

# Research Overview of “Communist Party of China and Changes of Urban Society”

Zhao Xin, Chen Wei  
Qilu Normal University, Jinan, China

Since the Communist Party of China entered cities, the changes of urban society are worthy of research and thinking. Numerous scholars interpreted this problem from the aspects of regime, economy, culture, and urban planning. This paper tries to sort out these research findings, looking forward to a more in-depth research on this problem.

*Keywords:* Communist Party of China, urban society, changes

## Overview of Research Status

Urban modernization is a part of national modernization. Since the Communist Party of China came into power, both the urban structure and function had significant changes. After the Communist Party of China as a heterogeneous force entered cities in that period, our urban society had changes that are widely different from that of the traditional society in politics, economy, culture, etc. How did the Communist Party of China complete the transformation of urban society, and become an important force undertaking the process of modernization? It has aroused widespread concern in the academic circles.

After the reform and opening up, China's urbanization process has been accelerating, and such problems as urban construction and urban management have become a significant realistic problem in front of the Communist Party of China. Thus, the research on the relationship between the Communist Party of China and urban modernization, as well as the experience and enlightenment contained therein provides a reference and guidance for urban construction today. Scholars discussed this problem from respective professional fields and disciplinary perspectives. And relevant research findings are fruitful. This paper intends to systematically sort out relevant research findings so as to produce benefits for the propelling and deepening of researches on this problem.

There are many articles interpreting urban changes from the perspective of the Communist Party of China. According to different viewing angles, horizons, and research contents, such articles can be classified as the following aspects.

## Communist Party of China and Liberation & Takeover of Cities

Most of such works are focused on interpreting the policies of liberation of cities and the policies of

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Zhao Xin, master, School of Marxism, Qilu Normal University, Jinan, China.

Chen Wei, master, School of Marxism, Qilu Normal University, Jinan, China.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Zhao Xin, Qilu Normal University, No. 2 Wen Bo Road, Zhang Qiu District, Jinan City, China.

takeover of cities in the early period, and compiling and analyzing such a series of policies.

Li (2000) carried out a systematic research on this problem. He systematically expounded and theoretically analyzed the policy evolvement of takeover cities, the alternation of new and old regimes, the urban renewal and development, the takeover of old cultural undertakings, the external relations, and the transformation of urban society from six aspects, carried an in-depth study on the subject of the takeover of cities by the Communist Party of China, and summarized the experience and enlightenment on the takeover of cities. The Research Office of CPC History of CPC Jinan Municipal Committee and the Jinan Municipal Archives (1998) introduced the liberation and takeover process of Jinan in detail, i.e., the process of establishing a revolutionary order upon takeover, rooting out enemy agent organizations, stabilizing finance for the resumption of work, providing the people with a stable life, and implementing socialist transformation of cities. Through sorting out and analyzing the takeover and transformation process and policies of cities in the initial post-liberation period, they try to show the world, “The Communist Party of China not only has the ability to destroy an old world, but also does well in building a new world.” The Communist Party of China is able to accomplish the work of urban management and construction. Liu (1997) and the *City Takeover and Social Transformation* book series, including Henan Volume (2000), Tangshan Volume (1998), Jilin Volume (2002), Tianjin Volume (1998), Shenyang Volume (2000), Kunming Volume (1998), Jiangsu Volume (1997), Xi’an Volume (1997), Guangxi Volume (2003), Zhejiang (Hangzhou) Volume (1996), Qinhuangdao Volume (1997), Shashi Volume (1998), Urumqi Volume (1997), Chongqing Volume (1995), and Nanyang Town Volume (1998) have views similar to the above. Only the cities taken over and transformed are different. The above research findings are mainly focused on describing and sorting out the policies in that period and the policies and process of acceptance to takeover, and recording this historical process from the perspective of the revolutionary history. In addition, the cultural and historical data of some local literature also have much involvement in this aspect. All these are data arrangements, which play a helping role in the research.

### **Communist Party of China and Governance of Urban Society**

City was an unfamiliar and “hostile” field for the Communist Party of China as the Party grew up in rural society. Therefore, after entering cities, the Communist Party of China attached great importance to regime construction and the reconstruction of urban governance structure, and did a lot of work in urban regime construction and urban governance. Accordingly, the governance of urban society becomes a vital problem in the research on the Communist Party of China and the changes of urban society. Scholars carried out researches from different perspectives.

Such research findings are characterized by new perspectives and large quantities. The scholars interpreting it from the perspective of the unit system mainly include: Yang and Zhou (1999), Liu (2000), L. L. Li and H. L. Li (2000), Wang (2007), Li (2004), Lu (1992), Man and Ge (2008); the scholars carrying out researches from the perspectives of urban regime and society include: Guo (2006), Liu (1997), Chen and Xie (2002), Chen, Kong, and Lu (2007); the scholars reflecting the status of urban society in that period from the perspective of citizens’ life include: Tang (2009), Jin (2011), et al.

Selecting Shanghai as the object of study, Guo (2006) investigated the vanishing of such social organizations as old charities and townsmen associations, as well as the founding process of neighborhood committees in Shanghai in the early post-liberation period, researched how the Communist Party of China “placed the government authority among the people in an unprecedented way” to realize the unity of the state

and society, and theoretically reproduced the historical process of the regime of New China forming, developing, and constructing a social foundation compatible with itself in a urban space with a high degree of heterogeneity. Through establishing a series of political institutions, the Communist Party of China broke the original social strata, and successfully established a new governance system of urban society. The author holds that the Kuomintang tried to build a new state regime in reliance upon the existing social elites, without completely changing the pre-existing social structure, so finally it failed to let the state will take root in society. In the revolution process, the Communist Party of China unswervingly swept away the authorities of old society and their organizations, established its own organization system (neighborhood committee in replace of the Baojia system) and social support basis, and took the place of them to construct a new society and its own national foundation, thereby, achieving success. As we know, after the Communist Party of China entered urban society, the most obvious sign of urban society is the unit system. *Danwei China—Individual, Organization and State during the Process of Reconstruction of Social Regulation System* by Liu (2000) is a work that carries out a systematic research on the unit organization and the unit system from the perspective of politics. It shows to what extent the units and unit system meet the need for China's modernization, and under what conditions they would turn into the retardation force of modernization. This book tries to provide a scientific and rational interpretation of “Danwei China” (Unit China). It analyzes the CPC's social integration approach after they entered urban society from the aspect of the formation and impact of the unit system, and concludes that the unit system formats the entire society spatially, and forms a special social mobilization and integration mechanism. As the Communist Party of China extended the state power towards the society to the utmost extent, the private space vanished and people became the appendages of state relations. The two works both carry out lots of in-depth analyses on the structural changes of cities in China, with profound interpretations.

### **Communist Party of China and Economic Changes of Cities**

After 1949, the Communist Party of China began the process of economic modernization. The economic modernization strategy is aimed at giving priority to developing cities. Conversely, economic modernization is also the core content of urban modernization. After the Communist Party of China came into power, the cities in Chinese Mainland began implementing a modernization mode greatly different from the tradition. The process of urban & economic modernization had a great fluctuation, which was related to policies, economy, and the thoughts of each development stage, and the urban economy showed a zigzag track of changes. Therefore, the role of the Communist Party of China in urban & economic modernization aroused the interest of many scholars who carried out researches from different perspectives.

For the research on the problem, there are generally two research ideas. The first one places emphasis on the research of the CPC's urban economic development strategy, which is embodied as the summary and analysis of the economic layout and industrial development strategy after the founding of New China. The second one lays emphasis on the research of urban economic development content, which is embodied as the sorting and compilation of economic figures. The former includes *Reform and Development—Modernization Study of Chengdu, Inland City of China* edited by He (2002). This book focuses on the main line of the transition of Chengdu from a traditional agricultural city to a modern industrial city, and divides the urban modernization process of Chengdu since the mid-19th century into two stages. The first stage is the launch and preliminary development period of urban modernization of Chengdu...The period from the founding of the

People’s Republic of China to the late 20th century is the second stage for urban modernization development of Chengdu.”<sup>1</sup> It applies a lot of research methods to carry out an in-depth analysis on the development track of economic institution development of Chengdu in the modernization process in the 20th century, adding a sense of times and a stereoscopic sensation to urban development. In addition, it also includes *From Giving Priority to Political Center to Giving Priority to Economic Center—Transformation of the Dynamic Mechanism of China’s Urban Development from Agricultural Era to Industrial Era* by He (2004), *A Comparative Study of Beijing and Shanghai Development in the 20th Century* by Qiu (2003), *China’s Urbanization Path and Its Development Trend* by Wang (1993), “An Evolutionary Study of the Urban Form of Modern Jinan” (*Modern Urban Research*, 2009 (10)) by Wang (2009) and so on. The latter includes *A Century of Urban Changes* by Zhao and Wang (2000), and *A Century of Urban Development History of Jinan—Jinan since Port Opening* edited by Dang and Lin (2004). Relying on detailed archives and document literature, the above works take Jinan as an individual case to summarize and sort out the urban layout, as well as the development status of urban industry, commerce and finance of Jinan since 1949, and describe the transformation track of Jinan from a political city to an industrial city, from a traditional industrial path to a modern city.

### Communist Party of China and Educational & Cultural Changes of Cities

“Certain culture (as ideology) reflects certain politics and economy, gives a great influence and acts on the politics and economy of certain society.”<sup>2</sup> As a city is China’s social and cultural center, the success or failure to remove the old culture and to establish a new one concerns whether a regime can achieve real survival in urban society. Therefore, after entering urban society, the Communist Party of China must replace the old with the new in the cultural and ideological spheres while taking over the regime and resuming production. Finally, it rapidly established an ideological and cultural system matching its regime. The things behind the invisible ideological war are filled with academic charm to many scholars.

The works in this aspect include *Identity Construction and Material Life* by Wang (2008), “Primary and Secondary Education in Beijing under the Guidance of ‘Proletarian Politics’(1949-1966)” by Sui (2012), and “People’s Concept Reconstruction and Unified Front State Regime—A Perspective of State Construction by the Communist Party of China” by Xiao (2008). Besides, this can be found in comprehensive works concerning city changes, e.g., *Reform and Development—Modernization Track of Chengdu, Inland City of China* by He (2002), which describes urban education development; *A Section of Five Thousand Years of History: Chinese City in 1949* by Zhang (2009), which analyzes the reconstruction of the urban cultural psychology structure of Nanjing by the Communist Party of China after it entered Nanjing; *A Century of Urban Development History of Jinan—Jinan since Port Opening* (Qilu Press, 2004) edited by Dang and Lin (2004). In addition, there are some collections of local education development information, e.g., *Jinan Cultural and Historical Data Library of the 20th Century* (Education Volume) (Huanghe Press, 2004 version) edited by the Cultural and Historical Records Committee of the Jinan Municipal Committee of the CPPCC (2004), etc.

The achievements in this aspect can be divided into two types. The first type reflects the cultural changes of cities through the reconstruction of urban ideology. For example, *Identity Construction and Material Life* edited by Wang (2008) uses rich file information and takes Shanghai as an example to analyze the ideological

<sup>1</sup> Wei Yingtao: *New View of Research on Urban Development History—Review on Reform and Development—Modernization Track of Chengdu, Inland City of China*, Forum on Chinese Culture, 2002(02).

<sup>2</sup> *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* Vol. 2 [M]. People’s Publishing House, 1991 Version, pp. 663-664.

remodeling process of the working class in the city after the Communist Party of China entered urban society. The Communist Party of China organized the Learning Culture Movement centered on literacy to arouse workers' political and state concepts, completed the reconstruction of class consciousness by democratic means to enable the mental state and lifestyle of the working class to have a significant change, thereby, finally realizing “socialization”. The work theoretically analyzes the process of the Communist Party of China rebuilding thoughts and theories. The paper “Primary and Secondary Education in Beijing under the Guidance of ‘Proletarian Politics’ (1949-1966)” by Sui (2012) conducts a systematic research on the primary and secondary education in Beijing from 1949 to 1966. “Proletarian Politics” is the guiding thought of primary and secondary education. Since 1949, the setting, teacher management, student management, teaching and moral education activities, etc. of primary and secondary schools are all closely related to “Proletarian Politics”. It understands the development track of education serving politics from the aspects of the historical tradition of unification of politics and education in ancient China, as well as the management of educational institutions, the determination of educational aims, the selection of teaching contents, and so on in the transition period of modern education. However, *People's Concept Reconstruction and Unified Front State Regime—A Perspective of State Construction by the Communist Party of China* by Xiao (2008, pp. 23-26) holds that:

After the collapse of the imperial system, both the country and the society failed. Beset with internal disorder and foreign invasions, the society was on the verge of collapse. China did not form an internal social force that could allow the political party to promote social development. It required the political party to embed itself in the society and achieve social cohesion from outside.

The way of achieving social cohesion is “entering the society from the outside via a certain political carrier”. The main political carrier selected by the Communist Party of China is social revolution. The Communist Party of China got deeply involved in the society through a series of movements, and completed the ideological reform of the social group, i.e., the “peopling” process of citizens. The other type describes the development status of education and cultural undertakings of cities. For example, *A Century of Urban Development History of Jinan—Jinan since Port Opening* edited by Dang and Lin (2004) summarizes and describes the general education, higher education, adult education, special education, and scientific & technological development of Jinan in the education part, and reflects the development status of the socialist education cause under the leadership of the Communist Party of China since 1949. Perfect education system, complete educational facilities as well as rich educational forms all show the earth-shaking changes of urban education compared to that before the founding of New China.

### **Communist Party of China and Urban Planning & Layout**

In 1949, Chinese cities started to stride towards the open pattern of economic modernization. While the function of Chinese cities had a huge change, the urban layout as the carrier of industrialization path had a huge change as well. The change of the urban layout reflects the change in economic strategy of the Communist Party of China. Thus, the contents in this regard have attracted academic attention in recent years.

The achievements in this regard include “On Urban Layout Thoughts of the Three-Generation Leaders of the CPC” by Miao (2002b), “An Analysis on the Urban Layout Concept and Policy Performance of the Three-Generation Leaders” by Miao (2002a), “156 Projects and Development of Industrial Cities of New China (1949-1957)” by He (2007), “An Initial Discussion on the Theoretic System Framework for City Planning in China” by He (1994), and “Literature Review of Urban Planning Theory Typology” by He (2009).

The systematical researches on urban layout include “On Urban Layout Thoughts of the Three-Generation Leaders of the CPC” by Miao, as well as “An Analysis on the Urban Layout Concept and Policy Performance of the Three-Generation Leaders” by Miao (2002b), which systematically expound the urban layout theories, methods, and gains & losses in practice of the three-generation leaders of the Communist Party of China since the founding of New China. These articles summarize and review the urban layout thoughts of the three-generation leaders of the Communist Party of China from the perspective of economics, including Mao Zedong’s layout thought of “coastal cities and inland cities”, and Deng Xiaoping’s urban layout strategy of “giving priority to developing coastal regions to achieve common prosperity”; besides, Jiang Zemin raised the “coordinated development of cities in eastern, central and western regions” and seized the opportunity to put forward the strategic thought of China’s Western Development. In addition, these articles evaluate the urban development status of China, and point out the imbalance of China’s urban development. “156 Projects and Development of Industrial Cities of New China (1949-1957)” by He and Zhou (2007), researches the urban industrialization strategy in the early days of New China, indicates the impact of the strategy of limited development of heavy industries, and reconstructs the industrialized regions of New China. Thenceforth, China officially opened the new chapter for orderly construction and prior development of the modern industry. From 1949 to 1957, the cities of New China set out on the development path—new development mode of heavy industrial city construction oriented to prior development of heavy industries, which was different from that in other historical periods. The basic framework of China’s urban development under the planned economic system was basically formed, and produced a great impact on China’s urban system. Most of other research results are researches on urban planning from the perspectives of urban buildings, urban planning, and historical geography thereof, e.g., “An Initial Discussion on the Theoretic System Framework for City Planning in China” by He (1994), “Literature Review of Urban Planning Theory Typology” by Shi, Wu, Zhi, and Sun (2009). They analyzed this problem from different disciplinary perspectives, with great enlightening significance.

Seen from the existing results, the researches on “Communist Party of China and Changes of Urban Society” have the following characteristics:

First, most researches are focused on sorting out policies and interpreting institutions after the Communist Party of China entered cities in the initial post-liberation period. Most are simple sorting and listing of takeover policies, industry, and commerce policies, as well as policies and regulations of resuming production and stabilizing social order of cities in the initial post-liberation period, without any extension from the research perspective. In the research process of this period of history, they only give description, summarization, and analysis from the perspective of the ruling party. The research of historical science includes not only the simple research of “revolutionary history”, but also the past social events and feelings. In this way, we may have an insight into the multiple dimensions of a history to obtain a more intuitive and perceptual understanding. Moreover, such a research is beneficial to amend the historical research paradigm of “Revolution-Centered Theory” in historical science.

Second, the research on the social governance system of cities is slightly insufficient in terms of the systematicness and comprehensiveness of contents, with only analyses on one city or one aspect. A city is a complicated organism, and its governance system also includes dominant (e.g., administrative setup) and recessive levels (e.g., psychological identity of a regime). The research on a certain level is insufficient to have an all-around understanding of the problem. It lacks refined and empirical sorting of the social governance

structure and changes of cities, fails to summarize the basic paradigm of social governance since the Communist Party of China entered urban society, and lacks further comprehensive description and theoretical analysis of the urban governance mechanism. The research specific to the governance system means having a full grasp of the change process of this field, carrying out an in-depth research to reveal the rules, and fully grasping the changing process of the urban governance system to deepen the research on this subject.

Third, the rise of the research on China's modern urban history and the remarkable progress achieved are breakthroughs to the theoretical discussion on urban history research, preliminarily forming the theoretical framework and research method of China's modern urban history with Chinese characteristics. As increased importance is attached to the research on China's modern urban history and the research field is continuously expanded, lots of academic monographs and papers have been published. There are few works concerning the research of urban society with the new perspective of urban social research—"Communist Party of China and Changes of Urban Society" as the point of penetration. A number of problems and shortcomings still exist in the aspects of theoretical system, research methods, research fields, etc., and need to be solved. So far, some scholars have proposed revealing the relationship between the changes of urban society and the political force—the Communist Party of China in the aspects of politics, economy, culture, society, etc. from multiple dimensions. The research in this regard is also faced with the problem of how to increase and comprehensively and fully reflect the advantages and characteristics of "overall and comprehensive researches" on the basis of researches on single cities so as to prevent the research results of regional urban history from appearing in the form of a simple combination of research results of single cities.

Seen from the current research conditions, the research on the problem is still in the preliminary stage. While making gratifying achievements, it also has weak links. On the existing basis, the subsequent researches shall strive to be comprehensive, multi-angle, and multi-dimension, and try to restore historical appearance. In addition, there are a lot of one-sided researches on this problem, but only a few overall researches. The research on a certain aspect of the problem is beneficial to have a full recognition of the problem on the basis of detailed investigation and to form a real and all-around understanding. In fact, the overall research can help us to grasp the characteristics of this historical process so as to grasp the role and significance of the Communist Party of China in urban society on the whole. The subject research can avoid the void and overbroad tendency of the overall research on the basis of one-sided research and detailed investigation, and take a typical city as an individual case to deepen the research on the problem.

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