Why High-Speed Railway stations continue China's leapfrog urbanization: institutional parameters of urban development

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Why High-Speed Railway Stations Continue China’s Leapfrog Urbanization: Institutional Parameters of Urban Development

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Abstract: An ambitious program of High-Speed Railway (HSR) is under construction in China and already soon the network will overtake its counterparts in Europe. Reflecting on experiences in Europe, the authors explore the conditions for place making qualities of six new HSR station areas in China. The superb inter-city connectivity of the new infrastructure nodes raises a lot of expectations about the economic and social potential of the station areas, but the experiences in Europe thus far are very differentiated. With regards to the attraction of economic activities usually the existing differences between different economic regions are reproduced rather than shaping completely new conditions. Also the expectations of developing completely new integrated urban centers around stations in the urban periphery are rather ambitious. The paper questions the planning responses to HSR development in Chinese cities and investigates the institutional conditions that frame these responses. The authors explore how the plans for Chinese HSR station development account for their objectives and reflect on the potential of the station area planning by investigating the institutional parameters of urban development.

Keywords: High-Speed Railway (HSR); urban mega project; institutional parameters; spatial re-configuration; urbanization in China