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**18th International Conference on Agriculture and Rural Development in China
ICARDC XVIII**

**Rural China Unbound:
Exploring new concepts, theories and paradigms**

**11-13 December 2026
Hong Kong**

Hosted by:

**The Hong Kong Polytechnic University,
Hung Hom, Hong Kong**

Co-organised by:

**Department of Applied Social Sciences, PolyU
China and Global Development Network, PolyU**



CONFERENCE THEME

Rural China Unbound: Exploring new concepts, theories and paradigms

The Chinese countryside has often been studied and analysed through dualistic frameworks such as “rural” vs. “urban”, “city” vs. “countryside”, etc. These binary conceptualizations are reproduced through disciplinary divides that, for example, place agrarian and rural studies, urban studies, and environmental and resource studies in separate domains. Under new institutional reforms and emergent dynamics shaped by technological change, state ambitions, and market forces, such binary frameworks warrant renewed critical rethinking. This conference seeks to traverse these boundaries and create dialogue across theoretical and methodological approaches.

The theme of “Rural China Unbound” highlights our aim in foregrounding the diversity and complexity of interactions, linkages and networks that connect the Chinese countryside with a variety of “elsewheres” – be these municipalities, townships, other rural localities in China or places beyond China – through global commodity chains, capital investments, population flows, and digital networks. Aside from empirical research we are also interested in theoretical and methodological explorations of perspectives that open new paradigms for interdisciplinary dialogue.

We invite papers addressing (but not limited to) the following themes:

- New formulations and explorations of rural-urban and rural-rural interconnections
- Theorizations of peripheries, boundaries, hinterlands, borderlands, and frontiers
- Projects of rural-urban integration and rural revitalization; new-type urbanization; rural and agrarian urbanization
- Politics of land, settlements and natural resources; property rights; land, housing and customary law; real estate markets; ownership debates
- New developments in agri-food politics; agricultural modernization; alternative food networks; sustainable agriculture; organic farming; food safety
- “Ecological civilization” in China; ecological restoration; conservation planning and functional zoning practices; environmental enclosures and resource frontiers
- Spaces of eco-urbanization and green urbanism; green infrastructure; new energy projects and green energy transition
- Population movements and mobilities; migration and hukou; resettlement, displacement, politics of dispossession
- Technology and novel forms of agency and entrepreneurship in rural development; hi-tech farming; impact of digital networks, platform economy and e-commerce
- Global, regional, and local flows and networks that connect the Chinese countryside to other localities (commodities market, capital investments, digitalization and technology) and how these linkages reshape rural livelihoods and social dynamics of labor, gender, family, and social networks
- China in the “global countryside”: trade disputes and isolationism; reconstitution of rural places under globalization and de-globalization; climate change and global governance; interactions between local and global actors

PARTICIPATION

This conference will be hosted **in-person only** at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 11-13 December 2026.

We welcome both individual abstract submission and organised panel proposal. To allow more people to participate, each person is welcome to submit max. one individual abstract as lead author and one panel proposal. Co-authorship does not count. All submissions and presentations should be in English.

- Individual abstract submission:
Please submit a title, an abstract (200-300 words), and a brief bio (max. 100 words).
- Organised panel proposal:
An organised panel should consist of 4-5 presentations. The panel organiser should submit a panel title and a summary (200-300 words) to introduce the panel theme. Presenters in the panel should make their own individual abstract submission following the guidelines above. Please indicate the panel organiser and panel title in the form. Your abstract can be considered for individual presentation if the panel proposal is not accepted.

Please make your submission by the deadline of **30 May 2026** via this [online form](#). Notification of acceptance will be announced by email on or before 30 June 2026.

REGISTRATION

All presenters are required to register by **30 August 2026**. Depending on venue capacity, those who wish to attend the conference without presenting a paper are also invited to register by the same date.

The registration link will be sent out separately after the abstract submission deadline. All successfully registered attendees will receive confirmation by email.

PUBLICATION

Authors of accepted abstracts have the option of submitting full papers for consideration of inclusion in thematic special session(s) at the conference, where full papers will be discussed in preparation for submission as special issue(s) to SSCI-indexed journal(s). Please note that these papers should not be committed for publication elsewhere.

Full papers are due **30 September 2026** and authors will be notified individually by email in October 2026 of inclusion in special sessions.

ICARDC BEST PAPER AWARD

We are happy to announce the ICARDC Best Paper Award, which recognises early career researchers (less than 8 years after obtaining PhD) working on issues of China's rural-urban transition, agriculture and rural/sustainable development. The

prize awards outstanding papers that are of note in terms of originality, academic rigor, significance and potential impact. Eligible papers should not be published or submitted elsewhere.

Application and selection: Applicants are kindly asked to submit their CV and paper (MS Word, max. 8,000 words) with subject "ICARDC Award Submission" to secretariat@icardc.org. Submissions close by 30 September 2026. The winner will be honoured during a commendation ceremony at the ICARDC XVIII Conference.

TIMELINE

- 30 May: Abstract and panel submission deadline
- 30 June: Notification of acceptance
- 30 August: Registration deadline
- 30 September: Full paper submission deadline (optional)
- 11-13 December: Welcome to ICARDC XVIII at PolyU!

CONTACT

For any enquiries, please feel free to get in touch with the PolyU Organising Committee at icardc2026@gmail.com or the ICARDC Secretariat at secretariat@icardc.org.

ABOUT ICARDC

The ICARDC Network was established in 1989 and since then has organised many well-visited international conferences in and outside of China. ICARDC has led to numerous publications on the multi-faceted aspects of China's agricultural and rural development. ICARDC currently has close to 400 members, and hosts a [mailing list](#) with news about events, publications, vacancies, and projects. For more info, please go to www.icardc.org.