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State-sponsored and spontaneous urbanization in Fujian province of China, 1982–2010

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines unbalanced urbanization process in Fujian province from 1982 to 2010 from the perspective of dual-track urbanization. The analysis is mainly based on 67 county-level units. The spontaneous track of urbanization is a new process of urbanization in China emerged in the reform period. It plays an important role in linking urban and rural areas but also creates problems of rural-urban integration and social cohesion. This paper examines the relative roles of spontaneous and state-sponsored urbanization and their impacts on the spatial pattern and structure of urbanization in Fujian. It is found that rural to urban migration plays the most significant role while state-sponsored urbanization and rural urbanization play equal roles in the process of urbanization. There was a significant shift of state-sponsored urbanization from county-level cities and counties to urban areas of central cities, Fuzhou and Xiamen, and from inland area to coastal area after 1990. There have also been significant shift and growth of temporary population towards the central cities in the reform period. The shift from small towns to large urban areas is clear in both tracks of urbanization.

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1. Introduction

With the implementation of economic reforms and open door policies since 1978, there has been accelerated urbanization in China, driven by rapid industrialization (Friedmann, 2005; Pannell, 1995; Qian, 2013; Shen, 2006; Young & Deng, 1998). The process of urbanization in the reform period is quite different from that in the pre-reform period. The most important change is the emergence of “urbanization from below” and the large scale rural to urban migration of migrants without local household registration (*hukou*) in urban areas (Shen, 2006). Based on the data of 110 countries for 1960–2010, Chen et al. (2013:32) argued that urbanization in China did not deviate far from the world average. But attention should be paid to excessive peri-urbanization in China (Zhu & Hu, 2009).

Friedmann (2006:440) argued that “China’s urbanization, although entwined with globalization processes, is to be understood chiefly as an endogenous process leading to a specifically Chinese form of modernity”. The notions of “urbanization from above” and “urbanization from below” have been proposed to describe the urbanization processes in China (Ma & Fan, 1994; Ma & Lin, 1993; Wang, 2000; Yan, Lin, & Xu, 1994). The former notion refers to the construction of new cities or the expansion of existing cities by large-scale investments of the state, prevailing from the 1950s to 1970s. The latter one refers to spontaneous urbanization in the reform period, driven by rural industrialization in which villages’ or private investments play a key role. Urbanization

from above still works in the post-reform period to certain extent although urbanization from below has become very important (Ning, 1998; Shen, Wong, & Feng, 2002). Furthermore, the above two notions cannot adequately explain the emerging urbanization process in the reform period. For example, foreign investment also plays an important role which is called “urbanization from outside” (Shen et al., 2002; Sit & Yang, 1997). Besides, a large temporary population has emerged in many cities by rural to urban migration which is different from the rural urbanization (Ning, 1998; Shen et al., 2002). Zhu (1999) recognized two tracks of urbanization in Fujian. The term “state-led urbanization” is not used here as it refers to the investment or policy support to urban sector or township and village enterprises (TVEs) by central or local governments. It is not equivalent to urbanization from above or state-sponsored urbanization defined by Zhu (1999) and Shen et al. (2002).

The concept of dual-track urbanization has been proposed to describe China’s urbanization in the reform period (Shen et al., 2002). It has two tracks of urbanization: “state-sponsored urbanization” and “spontaneous urbanization”. The state-sponsored urbanization refers to nonagricultural population growth and exists in both pre-reform and post-reform periods. The spontaneous urbanization includes both rural-urban migration and the *in situ* transformation in rural areas. It has emerged since the 1980s. The spontaneous track of urbanization plays an important role in linking urban and rural areas. It also creates problems of rural-urban integration and social cohesion (Chang, Wen, & Wang, 2011; Cheng & Wang, 2013; Du & Li, 2010). The perspective of dual-track urbanization has been used in the study of urbanization process in China and the Pearl River Delta region (Shen, 2006; Shen et al., 2002).

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Fujian is an important province in coastal China located next to Guangdong and Taiwan. Like Guangdong, Fujian has benefited from many preferential reform and open policies. Its level of development and urbanization is at a medium level, below that of Pearl River Delta and Yangtze River Delta. The urbanization of Fujian has attracted the attention of some scholars.

First, Zhu (1999) pointed out that two different tracks of urbanization have coexisted since 1978. He found that the spontaneous urbanization was more important than the state-sponsored urbanization in the period 1978–1995. A balanced model of urbanization was identified by Zhu (1999) based on the data in 1990–1995. In terms of the state-sponsored urbanization, Fujian's urban system was dominated by small urban places with no spatial concentration (Zhu, 1999: 79). On the other hand, spontaneous urbanization took a dispersed form in terms of TVE employees. Zhu (1999: 81) expected that the lower level of the urban system would be greatly strengthened with the increase of towns and town population. The distribution of temporary population largely followed that of nonagricultural population in 1990 and 1995, with no clear trend of concentration towards large cities. The effect of TVE employees was much greater than that of the temporary population in that period (Zhu, 1999: 92). He made an attempt to explain the absence of polarization in the early stage of the regional development theoretically (Zhu, 1999: 207).

Second, the notion of *in situ* urbanization was used by Zhu (1999, 2000, 2002, 2004) to describe the urbanization process of rural areas in Fujian. The *in situ* transformation in Fujian is under the combined influence of the development of TVEs and foreign investments, but without state sponsorship. Zhu argued that existing urbanization theory did not pay adequate attention to increasing rural nonagricultural activities and a rural-urban continuum was proposed to replace the rural-urban dichotomy in urbanization studies (Zhu, 1999: 206). Qi, Zhu, and Zhou (2012) proposed a “double-pull” conceptual model to evaluate the effect of *in situ* urbanization by comparing three typical southeast coastal areas in China, namely, Quanzhou of Fujian, Dongguan of Guangdong, and Kunshan of Jiangsu.

Third, the relationships between urbanization and other social and economic factors have been considered. Chen (2006) evaluated the urbanization process in China by using Fujian as a case study. That study combined macro level analysis based on statistical data with field research. Zhang, Zhen, and Zhang (2008) revealed the characteristics and mechanism of peri-urbanization phenomenon using the case of Putian in Fujian. It is found that there were a large temporary population entering and leaving Putian and mixed land use types in the built-up area.

Urbanization is a complicated dynamic process driven by forces of economic agglomeration, market, foreign investment and government policies. Urban expansion and economic agglomeration are important themes for studying urban growth and urbanization. One important study is on the urbanized area in China by Long, Shen, and Jin (2016). Another important issue of urbanization in China is the growth of urban population without urban nonagricultural *hukou*. The 2010 census collected detailed data on the populations with agricultural and nonagricultural *hukou* in urban areas of China respectively.

One critical development in urbanization policies in China would be the grant of nonagricultural population *hukou* to rural migrants through certain mechanisms. No complete official policies have been proposed other than proposals by scholars such as Chan (2013). According to the New-type Urbanization Plan, 2016–2020 (Chan, 2014; Guojia, 2014), it is planned to grant urban *hukou* status to about 100 million people by 2020; to improve housing for 100 million people who currently live in substandard housing and urban villages; to absorb about 100 million people in the nearby towns and cities in central and western regions of China. Thus tracking and analyzing the changes of urban non-agricultural population and agricultural population are valuable to the study of urbanization process in China. Different dynamics of the state-sponsored and spontaneous urbanization in different cities and

regions revealed by such analyses will facilitate further studies on the urban agglomeration process and regional development (Shen, 2006; Shen et al., 2002).

This paper attempts to extend the previous study and to re-examine the urbanization process in Fujian using the perspective of dual-track urbanization (Shen et al., 2002). Previous studies have paid much attention to the spontaneous process of rural urbanization in Fujian but little to the impact of state-sponsored urbanization and the spatial patterns of urbanization. Given Fujian's unique geographical condition of hilly landscape and strong inland-coastal contrast, this paper attempts to address following questions. How spontaneous and state-sponsored urbanization contribute to the process of urbanization in Fujian? How spontaneous and state-sponsored urbanization contribute to the spatial pattern and structure of urbanization in Fujian? The results will verify the balanced model of urbanization identified by Zhu (1999) based on the data in 1990–1995. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces the study area, data and methodology. Section 3 provides an overview of urbanization in Fujian. Sections 4 and 5 analyze the state-sponsored and spontaneous urbanization respectively. Section 6 concludes the paper.

2. The study area, data and methodology

Fujian province is located in the southeast coastal area of China with a total area of 124,000 km². It had a population of 36.9 million in 2010 (FPC, 2013). This paper will analyze the changes of unbalanced urbanization at county level. Administratively, Fujian consists of 9 prefecture-level cities (names in big font) in 2010 (Fig. 1). They are divided into 67 county-level area units, including 9 urban areas of prefecture-level cities, 14 county-level cities and 45 counties (excluding Jinmen which is under control of Taiwan).

There were some changes in administrative units during 1982–2010. The number of county level units increased from 76 to 85. Since 1982, some counties have been upgraded to county-level cities without changing the boundaries, such as Changle, Fuqing and Longhai. Shishi, a county-level city currently, was separated from Jinjiang in 1988. Besides, the State Council approved in 1983 to transfer the administration of county-level units Yongtai, Mingqing, Changle and Fuqing from prefecture-level Putian to Fuzhou, and county-level units Lianjiang, Pingtan and Luoyuan from prefecture-level Ningde to Fuzhou. To keep consistency, the administrative divisions in 2010 are used for data analysis in this paper.

In order to reveal the dynamics of unbalanced dual-track urbanization in different areas, all area units are divided into four groups according to their special conditions of economic development and urbanization. Fuzhou is the provincial capital. Xiamen is one of the Special Economic Zones in China. It has the status as a sub-provincial city which is listed separately in the national plan like a province. Thus two cities are called central cities in the province. The urban areas of other prefecture-level cities can also form a group. Thus, four area categories can be obtained: urban areas of central cities including Fuzhou and Xiamen (2 area units), other urban areas of prefecture-level cities (7 area units), county-level cities (14 area units) and counties (44 area units).

Owing to changes in the census definition of urban population, data on urbanization level are not comparable between different censuses (Shen, 2005; Zhu, 2002). The definition of urban population in the 1982 census included all people living in the administrative areas of cities and towns (Shen, 2005). As urban population number of a city in 1982 contained too many people with *hukou* status of agricultural population, it should be adjusted to make it comparable to other years. The principle for adjustment is based on the consensus of previous studies that, generally, the average proportion of nonagricultural population within the urban area of a city should be higher than 70% (Zhou & Shi, 1995). In other words, the actual urban population of a city in 1982 is estimated by the size of nonagricultural population, plus 30% of total

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