

Preface

Tai-Chee Wong and Sun Sheng Han and the authors of selections in this groundbreaking anthology have made a major contribution to understanding the current status and probable future of urbanization, urban planning, local governance and urban finance in China. In addition to a wealth of current information, this anthology makes significant theoretical and methodological contributions. Even well-informed China-planning-watchers will find a wealth of new information and original interpretations that shed light on this important, complex, and rapidly changing subject matter.

Nineteen articles provide a rich range of content, methods, and theory. While the selections are grouped into Parts on “Population Mobility and Urbanization”, “Spatial Planning”, and “Management Approach”, as Wong and Han point out, changes in the different areas are closely related to each other and change in one area impacts others. The introductory chapter by Wong and Han synthesizes main themes and illuminates the interconnections. Patterns of migration, urbanization at different scales, economic development, changes in the boundaries and authority of different administrative units, and the division of authority and finance between the central and local governments in China have changed and continue to change rapidly. Wong and Han’s introduction does a masterful job of placing the current situation in historical context and synthesizing information on new developments and emerging trends.

The contributions are varied, but have one thing in common. All address significant issues that are critical now and likely to be even more critical in the future. While overall China’s modernization and economic development are a success unparalleled in human history, they have created many urban problems. The Chinese leadership is able to quickly change urban-related policies and is committed to a “new style” of urbanization in the future that will address many of China’s current urban problems. Pragmatism—“Crossing the river by feeling the stones”—occurs at every level.

In a country as large and varied as China, national-level generalizations do not capture reality on the ground. Another strength of this anthology is the wealth of

concrete, detailed information on conditions in different regions of China. Throughout the book there is a great deal of up-to-date empirical information, much of which is from the authors' own work or available only in scattered Chinese sources. Notable new research includes chapters on changes in migrant behavior (Wang and Maino), Beijing's "ant tribes" (Gu, Sheng, and Hu), and the role of rural towns (Zhao and Zhang).

Until recently too much of China's past scholarship about urban planning and policies was driven by ideology unrelated to implementation. In contrast, the selections in this book are written in the best spirit of "scientific" policy-oriented planning and policy making: data-driven, objective studies that describe shortcomings honestly and propose workable solutions. Readers will find constructive criticisms and innovative ideas for improvement in many areas: allowing some slums to remain or emerge, making Hukou statistics better represent reality, improving strategies to reduce spatial and class disparities, better managing peri-urban regions, reducing cities' carbon emissions, integrating planning of China's mega regions, fostering green urbanism and environmentally-friendly transport plans, making better policy for locating affordable housing, improving public services for rural towns, and a host of others.

In addition to Wong and Han's introductory chapter, a number of the selections take the form of broad syntheses of the existing literature and existing secondary data about a topic, plus the author's own recommendations. These include syntheses and policy recommendations about the wisdom of "slumless cities" (Wong), varied patterns of development in the peri-urban regions around Chinese cities (Yang, Day, and Han), a typology of China's mega regions and recommendations for better institutional integration of planning for them (Han), regionalizing urban development in order to improve environmental planning (Chung), China's land trading policy (Ye and Qin; Han and Wei), management of Beijing's urban villages (Liu), financial management and support for small town development in Western China (Zhang and Zhu), citizen participation (Tian and Zhu), and real estate management in China (Han and Liu). These prove excellent introductions to the most important urban challenges China faces.

Other of the contributions are case studies: one of the best social science methodologies for providing in-depth understanding that cannot be captured in secondary data or survey research. Case studies include examinations of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Suzhou (Kim), sustainable transport planning in Guiyang (Wong), characteristics of residential housing in Nanjing (You, Wu, and Han), and citizen participation in Yangzhou (Tian and Zhu).

Zhao Min and Zhang Li's study of the role of towns in Chinese urbanization is a good example of good methodology. Zhao and Zhang based their chapter on a combination of macro-level secondary data analysis and survey research exploring how individuals and household migrants' opinions and behaviors impact their decisions about where family members live and work. As Chinese statistics become more reliable, market socialism allows a much wider range for individual choice, and as decentralization increases differences in subnational government policies, more

research using mixed methods like this kind of macro-level structural data analysis and micro-level examination of individual and household choices is possible.

There is a lot of good comparative research in these selections. The current generation of China-born scholars has increasing mastery of the Western planning literature and the selections draw on the best current Western scholarship. They also make contributions to global understanding by illustrating differences between urbanization and urban plans and policies in China and other countries. Qin Bo and Wu Jianfeng's chapter on CO₂ emissions for example extends the global debate on density and CO₂ emissions. Western scholars such as Peter Calthorpe have long argued that in the age of urbanism higher average densities are the key to reducing CO₂ emission. David Owen argues that cities should be "more like Manhattan": America's densest city where per capital greenhouse gas emissions are lowest. Qin and Wu's finding that CO₂ emissions in China do, in fact, increase with urbanization, but that this impact tends to be weaker when urbanization is higher is significant for China, and other countries worldwide. Western contributors knowledgeable about China also pioneer the kind of comparative research that can benefit scholars in different countries. Van Dijk's chapter comparing Chinese and European ecocities is a notable example.

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