

CITIES, TOWNS AND RURAL INDUSTRIALISATION: REVISITING THE CHINESE DEVELOPMENT DEBATE

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Abstract

As part of the effort to theorise regional change in China it is essential that some attempt be undertaken to review the perceptions and insights of relevant indigenous Chinese scholarship. This paper will review and synthesise certain elements from an array of Chinese language literature which moves us toward a theoretical
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will be traced through a review of the large-city versus small-town debate, studies of the relationship between agriculture and industrial growth, research on rural industrialisation, and more general theories and concepts of urban and regional development. Analysis of these debates is framed with reference to particular processes and patterns in the lower Yangzi delta and the failure of conventional models to adequately explain such phenomena. The paper highlights components of a middle ground which balances local circumstances with the broad theories of development, industrial location and the production of industrial space, the local and the global, and the transition or otherwise to conventional urban forms. The paper concludes by proposing an alternative conce

on the lower Yangzi delta. His other research interests in China include studies of administrative restructuring and urban and regional development, curricular reforms and geographical education, and the emergence of new urban spaces for the visual arts and other creative industries in Shanghai and Ningbo. Prior to his appointment at

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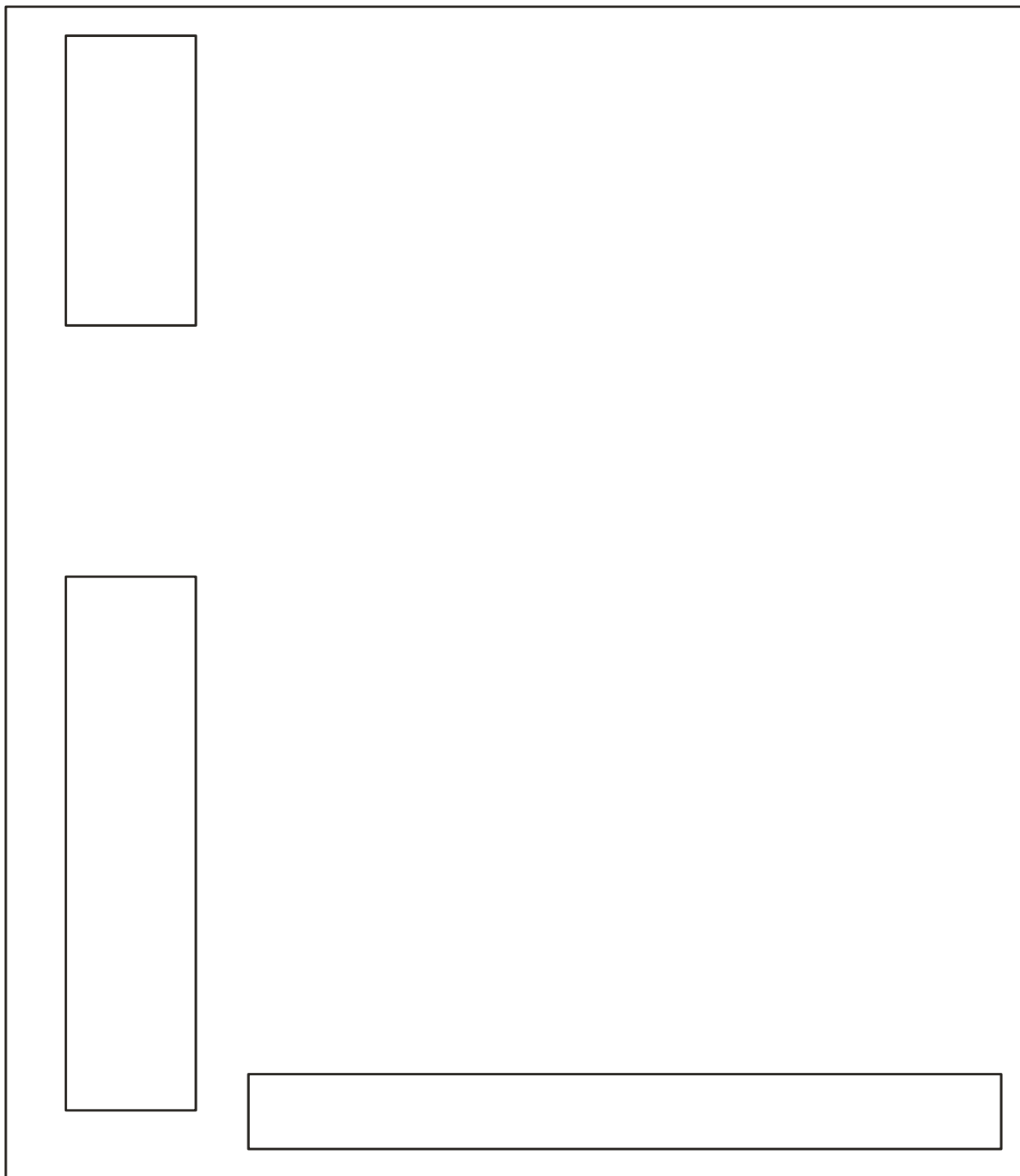
economic reforms, are profoundly mediated by locally determined administrative and institutional parameters. The same is also true of externally inspired regional infrastructural development. The potential impact of local production activities upon the wider space economy and the emergence of industrial organisations, such as the large number of designated industrial areas and special economic and technological development zones are also taken into account.

The transactional environment is mediated through a number of formal and informal administrative and institutional parameters. These are linked to bifurcation of the role of local governments both as community administrators and as owners and managers of non-agricultural enterprises. Although this bifurcation has deep historical and contemporary roots, it is primarily the disengagement of the central government from local administration that occurred with economic reforms, that has sharply enhanced the dual role of local governments. Within the transactional environment, processes of representation embedded in various administrative and institutional structures allow for the local mobilisation of indigenous and external means of production. These locally determined representations manipulate the transactional network, sometimes creating new ones, in order to maximise community-based production opportunities. In the absence of a meaningful legal and regulatory framework localities are free to exploit all means at their disposal to achieve this objective. Local actors, often with apparently conflicting roles, exercise their influence through these intensely localised economic and bureaucratic structures. This helps to explain the intensity and diffuse nature of local transactional networks, within structures and across space, and accounts for the lesser importance of linkages with external economies and the dynamics of agglomeration.

Sui, Y. Z. (1992) Study of the SD territorial planning for the city-countryside fusion system, *Economic Geography* 12(4): 26-

FIGURE 1

RURAL INDUSTRIALISATION
AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL URBANISATION



Adapted from Marton (2000), p. 43

