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A Review of County Urbanization Research

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Abstract

County urbanization is the driving force behind the coordinated development of urban and rural areas. Since the implementation of new urbanization in 2012, county urbanization has become a research hotspot in the academic community. This article provides a review of the current research on urbanization in the academic community. Firstly, it sorted out the academic definition of county urbanization and analyzed the definitions of urbanization in each county. Secondly, it analyzes the influencing factors of county urbanization from the perspectives of economy, population, government and transportation. Based on the research on definitions and influencing factors, measures to promote county level urbanization were explored. Finally, based on the research on county urbanization in the academic community, the role of county urbanization in other aspects of economy and society was summarized.

Keywords

County Urbanization; Literature Review; Influencing Factors; Promotional Measures.

1. Introduction

Urbanization is the leading driving force for the transformation of urban and rural development, increasingly highlighting its leading role in coordinating urban-rural relations. Actively and steadily promoting urbanization has become a major national strategy. Promoting urbanization strategy is an important means to expand domestic demand, adjust economic structure, and change economic development mode, and has become an effective way to drive regional coordinated development, coordinate urban-rural development, and achieve social harmony. At present, China is in a new period of accelerated urbanization development. According to the data from the 6th National Population Census (hereinafter referred to as the "Six Census" data), the permanent urban population in China was 666 million in 2010, with an urbanization rate of 49.68%, an increase of 13.46 percentage points compared to 2000.

County urbanization is the main content of new urbanization, and the academic community has conducted in-depth and detailed research on it since 2012. There is still a lack of papers to sort out the current research status of county urbanization. Therefore, this article will focus on county urbanization and summarize the current research conclusions of the academic community from four aspects: definition, influencing factors, promotion measures and roles of county urbanization.

2. Analysis of the Definition of Urbanization

The research on urbanization in the academic community can be traced back to 1992. Since 2012, China has been implementing a new type of urbanization that coordinates the development of large, small, and medium-sized cities, and county urbanization has become a research hotspot in the academic community. Liu Yansui and Yang Ren (2012) analyzed the spatiotemporal characteristics and formation mechanism of county urbanization in China since

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1990, and explored county urbanization from a spatial perspective. Li Qiang et al. (2015) explored and discussed the problems of urbanization in different regions, focusing on the models of nearby urbanization and local urbanization. Wang Yongtao (2023) believes that county urbanization is manifested as the demand for housing in urban areas, the urbanization of children's education, and the middle-class lifestyle. The family reproduction of the new three generations of rural families is thus split between "city county township", and forms a variety of labor division combinations, showing the characteristics of mobility, fragmentation and discretization. The urbanization of counties in the central and western regions has characteristics such as consumption, transition, and symbolic significance, and is a semi urbanization. The research conducted by the three from the perspective of definition provides a foundation for the academic community to conduct research on county urbanization from other theoretical perspectives. Other scholars in the academic community have classified county urbanization from different perspectives. Su Yunxun (2023) classified county urbanization into two types based on the economic foundation of the county: exogenous county urbanization and endogenous county urbanization. Mainly shape two new types of urban-rural relations: "dependent" and "integrated". Qi Yan (2020) divided county urbanization into synchronous urbanization based on regional industrialization in the eastern region and gradual urbanization based on industrialization in the central and western regions, based on the relationship between farmers and the market. Zhu Yun (2021) found that there are three relationship modes of farmers in county urbanization, namely, "wage based" urbanization type, "amphibious" urbanization type, and "breakthrough type" urbanization type. This practice difference is shaped by the Radiant intensity of regional markets, county industrial resources, and county agricultural resource conditions. He Wang (2022) took two county units in Sichuan Province as examples to empirically study "compatible urbanization", and proposed two compatible urbanization models through multi classification Logistic regression analysis. One is a nearby compatible urbanization model based on county towns, and the other is a local compatible urbanization model based on the overflow of mega city functions.

Yang Xianming et al. (2023) used entropy method and spatial autocorrelation method to construct an urbanization quality evaluation system from four aspects: population, economy, society, and land. He explored the spatiotemporal evolution process and characteristics of county urbanization quality in Qinghai Province from 2000 to 2018. It was found that there are significant regional differences in the urbanization quality of counties in Qinghai Province, with overall high in the north and low in the south. The spatial agglomeration characteristics of urbanization quality are obvious, and the spatial agglomeration characteristics of low-quality counties are particularly significant. The development of county economy is the core driving force, policy support and project support are special paths to promote urbanization, and remote urbanization is the characteristic of county urbanization. County level urbanization in Qinghai Province should follow the principles of classification guidance, adapting to local conditions, and promoting the coordinated development of county urbanization in the province. And Zhu Huaxiong and Wang Wen (2022) proposed the difficulties encountered in current urbanization. He analyzed the internal logic of the formation of the theory of county urbanization from the perspective of Economic history and History of economic thought. Combining the reality of county urbanization in recent years, he proposed that the difficulties in the development of county urbanization at present are: ① shortage of technical talents, labor force structure to be optimized; ② The industrial foundation is relatively weak, and the economic driving force still needs to be strengthened; ③ Financial funds still need to be increased, and financing capacity needs to be further improved; ④ Economic development should be combined with the "dual carbon" goal.

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3. Analysis of the Influencing Factors of Urbanization

In addition to studying various aspects of county urbanization itself, the academic community has also conducted in-depth research on the factors that affect county urbanization. Ding Xiaoxiao et al. (2023) estimated and analyzed the impact of high-speed railway and highway construction on county urbanization development by using the Panel data of county city in Chengdu Chongqing region from 2000 to 2020. It was found that the construction of high-speed railways has a relatively small impact on well-developed county-level cities and is not conducive to the further development of relatively backward county-level cities in the short term. Jiang Yuyang (2020) used rural student families in Taihe County, northern Anhui as a case study to analyze the new characteristics of county urbanization driven by education. He found that rural families driven by education formed a "half work accompanying study" division of labor mode of local study and remote work, which is reflected in the macro perspective of urbanization characteristics that intersect local and remote areas.

Zhang Qi (2022) explored the urbanization construction with county towns as an important carrier from the perspectives of historical logic, theoretical logic, and practical logic. He believes that using county towns as an important carrier to promote urbanization needs to focus on solving problems such as how to coordinate the large differences between county towns, how to ensure funding supply, and how to promote high-quality synchronization of the "four modernizations". Based on this, county-level governments should plan the development path of county towns in a reasonable manner according to local conditions, establish and improve the fiscal and financial supply mechanism through reform and innovation, and focus on focusing on the synchronization of the "four modernizations" and filling in the gaps. Liu Jian'e and Ling Wei (2023), based on the dynamic monitoring data of the national floating population from 2011 to 2018, adopted an age period generation effect model to examine the interactive effect between the subject selection of the floating population and urbanization policy driving. It has been found that the rational balance between maximizing the comprehensive benefits of families in the new generation of migration and family migration is evident. County urbanization urgently requires structural optimization to build a systematic plan for a significant shift in social mobility.

Scholars have also drawn more specific conclusions by using different regions as research areas. Guihua (2022) compared the county urbanization in the central and western regions with that in the eastern regions, and found that the urbanization in the eastern region is endogenous, supported by multiple factors such as industry, economy, finance, and population. The county urbanization in the central and western regions is exogenous, mainly absorbing local populations, mainly middle-aged and elderly people, and lacking strong support from the county industrial foundation. Lu Ming and Li Pengfei (2023) divided county towns into population inflow and outflow areas based on the distance to major coastal ports and central cities, and proposed implementing differentiated county urbanization roads accordingly. For county towns with population inflow, it is necessary to continuously deepen institutional and mechanism reforms, improve local living environment, and enhance local population carrying capacity. In counties where population flows out, it is necessary to face the objective laws of population mobility, continuously improve the policy system, and effectively improve people's income and living standards. An Xiaoming (2022) found through research and interviews with counties in the main agricultural product producing areas that there are currently four main forms of farmers entering cities: permanent residence, migratory bird, flow, and future investment. Basic education, stable employment, and a citizen oriented lifestyle are currently the three major driving forces for urbanization in major agricultural product producing areas. Only when the three driving forces are very strong can it be possible for farmers entering the city to independently choose to become true citizens. Therefore, it is necessary to consider from

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the perspective of farmers entering the city, be vigilant of misconceptions about county urbanization, and actively promote farmers' independent participation in county urbanization from aspects such as basic education, industrial development, and public services.

4. Analysis of Measures to Promote County Urbanization

Based on academic research on the influencing factors of county urbanization, other scholars have conducted in-depth research on ways to promote county urbanization. Qian Zhenming (2022) believes that in order to adapt to the trend and requirements of urbanization in county towns, it is necessary to strengthen the supply of public services in county towns, enhance the preferences of agricultural transfer population in county towns, and promote local urbanization of agricultural transfer population. The development of higher quality and fairer public services in the county seat and the improvement of the county radiation capacity of public services in the county seat mean that the government should take more responsibilities. Giving full play to the leading role of the government, forming an interactive and cooperative mechanism between the government and society, and promoting digital empowerment are the path choices for strengthening public service supply to adapt to the trend of urbanization in county towns. Sun Liangshun and Tian Ze (2022) believe that the "urban-rural amphibious" lifestyle is an important means for the new "third generation families" in rural areas to cope with urbanization in China's new urbanization process. Therefore, in order to move towards a new type of urbanization with higher levels of urban-rural integration, it is necessary to increase the construction of affordable housing to reduce the cost of rural migrant population settling in cities; Guide the "urban and rural amphibians" to play their active role in rural revitalization; Constrain the excessive pursuit of urbanization speed by some county-level governments; Optimize the allocation of public resources between urban and rural areas in the county, in order to enhance the county's ability to radiate and drive rural areas. Yuan Meng and Yang Hua (2022) believe that the current urbanization in the county has formed a consumption oriented urban-rural ternary structure, leading to the aggregation of spatial risks in the county, increasing the pressure on farmers' urbanization, and presenting unstable characteristics. Therefore, it is necessary to adjust the urbanization approach appropriately, adhere to people-oriented, urban-rural coordination, and systematic layout, leverage the "stabilizer" function of counties, adhere to the gradual urbanization path, and provide a stable foundation for China's modernization transformation. Gaoqiang (2022) proposed using county towns as carriers to promote the construction of new urbanization. The focus should be on the urbanization of industries, people, land, services, technology empowerment, and institutional integration. We should continuously strengthen strategic linkage, planning coordination, reform cooperation, and pilot exploration, and build a policy support system that is compatible with incentives and constraints, and coordinated with multiple parties. Jin Sanlin et al. (2022) believe that while urbanization in China is rapidly developing, there has been a polarization phenomenon of excessive expansion of mega cities and shrinkage of some small and medium-sized cities and towns. In order to promote balanced, coordinated, and high-quality development of urbanization, county urbanization should be placed at an important position in the national new urbanization strategy, accelerate the construction of urbanization with county towns as an important carrier, and actively build a system and mechanism for the integrated development of urban and rural areas in the county area, which includes both industry and agriculture, as well as urban and rural areas, to improve the level and quality of county urbanization.

5. Analysis of the Role of County Urbanization

County urbanization, as an important part of promoting new urbanization, will have various impacts on the development of cities and rural areas in China.

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Firstly, the impact of county urbanization on the future urbanization pattern. Yu Jie and Zhao Wei (2022) used qualitative analysis methods, mainly based on policy documents and relevant literature, to systematically sort out the evolution of county seat positioning and examine its carrier functions. Based on this, they predicted the future direction of urbanization pattern and proposed that county seat urbanization construction will promote China's urbanization in four dimensions: spatial structure, social structure, industrial structure, and governance structure to form big cities, county seats The concept of a three-level gradient pattern connecting rural areas.

Secondly, county urbanization has a profound impact on education, population, and industrial development. Bai Meifei and Sun Guoyuan (2023) studied the issue of rural elderly care in the context of county urbanization based on the theory of intergenerational relationships and dynamic family life cycle. They found that the small families of father and son, who are separated from urban and rural areas, form a unified whole and collaborate to manage tasks such as maintaining livelihoods, creating family businesses, raising children, and supporting the elderly. The small families of father and son, who are separated between urban and rural areas, form a unified whole, collaborating to manage the tasks of maintaining livelihoods, creating family business, raising children, and supporting the elderly. Qin Yuyou (2022) analyzed the development strategy of county education in the process of urbanization, which is an important carrier of county-level education. He believed that the strategic positioning of county-level education development should be in line with county urbanization, focusing on convenience and quality, optimizing the layout of compulsory education schools, and establishing a community of urban and rural schools; Highlighting inclusivity and preschool education, constructing a group of kindergartens in an orderly manner, and expanding the supply of preschool education resources; Focusing on high-quality and diversified education, enhancing the attractiveness of county education and promoting the development of high school characteristics. Improve integration and localization, strengthen the construction of vocational education collectivization, and improve the matching between majors and employment industries. Cao Xiaojin et al. (2021) used the life process theory as the analytical framework and selected three typical young people from Y County as the research subjects. Through non participatory observation and in-depth interviews, data was collected to explore the county level urbanization mechanism and local identity construction of young people from the perspective of individual life trajectories. Research has found that when the spatial practice and physical and mental experience of young people do not match their imagination, and upward mobility is obstructed, there will be three forms of county urbanization: active choice, active choice in passive, and passive choice. Shi Fanji and Xu Yong (2021), based on the logical relationship between population urbanization rate and industrial upgrading index, analyzed the coupling relationship between population urbanization and industrial upgrading in China's counties using cross-sectional data from 2271 counties in 1990, 2000, and 2010, and analyzed the influencing factors of the coupling relationship between the two. It has been found that the static coupling coordination between population urbanization and industrial upgrading in Chinese counties continues to improve over time, and shows a clear spatial pattern of gradual coordination from west to east.

Thirdly, some scholars have drawn more specific and targeted effects from more microscopic Area studies. He Xuefeng (2022) explored the logic of county-level urbanization in the eastern region and that in the central and western regions, China has formed two vastly different county-level economic models. Discovering the county economy within the coastal urban economic belt in the eastern region, this type of county economy is essentially an internal component of urban economy and belongs to the "foot" of large cities in nature; The county-level economy in the central and western regions, due to the lack of capacity to accommodate modern manufacturing, mainly relies on the agricultural income of farmers and their families

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and the income of migrant workers. Essentially, it is an extension of the rural economy in the past, and the nature of county towns is only the "brain" of rural areas. He believes that there are fundamentally different logics in the county-level economy of different regions in China, so county-level governance in different regions should also have completely different governance goals and institutional arrangements. Yang Shengli (2023) selects the data of 128 counties (cities) in Sichuan Province from 2011 to 2020, and uses the Panel data model to empirically analyze the impact of new urbanization on Common prosperity. It is found that the new urbanization in the county has a significant role in promoting Common prosperity, but there are certain regional differences. This promoting effect is mainly reflected in two aspects: firstly, it helps to improve the overall level of county prosperity, and secondly, it helps to narrow the level of county disparity. Chang Jiran (2022) used the new urbanization demonstration counties selected by the National Development and Reform Commission as research samples, calculated the coupling coordination degree of the samples from 2012 to 2019, evaluated the coordinated development level of leading industries and new urbanization, and analyzed various influencing factors. It was found that the degree of coupling coordination is showing an upward trend, shifting from mild imbalance to primary coordination, and shifting towards balanced development at the spatial level. However, the development level of the leading industry is relatively low, and its impact on the new urbanization belt is weak. The weakness lies in the insufficient driving power of the leading industry to other industries, which limits the high-quality development of the leading industry. Kong Xiangzhi and He Xinwei (2022) constructed a collaborative mechanism between county-level urbanization and rural industry revitalization based on the analysis of the Taoyuan Demonstration Zone case, and explored the conditions for its stable operation. Research has found that, under the premise of focusing on "agriculture, rural areas, and farmers" and focusing on urban-rural integration, the inherent contradiction between county urbanization and rural industrial revitalization can be resolved through the integration of land, population, funds, and other factors. By promoting industrial agglomeration, the synergistic development of county urbanization and rural industrial revitalization can be injected with power, which is an important way to achieve a positive interaction and coordinated development between county urbanization and rural industrial revitalization.

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