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China's Rural Revitalization Strategy and its Socioeconomic Effect

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Presentation structure

1

Urbanization and rural evolution in China

2

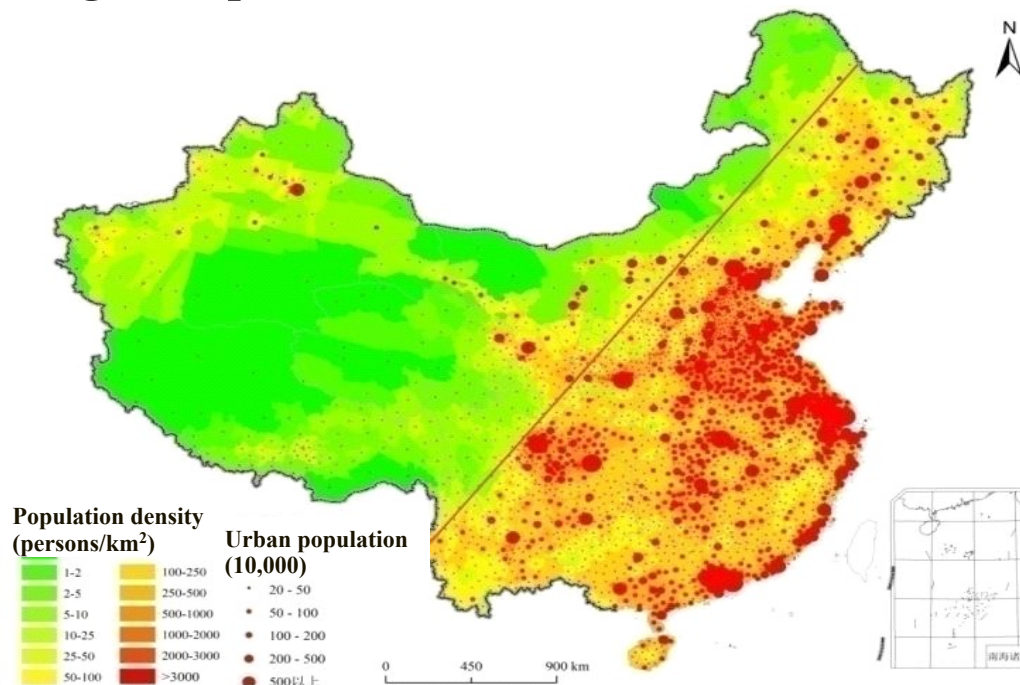
Some knowledge about *Rural decline*

3

Rural revitalization strategy and its effect

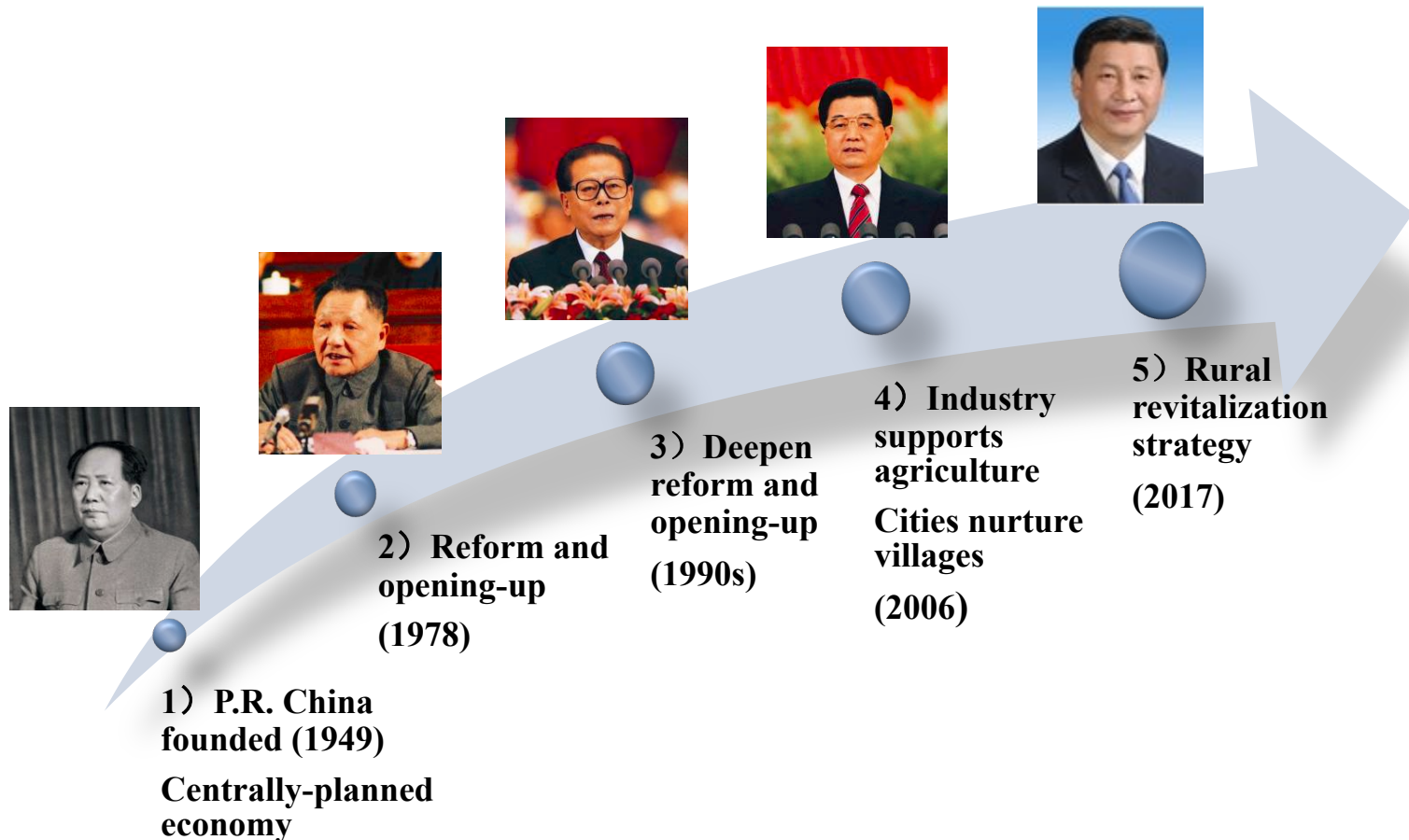
- By the end of 2020, China has 1.41 billion population in 34 provinces (2845 counties) with 902.2 million urban population, sharing 63.89% of the total.
- GDP 13.95 trillion\$, world's 2nd largest economic body, BUT per capita GDP is 9855.6 \$ in 2020, No. 63 in the world.
- Per capita disposal income 4419.5\$, urban residents versus Rural residents is 6018.4\$: 2352.2\$.

Fig. 1 Population distribution in China, 2020



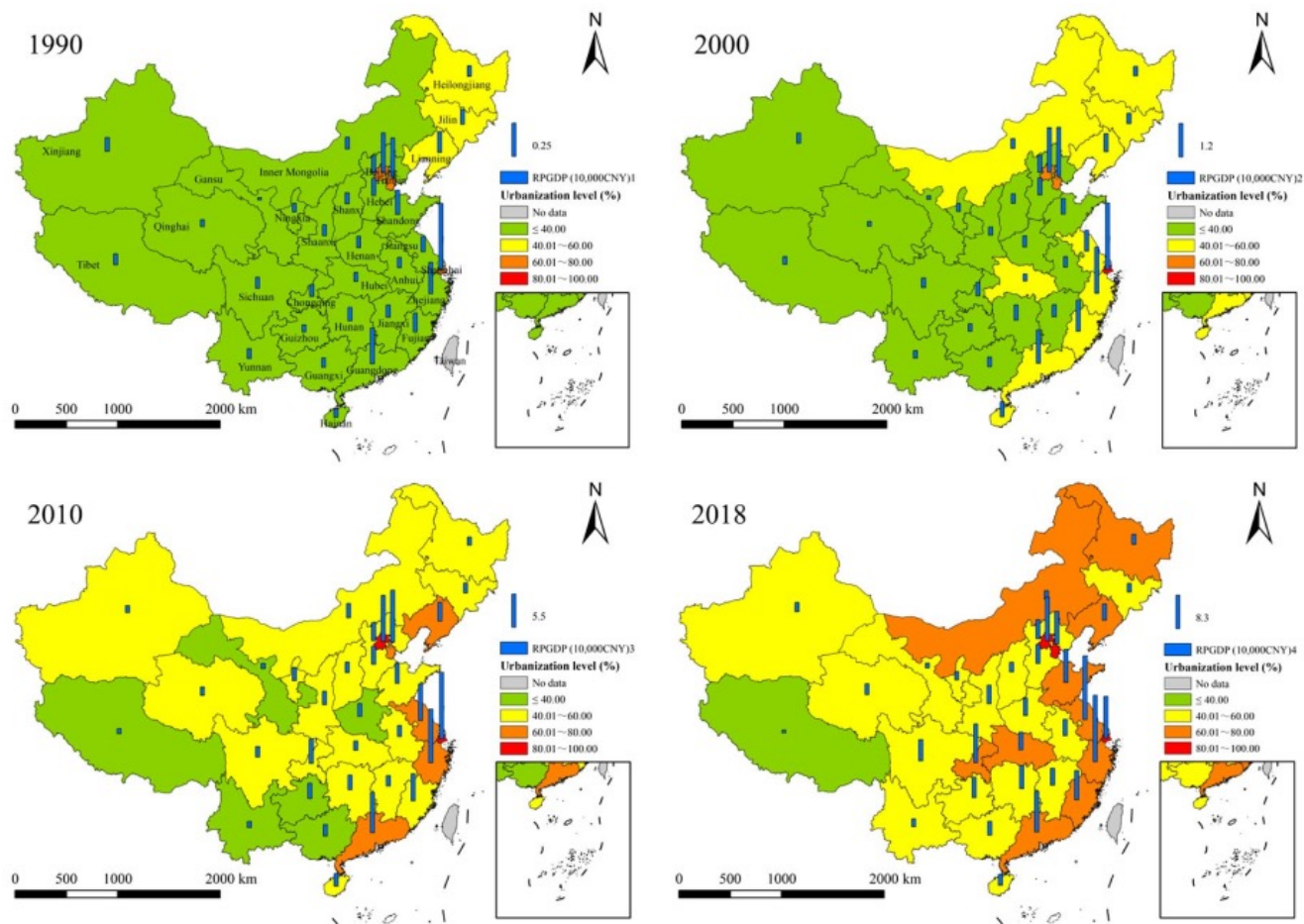
Southeast area:
36% of the
nation's land
concentrates
96% of the
population

- China has experienced a shift from a centrally-planned economy (1949-1977) to a market-oriented economy (1978-until now).
- The beginning of the 21st century has seen a shift from urban-biased policy to complete support of agriculture, villages, and peasants.
- China launched ***Rural Revitalization Strategy*** in 2017 to build up a prosperous rural society.



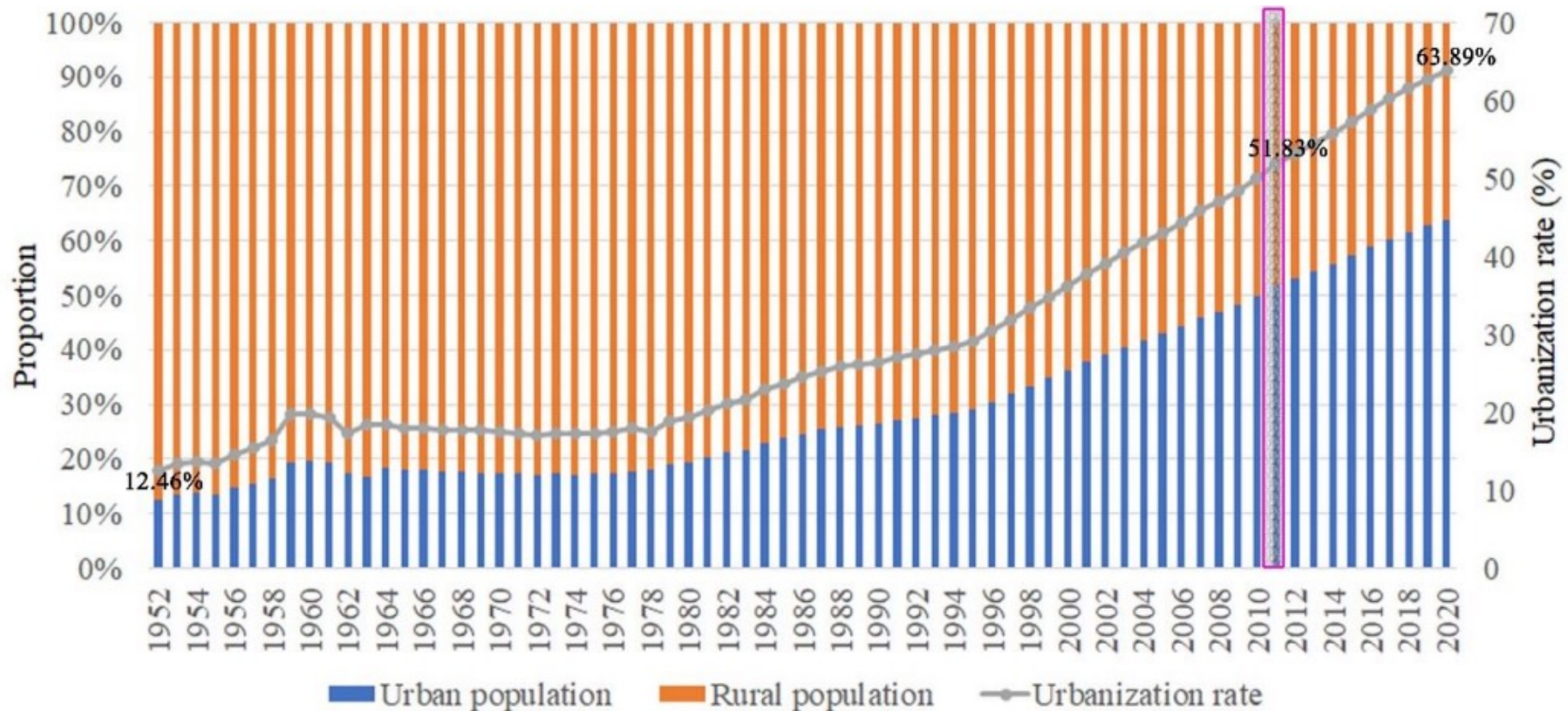
Provinces in the Eastern China are head of the central and western provinces in terms of socioeconomic development.

Fig. 2 Urbanization and rural per capita GDP in China, 1990-2018



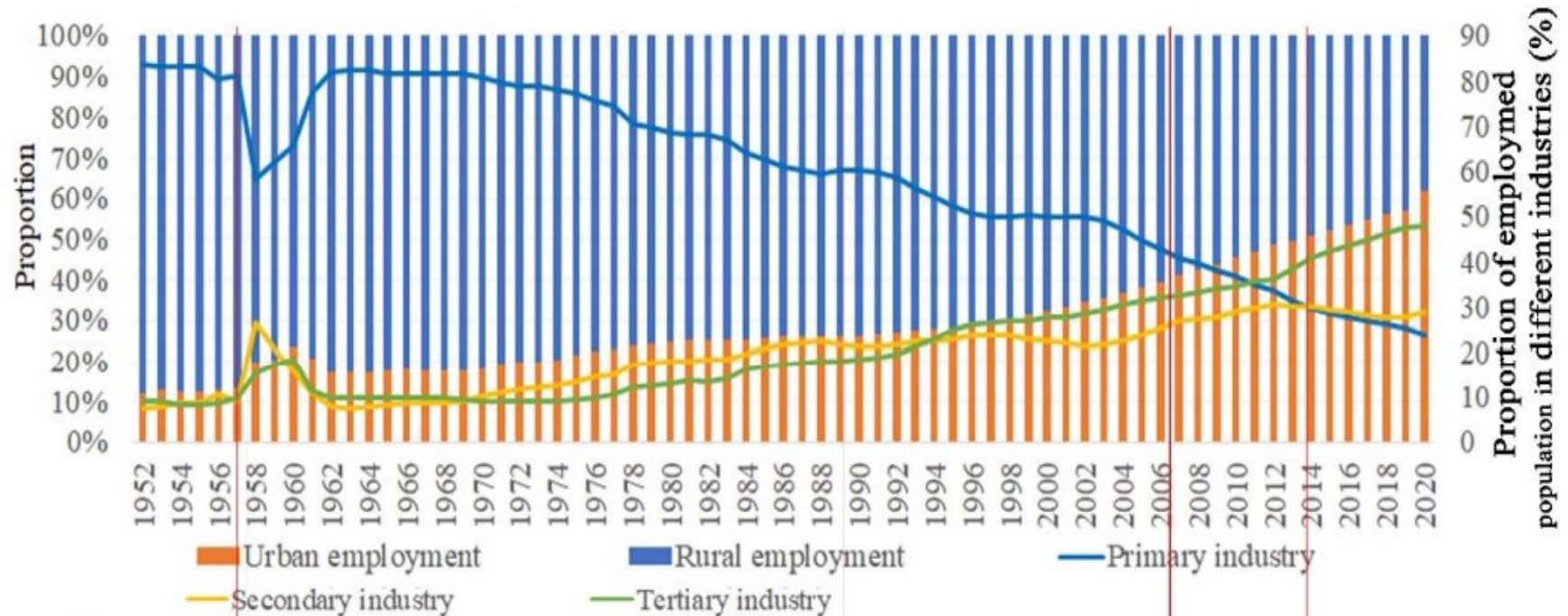
- China has experienced rapid urbanization growth since the late 1990s with the urbanization rate reaching 51.83% in 2011, and 65.22% in 2022.
- Rural population has been decreasing continuously from 790.14 million in 1978 to 509.79 million in 2020, with an average annual decrease of 1.04%.

Fig. 3 Rural and urban population in China between 1952 to 2020



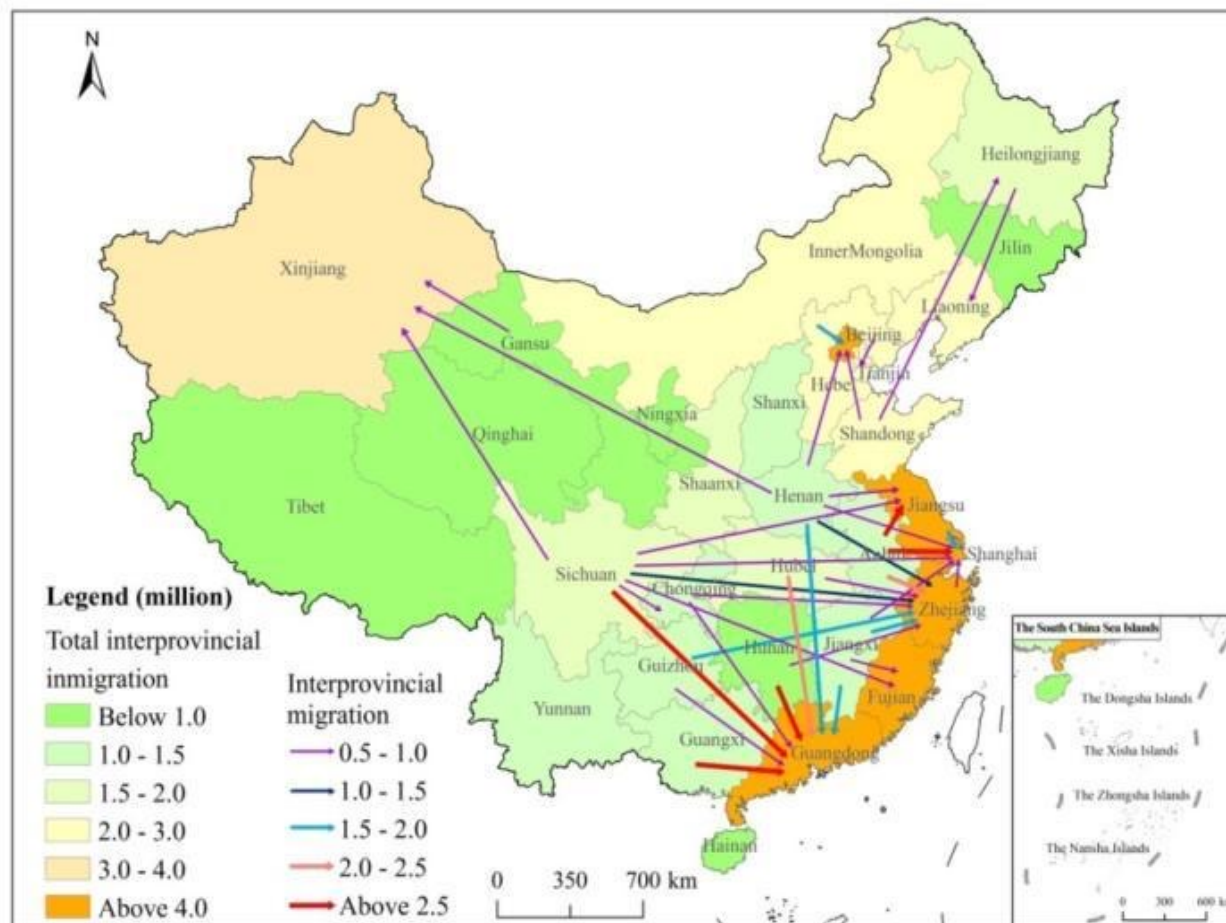
- The number of rural employments decreases steadily comparing with the increasing employments in urban areas.
- Since 2014, the country's primary industry employment share has been lower than that of the secondary industry.
- The number of migrant peasant workers reached 172 million by 2021

Fig. 4 Employment and industrial development in China, 1952-2020



Numerous rural-urban migrations are seen moving from less developed places of the Central and Western China to well developed regions in the Eastern China.

Fig. 5 Population mobility in China based on 6th population census



Young laborers outmigration

- The average age of migrant peasant workers is 36.8
- People less than 40 years shares 65.8% of the total peasant workers

Table 1. Age composition of China's peasant workers (%)

Year Age	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
16-20	2.6	2.4	2.0	1.6	1.6
21-30	27.3	25.2	23.1	21.1	19.6
31-40	22.5	24.5	25.5	26.7	27.0
41-50	26.3	25.5	24.8	24.2	24.5
Over 50	21.3	22.4	24.6	26.4	27.3
Data source : Monitoring report of peasant workers, National Statistics of China					

Hollowing-out villages

The emergence of “hollowing-out villages” when there are depopulation and much vacant and abandoned land in China



Aged smallholders

- Household contract responsibility system creates 210 million households and each manages less than 1 ha arable land.
- 23.81% of rural residents are over 60 and 105 million are engaged in agricultural production.
- Peasants with education attainment below primary school shares 43.4%



Laiyuan, Hebei province



Haiyuan, Ningxia Autonomous Region

Left-behind population

SOCIOLOGY

Rural China is no country for old people

Erosion of families sparks an epidemic of suicides among the elderly

By Kathleen McLaughlin,
in Zhangjiajie, China

Early before breakfast one summer morning in 2014, Xiang Youyu stepped outside her family home in this bucolic mountain village and hanged herself from an orange tree a few feet from the front door. Xiang, then 74, had some minor health complaints, and was a “sensitive” person, says her husband, Shu Haogui. “She took things too hard.” But he never imagined she would take her own life.

The tree where Xiang killed herself has been cut down, and life in the village carries on much as it has for the past few decades. As in other parts of rural China, it's mostly empty-nesters who do the farming here. Young and able-bodied people, like Shu's 20-year-old grandson, migrate to cities for work as China's epic urbanization rolls on. The shift has brought prosperity, but sociologists also blame it for a troubling rise in elderly suicide rates.

“A lot of people say elder suicide is a natural thing. This rate we are seeing is not natural,” says Jing Jun of Tsinghua University in Beijing. Worldwide, suicide rates are highest among people over 70, according to the World Health Organization (WHO); in the

Polytechnic University and colleagues describe how elderly Chinese “face a number of challenges with respect to maintaining a positive view of themselves.” As economic development and urbanization lure able-bodied young people out of villages and into China's massive migrant workforce, many elderly people are left behind to fend for themselves.

The exodus includes the young women who once helped care for the elderly. In the past, a daughter-in-law was expected

gap in basic care for elderly people. The problem will only worsen: Roughly 15% of China's population today is more than 60 years old; by 2050, that is expected to rise to 39%.

China's new 5-year plan acknowledges that the country's aging population is a paramount concern. Beginning next year, the central government will gradually hike the official retirement age to 55 for women and 60 for men—a move that could help seniors in those age groups feel less isolated and more valuable to society.

But those who study China's elderly say much more must be done, such as building more elderly care facilities and filling gaps in the national health insurance program. In Beijing, the waitlist for nursing home facilities is 7 years long, Jing says. In the countryside, nursing homes are even scarcer. “In a culture that plays up filial piety, it just contradicts every cultural expectation we have,” Jing says. “There has to be another way of thinking about getting old in China.”

Sociologist Zhou Liang of the Xiangya School of Medicine in Hunan is experimenting with ways to engage elderly people and reduce their isolation. Initially, his team tried creating community groups in rural areas. The researchers found, however, that those most at risk of suicide did not participate.



Shu Haogui's wife hanged herself from an orange tree when she was 74 years old. She was “sensitive,” he says, but he never imagined she would take her own life.

China's elder suicide rates in the countryside (47 per 100,000 over 65) are 3 times higher than those in the US (15 per 100,000).

Ref. McLaughlin, K. Science 352, 283 (2016).

Left-behind population

- One fourth of the left-behind children have phone chat with their parents, but half of the conversation ends in 3 mins.
- Left-behind children tend to be precocious than their peers



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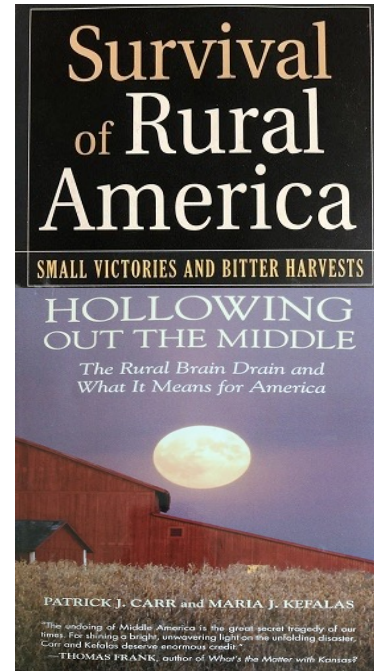
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Some knowledge about *Rural decline*

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Rural revitalization strategy and its effect

Rural decline as a global tendency



China



World

Literatures related to rural decline

As early as in the 1960s, concerns about **rural renewal** were formally expressed in the US (Anding and Gustafson, 1968).

Similar expressions such as **rural decline, community destruction, “dying” rural communities, marginal community, “hollowing out” of the countryside and vacating places** were put forward successively to describe the downward spiral of decreasing employment, depopulation, economic depression and deteriorating quality of life in the countryside (Gallaher and Padfield, 1980; Forth, 2000; Ono, 2005; Carr and Kefalas, 2009; Li et al., 2016; Koning et al., 2021).

COMMENT

SEISMOLOGY Tales of American earthquakes, past and future **p.278**

MUSEUMS When repositories are lost to research **p.279**

CLIMATE ADAPTATION Lessons from the US flood-relocation programme **p.281**

GENOMICS Consent should be confirmed before reusing genomics data **p.281**



Farmers harvest wheat in Lanfeng county, Shaanxi province, China.

Revitalize the world's countryside

A rural revival is needed to counter urbanization across the globe, say Yansui Liu and Yuheng Li.

Urbanization gets a lot of attention. Most countries are expanding their cities to boost their economies and living standards. The proportion of people living in urban areas around the world rose from 33% in 1960 to 54% in 2016, with particular growth in Asia and Africa. But the attendant rural decline barely gets a mention. In most regions, countryside communities are becoming less viable, even when their populations are slowly rising, too.

In China, for example, these trends are writ large. Last year alone, nearly 170 million peasant workers — most of whom are young and fit — left their home villages and towns for cities. Work was the main reason: the number of jobs in rural China fell by more than 20% between 1990 and 2014. Urban occupations pay better. In 2015, migrant workers earned about 21% more in cities than their counterparts in the countryside.

The communities that rural job-seekers

leave behind are enfeebled. Fragmented families struggle to sustain small farms. In China, 2 million hectares of agricultural land fall out of production each year; in 2015, emigrants left behind 60 million children, 47 million women and 50 million elderly people in their home villages. More than two-thirds of China's rural primary schools have closed in the past 25 years. Suicide rates among older people in rural parts of the country (at 47 deaths per 100,000 people) are three times US rates.

Rural decline is a global issue (see 'World rural populations'). From the United States and Sweden to sub-Saharan Africa, the rural-urban divide is widening. Cities attract the lion's share of government funding, private investment and even research. For instance, since 1980, cities have received more than 70% of China's total public and private investments in fixed assets. The consequences are especially dire in poor nations, where migration is driven by survival rather than by opportunity. Slums in cities such as Port Harcourt in Nigeria, Mumbai in India and Mexico City are expanding as poor and uneducated rural workers move in to seek their fortunes.

For the past decade, we have been studying how land issues can be harnessed to improve rural lives and economies in China (see 'China's challenge'). For example, projects to enhance soil fertility and manage flooding have boosted agricultural yields and incomes in the western Loess Plateau areas. Our research and work by others suggest that it is possible to rebuild rural villages and towns by improving infrastructure, developing local resources and cultivating tourism, special products and crafts. Lessons can be learnt from some countries' policies that have bucked the trend.

Policymakers and researchers must shift their attention and effort to rebalance policies that are biased towards cities. Scientific methods such as big-data surveillance and analysis are needed to monitor rural communities and environments, and to find solutions to local problems.

SPIRAL OF DECLINE

Rural areas are abandoned for reasons that include mobility and technology, poverty, biased policy and inadequate land management. As early as the eighteenth century, Europe's Industrial Revolution saw villages

nature

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NATURE | COMMENT

Revitalize the world's countryside

Yansui Liu & Yuheng Li

16 August 2017

A rural revival is needed to counter urbanization across the globe, say Yansui Liu and Yuheng Li.



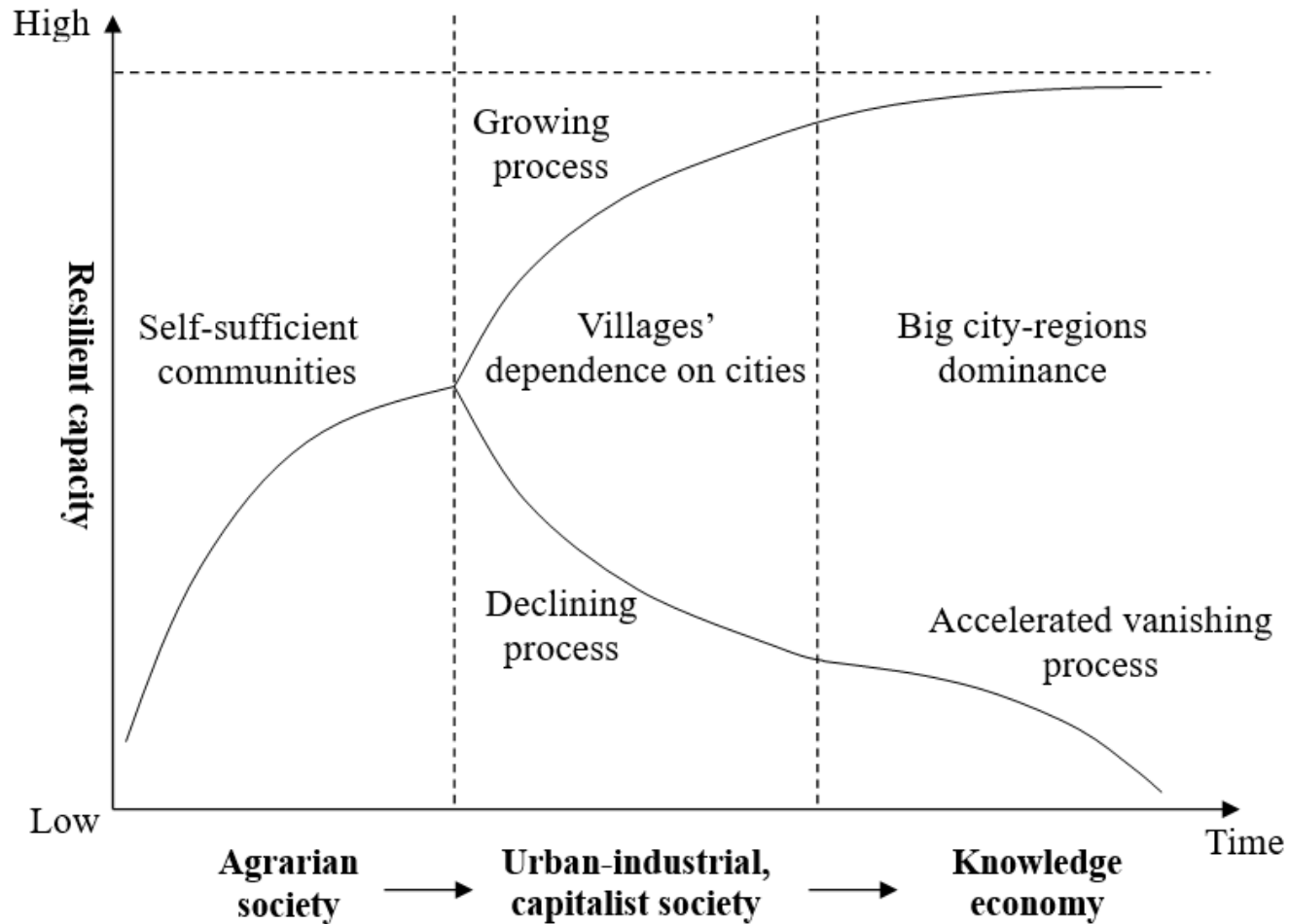
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- Rural decline is an inevitable process and a global tendency.
- A rural revival is needed to counter urbanization across the globe.

Fig. 7 A sketch map of rural evolution



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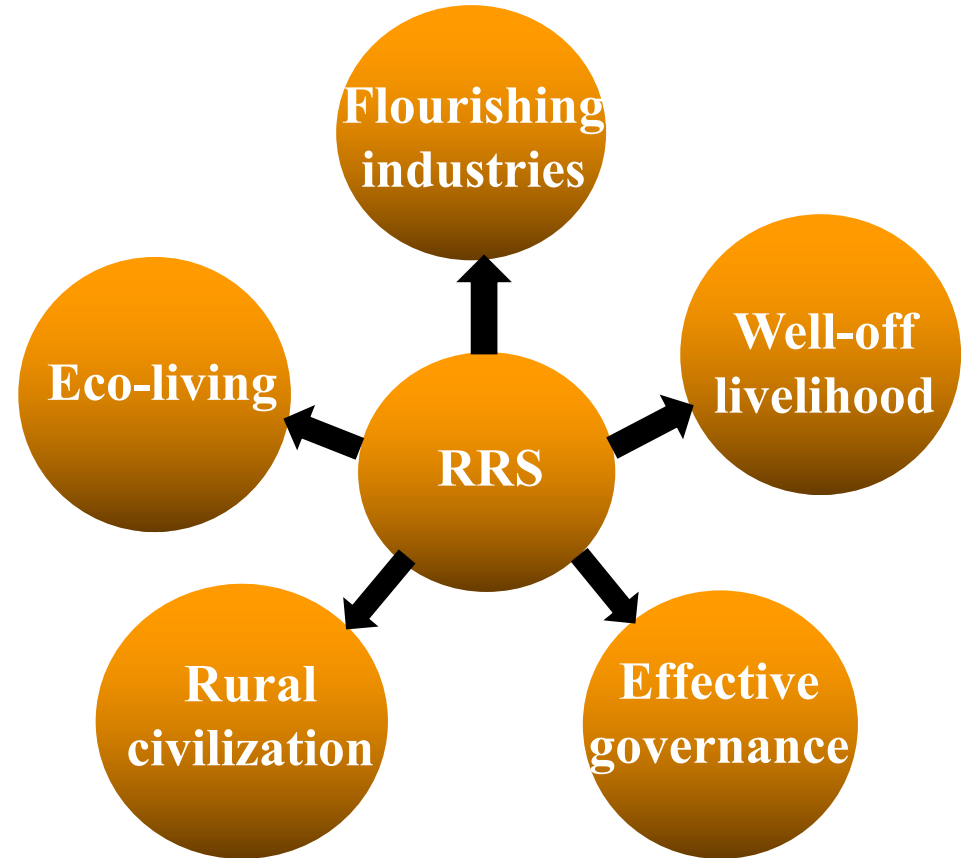
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Rural revitalization strategy and its effect



Rural revitalization strategy was put forward during the 19th CPC's national congress in 2017



Institutional innovation is needed to promote integrated urban-rural development, and speed up agricultural and rural modernization.

- RRS has three-step goals: to establish institutional framework and policy system 2018-2022; to achieve “decisive progress on rural revitalization” by 2035 and “fully rejuvenation with well-off farmers and strong agriculture sectors” by 2050.

National Rural Revitalization Administration



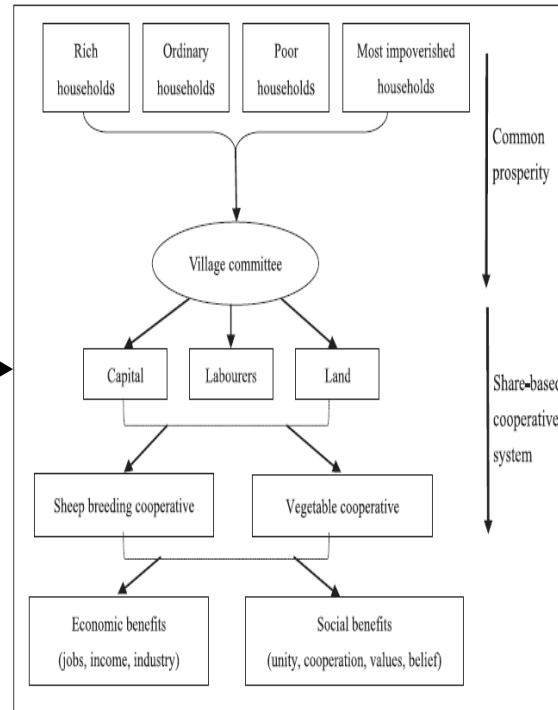


- Land consolidation shifts from land fragmentation to large scale cultivated land for commercial crops and fruits



Fuping, Hebei province

Share-based cooperatives, Xiaoguan village, Hebei province



- Agricultural management system innovation brings aging smallholders together with increased resilience against challenges and expected risks

Thanks for your attention

Questions?