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16th International Conference on Agriculture & Rural Development in China (ICARDC XVI)

Conference Program

Rural China under Xi: Change, Continuity and Contradictions

29-31 August 2022, Oxford University, UK

Syndicate Room, St Antony's College



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Asian Studies Centre
St Antony's College

Table of contents

Conference theme.....	2
Logistics.....	3
Publication and planning	3
Participation and zoom-links.....	4
Conference program (NOTE: all slots listed in UK time)	5
Keynotes and organisers	7
Session Chairs.....	9
Abstracts (in order of appearance).....	10
Conference Day I.....	10
Conference Day II.....	16

Conference theme

In a span of a generation, rural China has undergone a dramatic transformation: infrastructure – ranging from roads to electricity grids – has been constructed; the majority of rural residents are covered through basic health care and pension programs; and “extreme poverty” has been eradicated. These are remarkable improvements from the late 1970s, when China’s economic reforms began with the launch of a new agricultural land lease system in a poverty-stricken village. At the same time, the Chinese countryside is still facing major challenges such as

environmental pollution, rural education, and the hollowing out of villages' socio-demographic and economic structure.

Today, more than 4 decades later since the economic reforms started, the Chinese state is headed by President Xi Jinping, arguably, the nation's strongest leader since Mao Zedong. Under his administration, the Chinese countryside has become the next political priority. For him, rural revitalization is "a major task in realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation", a strategy proposed as a key move for the development of a modernized rural economy. To realize this, the Chinese state has been working to foster rural industries and services, promote the application of new technologies, and build a "beautiful countryside". In addition, peasants and citizens are being pressed to repopulate the villages with new entrepreneurs and consumers, after these had been left behind during the massive rural-urban migrations of the 1990s and 2000s.

Logistics

ICARDC XVI invites papers for an SSCI-rated special journal issue around the theme "Rural China under Xi." During this event we aim to take stock of and examine the changes, continuities and contradictions that have occurred in the Chinese countryside since the Xi administration assumed power. The covered topics include but are not limited to:

1. Livelihoods, rural-urban migration and linkages, rural entrepreneurship, social conflict, and social networks;
2. Globalization and commodification, and how these processes have affected and are being affected by Chinese agricultural and rural development;
3. Theoretical and methodological approaches to understanding Chinese rural-urban relations, and their implications for institutions, systems and organizations;
4. The complexities, diversity and dynamics of the rural-urban 'divide' and/or its 'integration' across time and space in China;
5. Historical experiences of rural industrialization, rural urbanization, and poverty alleviation in China and in a comparative perspective;
6. Socio-economic, political and ethno-cultural contexts and how these have sustained, reproduced or reshaped kinship, family, and gender relations;
7. Recent and historical processes of environmental change, natural resources, and ecological degradation in rural China;

This event brings together world-leading and talented, young scholars from various disciplines – sociology, political science, economics, anthropology, geography, law, and related disciplines.

Publication and planning

All draft papers should be in no later than **30 July 2022**. Selected papers can be considered for inclusion in one or more SSCI-rated special journal issues. Please note that all papers will be subject to the regular peer-review. The planning is as follows:

- 29-31 August 2022: ICARDC XVI: feedback on draft papers
- 15 September 2022: Selection of papers for special issue(s)
- 30 October 2022: Submission of revised papers and external review

Participation and zoom-links

ICARDC XVI is set up as a hybrid event with in-person and on-line participants. The conference venue is at the Syndicate Room in St Antony's College, 62 Woodstock Road, Oxford OX2 6JF. More information on how to get to the college, lodging and contact details can be found [here](#). Those participating online can do so by registering and entering through the following zoom links:

- **30 August Morning**
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81213860319?pwd=bTgvdkdIUE9MTmZQMgtGOWNkRXhYQT09>
- **30 August Afternoon**
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88643155861?pwd=RlRlY3ZkNTNENGljWW1rN0pjTmE2QT09>
- **31 August Morning**
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85661912262?pwd=RXlaR0xZUEowbGtPWVAzQnNH TkxSQT09>
- **31 August Afternoon**
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88694009818?pwd=QjR4U00zNXRkRkdhNkN1UHA1QWxhdz09>

Please note that in the unlikely event of any serious connectivity issues during the conference, alternative back-up lines will be set up.

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Conference program (NOTE: all slots listed in UK time)

Date	Schedule	UK time
29 August	ICARDC Steering Committee Meeting (by invitation)	9:00-10:30
	Arrival and registration	
30 August	Opening Ceremony chaired by Rachel Murphy	
	Welcome speech by Rachel Murphy (ICARDC Organiser)	7:00-7:10
	Welcome speech by Peter Ho (ICARDC Chair)	7:10-7:20
	with message by Esther Duflo, Nobel Prize Winner of Economics	
	Keynote Speech by Tiejun Wen (20 min. & 10 min. Q&A)	7:20-7:50
	0 Risk, 0 Poor: Capital Intensive Investment for Poverty Reduction & Its Institutional Experience	
	Group photo (online & offline)	7:50-8:00
	Session 1: chaired by Ray Yep (20 min +8 min Q&A per presenter)	8:00-9:30
	Rural Construction Land Market in China by Rumei Hu and Rong Tan	
	Political Economy of China's Rural-Urban Divide and Rebalancing by Rui Mao, Maoqi Ruan, and Kevin Chen	
	Governing poverty in rural China: Xi's war on poverty and its aftermath by Wanyi Xue, Sarah Rogers	
	Break	9:30-9:45
	Session 2: chaired by Shuyi Feng (20 min + 8 min Q&A per presenter)	9:45-11:15
	Anti-productivism or post-productivism? Searching for alternatives in rural China, by Forrest Zhang	
	Debunking the state via legal pluralism: Historical, indigenous, religious & customary rights in China by Peter Ho	
	Rural cosmopolitanism or elite ruralism? The rise of China's 'new farmers' by Leigh Martindale	11:15-12:00
	Lunch break	
	Session 3: chaired by Shaohua Zhan (20 min + 8 min. Q&A per presenter)	12:00-13:30
	Versatility with Vulnerability: Cross-sector Policy Review on Agrivoltaic Projects (AVP) by Xiuzhi Zhang, Rui Ding	
	Equality or Productivism? Integrating Rural Migrants in Public Rental Housing by Weiyi Cao, Can Cui	
	How e-commerce is exploited to foster rural revitalisation in China? Evidence from West China by Yitian Ren	13:30-13:45
	Break	
Session 4: chaired by Rachel Murphy (20 min + 8 min. Q&A per presenter)	13:45-15:15	
Lost in Hierarchy: on the failure of the Sino-Singapore Jilin Food Zone by Shuanping Dai and Yuansheng Liu		
Qinghai's "emigration state": State-led migration, noodle-making & development Charlotte Goodburn, Yiming Dong		
Perceptions and Attitudes of China's Rural Youth by Teresa Wright, May Farid, Wei Yan	15:15-15:30	
Closing remarks		
	Conference dinner	17:00-19:00

Day II of ICARDC

31 August	Keynote Speeches	
	Huang Xianjin (20 min. & 10 min. Q&A)	7:00-7:30
	China's Rural Land Reforms in the Face of Rural-Urban Common Prosperity	
	Petra Berkhout (20 min. & 10 min. Q&A)	7:30-8:00
	Farmers' Protest and Nitrogen Policy in The Netherlands: Lessons for China?	
	Session 5: chaired by Forrest Zhang (20 min + 8 min. Q&A per presenter)	
	Rural Land Expropriation in China: Change, Continuity & Contradictions; Qingyong Zhang, Lei Feng, Shuhao Tan	8:00-10:00
	Xi Jinping and the Transformation of China's Rural Land System by Xueyang Cheng	
	Building a collective economy, but for whom? 3 Conversions & rural revitalization by Shaohua Zhan, Xingyan Chen	
	From Green Revolution to "Green Development" by Xiuli Xu, Rui Wang, Lúia Cabral	
	Break	10:00-10:15
	Session 6: chaired by Jesper Zeuthen (20 min + 8 min. Q&A per presenter)	
	Institutional innovation in agri-environmental governance: Straw-burning control in Northeast China; Yu Zhiwei	10:15-11:45
	Negotiating A State Neoliberal Mode of Media Operation by Ran Yan	
	No Fairyland: The beatification of rural life through the lens of Liziqi and its antithesis by Kailing Xie, Yajiao Li	
	Session 7: chaired by Bin Wu (10 min + 40 min. documentary + 5 min. Q&A)	
	Filming in Rural China: Producing Knowledge Through Embodied Creative Praxis by Ang Gao	11:45-11:55
	Documentary screening by Ang Gao incl. 5 min. Q&A at end	11:55-12:40
Update ICARDC publications & closing by Rachel Murphy and Peter Ho	12:40-13:10	
Lunch break	13:15-14:15	

Keynotes and organisers



Tiejun Wen is a renowned expert on social-economic sustainable development and rural issues, especially in policy studies, macro-economic, geo-strategy of south-south cooperatives, and long-term inclusive growth in China. He is executive dean of China's Institute of Rural Reconstruction of China, Southwest University, member of State Consultant Committee of Environment Protection, and Vice Chairperson of the China Society of Agricultural Economics. Wen has received numerous honors and awards, including the First Rank Award for Science and Technology Progress from the Chinese Ministry of

Agriculture and the First Rank Award for Teaching and Education from the Beijing Municipal Government. Prof. Wen is author of the influential best-selling work on the agrarian crisis in China. As Executive Secretary General of the Chinese Society for Restructuring the Economic System, he is leading China's grassroots efforts to revive rural communities and economies, and he won his fame not only as a theorist, but also as the creator of China's first free farmer's training centre – the Yanyangchu Countryside Construction Institute in Hebei Province. He was named as one of the ten “movers and shakers in China's economy” by China Business Weekly.



Petra Berkhout is Senior Researcher at the Wageningen University and Research Centre. She is an agricultural economist with a professional experience of 30 years, mainly in the area of the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Prior to her current position, she worked for the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, first in the area of the agricultural market policy, later in the area of EU rural and structural policies for the agricultural sector, including state aid procedures. She was spokesman for the Netherlands in the Committee on Structural Policies and Rural development (“STAR”-committee) and working groups on rural development (“Agenda

2000”) and co-author of the first Dutch Rural Development Policy. She later switched to research and participated among other things in the Special Accession Programme for Agricultural and Rural Development projects in Lithuania and Poland, impact assessments in the area of the first pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy, and evaluation studies, especially of rural development programmes. She was editor of the Dutch annual agricultural report for more than 10 years (2003-2018), commissioned by the ministry of Agriculture.



Xianjin Huang is a doctoral supervisor, Vice Dean of the School of Geography and Ocean Sciences, Nanjing University, Director of the Human Geography Research Center of Nanjing University, and a 2014 Changjiang Scholars Distinguished Professor of the Ministry of Education. He obtained his PhD in Agricultural Resource Economics and Land Use Management. Professor Huang Xianjin is mainly engaged in research on land economy and policy, land use and planning, resource and environmental economics. He has been awarded twice by the Fok Yingdong Education Fund, and won the first and second prizes of provincial and ministerial level scientific and technological progress or outstanding achievements in philosophy and social sciences

five times, and was selected into the New Century Talent Support Program of the Ministry of Education.

The organisers



Rachel Murphy is Professor of Chinese Development and Society and a fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford University. She obtained her doctorate in Sociology at the University of Cambridge in 1999 funded by a scholarship from Trinity College. She was previously a British Academy Post-Doctoral Research Fellow in Development Studies at Cambridge. She is course director for the MSc in Contemporary Chinese Studies, and former Head of OSGA (2014-2018). Rachel's long-term research has explored social and cultural change occurring in China because of urbanization, migration, education, demographic transition, state policies, and media transformations. Over twenty years she has conducted ethnography, interviews, documentary research and surveys in villages, townships and cities, and has spent more than six years in China. Her most recent monograph, *The Children of China's Great Migration* (Cambridge University Press, 2020; paperback 2022), supported by a British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship, draws on the stories obtained through longitudinal fieldwork with children, their caregivers and migrant parents who hailed from two landlocked provinces in eastern China. The book provides a rare exploration of migration, im/mobility, urbanization, education, and families' gender and intergenerational relations through the eyes of rural children whose parents have migrated for work without them. Rachel serves as President of the British Association for Chinese Studies and is on the editorial board of *Modern China*. She also previously served two terms on the executive editorial committee of the flagship journal, *The China Quarterly*.



Peter Ho is high-level National Expert of China and Distinguished Professor at Zhejiang University. He was Full Professor at Leiden University and Director of the Modern East Asia Research Centre, Full Professor at Groningen University and Director of the Centre for Development Studies. He has held the position of Research Professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). Prof. Ho is interested in the revision of theories of development in relation to China in which context he posited the "[Credibility Thesis](#)" and the concept of "embedded activism."

He is listed as a highly cited researcher by Elsevier, and is widely published in leading SSCI/SCI-rated journals of development, planning and area studies. He published numerous books with, amongst others, *Cambridge University Press*, *Oxford University Press*, and *Wiley-Blackwell*, and has guest-edited over 10 SSCI-rated special journal issues. Ho was awarded the William Kapp Prize for Evolutionary and Political Economy, the China Rural Development Award, the Title of Leading Expert of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, and the Consolidator Grant of the European Research Council (ERC). He is Chair of the International Conference on Agriculture and Rural Development (www.icardc.org), serves on the editorial boards of *Land Use Policy*, *Conservation and Society*, *Legal Pluralism and Critical Social Analysis*, *China Rural Economics*, *Land*, and the *Journal of Peasant Studies*, and is the Series Editor of the *Elements of Global Development* of *Cambridge University Press*.

Session Chairs

Ray Kin-man YEP (PhD, Oxford University) is Professor of Politics and Associate Head of Department of Public Policy, City University of Hong Kong. He specializes in the political economy of China's reforms, late colonial governance of Hong Kong and contentious politics. He has published in leading journals including *China Quarterly*, *China Information*, *Development and Change*, *Journal of Rural Studies*, and *Public Administration Review*. His latest works on Hong Kong studies include three books: *May Days in Hong Kong: Riots and Emergency in 1967* (Hong Kong University Press 2009), *Negotiating Autonomy in Greater China: Hong Kong and its Sovereigns before and After 1997* (Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Press 2013), and *Routledge Handbook on Contemporary Hong Kong* (Routledge, 2018). He has held visiting positions in Bristol University, Peking University, University of Macao, Brookings Institution and Academia Sinica. He is also active in public service and had served in the Hong Kong Central Policy Unit, Advisory Council for Environment, and Strategy Subcommittee of Sustainable Development Council. He is now Research Director of SynergyNet and a member of the editorial board of *China Information*.

Feng Shuyi is the Dean of the School of Public Management of Nanjing Agricultural University and Vice President of the Seventh Council of China Land Society. She was selected into the "national hundred and ten thousand talents project" of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security in 2020 and awarded the honorary title of Young and Middle-Aged Experts with Outstanding Contributions". Her research fields are institutional change and resource allocation efficiency, farmer behavior and sustainable management of resources and environment. She published over 100 academic papers, including 38 papers in SSCI/SCI and 54 papers in CSSCI/EI/CSCD journals. Many of her research reports have been approved by the central authorities and leading comrades of Jiangsu Province, and the policy suggestions put forward have been adopted and applied by relevant departments.

Jesper Willaing Zeuthen (PhD International Development Studies, MA in Chinese) is Associate Professor at the Department of Politics and Society of the University of Aalborg, Denmark. Prior to this he worked as Senior Analyst at the Danish Ministry of Defense. He specializes on Chinese local governance, urbanization, rural development, labour migration, and resource governance. His publications have appeared in SSCI-rated journals, such as *Geoforum*, *Land Use Policy*, *China Information*, *Extractive Industries and Society*, and *Third World Quarterly*.

Qian Forrest Zhang is Associate Professor and Associate Dean (Research) at the School of Social Sciences of the Singapore Management University. He obtained his PhD in Sociology from Yale University, MA in Urban Geography (University of Georgia), and BS in Management Information Systems (Fudan University). He specializes in agrarian political economy, social class, family and social mobility, self-employment and informal economy, and contemporary Chinese society. His articles appeared in leading SSCI-rated journals, including *World Development*, *The China Journal*, *The China Quarterly*, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, *The Journal of Agrarian Change*, and *Geoforum*.

Wu Bin is Senior Research Fellow in the Haydn Green Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Nottingham University Business School. He holds a BSc degree in Physics, a MA in Philosophy of Science and Technology, and a PhD in Human Geography. His research interests include: rural revitalisation and sustainability, farmer innovation system and government intervention, social capital for community development, rural innovation and entrepreneurship. He has delivered a number of external projects commissioned by EU, ILO, Italian and UK Government, Research Councils. His publications appeared in *Agriculture and Human Values*, *Land Use Policy*, *Journal of Cleaner Production*, *Journal of Rural Studies*, etc. He has published many edited volumes (Routledge) in *Contemporary Chinese Studies* and *Chinese Higher Education Reform*, and serviced as guest editor for special issues of *Journal of Contemporary China*, *Business and Society*, *Journal of Integrative Agriculture*, *Journal of Chinese Overseas*.

Zhan Shaohua is Associate Professor at Nanyang Technological University. He received his doctoral degree in sociology from the Johns Hopkins University. His research interests include international migration, food security, land politics, social policy, comparative historical research, with a focus on China, Singapore, and other Asian nations. His work has been published in *World Development*, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, *Journal of Agrarian Change*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *The China Quarterly*, *The China Journal*, among others. He is currently working on two research projects. One compares Chinese and Indian immigrants in Singapore, Los Angeles, and Vancouver, and the other examines food security in China and its global implications.

Abstracts (in order of appearance)

Conference Day I

Rural Construction Land Market in China: Toward Centralizing Rural Collectives' land at Market Price

Rumei Hu, Post-Doc Researcher, School of Public Affairs, Zhejiang University, China

Rong Tan, Vice Dean and Professor, School of Public Affairs, Zhejiang University, China

The local governments in China have developed the land finance system amidst the dual urban-rural regime. However, the rural landowners have participated in the land supply market without legal license in South China. And in recent years, those areas tended toward a unified allocation of rural construction land by centralizing rural collectives' land at market price. The objective of this article is to elucidate the patterns of rural-to-urban land transfers in authoritarian regimes. A theoretical framework is developed from the perspective of incentives and constraints of local governments' behaviors. A case study on the rural-to-urban land transfers in Guangdong Nanhai in the past 30 years is conducted to support the theoretical analysis. It is found that the fierce competition with other places to attract investment motivates the local government to dominate land resource allocation, while social stability concerns impose some limits. The bargaining power of rural collectives and villagers is an important factor affecting local government behavior in rural-to-urban construction land transfers. This article provides new insights into different patterns of rural-to-urban land transfers in authoritarian regimes from the perspective of local government behavior. Policy recommendations on land market reform are proposed accordingly.

The Political Economy of China's Rural-Urban Divide and Rebalancing

Rui Mao, Professor, China Academy for Rural Development, Zhejiang University

Maoqi Ruan, China Academy for Rural Development, Zhejiang University

Kevin Chen, Qiushi Chair Professor & Dean, China Academy for Rural Development, Zhejiang University

The divergence between urban and rural income is one of the most notable features of China's economic imbalances and underlies an essential challenge to the country's vision for "common prosperity". This paper reviews the measure, evolution, and spatial distribution of rural-urban income gaps of China, and identifies four stages of rural-urban relations. In the first two stages, the rural-urban divide was widened, respectively, by the adoption of "catch-up" policies during the planned economy period and "political tournaments" emerged since the reform and opening up in 1978. Following the initiation of "rural-urban development coordination" and campaign to build "a new countryside", rural-urban income disparities plateaued and started to decline in the third stage between 2002 and 2011. In recognition of the priority to developing agriculture and rural areas, rural-urban income disparities showed steady declines in the final stage since 2012. This paper systematically examines the continuity and innovations of China's rural policies under Xi in terms of both ideology and methodology. Based on an overarching analysis of the "Targeted Poverty Alleviation" and the five-pronged approach of "Rural Revitalization", this paper shows that aside from the inherited prominence of addressing San Nong issues, Xi's rural policies feature an unprecedented highlight of buttressing rural-urban linkages by defining the integrated growth as an indispensable ingredient in the country's second centenary goal and outlining the roadmap with systematic deep-level reforms. By assessing the connotation of the country's strategic goal of "common prosperity" and its relations with rural-urban integration, this paper provides an outlook to China's rural policies and rural-urban in the future.

Governing Poverty in Rural China: Xi's War on Poverty and Its Aftermath

Wanyi Xue, PhD Researcher, University of Melbourne, Australia

Sarah Rogers, Senior Lecturer, University of Melbourne, Australia

The Targeted Poverty Alleviation (TPA) campaign, introduced in 2013, aimed to eliminate absolute poverty in rural China by the end of 2020. In this paper we explore the limits of China's approach to governing poverty by examining the implementation of the TPA campaign in its final year (2020). Through interviews with village heads, TPA resident secretaries, and local poverty officials in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and analysis of secondary sources, we identify the key challenges facing the anti-poverty campaign. Our findings show that in practice, and particularly in an ethnic minority region, TPA cannot fully "solve" the problem of poverty. Through analysis of local political dynamics, ethnic minority issues, gender, and "returning to poverty" (返贫), we provide new insights into how poverty is understood, measured, and governed in China. Keywords: rural China; targeted poverty alleviation; grassroots governance; local politics

Anti-productivism or post-productivism? Searching for alternatives to productivism in rural China

Qian Forrest Zhang, Associate Dean and Associate Professor, Singapore Management University

Several recent studies have used post-productivism to describe new developments in rural China, such as the “new farmers” and their practice of organic farming, urbanites’ consumption of second homes in rural areas, and village reconstruction driven by place-making. The paper argues that there are two types of post-productivism emerging in rural China today, each driven by a distinctive dynamic. The first is a consumption-oriented transformation of rural space and agriculture, driven by outside urban demands; the second is a rural-based countermovement against the dominant productivist agricultural regime, initiated from within. The paper points out that the second type has not yet been studied. The empirical part of the paper presents a case study of a rural cooperative in Shanxi Province to illustrate how rural residents’ discontent with both the productivist agricultural regime and the commodification of livelihood motivated them to transform their agricultural practices and create a new, post-productivist model that prioritizes self-sufficiency, reciprocity, and cultural heritage over productivity, market exchange, and monetary gains. Data for the case study were collected through interviews and focus-group discussions in three field trips (2015, 2016, and 2018) to the village. In conclusion, it is argued that this type of locally initiated transition to post-productivist agriculture presents a more sustainable and equitable alternative of rural revitalization than the urban-driven, post-productivist consumption of rural space.

Debunking the state via legal pluralism: Historical, indigenous, religious and customary rights in China

Peter Ho, Distinguished Professor and High-level National Expert of China, Zhejiang University

In the literature on legal pluralism, there is minimal attention paid to the state, a perspective critiqued by a growing group of scholars. In furthering the debate, this paper postulates that states are constituted by competing semi-autonomous fields and are thus, to varying degrees, inherently inconsistent, contradictory, and pluralist in nature. To substantiate the argument, we deconstruct an “archetypal unitary state”: China. The analysis proceeds by examining a critical right (ownership) around an equally critical resource (land). This is achieved with reference to different legal orders considered sensitive *and* potentially explosive in China: historical, indigenous, religious and customary rights. The study demonstrates that the Chinese state, at times, puts forward rules in flagrant contradiction with statutory law up to the point of upholding pre-revolutionary private ownership rights. The findings of this paper may have significant implications for our understanding of the functioning of states, including those perceived as highly unitarist in nature.

Rural cosmopolitanism or elite ruralism? The rise of China’s ‘new farmers’ in an Ecological Civilization

Leigh Martindale, University Lecturer, Loughborough University

The recent calls by President Xi Jinping for ‘rural revitalisation’ and the need to ‘modernise the rural economy’ has been accompanied by measures that encourage and press peasants and citizens to return to the countryside as entrepreneurs and consumers. This urban-to-rural migration (URM) suggests a potential for returning, and now ‘cosmopolitan’, individuals to disseminate external experiences and opportunities back into rural regions. Indeed, the recent emergence of the term ‘rural cosmopolitanism’ as a political or ethical project capable of developing notions of inter-cultural mobility, conviviality, and openness-to-difference in rural communities, seems especially valuable in

a country that has a deep and defining rural-urban divide. However, despite this potential for a progressive rural cosmopolitanism to emerge from the Xi's policies, literature is beginning to suggest that this new wave of URM is defined more by elite ruralism, whereby urban migrants perceive that the barrier to rural revitalisation lies intrinsically within the current rural population. Using the example of China's 'new farmers' (xin nongmin) - those urban elites who are now developing rural agricultural enterprises that are often based around ecological and community farming principles – the paper explores this tension and suggests rural cosmopolitanism is contingent on relationships of trust.

Versatility with Vulnerabilities: A Policy Review on Agrivoltaic Projects in Rural China

Xiuzhi Zhang, Associate Professor, School of Public Administration, Renmin University of China

Rui Ding, Associate Professor, Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture

For the past decade, Agrivoltaic projects (AVP) in rural China has been repeatedly boosted by the State through being tied to grand schemes, such as rural revitalization, poverty alleviation, and carbon peaking and carbon neutrality. Nevertheless, its versatility may also be a vulnerability for its linkages to multiple policy domains, and the absence of more coordinated, consistent, and sustainable policies on land use, subsidies, and technical and engineering guidelines. Through review on AVP related policies, the development and effects of policies are introduced and discussed, which help to explain key issues that may influence the progress of AVP.

Equality or Productivism? Integrating Rural Migrants into Public Rental Housing Program in Chongqing

Weiwei Cao, Researcher, Urban Economics Group, Department of Social Sciences, Wageningen University, The Netherlands

Can Cui, Professor, School of Urban and Regional Science, East China Normal University, China

After three decades of housing commodification in China, housing affordability has become an urgent concern especially in big cities. Various public rental housing programs have been implemented, justified as an urban policy to provide affordable housing for low-to-moderate income households and to accommodate the migrant population. Although the migrant-inclusive housing policy aims at achieving rural-urban equality, it has been strategically used by the municipal government as a tool for promoting industrial growth. Low-income rural migrants are largely excluded from the public rental housing provision. Chongqing, however, has made rural migrants eligible to apply for public rental housing. This paper examines how the 21 rental housing projects in Chongqing have been driven by two different justifications of equality or productivism. Employing a hedonic model, we estimate the “market value” of each public housing project, which indicates the rents that a public rental dwelling would have if it were listed in the private market. We further reveal which justification has been the dominant force shaping each of the 21 public housing communities in Chongqing: the ideology of equality usually results in a community of higher “market value”, while the ideology of productivism leads to a community of lower “market value”. The paper implies that both two types of communities still form underlying conditions that create different barriers for rural migrants' integration in the city.

How e-commerce is exploited to foster rural revitalisation and restructuring in China? Evidence from less-developed rural West China

Yitian Ren, Researcher, Department of Planning and Environmental Management, University of Manchester

ICT infrastructure and e-commerce are increasingly becoming profound influencing factors for rural society's breakthrough development in addressing their conventional deprivations such as geographical isolation and information asymmetry. A new form of regional development based on online e-commerce platforms has recently emerged in rural China (among which some rural villages developing e-commerce activities by Taobao platform are defined as Taobao village if certain criteria are met). Extant literature in the field presents insufficiencies in deciphering how this e-commerce driven development mode is established across different stakeholders in the specific context of Chinese rural society. Also, previous research works tend to focus predominantly upon rural e-commerce practices in the East coastal region of the country, whose socioeconomic backgrounds distinguish significantly from the less-touched West counterparts. This study therefore aims to investigate how e-commerce as platform technological force is exploited and harnessed towards rural revitalisation in the less-developed West China. Empirical evidences are drawn from the e-commerce development trajectory and mechanism at a county-level territory (xian yu) of Chongqing Municipality. Via empirical study, the key actors across state, market and community and their interactions formed in the rural e-commerce practices are investigated to decipher how e-commerce is exploited to foster rural development in West China. This study further generates valuable implications for ICT and e-commerce catalysed rural breakthrough development in China and in a wider context of Global South

Qinghai's "emigration state": does state-sponsored out-migration through noodle-making work as a development strategy for poor rural counties in China's north-west?

Charlotte Goodburn, Senior Lecturer, King's College London
Yiming Dong, Research Associate, King's College London

Scholars of international migration have shown much recent interest in labour-sending states. Some have been positive about state migration brokerage as a development strategy, highlighting advantages for destinations, origins and migrants. Others have challenged this "triple win", arguing that reliance on out-migration causes underdevelopment, precarity and long-term unsustainability. This paper draws on these critiques to examine a much less-scrutinised case of internal migration: state-sponsored out-migration from Qinghai in north-west China. Here, local states provide training, funding and employment contacts to impoverished, rural, ethnic minority households – particularly those who have lost land through the "Returning Farmland to Forest" programme – to set up noodle shops in eastern China. Through remittance-sending and eventually returning to Qinghai, migrants are supposed to enhance their home counties' development as well as exiting poverty themselves. Based on detailed qualitative fieldwork at both ends of the migration trajectory – Shanghai and Qinghai – this paper suggests that impacts of the scheme are complex, and unaccounted for in the "poverty alleviation through resettlement" literature which focuses overwhelmingly on permanent resettlement. For many Qinghai migrants, short-term poverty relief is offset by non-economic consequences in education and ethnic inequality, while for home counties long-term development challenges remain.

Lost in Hierarchy: on the failure of the Sino-Singapore Jilin Food Zone

Yuansheng Liu, Researcher, Jilin University of Finance and Economics
Shuanping Dai, Professor, Jilin University

This study illustrates the increasing rigidity in rural regions by exploring the failure of the Sino-Singapore Jilin Food Zone (SSJFZ) which should have been successfully developed given its preferable political demonstration. The SSJFZ is a bilateral collaboration development project between Singapore and China, signed by two premiers, Wen Jiabao and Lee Hsien Loong, in 2012 after four-years' preparation and negotiations. The SSJFZ is the first agricultural collaboration and the third development collaboration following the Tianjin Eco-city and the Suzhou Industrial Park, between these two countries. This project aims to develop an advanced food industry with Jilin's superiority in agriculture and Singapore's leading technologies in food manufacture and food security. This study applies a process-tracking approach to unpack the failure of the SSJFZ. It finds that, first, the SSJFZ collaboration has been awarded a premier collaborative project, however, the food zone was administrated by a county government that lacks decision-making power, which means the food zone has been governed by multiple provincial departments, that is to say, the administration system cannot match with the premier-level promoted project. Second, the food zone locates between Changchun and Jilin city, and cannot fully enjoy the public service, infrastructure, industrial foundation, and platforms in both major cities; moreover, these two city governments are not motivated to invest resources in such a "remote" industrial project. The SSJFZ's failure suggests unsuccessful coordination among hierarchies but also a new rural-urban divide that is necessarily different from the urban bias in the 1980s.

Perceptions, Attitudes and Wellbeing of China's Rural Youth

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Rural hukou-holders born since 1990 constitute roughly 25 percent of China's population. Their views are integral to current and future political stability. This paper brings together a range of data sources, including original survey data and existing scholarship, to display the experiences and attitudes of China's rural youth. Along with examining trends in recent waves of the World Values Survey, the paper draws on an original dataset studying the physical and mental well-being, life satisfaction and attitudes of rural and urban middle and high school students. Young rural Chinese face an array of physical, social and educational challenges that constrain their ability to enjoy materially comfortable and emotionally satisfying lives. To queries about their current circumstances, future, and social environment, they respond with a complex combination of optimism and pessimism, satisfaction and frustration. Their political views are similarly mixed: their level of trust in the government is lower than other age and hukou groups, yet they are less likely than other groups to believe that official corruption is prevalent. Meanwhile, young rural Chinese appear more concerned about material factors and display greater "grit" than do urban youth. Although our 2022 survey data show some signs of improvement, government efforts to further address young rural hukou-holders' socioeconomic limitations are likely to bolster political support within this large yet marginalized group.

Conference Day II

Rural Land Expropriation in New Era China: Change, Continuity and Contradictions

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Rural land expropriation (that is, the process in which the state turns rural collective land into state-owned land for non-agricultural purposes) has greatly contributed to China's rapid socio-economic development over the past few decades. What has changed under Xi Jinping administration? And how about the continuity and contradictions? Using national and provincial official statistical data, interviews with officials of the central government, and survey data from 2005 to 2018, and methods of comparative analysis and descriptive statistics, this study explores the dynamics of rural land expropriation in China covering the following aspects: 1) size of expropriated area; 2) purposes and processes of expropriation; 3) compensation; 4) conflicts; and 5) satisfactory level of expropriated rural residents. The results show that under Xi Jinping administration: 1) the average annual land expropriation area decreased; 2) purposes and processes were more formalized; 3) the compensation method changed; 4) both the number and intensity of social conflicts decreased; 5) the rural residents' satisfactory level improved as a whole. Despite such changes, we argue that some problems remain and the system of rural land expropriation needs further improvement.

Xi Jinping and the Transformation of China's Rural Land System: From the Right of Free Use of Resources to Property Right with Chinese characteristics

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After the rise of the People's Commune Movement in 1958, China established the system of homestead resource "free distribution & free recovery". Rural residents have the free use right but not the property right of residential land resources. With the collapse of the system of People's Commune, the gradual establishment of the market economic system and the development requirements of common prosperity, only by re-property rights of this right of free use of resources can we implement the goal of rational use of land resources determined by the Constitution and the national strategy of rural revitalization and integration of urban and rural development. However, there are lots of controversies about how to rebuild property rights on homestead resources. Some people think that the free use right of homestead should be transformed into "social security right with property characteristics". Others believe that the free use right of homestead should be transformed into "private property rights". Xi Jinping calls for the reform of the homestead system to avoid these debates and explore a homestead property right system that can maintain socialist characteristics and uphold socialist public ownership. Therefore, on the basis of the dichotomy of "collective land ownership-right to use homestead, the reformers further put forward the reform idea of "collective land ownership-right to qualify homestead-right to use homestead. While, it is not clear how the reform idea can be implemented in law. In this regard, we need to review the protection of Chinese farmers' right of residence in the context of urban-rural integration development, and establish a new legal system through the dual reform of housing system and land system.

Building a Collective Economy, But for Whom? “Three Conversions” and Rural Revitalization in China

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Despite the rhetoric of the Chinese government to build the rural collective economy in recent years, this paper argues that the policy deviates significantly from the definition of the collective economy, a system under which collective members should be involved in the profit-sharing and welfare-provisioning processes. Our research shows that the new initiative to strengthen rural collectives has been to convert collective resources into marketable assets, called “Three Conversions.” Our in-depth fieldwork in a pilot village selected for implementing the “three conversions” policy shows that the newly established collective economic organization is not an inclusive collective entity for all villagers. Rather, the policy and governmental funds empowered rural cadres and private investors, who have controlled collective resources for personal gains. In the meantime, the ordinary villagers are increasingly detached from farmland and collective resources. As a result, instead of strengthening the collective economy, the three conversions policy has given rise to state-directed agrarian capitalism in rural China.

From Green Revolution to “Green Development” Historical Review of China’s Agricultural Science and Technology Development and South-South Cooperation

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This paper focuses on China and aims to explore the country’s development translation capacity in the field of agricultural science and technology over the past 70 years. It juxtaposes two key moments in the country’s agricultural development history. The first moment is the so-called hybrid rice revolution (akin to other countries’ Green Revolution) that started in the 1950s. The second moment is the current “Green Development” narrative that has seen China transferring its own agricultural technology and development expertise to other development countries, particularly in Africa, as part of its “going out” policy. Connecting these two moments helps illuminating the process of “selective learning” and translation by Chinese science and technology organisations and individuals. Past engagements with international scientific community have helped to develop domestic capacities and draw on external resources to assist endogenous development processes. This experience informs China’s engagement with other developing countries. The paper thus contributes both to debates on China’s endogenous agricultural and rural development trajectory as well as debates on the interface between international aid and development, both within China and with regards to China’s presence abroad.

Negotiating A State Neoliberal Mode of Media Operation: A Case Study of Sannong TV Drama Ma Xiangyang Goes to the Countryside

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This study uses a ‘sannong’ topic television drama Ma Xiangyang Goes to the

Countryside to illustrate the inherent tensions of China's state neoliberal mode of media operation. It examines the production, circulation and use of this drama within the current boundary of the state censorship in the context of China's turn to state neoliberalism, a developmentalism which enables the state to play a more active role in moderating the negative impacts of marketisation. Through unpacking the conceptualisation of 'state neoliberal mode of media operation', this research exemplifies how the state-projected neoliberal developmentalism shaped media processes and social relations in contemporary Chinese social and political context. Multiple types of data were collected and analysed, including interviews with industry professionals, the drama text and secondary sources. This research argues that in the state neoliberal mode of media operation, the state plays the triple role as the national development planner, the media regulator and the market player. It uses the regulatory power to generate revenues from media marketisation on the one hand, and leverage the impact of media to legitimate and reproduce the state neoliberal development agenda on the other hand. This article concludes by arguing that China's current developmentalism facilitates a state neoliberal mode of media operation, one that is non-liberal, neoliberal but disingenuously neoliberal.

Promoting Farmer Participation in Agri-environmental Governance: the role of governance structure in Straw-burning Control in Northeast China

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China has achieved remarkable progress in mobilizing farmers' participation in straw-burning control programs (SBCP), particularly in the northeast; little is known about the governance structure of these programs and the mechanisms promoting successful farmer participation. The aim of this paper is to provide more insight into the governance structure of the SBCP in northeastern China and to provide quantitative estimates of the impact of some of the main mechanisms used to promote the ban on straw burning. First, we apply the governance analytical framework developed by Lemos and Agrawal (2006) to the case of the SBCP in 2018 in Heilongjiang, northeastern China. Second, we test farmers' perception changes, including penalties intensity and straw-utilization facilities using farm household survey data collected in 2018 and 2019 in Heilongjiang Province and present the results of their effects. The theoretical analysis indicates that the governance structure in Heilongjiang included two respects. One was to build the Chief's Accountability System to integrate the fragmented departmental functions and form the policy-enforcement power. The other was to entrust intermediaries in the farmer community, including village committees and cooperatives, as the government's agents to promote top-down supervision and bottom-up straw-utilization services to farmers. Our empirical results show that the governance structure above achieved the increase in penalty intensity and straw-utilization facility supply, thereby promoting farmers' sustainable straw utilization.

No Fairyland: The beatification of rural life through the lens of Liziqi and its antithesis

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Among China's numerous Vloggers, Li Ziqi is not only a household name but also an international brand. Starting as a migrant worker from rural Sichuan, Li has garnered millions of followers with her videos of her idyllic rural Chinese life featuring traditional

food making and handcrafts, which enjoy huge popularity both domestically and internationally. Accompanying her commercial success, Li was awarded ‘2019 China’s Ten Women’ by China Women’s News, for ‘her telling of Chinese stories as an international celebrity’ and was commended by the People’s Daily. In 2020, she became one of the first promotion ambassadors of China’s Farmers Harvest Festival. Since her recent fallout with the MCN (Multi-channel network) agent Weinian which manages Li Ziqi brand, Li has vowed to commit herself to the state project of ‘Rural Revitalization’ and contribute to Xi’s ‘common prosperity’ campaign in her interview with CCTV in October 2021. This paper juxtaposes Li’s own life story and her vision for a beautiful rural life expressed through her videos with realities commonly faced by Chinese villagers, especially women. Combining feminist textual analysis of Li’s stories with fieldwork data collected between 2015-2017 in rural China, we analyse labour division and family relations through the lens of gender to elaborate issues around care for left behind children and elders as well as women’s economic participation. We aim to shed light on the continuing barriers for rural women who share similar humble roots with Li to forge their own path to a fulfilling life in the context of Xi’s advocacy for traditional family values and China’s turn to pro-natalist policy.

Filming in Rural China: Producing Knowledge Through Embodied Creative Praxis

Ang Gao, Researcher, Newcastle University, UK

This paper explores documentary filmmaking as a method for producing knowledge about rural China. In particular, it considers how the researcher’s/practitioner’s body can be the platform for knowledge production, which conjures up the in-between space of the praxis. In my research it was evident that agricultural cooperative served as the platform for rural revitalisation, but its profit-based operation prevented the equal development of all villages. Through conducting shot-by-shot analysis of my bodily movement and reflecting on my inner subjectivities in the filmmaking practice, I figured out that the “gap” between the Government-pictured rural China and its real situation is rooted in the social discourse that devalued the rural part. Rural areas are not only economic ‘units’ but also a living space of history, art, culture and personal identities. This paper will give an overview of policies were implemented in rural China since Sannong Wenti (Three Agricultural Issues) was first referred in 1996. I will then introduce documentary filmmaking as a form of embodied creative praxis to show how the practitioner’s body conjures up the knowledge and practice that goes beyond textual analysis. I will illustrate this through clips from my PhD documentary (trailers see below) that show how my embodied filmmaking practice produces new knowledges about rural China. Specifically, it conveys the expressions of the past in the present, the forgotten private and public histories, and the disappearing architecture of villages. The paper argues that documentary filmmaking can be a radical methodology to reflect the gap between the Chinese rural revitalization policies and the real lived experience of villagers, and therefore how the village seemed to stand still in time as a fading image of a troubled and best forgotten history.

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