



# Research on the Problem of the Guangzhou-Foshan Metropolitan Area

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**Abstract.** This paper uses the method of reading government reports, relevant literature, and field investigation to deeply study and analyze the problem of the urbanization of the Guangzhou-Foshan Metropolitan Area and on this basis, put forward some constructive references for the better and more efficient development of the Guangzhou-Foshan Metropolitan Area. This article first describes the concept and connotation of metropolitan areas and urbanization. Secondly, the necessity of the same urbanization of the Guangzhou-Foshan Metropolitan Area is analyzed, and a series of prominent problems existing in the urbanization of the Guangzhou-Foshan Metropolitan Area are studied. Finally, this article hopes that Guangzhou and Foshan will pay attention to the problem and work together to promote the urbanization process of the metropolitan area with a market-oriented approach.

**Keywords:** metropolitan area · urbanization · industrial structure · regional development

## 1 Introduction

The concept of “metropolitan area” was first mentioned by French geographer Jane Gottman in his articles. As early as in the 1960s, Japan began to pay attention to this phenomenon and put forward the concept of “metropolitan area” after in-depth research on it. Up to now, scholars domestic and abroad still have no very clear definition of “metropolitan area”. Generally, “metropolitan area” refers to the urban space combination form composed of one or more core cities and towns and regions adjacent to the core that have close social, economic, and cultural interaction and have the tendency of urban integration and possibility after urbanization development reaches a certain stage. By 2020, the urbanization rate of Guangzhou and Foshan has reached 86.19% and 94.96% respectively, which indicates that the urbanization development level of Guangzhou and Foshan metropolitan circle with Guangzhou and Foshan as main parts has reached a high degree. Guangzhou is one of the cores of a large bay area of Guangdong city, at the same time, as the core of the industrial city of Guangdong province, Foshan city, one of their economy and culture are closely linked, and Shared between the two cities traffic network, such as financial capital, talents and information resources,

greatly promote the industrial linkage and complementary functions and the promotion of people's living levels. Urban integration refers to an urban development strategy in which a city and another or several neighboring cities realize industrial transformation and upgrading through resource sharing on the premise of economic, social, ecological, and industrial complementarity and improve the living standards of people in the urban area. Integration is one of the important measures to build a modern metropolitan area, so the integration of Guangzhou and the Foshan metropolitan area can better promote the development of the regional economy.

## **2 Analysis of the Necessity of Urbanization in the Guangzhou-Foshan Metropolitan Area**

### **2.1 The Necessity of Optimizing the Economic Development of the Guangzhou-Foshan Area**

Competition between international and domestic cities is becoming more and more intense, and the development of the Guangzhou-Foshan Metropolitan Area is also facing various problems, such as the repeated investment and construction of infrastructure and public service networks, the segmentation of resource and factor markets, the low-level duplication of industries, and the internal friction of competition between cities, which has led to the lack of regional economic development. The solution to the above problems must rely on the cooperation and seamless connection between Guangzhou and Foshan. The best way to eliminate the obstacles that affect and restrict common development is to make metropolitan areas co-urban.

### **2.2 It is Necessary to Optimize the Industrial Structure of the Guangzhou-Foshan Metropolitan Area**

Economic globalization can promote the free flow of factors of production on a global scale and the adjustment of industrial structure on a global scale, and all regions of the world are giving full play to their comparative advantages to participating in the international division of labor. Under the background of the post-epidemic era, the world economic center of gravity has accelerated to shift to the Asia-Pacific region, domestic labor and capital have gradually gathered in metropolitan areas, and multinational companies have significantly increased their investment in metropolitan areas. In this context, the Guangzhou-Foshan Metropolitan Area should seize the opportunity of the times, give full play to its location and comparative advantages, labor competitiveness, scientific research, and other advantages, integrate the resources of the Guangzhou-Foshan Metropolitan Area, make full preparations for a new round of international industrial transfer, and further promote industrial transformation and upgrading.

## **3 Analysis of the Problems Existing in the Urbanization of the Guangzhou-Foshan Metropolitan Area**

### **3.1 Conflicts of Administrative Interest Are Difficult to Reconcile**

The Guangzhou-Foshan Metropolitan Area includes two cities, Guangzhou and Foshan, 12 districts and 4 districts, and is managed by hundreds of administrative units of various

sizes. Although a hotline contact mechanism and a joint meeting of the secretary-general of the municipal party committee have been established between the two municipal governments, a management system applicable to the economic development of the metropolitan area has not yet been formed, and a coordination mechanism conducive to promoting the integrated economic development of the Guangzhou-Foshan metropolitan area has not yet been truly established. The contradiction between the interests of the administrative districts and the economic interests of the metropolitan areas has not been reconciled, and when it comes to the allocation of resources and interests, it is difficult for the administrative entities to negotiate from a higher, broader, and longer-term level, to greatly reduce the efficiency of cooperation between each other. At the same time, the multi-level division of management makes it impossible to achieve economic linkage within the metropolitan area, resulting in internal friction between higher-level governments and governments at the same level and disorderly competition between cities. Guangzhou-Foshan Metro is a good example, from the start of construction in 2002 to 2022, in the past 20 years, a total of 1 line has been opened on the Guangzhou-Foshan Line, and in the same period, the Guangzhou Metro opened 18 new lines such as Line 2, Line 3, Line 4, Line 5, etc., which shows that under the chaotic administrative management system, it is difficult for the Guangzhou-Foshan Metropolitan Area to develop steadily and sustainably.

### 3.2 The Phenomenon of Industrial Isomorphism is Prominent

As of 2020, the proportion of three industries in Foshan is 1.5:56.4:42.1, and the proportion of three industries in Guangzhou is 1.15:26.34:72.51. On the whole, the industrial focus of Guangzhou and Buddhism is concentrated in the secondary and tertiary industries and does not highlight the serious phenomenon of industrial isomorphism. But after looking at the data further, we have discoveries [1]. From the perspective of high-tech manufacturing, in 2020, the added value of Guangzhou's high-tech manufacturing industry increased by 6.3%, of which the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry increased by 16.6%, the aerospace equipment manufacturing industry fell by 41.8%, the electronic and communication equipment manufacturing industry increased by 6.9%, the electronic computer and office equipment manufacturing industry increased by 14.9%, and the medical equipment and instrumentation manufacturing industry fell by 5.1% [3]. The added value of Foshan's high-tech manufacturing industry increased by 1.9% over the previous year, accounting for 6.4% of the added value of industries above designated size, an increase of 0.4 percentage points over the previous year. Its traditional Chinese medicine manufacturing industry increased by 60.6%, the computer and office equipment manufacturing industry fell by 1.2%, and the medical equipment and instrumentation manufacturing industry fell by 25.3%. From an industrial point of view, Guangzhou's annual industrial added value was 572.252 billion yuan, an increase of 2.6% over the previous year. The added value of industries above designated size increased by 2.5%, of which state-owned enterprises increased by 17.4%, foreign-invested enterprises, Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan increased by 0.4%, joint-stock enterprises increased by 4.9%, joint-stock cooperative enterprises fell by 9.1%, and collective enterprises fell by 13.9%. In terms of light and heavy industries, the light industry fell by 0.1%, and the heavy

industry increased by 3.9%. The added value of Foshan's dominant traditional industries increased by 6.1% over the previous year. Among them, the textile and garment industry fell by 17.0%, the food and beverage industry increased by 10.3%, the furniture manufacturing industry fell by 12.6%, the building materials industry increased by 21.0%, the metal products industry increased by 15.6%, and the household electrical appliance manufacturing industry increased by 14.6%. After further observation of the data, we will find that even if Foshan does not take high-tech industries as its advantage, it is vigorously developing high-tech industries. Guangzhou should focus on the development of advantageous scientific and technological fields, but it is still building heavy industry [2]. This shows that neither Guangzhou nor Foshan has a great focus on their advantageous industries, and they have not given full play to the advantages of the two cities to achieve complementary advantages [4]. The prominent phenomenon of this industrial isomorphism is not conducive to the common development of the same city of Guangzhou-Foshan.

### **3.3 The Market-Oriented System is not Perfect**

A mature market mechanism is an important foundation for the economic integration of the metropolitan area. The key to establishing a metropolitan market mechanism is to enable the market mechanism to play a fundamental role in resource allocation in the development process of the metropolitan area. The market mechanism can strengthen the economic ties between cities, promote the economic structure of the metropolitan area to be more reasonable and the transformation and upgrading of the industrial structure, and then promote the formation and development of the metropolitan area with the city. Although Guangzhou and Foshan are at the forefront of China's reform and opening up and have made great achievements in the construction and development of the socialist market economic system, the market economic system has gradually been established and improved, from the perspective of the overall area of the metropolitan area, there are too many local protection barriers and administrative restrictions within the city and between the city, which greatly restricts the role of the metropolitan area market mechanism, resulting in the formation of a unified economic exchange and development platform within the metropolitan area, and the common market system has not been cultivated. The market-oriented mechanism that adapts to the urbanization of the metropolitan area cannot be perfected. Because the market mechanism of the metropolitan area is not perfect, the agglomeration and diffusion role in the metropolitan area cannot be played, the function strengthening of Guangzhou as a central city and growth pole is hindered, and the effective driving role of Foshan City and the surrounding areas is limited, which directly affects the process of urbanization of the metropolitan area [5].

### **3.4 The Metropolitan Area Master Plan Has not Been Developed**

The overall planning and detailed planning of the development of the Guangzhou-Foshan Metropolitan Area have progressed slowly, and the urbanization of the metropolitan area lacks the necessary guidance and legal compulsion to promote it. Guangzhou and Foshan in the metropolitan area are independent and difficult to allocate uniformly, making it difficult for the overall planning of the metropolitan area to be released [6]. The two

municipal governments should consider the construction and development of each city from the level of the entire metropolitan area, if not, even if a reasonable industrial ecosystem can be built in a small area of a local area, but at the level of the entire metropolitan area, it will cause the repeated construction of infrastructure, the repeated allocation and layout of the industry, and the unmatched production and living conditions, which will lead to the waste of resources and the loss of production efficiency. At the same time, due to the lack of a specific unified plan, the urbanization of the metropolitan area can only stay in words, at most it can only be the random action of the two municipal governments, without legal constraints and regulations, it is difficult for the development of the metropolitan area to be high-quality and sustainable.

### **3.5 Inter-city Competitive Partnerships Have not Been Formed**

First of all, there are many different administrative entities in the Guangzhou-Foshan Metropolitan Area, and the competitive cooperation relationship between cities has not been formed. Therefore, under the circumstance that the market economy is not yet mature, the factor market has not yet been unified, and the current cadre assessment system has not changed, Guangzhou, Foshan and the administrative regions in the circle must be independent when considering the gains and losses of development and their respective interests. Therefore, when it comes to competition between cities, there will inevitably be a game, and the game must be based on prioritizing its interests. This can lead to both sides ignoring the long-term interests of the other and the region. If this kind of game occurs in large quantities in the construction of public infrastructure, the improvement of public services, and the system of fiscal and tax distribution. Then the barrier-free flow of people, logistics, information flow, and capital flow will become difficult to achieve. This will inevitably lead to duplication of investment, restructuring of industries, waste of resources, increased transaction costs, loss of public welfare, and reduction of urban economic efficiency. These negative effects are likely to be embodied in the numerous highway toll stations, the increase in inter-district transportation costs, the collective on of financial settlement fees according to administrative divisions, and vicious competition in foreign trade exports and industrial development. This will greatly reduce the efficiency of the Guangzhou-Foshan urbanization, and greatly increase the difficulty of the Guangzhou-Foshan urbanization.

### **3.6 The Influence of the Core Area is Insufficient**

Judging from the development experience of the world's five major metropolitan areas, the agglomeration and diffusion of central cities play a vital role in the formation and development of metropolitan areas. Central cities with strong economic strength and influence can play the role of growth poles and fully promote the overall development of other urban areas in the metropolitan area. The economic development level of the core area of the Guangzhou-Foshan Metropolitan Area is relatively high, and the various industry systems are relatively sound, but the concentration of service activities such as business and trade logistics, cultural education, technological innovation, and information consulting is insufficient, and the scope of service activities cannot be oriented to the entire metropolitan area. The lack of influence in the core area and the poor service

delivery channels between the core area and the peripheral areas are the root causes of this situation. At the same time, the scientific and technological innovation ability of the Guangzhou-Foshan Metropolitan Area and the contribution of academic and research achievements to industrial development are relatively limited, which is extremely disproportionate to Guangzhou's status as a center of science and technology, talents and innovation in South China [7].

### **3.7 Resource Shortages and Environmental Pressures Are High**

The Guangzhou-Foshan metropolitan area lacks native resources and energy, and the factors of production are congenitally insufficient. In the use of resources and factors, metropolitan area enterprises have problems such as lack of independent innovation ability, low production efficiency, serious waste of resources and pollution, and low production profits, and the development level of the entire metropolitan area is still in the stage of resource-consuming development. In the regional environmental problem, the pollution and hazards left behind by previous developments have not yet had time to deal with and recover, new pollution and hazards have begun to appear, coupled with the lack of correct guidance and guidance, a large number of industrial pollution has spread from cities to rural areas, from local to the entire region. Due to the lack of previous planning control, the extensive use of land resources is large, inefficient, and limited development potential. All of this has greatly affected the sustainable development within the metropolitan area. At the same time, compared with the Yangtze River Delta and Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei, the strength of universities and scientific research institutions in the Guangzhou-Foshan Metropolitan Area is not strong, and the shortage of various senior technical and management talents is an indisputable fact. At present, the wages and benefits are not high, the social security capacity is not strong, and the humanized management is not in place, which makes it difficult for the metropolitan area to attract, retain and make good use of all kinds of outstanding talents, and even the emergence of large-scale enterprises "recruitment difficulties" for several consecutive years, which restricts the transformation and upgrading of the existing industries in the Guangzhou-Foshan metropolitan area.

## **4 Conclusions**

The text summarizes seven outstanding problems in the Guangzhou-Foshan Metropolitan Area, one is that the conflict of administrative interests is difficult to reconcile; the second is that the phenomenon of industrial isomorphism is prominent; the third is that the market-oriented system is not yet perfect; the fourth is that the overall plan of the metropolitan area has not been formulated; the fifth is that the cooperative relationship between cities has not been formed; sixth, the agglomeration and diffusion capacity of the core area needs to be strengthened; and the seventh is the shortage of resources and the greater environmental pressure. Based on this, this article hopes that Guangzhou and Foshan can attach importance to the problem, work together, promote the urbanization of the metropolitan area with market leadership, establish a coordination mechanism for the urbanization of the same city, and rationally layout the integrated industrial system,

to give play to the leading role of the core area of the metropolitan area and promote the integration of public undertakings.

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