

of why litigation strategies have been under-utilized thus far would have been beneficial and help provide more insights into how such a strategy can be implemented to produce tangible results.

Throughout the book, the authors express hope for the future of the WTO as an institution capable of managing the challenges posed by China's state capitalism. They argue that with the right strategies and a commitment to multilateralism, the WTO can navigate the complexities of China's state-driven economic model and maintain a rules-based international trading system.

Overall, *Between Market Economy and State Capitalism: China's State-Owned Enterprises and the World Trading System* offers a vital contribution to the ongoing discourse surrounding China's state capitalism and its implications for the world trading system. Scholars from a diverse array of fields, such as international trade, international political economy, Chinese studies and international law, will find this book to be an invaluable resource thanks to its comprehensive analysis of China's state capitalism and its intricate interactions with the global trading system, particularly the WTO. Furthermore, policymakers and international trade practitioners stand to benefit from the book's insights into the complexities of China's unique economic model and the far-reaching implications it has for the effectiveness and sustainability of the multilateral trading system.

The key message of the book, that the WTO is well-equipped to address the challenges presented by state capitalism in China and beyond, offers a refreshing and reassuring perspective during a critical period in which the global trade body faces an existential crisis. As its 164 member countries scramble to find ways to repair the embattled dispute settlement system by 2024, the WTO's future hangs in the balance.

While the authors of the book maintain a cautiously optimistic outlook, readers might be left wondering whether their sage advice may have arrived too late or, even worse, could fall on deaf ears in the age of deglobalization and heightened geopolitical tensions. Despite the daunting task at hand, the book serves as an important reminder that cooperation and multilateralism are still the most viable paths forward. By emphasizing the potential of strategic litigation and constructive engagement with China, Gao and Zhou provide a roadmap for navigating the complexities of ongoing and future negotiations within the context of the global trading system.

doi:10.1017/S030574102300111X

## Creating Chinese Urbanism: Urban Revolution and Governance Change

Fulong Wu. London: UCL Press, 2022. 281 pp. Open Access.  
ISBN 9781800083332

Weiping Wu

Columbia University, New York, USA  
Email: [ww2455@columbia.edu](mailto:ww2455@columbia.edu)

Since the onset of economic reforms, the scope and magnitude of change and impact occurring through China's urbanization process are unprecedented. Over 700 million people live in cities now, with another 200–300 million more expected to urbanize in the next decade or so (Weiping Wu and Qin Gao [eds.], *China Urbanizing: Impacts and Transitions*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022). Though China has only turned majority urban in the recent decade,



cities have long served as a microcosm in which large societal currents manifest. Studying cities and their myriad actors – officials, developers, planners and different groups of urban dwellers, including the vast number of migrants – adds valuable insights to the larger endeavours of China studies.

Undoubtedly Fulong Wu is among the most productive and influential scholars on issues related to Chinese urbanism, and his work thus far represents a more expansive agenda than that of many scholars of urban China, partly based on a premise of connected global urbanism. This has the effect of raising the visibility of urban China in the relevant disciplines and developing new theoretical perspectives to situate China in global urbanism. *Creating Chinese Urbanism* shows further evolution of his scholarship, in that Wu has returned to the fertile empirical ground with full force. The scope of the book is extremely impressive, as it integrates historical narratives and broader socio-spatial questions with specific attention to the (re)production of urban neighbourhoods. The book probes into the processes of neighbourhood change and urban governance with deep and comprehensive attention. It also connects with the broad intellectual dialogues in urban studies and China studies, on issues at the centre of the book: governance and governmentality, local institutions, collective and social life, and informality. Using neighbourhoods as the conceptual container to untangle these issues also turns out to be a highly informative undertaking.

As an overarching framework, to associate China's changing urban social geography with the famed Chinese anthropologist and sociologist Fei Xiaotong's notion of *chaxugeju* (differential mode of association) is at once enabling and provocative. Derived from extended work in rural China before 1949, Fei's theory of social structure centres the self, with differential relational associations that weaken once beyond families and then villages. In this context of "earth-bounded" agrarian society, urbanization entails "leaving the soil" by way of "breaking up socially integrated traditional neighbourhoods" (chapter one). This book thus claims the need "to understand not only space and spatial processes but also place and place-based changes" (p. 51), the latter of which arise from the changes in neighbourhoods themselves, an analytical anchor enabled by Fei's notion. In the end, Wu concludes that urbanization has led to the production of a social landscape in which "differential relations (*guanxi*) persist but the mode, rationality, or order (*geju*) has perished" (p. 261).

How has this metaphoric transformation of urban social geography taken place? Wu aptly uncovers not only spatial dynamics but also the associated social and political processes. Urban China during market reforms is dotted by inner-city neighbourhoods built before 1949, work-unit (*danwei*) neighbourhoods developed prior to housing reforms, migrant neighbourhoods in the form of urban villages (*chengzhongcun*) and middle-class gated communities. A sharp departure from the socialist tradition marked by a close relationship between living and work amid a world of acquaintances, social engagements in urbanizing China no longer permeate the association among dwellers; instead, a "new moral order" is based on property rights (p. 19) or property-led redevelopment. This new mode of association is predicated on the basis of individuals rather than collectivism.

Marketization, according to Wu, is the central driving force for the disappearing traditional mode, rather than the features of urbanism *per se* (e.g. higher population density and residential design). Consequentially, neighbourhood life reflects a weakened society. Even in urban villages, where the state and society used to be intertwined, the transient nature of migrants and their living quarters preclude social engagements of any significance. Unlike their counterparts elsewhere around the world, in gated communities at the more affluent end of urban life in China private governance remains limited. Wu then argues that the urban process is generative for our understanding of the features of urban governance under marketization: the building of residential communities by the state has not managed to recreate an entirely totalized society, by which he refers to "the state

[controlling] the economy and [monopolizing] all social resources” (p. 10). In its place is the imperative to develop an administrative order through professionalizing bureaucratic functions.

While China may present a critical case in which the state–society dichotomy takes on increasing complexity, state-sponsored strategic intentions remain – and now seemingly more so – dominant of autonomous decisions of other stakeholders. In what ways has the evolution of urban neighbourhoods reflected the realities and consequences of such intentions? This is just one question to be asked of Wu’s book. The answers are in fact scattered throughout the chapters, though perhaps somewhat buried among thick descriptions. Another quibble I may have about the book has to do with the overarching sentiment of social determinism, which arguably nudges us to look beyond the force of economic agglomeration. But there is evidence sprinkled across resettlement as well as new neighbourhoods in some Chinese cities that mutual benefit-sharing has provided the foundation on which residents exercise agency in safeguarding social relations forged in their previous living environments (Min Zhang et al. “Agency and social construction of space under top-down planning: Resettled rural residents in China,” *Urban Studies* 55[7] (2018), 1541–1560). That, particularly when reinforced by human-centred design and planning approaches, has the promise of maintaining or even expanding social relations in an urbanized world of individualism.

A significant and ground-breaking contribution on an important topic, this book draws on an impressive reservoir of both English- and Chinese-language studies. The writing quality is very high. Wu pays meticulous attention to the sequence of events and multitude of factors driving the (re)development of each type of neighbourhood under study. As China continues to urbanize, socio-spatial transformation will no doubt keep apace. This book reminds us that urban transformation is far from a monolithic and nationwide phenomenon. The anchor at the local level, where urbanites live and interact, is clearly a generative foray. More importantly, the book is a critical addition to the recent canon of urban China studies that marks the commencement of renewed attention to empirically grounded theorization.

doi:10.1017/S0305741023000930

## Steering Political Currents: Policy Design and Implementation in China’s Smart Grid Industry

Hannes Gohli. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2022. 510 pp. €109.00 (pbk). ISBN 9783756005239

Philip Andrews-Speed

Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, Oxford, UK  
Email: [cpandrewsspeed@hotmail.com](mailto:cpandrewsspeed@hotmail.com)

The task of understanding China’s public policy processes is hampered by a combination of its unavoidable complexity due to the size of the country and its intentional opacity. The perverse outcome is a large and ever-expanding academic and think-tank literature on this topic that is difficult to keep up with. Thus, it is refreshing to encounter an analysis that brings together an under-appreciated theoretical frame with detailed empirical analysis of a narrow field of public policy in China. In *Steering Political Currents*, Hannes Gohli draws on steering theory to examine policy design and implementation in the smart grid industry.