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The characteristics and trend of the remote urbanization under the background of the new-type urbanization

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ABSTRACT

The Chinese urbanization level is relatively low and out of balance at present. And the phenomenon of low quality of remote urbanization is very apparent. Therefore, it is very vital significant to keep the coordinated development between the number and quality of urbanization and narrow the gap in regional urbanization. In this paper, the relevant concepts of the urbanization such as the new-type urbanization and the remote urbanization are introduced at first. Then the reasons of the formation, salient features and current situation of the remote urbanization are analyzed. In the end of this paper, the supporting measures for the localization of remote urbanization under the background of the new urbanization are put forward.

KEYWORDS

Urbanization; New-type urbanization; Remote urbanization; Localization.



INTRODUCTION

The urbanization is the process that the rural population keeps moving to the cities and towns. The level of the urbanization is an important symbol of the industrialization and modernization of a country. The Chinese government has promoted the urbanization to a strategic height in recent years. Chinese urbanization rate has reached 52.57% in 2012. It means China has entered into a stage of accelerated urbanization and the developmental momentum is swift and violent. At the same time, some experts and scholars have also deeply analyzed the contemporary China's three big imbalances of the urbanization including the imbalances between the development of the coastal and inland cities, big and small cities, and the urban development and energy security^[1]. And the problems of the unbalanced regional development and the incongruity of the quantity and quality of urbanization caused by the remote urbanization with low quality are particularly worthy of attention.

RELEVANT CONCEPTS

Traditional urbanization and new-type urbanization

The model of the traditional urbanization is mainly embodied in the growth of the urban population, the disorderly expansion of the urban space, the huge resource consumption and the significantly deteriorated urban environment driven by the extensive industrialization. The new-type urbanization which is different from the traditional urbanization refers to the urbanization with resource saving, friendly environment, efficient economy, social harmony, mutual promotion of urban and rural, and coordinated development of different sizes of cities and towns^[2]. The new-type urbanization requires more attention to be paid to the quality of the urbanization and the moderate and healthy urbanization developmental speed. Its targets should be the moderate growth of urbanization, improvement of the environment of investment and living^[3].

Local urbanization and Remote Urbanization

Traditionally, the local urbanization refers to urbanize the population within certain administrative region in situ and the remote urbanization means urbanizing the population moved to other administrative regions and engaged in non-agricultural production. In China, the typical phenomenon example of the remote urbanization is that the rural residents in the central and western regions migrate to the coastal cities in the east such as the cities in the Pearl River delta and Yangtze River delta.

THE DEVELOPMENT HISTORY AND PROBLEMS OF THE REMOTE URBANIZATION

Reasons for the formation of remote urbanization

The remote urbanization is formed by the factors such as the differences of the level of social and economic development which breaks the regional balance and prompt a certain scale of population to move from one region to another. The power of migration comes from the organic combination of the "pulling force" of the cities and towns and the "pushing force" of the rural area. Here are the main reasons for the formation of remote urbanization.

(1) The regional development balance is broken and the demand of population for the coastal labour-intensive industries increases.

A lot of international capital has passed into China's eastern coastal areas with the development of the society, especially since China's reform and opening up. The labour-intensive industries have developed rapidly and led to a high demand for cheap labours. But this kind of demand can't be fully satisfied in local. So the cross-regional flow of the surplus rural labour from the central and western regions to the eastern region is impelled. At the same time, the eastern region has become an important part of the global manufacturing chain with the cheap land and labour resource. And the developmental difference between the eastern region and the central and western regions is enlarged. It drives the

labour resource of the central and western regions to keep moving out. And the cross-regional flow of the labour becomes the norm.

(2) The central and western regions get surplus rural labour but not enough land for urban development.

Most of the central and western regions in China belong to the mountainous hilly regions. The economy of scale and industrialization development of agriculture are hindered by the problems such as the high and steep mountains, barren land, poor quality of cultivated land and lack of per capita cultivated land^[4]. The shortage of land resource and the enhancement of the industrialized degree of agricultural production lead to rapid increase of surplus rural labour.

(3) The small cities and towns in the central and western China get weak foundation, small radial force and poor population absorption capacity.

The best place to attract the surplus rural labour should be the designated towns and county towns. However, in the designated towns and county towns, the infrastructure is lacking, the service level is low, the industrial supporting ability is not strong and the employment is insufficient. So they do not have strong attraction to the surplus rural labour and lost their positions and functions as important transfer stations of urbanization. So the surplus rural labour is forced to move out. That is how the remote urbanization phenomenon forms.

Salient features of the remote urbanization

(1) The regional differences are obvious.

The difference of the remote urbanization among provinces caused by population migration is very obvious by analyzing the rate of provincial population migration (regional migration rate) in recent 30 years. (Figure 1) The rate of population migration of the eastern region rose from 22.75% in 1987 to 34.53% in 2005 and the amplification of the rate was 51.78%. The amplification of the rate was as high as 183.6% in the central region but only 26.33% in the western region. The eastern region is the main "input" region for the remote urbanization cross provinces and the central and western regions are the main "output" regions.

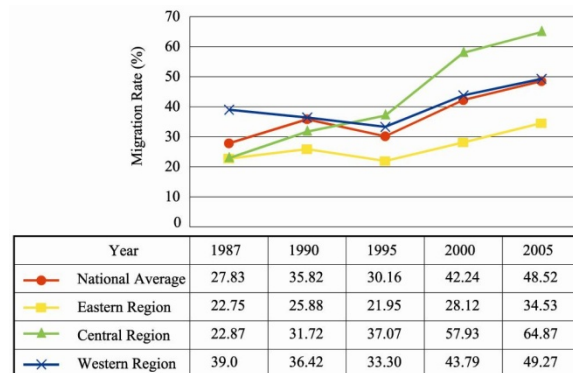


Figure 1 : Contrast table of regional migration rates between 1987~2005 (Data source: China city statistical yearbook.)

(2) The main body crowd is obvious.

The migrant workers and businessmen are the main part of the population migration by the analysis of the reasons and proportion of the urban population migration. And the proportion kept increasing with the passage of time from 25.12% during 1985 ~ 1990 to 43.07% during 2000 ~ 2005. According to the relevant statistics, the number of the migrant workers coming out of Hubei Province in 2008 was 7.52 million and accounted for 78.2%. The number of the businessmen was 1.34 million and accounted for 13.9%. The last was 0.76 million and only accounted for 7.9%. It could be found out that the migrant workers and businessmen are the main body crowd of the remote urbanization and the peasant-workers are the main body crowd of them.

Situation of the remote urbanization

(1) The pattern of the remote urbanization has been changed because of the new transfer mode of the rural labour which is brought about by the upgrade of the coastal industrial structure and the inland industrial transformation.

China's coastal cities have entered into the mid-to-late industrialization with the further development of the economy. The industrial structure upgrading is bringing about a new change of the human resource demand structure. The demand for the labour force with low quality and skill has shrunk. And the demands for the skilled workers and high-quality labour force for the emerging industries, technology and capital intensive industries and modern service industries are growing. So the people from other place are pushed to go away. The inland areas are undertaking the coastal industrial transfer with their advantages of rich resources. The development of their cities and towns has been speeding up, the employment opportunities have increased and the labour demand recovers sharply. So the people in other place are pulled to come back. The pattern of the remote urbanization is changed under the both actions.

(2) The "poor quality" and "fragility" restrict the remote urbanization^[5].

Because the floating population is hard to blend in the local mainstream society life, they often gather in the urban-rural fringe and urban villages with poor living quality and low utilization rate of public service facilities and lack local consumption desires. The concept of "earning money home" is deeply rooted. The "fragility" makes the floating population can't integrate into the local city fully. The "poor quality" directly restricts remote urbanization's function of promotion to the urban economy. They both connect to each other and add the power of backflow to the floating population.

(3) The pressures of resource and environment force the floating population to go home.

The large floating population exerts huge pressure to the local urban life after they moved into the eastern coastal cities. It is embodied in many aspects such as the urban traffic, power supply, housing, municipal infrastructure construction and public security, etc. The coastal cities are forced to change developmental mode and adjust industrial structure under the unsustainable development conditions such like excessive population concentration, energy supply tension, a lot of municipal refuse, etc. And some low-end labour force will be forced to return home.

(4) The localization of remote urbanization will be an inevitable trend.

Guiding the rural migrant workers to return their own provinces will not only alleviate the pressure of the coastal cities but also raise the level of urbanization of the cities in the central and western regions. Returning has already been a trend. It could be found out by the analysis of the related survey data that there was a widespread backflow of the rural migrant workers from Hubei province and 17.46% of the total number of the rural migrant workers chose to come back in 2008. The number of the rural migrant workers cross the province was on a declining curve. The number of the net rural migrant workers from Hubei province to other provinces in 2009 was only 82.37% of that in 2008. (Figure 2)

Therefore, the remote urbanization in Hubei province has turned up a transition and the trend of localization of remote urbanization has shown up gradually with the backflow of the rural migrant workers used to go to other provinces.

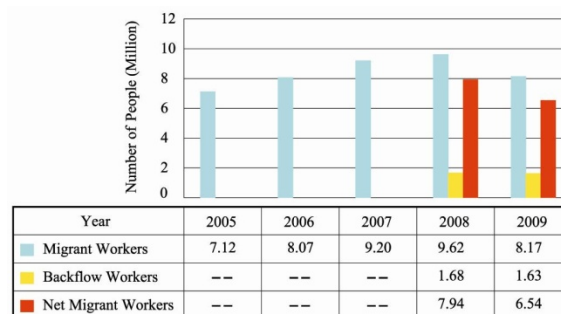


Figure 2 : Analysis diagram of proportion of migrant population in Hubei province in different years. (Data source: Hubei province bureau of statistics.)

SUPPORTING MEASURES

Distinguishing directions of industry transformation of the cities

The new-type urbanization should have a good foundation of industry and coordinated development with the industrialization. Therefore, each city should determine its industry development strategies about the adjustment, optimization and upgrading of the industrial structure. The small-medium cities need to undertake the industrial transfer actively while the coastal labour-intensive industries are moving inside gradually. That means the cities with different types, sizes and in different regions should choose different directions of industry transformation. Take the Hubei province for example, its capital Wuhan city is the centre city in the central region and should vigorously develop modern service industry. It should also develop the high-tech industry based on the east lake national innovation experimental zone. The outer cities of Wuhan city circle should pay attention to the industrial agglomeration of manufacturing and take the industrial relocation from Wuhan city and coastal areas. The central part of this province should pay attention to the development of capital-intensive industries and the western mountainous area should moderately import labour-intensive industries.

Hierarchical urban system

The new-type urbanization is the urbanization with adjust measures to local conditions and various developmental paths. The large and medium cities and small towns should be treated differently. The large and medium cities should take the heavy responsibilities to develop industrialization and economy. And the small towns should be a regulator of population transfer and perform the basic functions to service the agriculture, farmers and rural area.

Reinforced urban infrastructure

In addition to the development of non-agricultural industries, the supporting capacity of the urban infrastructure in the central and western regions is also an important restriction factor to the backflow of the labour force. Therefore, the roles of the government, enterprises and civil organizations should be given full play to. And the modes of the investment, financing and construction should be established with various forms to improve supporting capacity of urban infrastructure. Then a good urban environment for living and work will be created.

Reformed urban population management system

Just giving the rural labour force non-agricultural jobs and urban living place is not the urbanization in the true sense. And the urbanization with only the agglomeration of population and industrial optimization but without the improvement of living quality and optimization of the living environment is also not the urbanization of high quality^[6]. Therefore, if the cities and towns of the central and western regions want to attract the population of remote urbanization to come back, it is more important to reform the urban population management system and establish a unified urban and rural residence registration system^[7,8]. The outside resident population must share the equal rights with the urban population in health care, education, pensions and unemployment benefits and be given the full "civil rights"^[9]. That means the government must give up the unilateral protection to the original local urban interest groups and increase the input on the security housing, education, health care, social security and other public products and services to every person.

CONCLUSION

In a word, it is a key period for the rapid development of China's urbanization. Dealing with the remote urbanization will bring a very important role to the new-type urbanization and China's development.

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