

BOOK REVIEWS

The End of the Village: Planning the Urbanization of Rural China

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Since the twenty-first century, we have witnessed an acceleration of urbanization in China from 35.43 percent in 2000 to 63.89 percent by 2020 (NBS 2021). It is associated with a rural decline, referring to the outflows of land, capital, labour and talent from rural to urban areas, resulting in farmland abandoned, children and the aged behind, and rural depopulation. To cope with such challenges, nonetheless, the Chinese government has initiated a number of programmes to rebalance and revitalize its countryside. “Urban-rural Coordination” was one of such government initiatives, starting from the mid-2000s, which intended to redirect urban resources for rural development under the slogan “industry promotes agriculture, cities carry the countryside” (Wu and Liu 2020). Based upon extensive research in Chongqing, a national pilot zone for “urban-rural coordination” development, this book offers valuable analysis and insight into the complexity and contradictions of China’s rural transformation. With an in-depth case study of Hailong, a model village of rural urbanization in a suburb of Chongqing, in particular, the author attempts to illustrate the future of China’s countryside.

This book could be attractive to a wide range of readers, including academia, development professionals and policy analysts who are interested in China’s urbanization in the broad contexts of a large-scale rural-urban migration, brain drains, rural depopulation and rural-urban inequalities. It provides a broad background to the rural development crisis in China which is rooted at the persistent tension between the “de jure urban and rural categories and its de facto progresses of urban-rural interpenetration”. This tension provides the basis for the author to develop his concept of “disjunctural urbanization”, which produced the conditions for new (and newly contradictory) forms of Chinese urbanization (31).

It is very impressive that the author spent a total of 18 months in the fieldwork between 2010 and 2015 resulting in more than 200 interviews. Based upon field observations and a large number of interviews, the book shows various understandings, perceptions, approaches to China’s rural development crisis in general, and a balanced account of these differing voices and responses, from government officials, village leaders and inhabitants to government-led urban-rural coordination development in Chongqing and Hailong in particular.

This book is organized into two parts and six chapters. The first three chapters are dedicated to various experiences, opinions and commentary on China’s rural development crisis and the government coping strategy in Chongqing. Chapter 1 starts from municipal planners and policy makers who were responsible for planning and implementing the urban-rural coordination programme. This is followed by Hailong’s exploration through village leaders to leverage opportunities for the expansion of Chongqing city. Chapter 3 brings the voices of Hailong’s inhabitants, both registered villagers and migrants from the outside the village, to reflect their experience, views and responses.

The latter three chapters examine the process of Hailong’s sociospatial transformation through development planning at municipal level, redevelopment projects at administrative villages to the displacement of village inhabitants. Chapter 4 describes the coordinative planning for Hailong village development

involving property, political dialogue between municipal officials and village leaders, and uncertainty at the urban-rural edge. Chapter 5 details the transformation of the village's collective landholdings into real estate, and of Hailong's villagers into shareholders. Chapter 6 examines villagers' responses to the end of that village, resulting in the displacement of both the village institutions and its inhabitants.

Through the combination of extensive literature review and analysis of rich data collected in Chongqing, this book is valuable for readers to understand the challenges facing rural China caused by the bifurcated land system, and the impact of government-led urbanization on rural transformation and the livelihoods of rural people. However, a certain caution may be needed in regard to the future of rural China. It may be too simplistic to apply the "end of the village" or "urbanization of China's countryside" (233) to all villages across China, taking into account its complexity and diversity in terms of geographic, resource, economic and social environments on the one hand, and the long history of culture tradition rooted in rural areas (Wu 2020). While the case of Hailong village could be a good example to illustrate rural transformation in suburban areas of large municipals, it may struggle to represent those villages in remote, mountainous, poor and ethnic minority communities in the marginal areas of China where rural development is often driven by a different logic and dominated the separate national programme (e.g. "Targeted Poverty Alleviation") (Wu *et al.* 2020) which is largely ignored in this book. It seems too early to predict the future of rural China because there are so many new pilots and "social experiments" that exist in different locations and carried out by different people, including grassroots innovators and urban citizen groups, who are trying to find new solutions or pathways to overcome the rural development crisis, towards a balanced and harmonic relationship between rural and urban societies in the future.

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Soju: A Global History

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Soju is a global beverage. For those who have imbibed, *soju's* potent proof joins with distinct aromatics suggestive of high mountain pines to sweep one into a moment of tender-grilled beef ribs with good