China’s Urbanization and Urban Planning in the Context of Globalization

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1. Urban Development in the context of globalization
China is experiencing an accelerating process of urbanization. This process is not only driven by the market and the industrialization process, but, as China has become a member of WTO, also inevitably influenced by the globalization process.

How to respond to the impact of globalization on development has become a focal attention of the governments and the academic society in China.
1. Urban Development in the context of globalization

The new urban system in China

1. A number of cities with international and regional importance have been primarily formed.

- Many MNCs locate their headquarters in cities with international importance (e.g. Beijing and Shanghai) and those with regional importance (e.g. Guangzhou and Qingdao).

- Enhance their economic dominance.
1. Urban Development in the context of globalization

The new urban system in China

2. Densely urbanized regions have been developing in a fast pace
   - Three densely urbanized regions have been formed along China’s coast areas, i.e. the Pearl River Delta, the Yangtze River Delta and the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region.
   - These regions have become the most dynamic and competitive economies that dominate the development orientation of the country.
Key urban system area and land use

Beijing 1998

Pearl river dealt 1995

Suzhou 1996
Key urban system area and land use

Beijing 2002

Pearl river dealt 2002

Suzhou 2004
The new urban system in China

3. Industries are prospering in small cities and towns

- Many small cities and towns along the coast are directly participating in international production.
- They have absorbed a great deal of surplus labors from the countryside and brought the rural economy up.
1. Urban Development in the context of globalization

The new urban system in China

4. The marginalization of the inland cities and traditional industrial cities

- The inland medium-and-small-size cities and the industrial cities formed in the planned economy have lost their advantages.
- They are encountering problems of slow growth, industrial degradation and insufficient employment.
2. Urbanization in China
2. Urbanization in China

The process

In China, the general urbanization level is not so high but the absolute volume of urban population is extremely large. We have to admit that China’s urbanization itself is a great contribution to the world and to its modernization.
2. Urbanization in China

The process

Before the 1980s, rural-urban migration was generally constrained or even suppressed.

Since 1980s, China has been experiencing a rapid and continuing development in urbanization.

The annual increase of the indicator was only 0.1-0.2% prior to 1980. But after then this figure hit 0.8-1.0%.
2. Urbanization in China

The process

Besides the open-door policy and the economic reform, China’s rapid urbanization is also due to the following reasons:

- The wide spreading of the transport infrastructure that facilitates easier migration
- More education opportunities in the cities
- The rapid development of information technology and modern media which create new jobs
- Lessons learnt from the developed countries that help China to gain efficiency and avoid making similar mistakes.
The characteristics of China’s urbanization

1. Urbanization is accompanied by the transition from a planned economy towards a market economy.
   - This increases its complexity as well as the difficulties in management.

2. Urbanization in China
2. Urbanization in China

- The characteristics of China’s urbanization

2. Regional imbalance in urbanization
   a) The inter-province imbalance.
The characteristics of China’s urbanization

2. Regional imbalance in urbanization
   b) The intra-province imbalance.
   c) The imbalanced development of the urban system. The mega and large cities are developing faster than the medium and small sized cities in terms of population and economic growth and fixed-asset investment.

Development differences in Jiangsu Province

Mega and large cities
2. Urbanization in China

The characteristics of China’s urbanization

3. Urbanization is a two edged sword on resources conservation

- The eastern coast regions are not only the most rapidly developing areas, but also areas of abundant arable land and water resources, which significantly challenges the urbanization process.
2. Urbanization in China

The characteristics of China’s urbanization

3. Urbanization is a two-edged sword on resources conservation

- we hope that the following problems can be resolved:

   a) Decreasing woodland coverage;
   b) Degradation of grassland and frequent sandstorm;
   c) Loss of water, soil and biological species;
   d) Exhausting water resources;
   e) Pollution by pesticides and chemical fertilizers.
2. Urbanization in China

The characteristics of China’s urbanization

4. The existence of the dual urban-rural structure results in a severe phenomenon of incomplete urbanization

a) The rural household responsibility system is regarded as the “social security” for the migrants.

b) As migrant labors increase, the internal dual structure of the cities has also been formed.
2. Urbanization in China

The future process and challenges

We estimate that China’s urbanization level would reach 46%-48% by the year of 2010 and to 55%-58% by the year of 2020.

Urbanization Process in 2020

Estimated poor areas
2. Urbanization in China

The future process and challenges

1. The severe resource and environmental constraints.
   E.g. arable land, water, energy, etc.

- Arable land
- Water pollutes
- Energy distribution
The future process and challenges

2. The increasing social problems arising from rapid urbanization.
   E.g. the traditional low-income residents, the floating population, the farmers with no job, etc.
2. Urbanization in China

The future process and challenges

3. The threat to the healthy economic structure and the safety in national economy.

- Many regions have a large proportion of export-oriented and foreign-capital dependent industries.
- The excessive government intervention and the intense competition between cities
- A low level in urban development but a high level in local governments’ debt burden.
2. Urbanization in China

The future process and challenges

4. The pressures on regional coordination.

- To sustain a rapid and healthy development in the eastern coast areas, to accelerate development in the inland and the western regions, and to rehabilitate the environment of the ecologically fragile regions.

Urban system in China
2. Urbanization in China

The future process and challenges

5. The crisis of urban public security.

- The 2003 epidemic of SARS in some of the big cities was an initial warning to China’s urban public security system.
- Potential natural disasters, severe man-made incidents such as terrorist attack.
3. The status and the role of urban planning in the new development phase
The status and the role of urban planning

The status of planning

1. The urban planning system

Under the framework of the *Urban Planning Act*, China has formed an integrated urban and rural planning system.

- The National Urban System Planning,
- The Provincial Urban System Planning,
- City Master Planning (86 cities approved by the State Council, others approved by the provincial governments),
- Urban Cluster (Agglomeration) Planning (new type of planning legislated at the provincial level)
- Detailed Regulatory Planning.
3. The status and the role of urban planning

The status of planning

The Urban and Rural Planning System

State
- The National Urban System Planning
  - Urban System Planning
  - Urban Cluster Planning

Province, Prefecture
- Urban System Planning

Municipality, County Town
- Urban Planning
  - City Master Planning
  - Detailed Planning
  - Immediate Planning

Designated Town
- Town Planning

Township and Village Planning

The Urban and Rural Planning System in China
3. The status and the role of urban planning

The status of planning

The Land Use Permit, Planning Permit and Permission Notes for Site Location, etc.
The status of planning

2. The improved role of urban planning

- The Ministry of Construction in charge of national urban and rural planning.
- Provincial authorities are responsible for approving plans and implementing planning management and supervision.
- Planning departments installed in various levels of city government, and planning commissions established in the framework of the People’s Congress.
- The plan making agencies hire over 100,000 technical staff compared to that of 20,000 in the early 1980s.
- The State Government and the provincial governments have started to designate full-time inspectors to supervise the urban planning work.
3. The status and the role of urban planning

The role of planning

- The national development strategy was significantly reoriented.
  - Implementing the sustainable development strategy,
  - achieving the objective of building a well-off society,
  - adopting scientific view in development,
  - constructing a harmonious society,
  - developing a new socialist countryside.

Urban planning has been given a new life in the new era!
3. The status and the role of urban planning

The role of planning

1. Planning for macro control
   - Planning is an important means of the macro governmental control over the local socio-economic development.
3. The status and the role of urban planning

The role of planning

2. Planning as a public policy

- Defining urban land distribution and affecting the spatial pattern of jobs and residential distribution, and its environmental quality
- Defining distribution of social services in the urban areas, and influencing its level and orientation
- Defining urban transport policy, and influencing the supply of transport service.

Affordable housing in Beijing
3. The status and the role of urban planning

The role of planning

2. Planning as a public policy

- Rationalizing the regional urban structure, coordinating the distribution of major infrastructures, guiding the upgrade of regional industrial structure and promoting the regional competitiveness.
3. The status and the role of urban planning

The role of planning

3. Planning for conserving the natural and cultural resources

- The Government: “a scientific view in development”.
- The planning: the key resources such as the open spaces, the historical districts and the watercourses.
  - “No Development Zones”, “Limited Development Zones” and “Development Zones”
  - The “Green Lines” for green space system, the “Purple Lines” for cultural resources, the “Blue Lines” for watercourses, and the “Yellow Lines” for infrastructure.
Summary

China’s urbanization is experiencing an important development period in the light of globalization.

Central and local governments have been paying much attention on the planning tools.

Planning is expected to play a more significant role in the process of social transition and social transformation.

We have to strive hard for the construction of a “good society”.

Harmonious Society