

Study on the Act of Government in the Urbanization Process of Hebei Province

Taking Qinhuangdao as an example

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Abstract—Government as the direct leader and promoter in the process of urbanization, whether they behave properly or not affect directly on the quality and speed of the process of urbanization. Taking a representative city in Hebei province, Qinhuangdao as an example, this paper spreads out discussion from the situation of urbanization, the existing problem of government actions and the thought of standardizing the action. The final conclusions follow: urbanization can't do without government intervention; standardizing the act of government can promote the development of urbanization; government should clearly define their responsibilities and leave some things undone; government should be active in the aspect of responsibilities.

Keywords—Urbanization; Act of government; Hebei province; Qinhuangdao

I. INTRODUCTION

The “Development Planning for Hebei Coastal areas” puts forward that “The economic development between urban and rural areas should adhere to the path of urbanization with Chinese characteristics”; Hebei provincial government clears “Put urbanization into a strategic position in invigorating economy” and “Strives to make the level of urbanization reach 54% by 2015”. Urbanization has become an important theme of urban development. The average urbanization level in Hebei province comes to 43.74% and is lower than national average level by 5.94 percentage points. Whether urbanization can be moved forward actively yet prudently has a direct influence on the transfer of economic development mode and the optimization of the industrial structure and concerns the realization degree of the strategic goal of “powerful province and harmonious Hebei”. In the process of urbanization, government as the direct leader and promoter, whether they behave properly or not affect directly on the quality and speed of the process of urbanization.

II. URBANIZATION AND THE ACT OF GOVERNMENT

A. Basic connotation

“Urbanization” is first proposed formally in ‘Fundamentals of Urbanization’ by Serda. In recent years, urbanization and urbanization are all widely used and the former is more emphasized. What are the relations between them? Are there any differences? Some scholars think there is no essential difference between them. “Urbanization is the expression of urbanization with Chinese characteristics” [1];

Other scholars think they are not the same. Urbanization emphasizes on the coordinate development of small towns and cities, medium-sized and large cities. Urbanization only emphasizes on the driving development of large and medium-sized cities. In this paper, there is no essential difference between them. It is used to accord with China's national conditions.

The complexity of urbanization and the universality of its range determines the “diversity” of the connotation. Scholars separately define the concept from the view of demography, economics and sociology. According to some statistics, over 30 kinds of its connotation have been found [2]. Generally speaking, urbanization is defined from the view of broad sense in this paper. It contains the aspects of population, region, economic activities, urban construction, living environment and the living standard. It is the comprehensive reflection of overall development and progress of society. As to the act of government, Guoqing Hao, Yana Liu and Biliang Luo separately defined the connotation from the view of science of law, administration and economy. In this paper, the act of government emphasizes governmental duties, that is to make clear “what things that government do and not do”.

B. Interaction Force

Urbanization in our country is the result of government actions and they have a close correlation.

First of all, urbanization needs the government interference. “The inadequacy of the market and government's function determines that urbanization needs the effective participation and limited intervention of government” [3]. Urbanization in western countries is the product of market mechanism. There are many economic and social problems in the process of urbanization, such as unemployment. At present, the market mechanism in our country is not sound and is in the critical period of economic shift and social transformation. In this specific context, as an “invisible hand”, there is no any room left for market. As a “visible hand”, it will be sensible for government to intervene the urbanization reasonably and effectively.

Secondly, normative act of government will promote the process of urbanization. In the process of urbanization, the government's duty is to “operate the rudder”. That means government should take more responsibilities in the macro level. More specifically, the duty of government is to regulate and control economic and social development

environment, project the strategies for urban development, guide a rational flow of factors and standardize the market. Giving full play to these functions will provide a good operating environment to proceed the urbanization smoothly.

III. REPRESENTATIVENESS OF URBANIZATION IN QINHUANGDAO

A. *Promote the urbanization of Qinhuangdao to accord with national development strategy*

“Development Planning for Hebei Coastal areas” puts forward that “form the ‘one creates three’ spatial development pattern constituting by costal development area, Qinhuangdao, Tangshan and Cangzhou”. And “urban-rural development should adhere to the path of urbanization with Chinese characteristics”. Actively yet prudently promoting Qinhuangdao to take an urbanization road with its characteristics accords with the specification of national development strategy.

B. *The typicality of Qinhuangdao’s urbanization in Hebei province*

From the view of urban size and population, in 2010, the total area of Qinhuangdao was 7523 square kilometers and the population reached 2.9780 million. During the same period, the total area of Tangshan was 13472 square kilometers and the population reached 7.4679 million. The total area of Cangzhou was 14033 square kilometers and the population reached 7.0288 million. From the view of economic development level, in 2010, the GDP of Qinhuangdao is 87.7 billion. During the same period, the GDP of Tangshan and Cangzhou are separately 378.14 million and 190 million which are respectively quadruple and double of Qinhuangdao. Therefore, no matter from the view of urban size or urban population, Qinhuangdao belongs to a medium-sized city and is listed as an experimental city of planning and developing the city and its rural area in Hebei province. Studying it as a research object has a universal significance.

IV. THE STATUS OF URBANIZATION IN QINHUANGDAO

A. *Steady Improvement of Urbanization Level*

Qinhuangdao municipal government “makes urbanization a strategic priority of activating Qinhuangdao’s economy” and developed the work of “Great changes within three years” in the whole city in 2008. The twelfth five-year-plan outline for national economic and social development also makes it clear to “take an urbanization road with its characteristics”. Urbanization has entered a new stage of comprehensive acceleration. The rate of urbanization has increased from 38.77% in 2006 to 41.90% in 2008, 43.74% in 2009 and 47.24% in 2010 and keeps about 1.7% increasing rate every year. In recent years, the growth rate becomes faster and faster.

B. *Ever-Increasing Urban Population*

Urbanization can be seen as a process that rural population moves to urban. In this process, urban population has claimed an ever-growing share of the social total

population and the quality of population gradually improves. The urban population in Qinhuangdao has raised from 1.3552 million in 2006 to 1.4137 million in 2010 and keeps about 2% increasing rate every year. According to the classification standard of small, medium-sized and large cities in ‘Urban Planning Law’, Qinhuangdao has entry into the ranks of large cities.

C. *Constant Upgrading of Industrial Structure*

Urbanization can promote labor force to transfer from the traditional inefficient industries to modern efficient industries and raise the proportion of secondary and tertiary industry. So there is a directly proportional relation between urbanization and the proportion of secondary and tertiary industry. Then the proportion of secondary and tertiary industry will be raised, the rate of urbanization will be enhanced, the level of urbanization will be improved and it will further drive the innovation and upgrade of industrial structure. In 2010, the physical ratio of the three industries is 13.6:39.4:47.0. The leading role of service industry is prominent.

D. *Constant Optimized Living Environment and Improved Living Standard*

In 2010, green coverage rate of the build-up area in Qinhuangdao reached 45.6% and is 3.5 points higher than the average of Hebei province. The amount of bus per 10000 persons is 15.32 and 0.34 points higher than the average in Hebei province, 6.12 points higher than the national average. The environment is more livable and the life is more convenient. In 2009, the Engel coefficient of urban residents in Qinhuangdao is 32.6%. In 2010, it reached 34.0% and is up to 37.6% in 2011. According to the UN classification standard of rich and poor that is the Engel coefficient. If the Engel coefficient is between 30% and 39%, it means rich. The life for residents in Qinhuangdao has reached the rank of rich.

V. THE EXISTING PROBLEMS OF GOVERNMENT ACTIONS IN THE PROCESS OF URBANIZATION

Though the pace of Qinhuangdao’s urbanization is speeding up, the level of its urbanization (47.24%) is still 2.44 points lower than the average (49.68%). It is a long way to realize the goal of “striving to break through the level of urbanization of 65% by 2020”. In the process of urbanization in Qinhuangdao, the government plays a leading role and promotes the speed of urbanization at an annual rate of about 1.7%. At the same time, it is necessary to notice the shortage of government actions in the process of urbanization.

A. *The Lag of Urban Planning*

The construction of cities and towns is on the basis of the urban planning. Whether we can make a good job of urban planning directly influences the speed and quality of promoting urbanization. In the process of planning, Qinhuangdao government often lacks foresight. For instance, in the status of “you have me, and I in you”, the tourist area and residential area cannot be clearly classified. What

followed is traffic jam, life pollutions, chaos and other urban problems. This affects the city image. As to Qinhuangdao which aims to achieve the goal of “building a city on the basis of tourism”, the loss is self-evident.

In addition, the industrial structure has developed from the vertical aspect. But from the horizontal aspect, comparing with Shijiazhuang and Tangshan, the industrial structure is not enough reasonable. In 2010, the physical ratio of the three industries of Qinhuangdao is 13.6:39.4:47.0. During the same period, the physical ratio of Shijiazhuang is 9.8:49.7:40.5 and the physical ratio of Tangshan is 8.7:58.9:32.4. On the basis of agriculture, the primary industry makes up a large proportion and the development of secondary industry is relatively slow.

B. The Lag of system and Institutional Construction

“Following the economic development and structure transition, urbanization as an social phenomenon also need a rational system arrangement and innovation.” [3]The existing system is somewhat lag behind and hinders the normal promoting of urbanization. It usually uses NU ratio to measure the concentration degree of nonagricultural population of a city. NU equals that dividing the nonagricultural population as a proportion of the total working population by the urban population as a proportion of total population. If NU is less than 1, it means that nonagricultural population of this city is concentrated in urban area. On the contrary, it means nonagricultural population is concentrated in rural area. For some reason, largely because the household registration system and related employment and social security policies block the rational flow of surplus rural labor force.

The land system in China dated from the family-contract responsibility system. It not only keeps the collective ownership of land, but also allows farmers to hold the land use right. Due to the indeterminacy of land property right and the immaturity of transfer market, farmers neither want to give up the earnings from managing the land, nor abandon the land usage right to enter the city. At the same time, there are flaws in the requisition of land system. The subsidy standards are set by government. Government as an “economic man” violates the interest of the farmers for pursuing their own interests and hinders the deep development of urbanization. Government as the policy maker should reform and innovate for household registration system and land system in good time and clear the way for the urbanization.

C. Inadequate Inputs of Public Facilities

Infrastructure plays a basic role in the process of urbanization and is the carrier of urban development. The quantity and quality will directly affect the sustainable development of urban areas. Some indexes which reflect the level of urban infrastructures in Qinhuangdao are a far cry from the average of Hebei province. From the view of traffic capacity, in 2010, the road area of Qinhuangdao accounted for about 0.07% of national territorial area. During the same period, it accounted for about 0.35% and 0.67% of Hebei province and the whole nation. The road

area per person is 1.97 square meters and is 2.21 less than the average of Hebei province and 5.35 less than the average of the whole nation.

From the view of public service, the life of residents in Qinhuangdao are moving towards prosperousness. The demand moves from self expression survival to developmental demand. The demand for the field, content and quality of public service has become more advanced. The existing public service can not satisfy the demands of local residents. In 2010, the amount of hospital beds per 10000 persons is 13.2 lower than the provincial average and the amount of public books collections per 10000 persons is 31.1 less than the provincial average.

D. Phantom of Responsibility

“Phantom” is display by “government does not well take on their duties that they should do.” [4] For instance, when Qinhuangdao government formulating the plans for development, due to the function crossing and incomplete coordination mechanisms, it leads to the plans to appear the behavioral biases in the process of implementing. After the problem, they blame each other and no one takes responsibility for the deal. Then here comes the “empty space” for responsibility. This is because the responsibilities of government is not indeterminate. Otherwise, after Qinhuangdao became a prefecture-level city in 1983, majority leaders have a short tenure and been displaced quickly. So it leads to the lack of work continuity. And this is one of the reasons of the phantom of responsibility.

VI. THE THOUGHT OF STANDARDIZING THE ACT OF GOVERNMENT IN THE PROCESS OF URBANIZATION

A. Clarifying and Defining Governmental Functions

The development of urbanization cannot do without the macro-control of government. The duties is defined to improve the work of guidance and services on the premise of respecting and exerting the basic effect of market and act positively in the field of social management and public service. To be specific, we need to use economic measure to promote the development of urbanization, make a good plan for urbanization in the sight of sustainable development, maintain market order and build a market environment for fair competition and provide public goods and services. In addition, government should integrate urbanization into the evaluation mechanism, classify and qualify the evaluation indexes, promote the operation of accountability. If the act of government is muffed, the responsibility of corresponding leader must be investigated and the act of them must be standardized and restrained.

B. Scientific Planning and Reasonable Localization

According to the demand of developing “the attractive coastal tourist resorts for leisure and holiday” of the “Development Planning for Hebei Coastal areas”, it aims to conduct the “coastal strong city and beautiful port city”, make a scientific, sufficient and realistic medium-term and long-term plan for urbanization in the sight of sustainable development. For instance, according to the problem that

tourist area and residential area cannot be clearly classified, it is necessary to take a comprehensive solution as soon as possible. In addition, it must build the public system and focus on the participation of experts and general public.

The macroscopical urban pattern is changing, cities and towns should locate scientifically, especially the location of industry. Qinhuangdao has abundant tourism resources but weak industrial base. These congenital conditions determine that it cannot be a strong city just by developing industry or tourism. It is necessary to make overall plans and take all factors into consideration. Accelerate development of secondary industry and focus on develop labor-intensive industry and technology-intensive industry. Meanwhile, develop the tertiary industry, especially the tourism. The function of tourism plays an effective role in promoting the consumption and absorbing the labor force. Qinhuangdao has abundant tourism resources, 47 scenic spots, 30 A level scenic spots and 16 4A level scenic spots. In 2012, the total tourism revenue reached 20.235 billion and amounted for 18% of the GDP. It not only provides a large number of jobs but also promote the development of local transportation, accommodation and other related industries.

C. System and Mechanism on the Reform and Innovation of the Development of Urbanization

1) Deepening the reform of census register system

‘People's Republic of Household Registration Regulations’ was established in 1958. It marks the household registration system was formally established. ‘A notice about actively yet prudently promoting the reform of the household registration system’ was established by the State Council in 2011. It classifies and clarifies the policy of household relocation. At present, Qinhuangdao continues to use the old household register management and makes the surplus rural labor force cannot flow rationally and then affects the progress of urbanization. “Development Planning for Hebei Coastal areas” put forwards that “implement and relax requirements for household registration in towns and small and medium-sized cities, guide rural population towards small-medium cities and designated town and satisfy the demand of eligible rural population step by step”. [5] Qinhuangdao government should carefully implement the direction of policy and urge to come out the implementations. Under the background of immature environment, it is necessary to promote gradually and steadily and efficiently resolve the locating problem of workers and businessman.

2) Improving the system of land management

Following the promoting of urbanization, the transfer from agricultural land to urban construction land has become an absolute trend. It urges to improve the current system of land management. It needs to classify the content of the requisition of land system. Make different compensation for different types of land in accordance with the principle of market and fairness and protect the peasants’ benefit. At the same time, accelerate to promote the systems of old-age pensions, medical insurance and subsistence allowances for both urban and rural residents and eliminate the worries of surplus rural labor force.

D. Build the Diversified Investment and Finance System

Following the promotion of public products for residents, government has invested much more capitals to the aspect of construction of cities and towns. On the premise of limited fiscal expenditure, the construction of cities and towns trudges. Government should focus on the construction of financing platform. On the basis of increasing financial investment step by step, give great impetus to industrialized operation of public utilities, build the diversified investment and financing system with the participation of nation, collective and individual. In the range of legal provisions, the projects which can not be managed like street renovation, lighting, and environmental management are undertaken by government finance. As to those projects which can be managed, further to open for private capital and foreign investment, absorb funds for construction of cities and towns in a way of all-side and multi-channel. Government should focus on simplifying the procedure for examination and approval and strengthen the supervision and management.

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