

The Urban Transformation of the Developing World

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JOSEF GUGLER

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3

Urbanization in China: Reassessing an Evolving Model

XIANGMING CHEN AND WILLIAM L. PARISH

A CENTRAL question about urbanization processes in Third World countries is whether they will converge upon a general path travelled by Western industrialized countries or become increasingly divergent due to different historical and national conditions. If the answer is the latter, as suggested by recent cross-national evidence (Findley, 1993; Gilbert, 1992; Smith and London, 1990), two additional questions need to be addressed. First, how is the distinctive pattern of urbanization in each developing country shaped by a combination of historical, political, economic, and geographical factors unique to that country? Second, what does the change in the distinctive urbanization experience in a developing country reveal about the dynamics underlying Third World urbanization in general? We address these questions by focusing on Chinese urban development. China is currently in a period of transition that questions many older patterns. What was formerly distinctive about China may disappear as China adds more market elements to its economy. In this chapter, we reassess the Chinese model by focusing on the changing pattern of urbanization in China during the 1980s and early 1990s.

Urban Population and Labour-Force

Though problems with varying definitions of urban are common around the world, these problems are particularly acute in China, where frequently changing administrative definitions make it difficult to attach precise meanings to urban trends. Nevertheless, based on several careful

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