

*Urban Competitiveness and Migration in the YRD and PRD Regions of China in 2010**

Jianfa Shen and Lei Wang

Abstract

There has been significant migration in China since the early 1980s and such migration has played an important role in the urban and regional development of China. The relationship between migration and development has been a tricky question as they affect each other. Many migration studies have attempted to identify the impact of social and economic development on migration. This article examines empirically if there is a positive relationship between urban competitiveness and migration. The study focuses on 25 cities in Yangtze River Delta (YRD) and Pearl River Delta (PRD) in 2010. A total of 59 indicators are used to measure urban competitiveness first using a sustainable development perspective. The relationship between migration and urban competitiveness is analyzed among 25 cities. This study shows the following

Jianfa SHEN is Professor and Chairman in the Department of Geography and Resource Management and Director of the Research Centre for Urban and Regional Development, Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. His research interests focus on migration, urbanization, urban and regional development, urban competitiveness, and governance in China.

Lei WANG is Assistant Professor at Key Laboratory of Watershed Geographic Sciences, Nanjing Institute of Geography and Limnology, Chinese Academy of Sciences. His research interests include urban and regional development and the spatial planning system in China.

*Thanks are due to two reviewers for their helpful comments. The work described in this article was fully supported by a GRF research grant from the Research Grants Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China (Project No. CUHK 449013) and the National Natural Science Foundation of China (Approval No. 41329001).

effects of migration according to the verification of four hypotheses. The share of migrants in usual residents has a positive relation with the urban competitiveness. The share of intraprovincial migrants has a more significant relation with the urban competitiveness than the share of interprovincial migrants. The ratio of urban migrants in intraprovincial migrants has a significant relation with the urban competitiveness. The ratio of skilled migrants in total migrants has a significant relation with the urban competitiveness.

1. Introduction

The relationship between migration and urban economic growth has been extensively studied from the perspective of neoclassic economics in the literature.¹ It is generally understood that migration can provide human resources for economic growth and migration is primarily motivated by regional differentials in income. The inflow of migrants affects urban development in many different ways. They not only provide human resources for local industries and municipal services and increase consumer demand in the commodity market, but also raise pressures on local facilities and amenities.

The massive rural-urban migration has been part and parcel of China's rapid economic growth and urbanization.² With a discriminating household registration system, most rural migrants are treated as temporary population in destination cities, although they account for the majority of internal migration in China. Many scholars have documented the role of population mobility in urban and rural development.³ Concentrated in the southeast coastal cities, migrant workers are the main source of cheap labor force of industrialization, making Chinese products very competitive in the global market over the past three decades. They have also improved their own living conditions and boosted the economy of their hometowns through remittances and knowledge transfer.⁴

With the social and economic transformation in the developed cities of China, the streams of migration have become more and more diversified and complicated. Migration is no longer a short-term personal choice. It has become a family's long-term strategy and a way of life.⁵ It means that today migration involves not just labor migrants. More and more dependents are also brought to the receiving cities. Moreover, according to the studies of Rozelle et al. and Sun and Fan, most migrants were from inland rural areas in the 1980s and 1990s.⁶ But increasing