

Review of the Urban Growth over the Past Twenty Years & Prospects for the Next 2 or 3 Decades

I. Definition of Urbanization

Urbanization is the process of concentration of population to big cities due to social evolution. From the viewpoint of economy, it is characterized by extension of urban economy to rural areas and recombination of urban industry. From the viewpoint of sociology, it is an expanding process of urban factors in local regions, which indicates the improvement of the integrate power of a country.

Generally, urbanization can be reflected in the following aspects:

- Increase of the proportion of urban population in total population;
- Conversion of agricultural population into nonagricultural population;
- Expansion of city scales;
- Appearance of new towns in rural areas;
- Prevalence of urban economic and living style.

II. Review of the Urban Growth in China over the Past 20 Years

Along with the rapid economic growth and the improvement of individual living quality in China since the 1980's, the urbanization level here rises stably.

1. There are more cities with larger scales.

The flourish of medium and small cities and the expansion of big cities led to increased cities with larger scales.

Table 1: Cities of Different types in China in 1985 and 1999

City Type	Population	Number of Cities in 1985	Number of Cities in 1999
Super City	Over 2 million		13
Megalopolis	Between 1 million And 2 million	22	24
Big City	Between 500 Thousand And 1 million	30	49
Medium City	Between 200 Thousand And 500 Thousand	94	216
Small City	Under 200 Thousand	178	365
Total		324	667

2. Rise of Urbanization level in China

The urbanization level is obtained by dividing the nonagricultural population by the total population. Evolution of the urbanization level in China from 1982 to 1999 is showed in Table 2 and Figure 1.

Table 2: Evolution of the urbanization level in China (Million)

Year	Total Population	Nonagricultural Population	Urbanization level
1982	1016.54	218.4	0.2113
1983	1030.08	222.74	0.2162
1984	1043.57	240.17	0.2301

1985	1058.51	250.94	0.2371
1986	1075.07	263.66	0.2452
1987	1093	276.74	0.2532
1988	1110.26	286.61	0.2581
1989	1127.04	295.4	0.2621
1990	1143.33	301.91	0.2641
1991	1158.23	305.43	0.2637
1992	1171.71	323.72	0.2763
1993	1185.17	333.51	0.2814
1994	1198.5	343.01	0.2862
1995	1211.21	351.74	0.2904
1996	1223.89	359.5	0.2937
1997	1236.26	369.89	0.2992
1998	1248.1	379.42	0.3040
1999	1259.09	388.92	0.3089

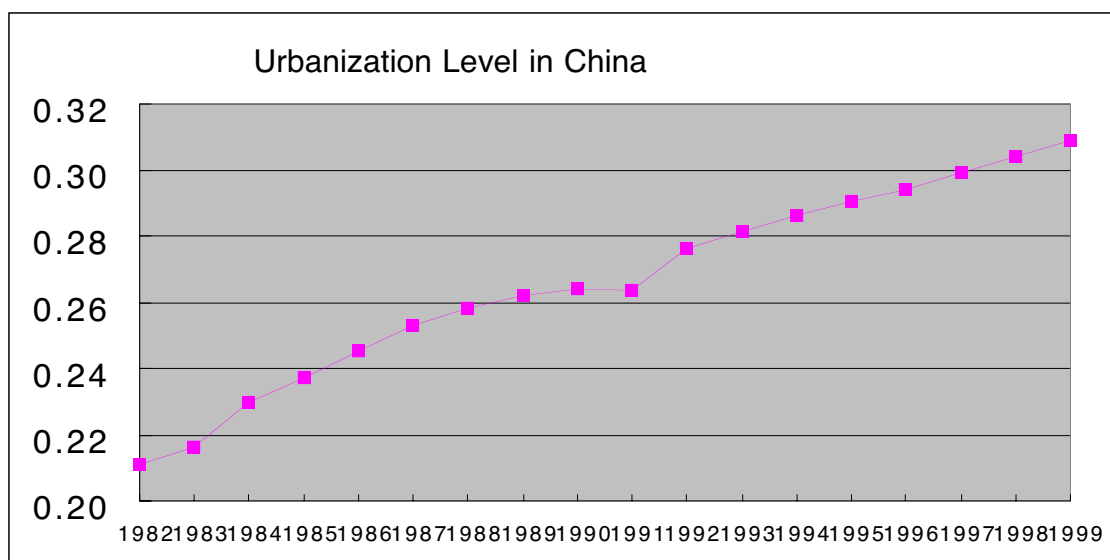


Figure 1: Evolution of the urbanization level in China (Million)

3. Adjustments on Urban Industry Structure and Concentration of the Tertiary Industry in Cities

Improvement and concentration of urban function has provided a better environment for production and living. Along with the prompt development of commerce, trade, finance, bond market, real estate and consultancy, the proportion of production from the tertiary industry in GDP continuously increased. At the same time, the tertiary industry rapidly raised its place in the urban employment structure.

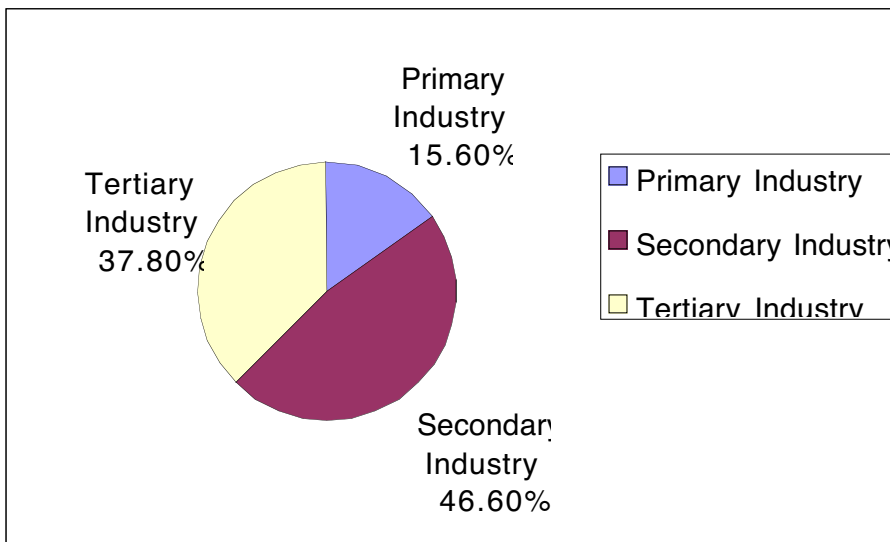


Figure 2: GDP by Type of Industry in all Chinese Cities, 1999

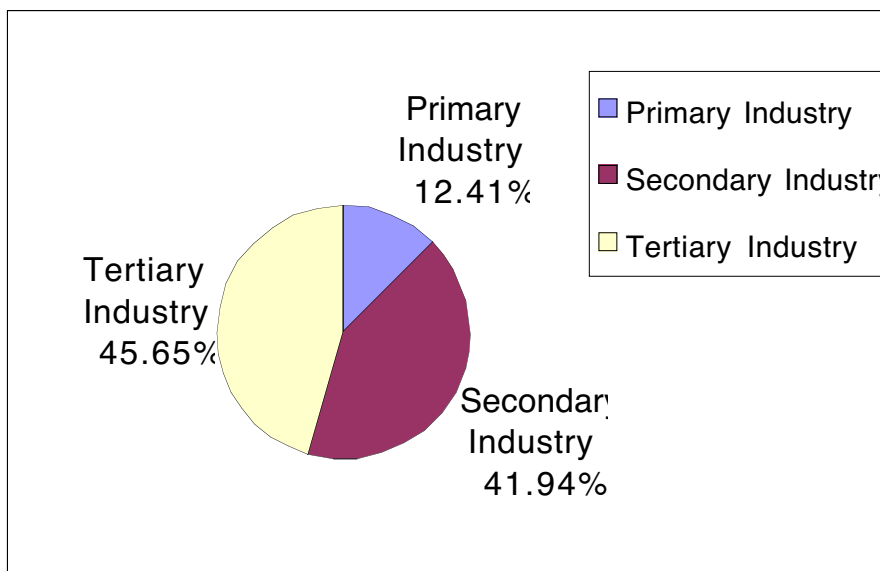


Figure 3: Employment by Type of Industry in all Chinese Cities, 1999

To illustrate the changes on the urban industry structure in China over the past twenty years, let us take Beijing, Hangzhou City and Datong City for examples.

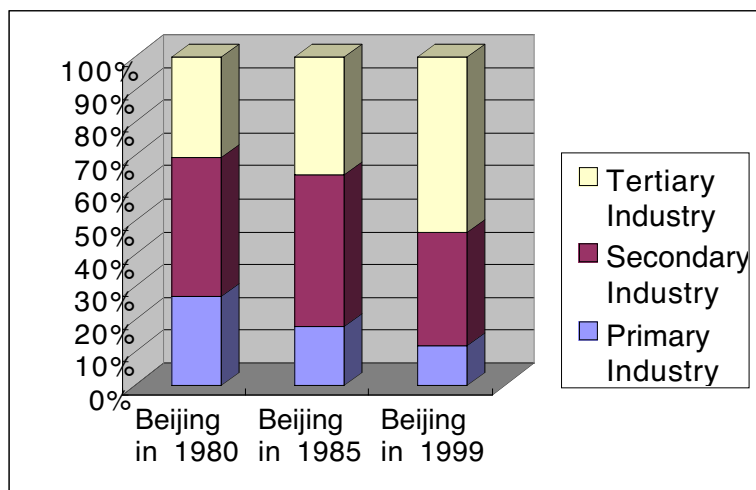


Figure 4: Employment by Type of Industry in Beijing

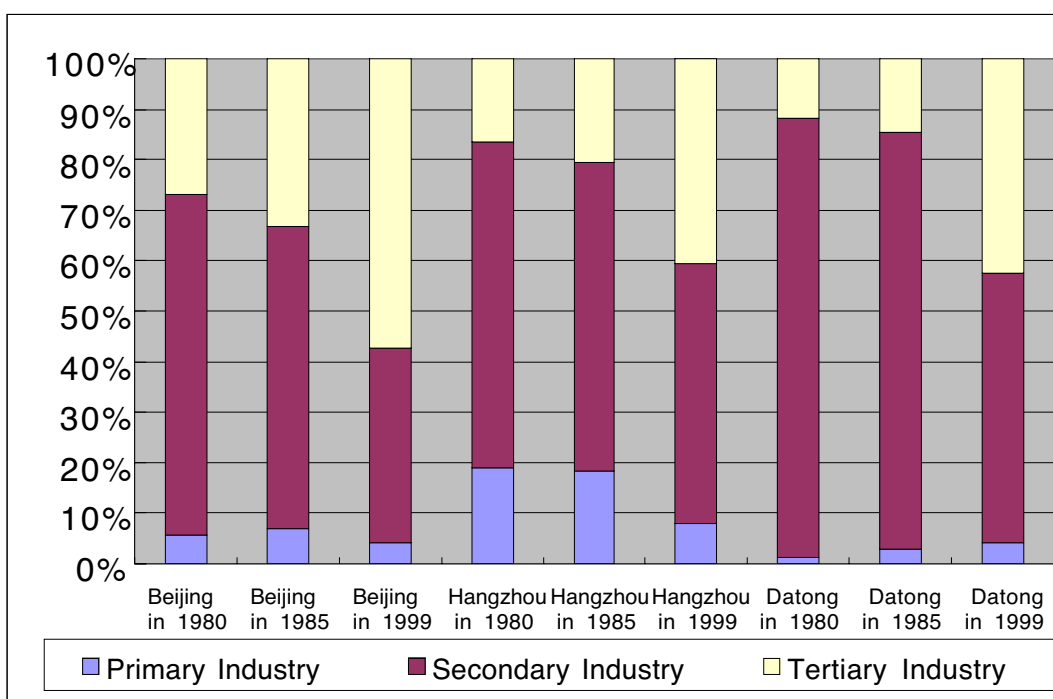


Figure 5: GDP by Type of Industry in Different Cities

4. Evolution of Urban Land-Use Patterns

The evolution of urban land-use pattern and transformation of urban population scale are both essential characteristics in the urbanization process. There are three main trends in the urbanization of China.

1) Co-prosperity of big cities and their satellite towns

Decentralization is the natural consequence of urbanization. Along with the urbanization of suburbs, satellite towns are built up around Shanghai, Beijing and Tianjin and some other super cities to relax the stress of urban population and industry. Various administrative and economic measures, such as land value, tax and welfare, are adopted to encourage residents and industries move out to suburbs. The multi-centered land-use pattern is established to enhance the relationship between the big city and its satellite towns and to realize the co-prosperity of cities and towns in a

large region.

2) Scattering-grouped land-use pattern in medium cities

Another urban land-use pattern is the scattering-grouped pattern, which is made up of some town-groups. Each group has its own center and independent functions. The city center is usually located in the middle of all groups. It has the largest scale among all group centers and serves as the political, cultural and commercial center in the city. It is actually a multi-centered aggregation of medium or small towns

3) Integration of urban area and rural area and prompt development of small towns

Along with the integration of urban area and rural area, economy in small towns is developing rapidly. Wenzhou City in East China is a good example. Through the development of characteristic industries in villages and towns, relevant industries and infrastructures are simultaneously built up here. Economic factors including population, capital, technique and information are accumulated in country towns.

5. Diversification of Urban Functions

The trends of individualization and integration of urban functions are parallel. There are more cities with characteristic functions. The leading industries in different cities may be financing, trade, mining, industry, tourism, education or a combination.

6. Improvement of Urban Environment

III. Prospects of the Urban Growth for the next 2 or 3 decades

As a result of industrialization, there was a tendency in urbanization to become larger, centralized and densely populated. Development in the information industry leads to a shunt from this tendency. The new tendency is to build up smaller and reasonably scattered cities with vague boundaries and supported by high techniques.

The characteristics of future cities may include:

1. Groups made up of cities in medium or small scale
2. Intelligent city based on highly developed information industry
3. Network city made up of multifunctional communities

Based on the urbanization data in China over the past 20 years, future urbanization tendency is forecasted. According to this forecast, the urbanization level in China will reach 50% in next 20 to 30 years.

China is now in a stage of accelerate urbanization. The parallelism of spatial centralization and decentralization leads to great developing indeterminacy. Factors such as urban planning, land-use policy and economic growth pattern, all have great impacts on the development of urban structure. If led by reasonable policies and developing schemes, multi-centered and scattering-grouped patterns may be established in big cities and medium cities respectively. Otherwise, it is also possible for Chinese cities to experience the troubles caused by extra-centralization and extra-decentralization.

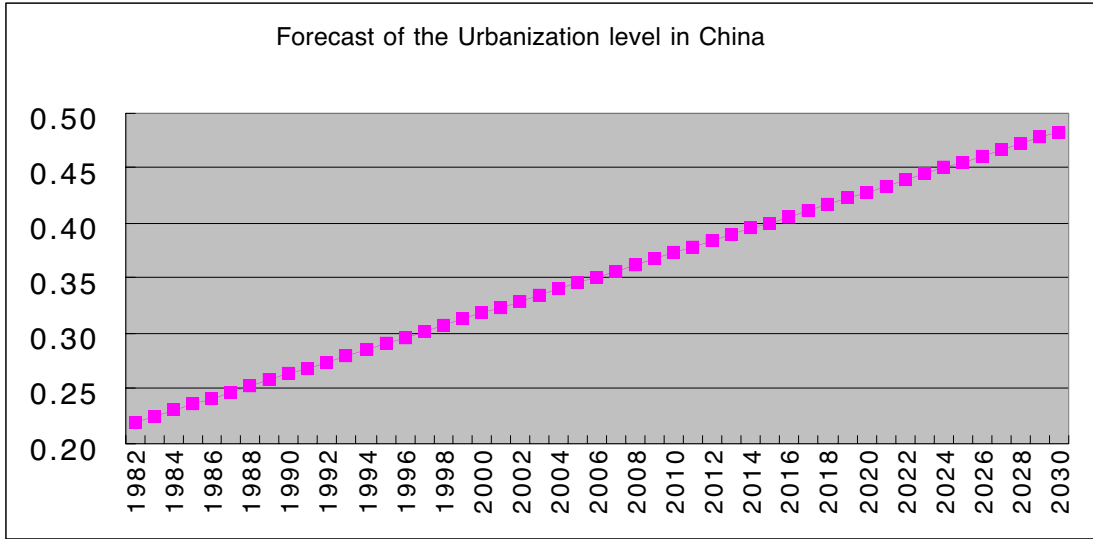


Figure 6 Forecast of the Urbanization Tendency of China