**Analysis on the Development Characteristics of**

**Medium - sized Cities in China**

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Medium-sized cities play more and more important roles in both economic and social development of China. Their transformations and characteristics deserve more research, since also the criteria to define the different type of cities have been changing together with Chinese urban development.

The main criteria to define a city as been, the presence of non-agricultural population, a number that has also changed over the years. According to recent regulations, medium-size cities are considered those with an urban population between 100-500.000.

In China, in 2014, there were 100 medium-sized cities and 49 were super-large cities. These numbers remained almost stable in 2005 – 2010 – 2014 (respectively, 108, 110, 100), but other interesting trends can be observed,

Firstly, the trend experienced by most of Chinese cities has been a progressive change from medium and large city-size to metropolises.

Secondly, medium-sized cities have maintained relatively stable spatial distribution characteristics: they are mainly distributed in central-eastern China and especially in the central areas. Nonetheless, in the last decades, the proportion of medium size cities has been decreasing, and if we look at the data about the population density, we can see that this is low in medium-size cities (and it has been declining, in 2014 it’s 322/square Km) while large cities have the highest population density (more than three times that of medium-cities).

Concerning the average salary, the lowest value among all the type of cities is that of medium-size cities, which means these cities are relatively poor compared to the others (also compared to small-cities), even if from 2010 to 2014 it has passed from 29226 to 44810 RMB (but these values also go together with the increase in the cost of life as well!).

Thirdly, in terms of GDP the largest share is taken by large cities, followed by medium cities (but in terms of GDP per capita, medium cities values are lower than that of small-cities), moreover, the GDP of medium cities has been going up until 2010 and then it has been declining, and it concentrates in city clusters and in the cities settled around the Beijing- Shanghai railway. In this regard, it is relevant to consider that from 2005 – 2014 also the job creation in these cities has been decreasing and the majority of job created has been, indeed, along the Beijing-Shanghai railway line. Also, even if compared with other levels of cities, medium-sized cities have lager amount of GDP, population, government measures, etc. their overall efficiency isn’t high, both their industrial and employment structures – which is dominated by dominated by secondary industry - are low end and also financially they are not strong. In addition, they have more expenditure than revenues, and even if in terms of public expenditure for education (17%) they are just after large cities, they spend very little in science an technology (1%) - which create a great spatial difference between medium and large cities. Indeed, except for the South-eastern areas and for the Yangzte river Delta other urban centres investing in science and technology are dispersed (e.g. Guanzhong region, Inner Mongolia, etc.).

Fourthly, concerning the industrial structure and employment characteristics, compared with the cities of higher level, the proportion of primary industry employees in medium-sized cities is relatively higher (3,3%), even though the highest number of employees is in tertiary industry (almost 53%); followed by secondary industry (which has been, indeed, increasing from 2010 to 2014).

A final remark is about foreign-funded enterprises and the attraction of foreign capital which continue to be low in medium-cities and more concentrated in higher level cities.

The discussion that followed pointed out some aspects that deserve more research, to start and most importantly, what are the most adequate criteria to define cities and different type of cities, then also, why the salary of medium cities is lagging behind compared to the other types? One of the possible reason is the competition among different cities (fighting for foreign investment), and medium cities are indeed weaker in competitiveness and industry upgrading. Real estate also can be a reason, since it play a major role in redistribution of wealth in China. Another reason could be related to the characteristic of employment of these cities and the opportunity of job they can offer, indeed if students coming from small cities have the opportunity to study in large cities they will rarely decide to go back.

Other questions raised regarded the role of policy in the diminishing of speed of growth of these cities, maybe policy should focus more on medium and small cities, and find the best way to control size enlargement and population growth. In this regard, China needs a multi- dimensional approach to foster cities’ efficiency and livability.

**The Development Strategy of Zhuhai City**

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Zhuhai is located in the west bank of the Pearl River Delta and to the South China Sea coast, and it is one of China's first established Special Economic Zone (in 1980), moreover it is the only city linked to Hong Kong and Macao cities with roads.

The development strategy of Zhuhai over the past 30 years, has seen a lot of efforts to position the city as on of the most livable cities in China, and indeed it receive honors and awards for the achievements in terms of city sustainability, environmental protection and regulations: currently Zhuhai is also pilot city of China Europe Low- Carbon Ecological Cooperation and pilot city of the National Sponge City Construction

The spatial strategies developed from the 80s on made the city pass from the simultaneous development of industry and agriculture to the current orientation (started in 2000) to high-tech industries and the development of the city as the core of the west side of Pearl River Delta (according also to the Masterplan released in 2005)

The goal is to reach a total population of 6.5 million by 2060, with a construction area of 698 km2, with Hezhou as the city's future centre, and a the whole urban area developing according to “one core, two hearts and six groups”.

Nonetheless, the city suffers for many difficulties: e.g. the west – east connection is highly congested, the handling capacity of the airport is lagging behind, and the city in general has poor public supporting facilities, moreover many relevant projects that have not been completed yet, such as the bridge connecting HK-Macao-Zhuhai and Guangfojiangzhu intercity train). Zhuhai’s GDP per capita and per unit of construction land of Zhuhai is also low compared to that of the other Pearl River Delta city, such as Shenzhen, Dongguan, Guangzhou, Foshan, Zhongshan, etc.

Moreover, the city suffers of a huge gap between the Western (where most of manufacturing industries are concentrated) and the Eastern part (which is served by more service and infrastructures), but in general the industrial structure is quite weak and innovation driven development low.

Currently, the strategy is region-oriented and its main aim is to promote the cooperation and development of regional economy, to build the Guangdong-Hong Kong- Macao Bay Area as a world-city cluster and to create a new special economic zone (Hengqin New Area) together with other important economic support zone, based on the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Bay Area and Pearl River - Xijiang economic belt. Such a strategy aims to drive the development of south-central and southwest regions, and foster radial effects of all South China and Southeast Asia, and it has been also defined as “connect the East, Exploit the West, extend the North, Enter the South”.

But according to the last Masterplan of Zhuhai (2015) – whose concept plan has been done by a Singapore company and it has been highly debated because of the decision to protect the wetlands which are close to the city centre – shows that the city also wants to develop as tourist city, so the city is carefully regulating construction, water system, vegetation coverage and many other factors and will limit the city boundaries to 705 km2.

Moreover, the “U+” strategy (U-shape development belt + Western Central City), will promote the urban U-shaped development belt, build a multi-center and relying on seven major industrial groups and urban functional groups, will promote multi-node linkage development.

To conclude, in the last 30 years, Zhuhai’s planning has addressed economic development together with regulation on urban construction and environmental protection. It has implemented what are called the "Eight prohibitions" of environmental protection and the "eight unifications" of urban construction and the "five unifications" of land management, so as to promote the rapid economic development, while maintaining a good ecological environment and had also establishe a Liveable City Index System based on the following dimensions and principles: Ecology (Secure and Sustainable), Space (Compact and Pleasant), Society (Safe and Harmonious), Humanities (International and Diverse), Economy (Low Carbon and Innovative), Service (Quality and Sharing), Traffic (Green and Smooth).

**Evolution of management in the development zone in Zhuhai: An emergence of a local model of governance?**

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With many decentralization reforms carried out in China, the huge urban development initiated during the 1980’s has intensified with a rapid growth of development zones. Data of 2009, show that China's 54 state-level development zones with 0.04% of the country's total land area, represent 10% of industrial output value and industrial added value. The development zone has either become a new city, a new independent administrative zone or changed into a new technology industrial park. We may consider it as an important role of Chinese urbanization. Besides, many political or administrative innovations or reforms have also been experimented in the development zones, leading to different models of management, such as Administrative Region Management Model of Qingdao Economic and Technological Development Zone, Government and Enterprise coexistence management Model, such as the model in Suzhou Industrial Park, and Entrepreneurial Management Model of Minhang Development Zone in Shanghai and Shekou Industrial Zone in Shenzhen. Meanwhile, many powers and resources have been decentralized to the local authorities. Linked to the local economic development, more and more local actors participate into the local public action. However, in the past, the local management was very hierarchical and bureaucratic, as Wu (2002) pointed out, before economic reforms, the former three systems were pillars of socialist urban governance, which were based on the Party-state System, Household Registration System and Work-unit System and which prevented rural peasants from moving into the cities. Thus, research on the evolution of local model of management, or even, whether we can apply the notion of growth coalition to the Chinese context. Besides, by borrowing the conception of local “policy network”, we may also analyze the interactions between the state and social forces or the citizens in order to examine the nature of local governance in China, or perhaps to discuss about the transitional characters of the political regime or the possibility of limited pluralism in China.

More and more discussions about the governance mode of the development zone have been carried out among the Chinese researchers, however, the discussion from the perspective of local governance is still little mentioned. With China's decentralization and economic and social development, China's local governance model has undergone tremendous changes. Local authorities are considered as an important actor to adjust the local structure and functions, while with the increasing development of private enterprises, dynamic participations of these enterprises have been found in local place. In the local development process, the local governance model has been evolving, showing a trend of diversification, and this phenomenon is particularly prominent in China's development zones. Development Zone is not often considered as an administrative zone, but a zone mainly based on economic functions. In the development zone, the quasi-government administration of the Committee of management (CM) functions as an administrative agency that manages the zone. Many research show that development zones often have a management model, that is the CM. Besides, there is usually a development company, with the characteristics of the company to implement the specific task of construction and management of the development zones. At the same time, a large number of Chinese or foreign enterprises many have settled within the development zone. Through the CMs, these enterprises can express their demands for their development. Therefore, in the local context, how the CMs localize and implement their functions, how other actors, such as the public or private enterprise or the associations of entrepreneurs participate in local governance have become an important issue of local governance.

Zhuhai Hi-Tech Industrial Development Zone has been chosen as a case study, mainly for two reasons: firstly, high-tech zones represent an important form of development zones, and due to their emphasis on science and technology and economic development, high-tech zones in China have been valued and developed. Secondly, Zhuhai is a special economic zone, with its open and flexible policy, which presents also the forefront of China's policy. Zhuhai (national) high-tech industrial development zone have been developed since 1990s, local participation have been also formed and developed. Both characters help us to examine the position, roles and influence of local governments as well their delegated institutions. Through the discussion about the interactions in Zhuhai Hi-tech Zone, the study tries to characterize the interactions between the state and social forces or the citizens in order to examine the nature of local governance in China, and the patterns of interaction between different actors.

For the study, quantitative and qualitative methods will be used. Firstly, quantitative information concerning Zhuhai Hi-Tech Industrial Development Zone will be collected from the Provincial/Municipal/District/Zone authorities, local development journal, documents from universities or research centers. In a second time, semi-directive interviews with officials at different levels of governments, entrepreneurs, journalists and professors or researchers will be conducted on the issue of evolution of this development zone in Zhuhai.

**Planning, representations and perceptions of China’s urbanization: a case study on Hangzhou Future Sci-Tech City**

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Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang Province and second largest metropolis in the Yangtze River Delta Region, in the last 30 years has faced several changes related, on the one hand, to the implementation of different comprehensive master plans (i.e. 1981-2000, 1996-2010 and 2015-2020), specific policies and regulations and, on the other, to the presence of many non-state-owned industries.

In particular, the last version of the Master Plan (2001 – 2020): led to the annexation of Xiaoshan and Yuhang counties as administrative districts of Hangzhou City, and in the new release it was also added that Hangzhou had to enhance the city’s scientific innovation and regional comprehensive services.

As a matter of fact, the different rounds of administrative rescaling and adjustments have accelerated Hangzhou expansion and spatial restructuring and made it become a, dispersed, multi-nuclei city (Wei, 2005; Zhang et al, 2009).

Moreover, the annexation of 2001 – due to the abandonment of the previous concept of satellite towns and the preference to centralize resources – made Yuhang became the Hangzhou’s largest district, and the municipality solve the problem of land limitation to urban development reaching 3068 km² (from 682.9 km² in 2000).

The study aims was to analyse the visions channelled by the planning of Hangzhou urban development and modernization focusing in particular on Yuhang which is, indeed, experiencing a rapid urban development. Moreover, among other projects, in 2011 Yuhang was awarded the national overseas high-level talents innovation base (demonstration zone together with Beijing, Tianjin, Wuhan) and it is now implementing the planning of Hangzhou Zhejiang Future Sci-Tech City (<http://www.zjfuture.gov.cn/english/>).

Considering also that the Future Sci-Tech City lies on Hangzhou western urban fringe, in an area of great ecological value and relatively close to downtown (even if until few years mainly by farmlands and wetlands), the study questioned some typical urban dilemmas and the cascading effects triggered by such a massive (and rapidly implemented) planning. The main hypothesis are base on the recognition that urban fringes – as it is the case of the area where Hangzhou Zhejiang Future Sci-Tech City has been established - are very dynamic but also critical social and geographical entities where different populations, functions and opportunities (and threats!) might coexist but, at the same time, hold different perspectives, expectations and needs. As such, they require comprehensive research approaches in order to pursue urban sustainable development while ensuring high flexibility to future changes. The specific angle chosen to observe such transformations was, therefore, that of the different stakeholders of Hangzhou Zhejiang Future Sci-Tech City (i.e. entrepreneurs, researchers, residents, etc.) and to analyse how they perceive such a transition.

The fieldwork has been conducted using visual ethnography methods intertwined with official documents analysis and background interviews. In a second phase, the interviewees have been shown a collage of visual elements of the area under study which worked as a palimpsest capable of containing and fusing together different modes of perception and vision, triggering multiple and simultaneous levels of understanding (Anzoise et al 2016).

The interviews with images revealed the different ways sustainability and development are framed (and the need for some, given the current compromise China has to accept to modernize, to slow down at a certain point to address, also, emerging environmental and social problems), as well as the concern for the consequences of massive construction on the quality of water and soils and food, etc. Also the planning of brand-new and hyper-functional cities and development zones has been questioned, for the threat it can represents in terms of social and economic diversity.

Such results, confirm the crucial role of city image construction in development and sustainability discourses and the need to go beyond monitoring, management of resources, rationality, and find novel ways to analyse also how social discourses and imaginaries develop (since they are a constitutive part of change and not only a support to it). Closely connected to this, is the need to critically rethink to urban planning itself, to its practices and *discursive and material nature* for the role they play in the framing, understanding and tackling of sustainable urban development (Brand & Thomas, 2005; Fainstein, 2000).