A great event: regional scientific development in the Asia–Pacific region

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The *Asia–Pacific Journal of Regional Science* was founded as a long-awaited event for many regional scientists in the Asia–Pacific region.

In 1954, the American Association for Regional Science (AARS) was formally established, and it received responses from economists, geographers, engineers and management scientists from all regions of the world. On regional science, the word “region” has been proposed as an independent scientific concept from rational thinking; as the concept of “mass-particle” was proposed, which changed the thinking of the development of physics. The latter developed the particle dynamics, which provides a rational concept as the core of the analysis of a physical phenomena model.

From then on, rational thinking on the breakthrough of the early development of regional geography is regional economics. Until now, the regional scientific research has developed a series of theoretical concepts for regional economic problems, geographical problems, and urban planning issues. We are saying that regional economics is no longer referring to the “area economy,” but more to the sense that there is an independent spatial economy that interacts with other economies of the same nature. We say that regional planning is no longer a planning of a spatial scope, but rather a re-organization and optimization of local economic units, environmental units, resources and population within a spatial scope. Regional planning is development of regional science, but also the formation of urban economics. The regional planning is a developed result of regional science, it also formatted a branch in urban economics. Now, more than 60 years have passed since the establishment of AARS, and we still have great interest in the development and application of such disciplines.

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Regional science in China has experienced very good development. That development is associated with the process of industrialization in China. At the beginning of the 1960s, there were signs of industrial recovery in China. Professor Yan Zhong-min, an urban geographer at East China Normal University, introduced the scientific concept of regional science, and raised the issue of understanding China's urban system. In the 1980s, as China began to integrate industrialization, the *Journal of Regional Science* was introduced to China. Regional science has also developed in China: during the development, it more or less failed to distinguish regional economic issues from regional scientific issues, but the concept of regional science in China has very good application of urban economics on theoretical application, and empirical research and achievement is particularly prominent. In this process, Prof Yang Wuyang, Peking University, and Prof Xu Xueqiang, Sun Yat-sen University played the backbone role.

In the early 1990s, Yang Wuyang, Yang Kaizhong and some scholars initiated the establishment of the Chinese Association of Regional Science. Chen Zongxing, professor of Northwest University, translated and published W. Isard's work of 1975 *Introduction to Regional Science*. China's largest scientific publishing company, Science Press, published *Regional Scientific Principles* with Prof. Wang Zheng (Institute of Policy and Management, Chinese Academy of Sciences) and Ding Jinhong (East China Normal University)—this sector indicates the regional science in China's development has been in full swing. Into the 2000s, China's regional science cluster in the industry's most enthusiastic research was represented by Liang's results in *Industrial Agglomeration* (2004). At the same time, Krugman's new economic geography theory has been widely disseminated in China.

At present, regional science is still in development: two prominent regional scientific issues have become a focus of research for Asia-Pacific region scientists. The first is a theoretical question: what is the regional interaction?; the interaction of mathematical expression is what? Initially, regional scientists used the Newtonian gravitational model to compare spatial or urban interactions, and later developed Wilson's exponential decay model. Wang Zheng (1989, 2000) proved the validity of the exponential model using statistical mechanics. However, what we are concerned with is what causes space interaction—logistics? Population migration? Capital flows? Is the area spillovers? The global economic integration is developing, and regional economic integration is redeveloping within some of Asia's countries too. A prominent question is how to express the interrelations of economic, technical, demographic and even exchange rates among these regions, and how to analyze international relations. Regional development essentially can have similar spatial interaction of the unity of the macro-expression, which is a theoretical problem of regional science. The second problem is that if China is engaged in an urban group (agglomeration) strategy, what is the scientific meaning of the urban group (agglomeration)? What kind of spatial organization is an urban group (agglomeration), and what are the cities in an urban group (agglomeration), that it depends on? Is the traditional spatial organization of the central-hinterland structure sufficient to support the development of urban group (agglomerations)? How to plan urban group (aggregation)? I think these are not only the problem of China's regional science,

but also the global regional scientists face the problem, it has a scientific universality.

The Asia–Pacific region has a vast territory, and there are many countries in the Asia–Pacific region. As such, the Asia–Pacific region not only has strong regional scientific research needs, but there are sufficient regional issues and types of regional scientific research that can provide a basis. The launch of *Asia–Pacific Journal of Regional Science* will promote the development of regional science, and will also promote the development of the Asia–Pacific region’s economy.