and collaborate, ensuring that cross-collaborative governance is implemented effectively.

Therefore, this paper suggests that the governments of Zhaoqing, Hezhou, and Guilin should establish a dedicated website for the construction of the "Yue-Gui Corridor." This website would serve as a platform for updating, interacting, and sharing information related to the corridor's development. Additionally, a "Yue-Gui Dialogue" section could be created to collect and analyze the viewpoints, opinions, and ideas from diverse governance participants, helping to inform the cross-collaborative governance process both online and offline.

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