

Themed issue on “Land Use Policy in China” published in *Land Use Policy*

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Land Use Policy is an international and interdisciplinary journal, published by Elsevier, concerned with the social, economic, political, legal, physical and planning aspects of urban and rural land use. Recently, a themed issue on “Land Use Policy in China” has been published in Volume 40 of this journal (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/02648377/40>). Under the guidance of the journal editor Professor Guy Robinson from University of South Australia, Professor Hualou Long acted as the guest editor in compiling this themed issue. Sixteen papers included in this themed issue are organized around four main areas of interest to both researchers and policy makers: nation-wide land use issues, the Sloping Land Conversion Program, land engineering and land use, and land use transitions. More than 50 scientists whose research interest focuses on land use contributed to this themed issue, and they came from six countries including Australia, the United States of America, Germany, New Zealand, Netherlands and China.

In the editorial of this themed issue, it is emphasized that China is a nation with strong rural roots, and has transformed rapidly since the initiation of economic reform and opening up policy in 1978. Tremendous land use changes have taken place since then, leading to transformed development in both rural and urban areas. Accompanying this rapid urban–rural transformation, various land use issues have occurred, giving rise to formulation of new policies directly affecting land use. To some extent, these have caused new land use problems due to the nature of the policies and the difficulties in policy implementation constrained by the special ‘dual-track’ structure of urban–rural development in China. There are obvious regional discrepancies in the development gap between rural and urban areas as well as in the dimensions of geographical and bio-geo-physical conditions in China. Rural and urban transformation development underlying these regional discrepancies has led to a series of land use problems. The feasible solutions to these problems will rely on new land use policies aimed at addressing specific land use issues. Currently, there is a dilemma relating to land use associated with economic construction, farmland protection, farmers’ livelihoods, food production and ecological security. Various socio-economic and environmental issues brought about by rural and urban transformation can be mainly reflected in land use; however, they can also be reconciled and resolved via mapping out and implementing effective land use policies.

In view of this, this themed edition makes a compelling call for more systematic research into the formulation and implementation of land use policy, aiming at the new development phase in China. Urbanization is an inevitable trend, especially for developing countries. At present, a programme of people-oriented new-type urbanization, which symbolizes the departure from land-centered urban development to a new-type urbanization with its focus on the people, is being advanced in China, and it will bring about a rapid and far-reaching transition in rural China. However, the smooth implementation of the new-type urbanization strategy will inevitably rely on the challengeable innovations in relevant policy, mechanisms and mode concerning land use. Meanwhile, the volatility and complexity of land use policy in China, doomed by the rampant urban–rural transformation and the special ‘dual-track’ structure of urban–rural development, will present ongoing challenges for further research on land use policy in China.

This themed issue of *Land Use Policy* has succeeded in compiling theoretical and empirical studies to highlight land use policy in China, both its formulation and implementation. The papers make important contributions to the growing literature on land use policy in China. This themed issue of *Land Use Policy* builds mainly on papers presented at an international conference on ‘Land Use Issues and Policy in China under Rapid Rural and Urban Transformation’, convened by the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing, China, in October 2012, under the auspices of National Natural Science Foundation of China and the Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences.