

Small and Medium-Sized City: The Main Battle Field of the New Urbanization Construction

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Abstract

Small and medium-sized cities have played important roles in China’s new urbanization strategies. Small and medium-sized cities can not only help large cities avert over-concentration of population, but also avoid excessively decentralizing rural industrialization in small towns. To develop small and medium-sized cities, characteristic industries and vocational education are required so that people can get employed in the cities and become residents easily. City infrastructure and public services are necessary for urban residents. Public-Private Partnership may solve the problems of fund shortage that the local government is facing during the construction.

Keywords: Small and medium-sized cities, Urbanization, Strategy choice.

1. Introduction

China’s large-scale urbanization over past three decades has been unprecedented in human history. Nearly half a billion people have moved into cities, adding to a total of 700 million urban residents. In 1949, only around 11 percent of Chinese lived in cities (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2013). By the end of 2012, the proportion of China’s urban population had exceeded 52.57 percent (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2013). From 1980 to 2010, China’s share of the world’s total urban residents grew from 10 percent to nearly 19 percent. In the next 20 years, about 310 million additional Chinese people are expected to move to cities (Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2011).

From 1949 to 2012, China’s urbanization evolved through six stages with varying rates of change (see table 1.1). Since 1996, China’s urbanization has entered a rapid development period. Annual average growth of urbanization rate increased over 1 percent point. During this period, ongoing reforms and strong industrial demand have become the two major driving forces (United Nations Development Program, 2013).

Table1.1 Comparison of China’s urbanization Speed in Different Period

Period	Year	Annual average growth of urban population (millions of people)	Annual average growth of urbanization rate (percentage point)
6th Five-Year Plan Period	1981-1985	11.91	0.86
7th Five-Year Plan Period	1986-1990	10.20	0.54
8th Five-Year Plan Period	1991-1995	9.96	0.53
9th Five-Year Plan Period	1996-2000	21.46	1.44
10th Five-Year Plan Period	2001-2005	20.61	1.35
11th Five-Year Plan Period	2006-2010	21.53	1.39
12th Five-Year Plan Period	2010-2012	21.02	1.33

Note: “China Statistical Year book 2012”

The standards of urban classification are made by scale. According to Circular of the State Council, all cities can be classified into five groups: small cities (with populations of less than half a million residents), medium-sized cities (with populations from half a million to a million), large cities (with populations from a million to five million), megacity (with populations from five million to ten million) and super city (with populations over ten million). Small and

medium-sized city is a strategic pitch in China's administrative division system. The healthy development of small and medium-sized cities is of decisive significance for realizing integration urban and rural area, improving the demand structure, building a moderately prosperous society and speeding up socialist modernization.

By the end of 2012, all these regions influenced by small and medium-sized cities directly or indirectly have reached 93.4 million square kilometers, accounting for 97.3 percent; the population reached 1.156 billion, accounting for 85.4 percent of total population. In 2012, economic gross of these regions amounts to 43.92 trillion yuan, accounting for 84.5 percent of the total national economy; fiscal revenue of local governments reached 4252.18 billion yuan, accounting for 69.62 percent of the local finance income. So the healthy development of small and medium-sized cities are helpful for the overall development, playing an important role in the healthy development of the whole city. Small and medium-sized city is the main battlefield of new urbanization construction.

2. Characteristics of Small and Medium-Sized Cities Urbanization

2.1 The Level of Development is Uneven, Significant Regional Differences

Task group of scientific evaluation system for the development of small and medium-sized cities in 2014 research suggests that the top 10 cities all located in the eastern region was evaluated by scientific development index, abstemious city index, potential investment index and regional power index. From the regional distribution point of view of the eastern region 59 finalists (see table 2.1). Different regions have different levels of economic development and urbanization development as well.

Stable 2.1 National Comprehensive Strength Hundred Counties (cities) in 2013

Sort	City	Sort	City	Sort	City	Sort	City
1	Kunshan in Jiangsu	26	Yangzhong in Jiangsu	51	Renqiu in Hebei	76	Yizheng in Jiangsu
2	Jiangyin in Jiangsu	27	Haining in Zhejiang	52	Longhai in Fujian	77	Feixi in Anhui
3	Zhangjiagang in Jiangsu	28	Shouguang in Shandong	53	Dafeng in Jiangsu	78	Pingyang in Zhejiang
4	Taicang in Jiangsu	29	Tengzhou in Shandong	54	Xiaoyi in Shanxi	79	Guixi in Jiangxi
5	Cixi in Zhejiang	30	Yuluan in Zhejiang	55	Yuzhou in Henan	80	Dangtu in Anhui
6	Yixing in Jiangsu	31	Fuqing in Fujian	56	Pizhou in Jiangsu	81	Chiping in Shandong
7	Jinjiang in Fujian	32	Zhuanghe in Liaoning	57	Anda in Heilongjiang	82	Guangfeng in Jiangxi
8	Changsha in Hunan	33	Hai'an in Jiangsu	58	Korla in Xinjiang	83	Inner Mongolia Huolinguole
9	Shuangliu in Sichuan	34	Nan'an in Fujian	59	Tuoketuo Power Plant in Inner Mogolia	84	Wuqi in Shanxi
10	Haicheng in Liaoning	35	Laixi in Shandong	60	Nanchang in Jiangxi	85	Feidong in Anhui
11	Yiwu in Zhejiang	36	Hui'an in Fujian	61	Kaiyuan in Liaoning	86	Ganyu in Jiangxi
12	Yutao in Zhejiang	37	Laizhou in Shandong	62	Xingyang in Henan	87	Peixian in Jiangsu
13	Zengcheng in Guangdong	38	Zhaodong in Heilongjiang	63	Jurong in Jiangsu	88	Anning in Yunnan
14	Longkou in Shandong	39	Zhaoyuan in Shandong	64	Qianguo in Jilin	89	Changyi in Shandong
15	Jungar banner in Inner Mongolia	40	Rugao in Jiangsu	65	Donggang in Liaoning	90	Huantai in Shandong
16	Rongcheng in Shandong	41	Xintai in Shangdong	66	Yongkang in Zhejiang	91	Rushan in Shandong
17	Zouping in Shandong	42	Deqing in Zhejiang	67	Xinghua in Jiangsu	92	Qingzhou in Shandong
18	Zhuji in Zhejiang	43	Wenling in Zhejiang	68	Yanji in Jilin	93	Liaozhong in Liaoning
19	Qian'an in Hebei	44	Qidong in Jiangsu	69	Penglai in Shandong	94	Jingbian in Shanxi
20	Wafangdian in Liaoning	45	Changxing in Zhejiang	70	Gaoyao in Guangdong	95	Pingguo in Guangxi

21	Shishi in Fujian	46	Pixian in Sichuang	71	Gaoping in Shanxi	96	Liling in Hunan
22	Yueqing in Zhejiang	47	Yima in Henan	72	Gaoyou in Jiangsu	97	Lingwu in Ningxia
23	Danyang in Zhejiang	48	Fengcheng in Shandong	73	Fugu in Shanxi	98	Golmud in Qinghai
24	Fuyang in Zhejiang	49	Xinzheng in Henan	74	Ningguo in Anhui	99	Panxian in Guizhou
25	Ruian in Zhejiang	50	Dashiqiao in Liaoning	75	Anxi in Fujian	100	Daye in Hubei

Note: Green Book of Small and Medium-sized Cities (2013)

2.2 The Spatial Distribution of General Equilibrium, And the Development of Relatively Stable

In each province or autonomous region, small and medium-sized cities play very important roles and its distribution is relatively uniform. From 2004 to 2012, although the number of small and medium-sized cities decreased somehow, the average population size of small and medium-sized cities increased from 542.83 million to 711.82 million, the proportion of urban residents in small and medium-sized cities increased from 41.46 percent to 52.57 percent (see table 2.2). From the overall point of view, the development of small and medium-sized cities in China is relatively stable, non-agriculture population keeps increasing steadily.

Table 2.2 Small and Medium-Sized Cities Non-Agricultural Population in China, 2001-2012

Year	Quantity		Population	
	Small cities	Medium-sized cities	Non-agricultural Population (millions)	Percent (%)
2004	67	111	542.83	41.46
2005	65	108	562.12	42.99
2006	63	106	582.88	44.34
2007	58	111	606.33	45.89
2008	55	110	624.03	46.99
2009	53	110	645.12	48.34
2010	53	109	669.28	49.95
2011	53	108	690.79	51.27
2012	54	108	711.82	52.57

Note: "China Statistical Year Book" 2005 to 2012

1.3 The Extensive Mode of Economic Development Quality of Urbanization, The poor

According to the statistics of "The State of China's Cities (2012/2013)" shows that China's urban system operates in a strict administrative hierarchy which administrative power still plays a significant role in the mid-west regions. Due to lack of market competition, concept of sustainable development, system innovation and technical innovation are relatively backward in these cities. Rapid economic development and rise relies on high input, high consumption of energy resources, even spoiling ecological environment.

So the trend of general environmental deterioration in China hasn't been fundamentally controlled and environmental conflicts are increasing in intensity. In some key basins and coastal areas, for instance, water pollution is so severe, as is the phenomenon of cloudy brownish haze in some regions and cities, and the emission of major pollutants exceeds the environmental capacity in many regions. According to the monitoring results of the Ministry of Environmental Protection on air quality of most cities in China from 2005 to 2010, the proportion of cities with air quality equal to or above Grade I standard decreased from 4.2 percent to 3.6 percent; the proportion of cities with air quality equal to or above Grade II standard increased significantly from 56.1 percent to 79.2 percent; and the proportion of cities with air quality equal to or below Grade III standard has decreased from 39.7 percent to 17.2 percent. The tendencies displayed were that the proportion of cities with air quality equal to or above Grade II standard increased, while the proportion of cities with air quality equal to or above Grade I standard and equal to or below Grade III standard decreased (The State of China, 2012).

3. Policy Options for the Healthy Development of Small and Medium-Sized Cities Urbanization

"City Development Research Group Research Report (2011)" put forward that speeding up urbanization is an important content of China's "economic restructuring", is the current urgent task of economic development. The key to urbanization is the development of small and medium-sized city development. It is important for China to develop small and medium-sized city in the coming years.

China's urbanization counts as the biggest and fastest social movement in human history, which has turned Chinese society on its head and raises many difficult questions for policy makers. The region diffidence of

urbanization development is remarkable, and always expanding, different of cities and different development stage have its own distinct characteristics and different demands, so that urbanization should take diversified way to suit local conditions and put forward the healthy sustainable urbanization strategy to suit their individual need, which is the key of China's urbanization in China.

3.1 Understand the Connotation of the Development, Pay Attention to the Quality of Urbanization

Urbanization is a dynamic and complex process of comprehensive development, urbanization is not only the physical expansion of cities and the growth of population living in them, but also is a change of social production and life-style greatly. Urbanization should not only pay attention to the development of the economy, but also strengthen institutions and governance, including in key areas such as population administration, land management, finance and taxation, urban housing systems, public administration and environmental management. Urbanization can't strive merely for quantity of city, and should place greater emphasis on improving the quality of city to promote the development of long-term. The resources consumed in intensive growth pattern are obviously lower than in extensive growth pattern. Intensive urbanization development pattern is the trend of future development of small and medium-sized city.

3.2 Optimize the Industrial Structure, Promote the Sustainable Development

Industrial development is power and source of development rule of law urbanization development, is the city of radiation source of driving force. Throughout the history of world urbanization, each of great advances issued from industrial development. Urbanization must realize an industry to upgrade with transition, optimize and upgrade the industrial structure and balance the structures of primary, secondary and tertiary industries development. Relying on technological innovation and scientific management, constructing city's strategic industrial structure can promote the city sustainable development.

3.3 Regulate Government Management, Perfect the Management Mechanism

China's urbanization is closely linked to the governmental system or the state, including governments at all levels and spatial scales, and still runs key sectors of the economy directly and the rest indirectly. Not only is the state omnipotent in the major sectors of the economy, it also manages society directly in many ways. Thus, inevitably, the government plays an important part in the urbanization process and the development of the urban system. The process of urbanization of the small and medium-sized cities will be impossible without government. Government should make scientific plans for the scale and layout of urban agglomerations; and make small and medium-sized cities better in order to develop industries, provide public services, create jobs, and attract population. To reach the goal of enhancing ability of management city, continuously promote overall reform in public utilities. We should separate government administration from the management of enterprises, state assets, public institutions, and social organizations, and build a well-structured, clean and efficient service-oriented government that has scientifically defined functions and satisfies the people.

4. Results

Reviewing the course of world urbanization, we can find that the roads each country took are diverse and plenty. In Britain, urbanization was promoted by industrialization. Newtown construction is a key way for the urbanized advancement in South Korea. German vocational education pattern has played an important role in promoting urbanization. Although these successful experiences are well worth absorbing and learning, it doesn't mean that we can accept hastily and without thinking it seriously. We should choose a right path of urbanization, which combined with China's conditions. For small and medium-sized city, we should transform the development pattern, stress the active function of people, and balance the fairness and efficiency, focusing on improving the quality of development. To improve the quality of urbanization, flexible and pertinent measures should be adopted in the light of different characteristics and steps of cities.

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