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Flexible Urbanization Path and the Interlinked Urban-rural System: New Ideas of Rural Planning in China

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Keywords

After 35 years of rapid urbanization process, China's urbanization has entered a new stage characterized with a slow-down in urbanization ratio growth and structural adjustment of urban development, which according to the official discourse, called new urbanization era. From the perspective of employment, the paper observed the emergence of a new urbanization paradigm in the new urbanization era, the flexible urbanization path, which is characterized with pluriactivity and mobility of rural immigrants. Classic theories of rural development and urbanization of Adam Smith, Arthur Lewis and their successors all indicate that pluriactivity and mobility as the transitional process of urbanization and will end up in highly specialized urban employment and the one-way immigration to the cities. This paper argues that considering the situations of China's current urbanization, it is impossible to duplicate urbanization employment mode implied by the classic urbanization theory as what happened in the past 35 years in China. Rather, pluriactivity and mobility are the key characters in the emerging paradigm, which can be a feasible and sustainable alternative of Chinese future urbanization. According to the new paradigm the destination of urbanization immigrants should be more than typical cities, but a range of human settlements (including some rural area) closely with the city and their employment should be a pluriactivity in both agriculture and non-agricultural industries. Further, the emerging new urbanization pattern requires new spatial form which supports the pluriactivity and mobility of urbanization immigrants. Differing from China's traditional urban-rural dualism spatial pattern, corresponding spatial model for flexible urbanization is the interlinked urban-rural system, featured with an integrated partnership, collaboration and division of function. And under this context, the value of rural space and rural planning will further highlight since the destination and employment will extend from the cities to some part of rural area, and re-examining the rural space and rural planning is of great significance. The paper further hypothesized four possible scenarios for future rural area or villages within the urban-rural system, thus traditional villages with cultural characteristics, villages in pre-urban areas, agri-community and rural-gird. Then the paper provides reasonable conjecture and interpretation of the vision and planning solutions for each scenario, especially the last two scenarios through two case studies in Nanjing and Shijiazhuang, which can be a prototype as future rural planning in China.

Synopsis Observation of emerging new flexible urbanization paradigm and spatial form of China after 35 years of fast-forward growth, and corresponding ideas of 4 future scenarios and planning

solutions for China's rural area.

Keyword Rural planning

Keyword Urban-rural relationship

Keyword Urbanization

Additional information