

## I

## Property and Politics in China

If the land problem can be solved, one half of the problem of livelihood will be solved.

Sun Yatsen (1924)<sup>1</sup>

Whoever wins the peasants will win China. Whoever solves the land problem will win the peasants.

Mao Zedong (1936)<sup>2</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

The vast majority of political and economic change in China during the past century can be understood as a series of land reforms. As the preceding epigraphs from two of the most recognizable twentieth-century political figures indicate, power to make rules about who controls land is at the heart of political contestation in China. Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) assumed their positions at the helm in 1949 after decades of rural insurgence, occupying parts of the countryside and then carrying out land reforms that redistributed land to peasants in an effort to win political support and to foment class struggle as the primary axis of conflict in Chinese society. Largely for the same reasons, national implementation of land reform was the paramount task of the new regime once in power.<sup>3</sup> Thirty years later, approval of another land reform – decollectivization – once again signaled a sea change in Chinese politics. The land reform that generated the resumption of family

<sup>1</sup> Sun Yatsen, *Three Principles of the People* (Taipei: China Publishing Company, 1964), 179.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Edgar Snow, *Red Star over China* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 70.

<sup>3</sup> Vivienne Shue, *Peasant China in Transition: The Dynamics of Development toward Socialism, 1949–1956* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

farming in the 1970s and early 1980s introduced markets in goods and labor in rural China, setting the stage for reforms that would transform the country from a planned economy to an economy characterized by “socialism with market characteristics.”

This book is about another land reform, and one that is currently far less understood: the commodification of land that began in the 1980s. According to Article 10 of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), all urban land is owned by the state *guoyou*, (国有) and all rural land is owned by the collective (*jiti*, 集体).<sup>4</sup> Prior to 1986, land-use rights were allocated by urban or village governments to state units or farmers essentially free of charge. In 1988, however, a revision to the Land Management Law separated ownership rights from use rights, permitting landowners to lease land-use rights for fixed terms in exchange for capital in the form of land-use fees.<sup>5</sup> For the first time in PRC history land markets of some kind were legal in both rural and urban China.

Land and real-estate investment and development have become indispensable to Chinese economic growth in the years since 1988, yet Chinese property rights institutions bear no resemblance to the types of institutions lauded by Western social scientists and policy-makers as requisite for growth. Though capital and labor have mostly been privatized, land in urban China is still owned by the state and land in rural China is owned by the collectives. Despite the seeming stasis of national-level formal property rights institutions, the informal rules governing property and land development have been subject to intense political negotiation both at the lower levels of the Chinese state and at the center. In this book I examine property rights practices as they emerged during the process of the economic reforms undertaken since the 1980s in urban China.

In political science and related fields, most studies of the emergence of property rights examine the national level over the *longue durée*. As such, these studies focus primarily on how changes in property rights institutions produce changes in economic and political behavior at the very macrolevels. Typically, these studies are narratives about the centrality of property rights institutions in the emergence of “modern” forms of economic and political organization,

<sup>4</sup> The “collective” generally refers to the unit of organization in Chinese villages during the Maoist era. Decision making in rural China was concentrated in village teams, which were generally based on “natural villages” as they existed prior to 1949, and on “administrative villages,” a group of teams united in a production brigade during the Maoist era. In general, since the 1990s the administrative village, typically referred to as the “village,” makes decisions about land allocations. See You-tien Hsing, *The Great Urban Transformation: Politics of Land and Property in China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 134, 148n26, n27; Qin Hui, *Nongmin Zhongguo: Lishi fansi yu xianshi xuanze* (Peasant China: Historical Reflections and Practical Choices) (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> On the mechanics of land allocations and transfers before and after the 1986 law, see Samuel P. S. Ho and George C. S. Lin, “Emerging Land Markets in Rural and Urban China: Policies and Practices,” *The China Quarterly* no. 175 (2003): 681–707.

that is, capitalism and democracy, or the lack thereof.<sup>6</sup> Yet, in China, and indeed in much of the developing and postsocialist world, the politics of property rights are intensely local and vary within the same nation-state and, at times, even within the same city or region.<sup>7</sup> How do we explain the emergence of different subnational rules and practices of property rights even within the same institutional system? Similarly, how are these practices sustained in the face of national efforts to unify the rules governing property rights?

In explaining the emergence of land politics in urban China since the 1980s, this book offers a new perspective on the politics of property rights during times of transition – one that sees property rights as political bargains struck between local state actors and groups in society under conditions of uncertainty. Even in an authoritarian regime with state ownership of urban land, state actors distribute property rights as political resources to ensure compliance with economic reforms and to maintain social stability.<sup>8</sup> In cities in China where reforms were comparatively easy to implement, local governments designed property rights regimes to maximize their own accumulation of capital. However, where reforms were difficult and other resources were limited, local governments designed property rights regimes to placate potential losers from the reforms and to provide capital accumulation opportunities for groups outside the state. Such political bargains were struck early during the reform

<sup>6</sup> Douglass C. North and Robert Paul Thomas, *The Rise of the Western World: A New Economic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); Douglass C. North, John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R. Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Douglass C. North and Barry R. Weingast, “Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in 17th-Century England,” *Journal of Economic History* 49, no. 4 (1989): 803–32. Barrington Moore Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966). Exceptions include Tomas Larsson, *Land and Loyalty: Security and the Development of Property Rights in Thailand* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012); Susan H. Whiting, *Power and Wealth in Rural China: The Political Economy of Institutional Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Stephen H. Haber, Noel Maurer, and Armando Razo, *The Politics of Property Rights: Political Instability, Credible Commitments, and Economic Growth in Mexico, 1876–1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Gary D. Libecap, *Contracting for Property Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>7</sup> For example, on variations in African land rights, see Catherine Boone, *Property and Political Order in Africa: Land Rights and the Structure of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Political scientists have made similar arguments about the strategic use of land and property rights in other contexts. Catherine Boone argues that land is deployed as a patronage resource in electoral strategies in sub-Saharan democracies. David Collier and, more recently, Alisha Holland make similar arguments about the use of land and informal property rights as a form of redistribution in Latin America. Catherine Boone, “Electoral Populism Where Property Rights Are Weak: Land Politics in Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa,” *Comparative Politics* 41, no. 2 (January 2009): 183–201; Alisha C. Holland, “The Distributive Politics of Enforcement,” *American Journal of Political Science*, 59, no. 2 (April 2015): 357–371. David Collier, *Squatters and Oligarchs: Authoritarian Rule and Policy Change in Peru* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

era as urban officials sought to dismantle socialism and build capitalism, and they were accompanied by moral narratives that attempted to generate legitimacy for the new property rights arrangements. Later in the reform era, as land became central to local government revenue, local officials attempted to override the bargains, but they were constrained by these “moral entitlements.” Understanding property rights as bargains with both political and moral content explains why property rights regimes vary subnationally and why specific regimes endure despite concerted pressures for change.

The empirical contribution of the book concerns the centrality of property rights to China’s economic development strategy at both the national and local levels. The control of land – at every level of the administrative hierarchy – has been fundamental to the construction and execution of strategies for reform and development. The argument I make, however, is very different from the classic social science idea that the forms of property rights determine investment and growth outcomes. In China land control did not determine the pursuit of wealth or vice versa. Rather, urban governments, as well as the national government in Beijing, experimented with land markets and systems of property rights at the same time that they were fashioning plans to dismantle socialism and to build markets.

At the local level, cities were home to different constellations of political power as they navigated both property markets and development and reform agendas. Property rights were deployed as political and economic resources, figuring prominently in various groups’ efforts to accumulate capital as well as local governments’ strategies for political inclusion and appeasement. Specifically, the staging and sequencing of reforms to the public sector and the opening to foreign capital – undertaken early in some cities and later in others – afforded local governments different incentives and constraints with regard to urban land and property markets. In cities that opened to foreign capital before or while they were undertaking state-sector reforms – essentially building capitalism before dismantling socialism – local governments were able to extend authority over urban land as part of their reform strategies. But in cities that built capitalism at the same time they dismantled socialism (undertaking state-sector reforms before they had access to global capital), urban land control was ceded to non- and semistate actors, such as state firms, laid-off workers, and the emerging private sector, thus eroding the power of local governments over land. The sequencing of the reform efforts, combined with the structure of the local economy and the mediating role of socialist legacies, led to different systems for managing property rights over land, which I call “property rights regimes.” These regimes, and reform efforts more generally, emerged in tandem with new moral narratives to justify them. Property rights became both moral and material entitlements, setting the stage for the intractable political conflicts that ensued when entitlements were threatened.

At the national level, the creation of land and property markets required a dramatic change in how land was considered a resource in China. During the

1980s and 1990s, land changed from being a resource whose primary value was in its use for production to a resource with exchange value – in other words, one that could become capital. National institutions governing land control and property rights changed drastically as central officials experimented with policies and made judgments about the risks and rewards that would accompany land markets and the real estate sector. I find that the direction of this reform has not been the one that many assumed or predicted, that is, that land markets would gradually liberalize and property rights would become more secure, thereby becoming private over time. On the contrary, land markets were far more liberal and subject to far less state dominance and interference during their first decade than they have been ever since.<sup>9</sup> In addition to explaining the variation in land control regimes at the subnational level, I examine how and why the nature and importance of land control have been reconsidered and dramatically reorganized by the central government in the course of the reforms. Property rights institutions at the national level have also been the products of political bargains made under conditions of uncertainty.

Later in this chapter, I more fully conceptualize property rights regimes, the dependent variable in this study, and elaborate on the book's explanation of the emergence of and variation in these regimes. The chapter also introduces the empirical context: the puzzle of subnational variations within a single region of China. But first, I situate the problem of land politics and property rights in the context of Chinese politics since the onset of the market reforms.

#### LAND, PROPERTY RIGHTS, AND CHINA

Land control has emerged as the most contentious and important economic and political issue in contemporary China. In urban China, the demolition and relocation of urban residents have constituted an incendiary flash point for state–society conflict. International media and scholarly attention have increasingly focused on the dislocations that have resulted from grand projects of urban renewal and transformation.<sup>10</sup> The phenomenon of “nail houses” (*dingzihu*, 钉子户), residences in the middle of vast construction projects whose occupants refuse to leave, is endemic in almost every Chinese city.<sup>11</sup> The

<sup>9</sup> This finding accords with Huang Yasheng's arguments about the direction of reforms in the private sector in the 1980s versus those in the 1990s. See Yasheng Huang, *Capitalism with Chinese Characteristics: Entrepreneurship and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> On Beijing, see Yue Zhang, “Steering towards Growth: Symbolic Urban Preservation in Beijing, 1990–2005,” *Town Planning Review* 79, nos. 2–3 (2008): 187–208. On Shanghai, see Qin Shao, “Waving the Red Flag: Cultural Memory and Grassroots Protest in Housing Disputes in China,” *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 197–232.

<sup>11</sup> The most famous “nail house” is that of Yang Wu and Wu Ping, in Chongqing City. See Howard French, “In China, Fight over Development Creates a Star,” *New York Times*, March 26, 2007,

scramble for rural land has constituted an equally visible flash point for antagonism between peasants and local governments. China's preeminent sociologist, Yu Jianrong, has argued that contestation over land rights has replaced that over rural taxes and fees as the primary axis of state–society conflict in rural China.<sup>12</sup> Chinese academics estimate that as many as sixty million peasants have lost their land since the early 1990s. Scholars have argued that if the trends persist at present speeds, China will be home to 110 million landless peasants as a result of the conversion of land from agriculture to construction by 2030.<sup>13</sup> Sixty percent of peasants who file complaints (*shangfang*, 上访) with higher-level governments do so over lost land, most of which is lost as a result of state acquisition (*zhengyong*, 征用).<sup>14</sup> The process of land conversion is extraordinarily contentious, and often violent. Chinese journals frequently report beatings, assaults, incinerations, and mass brawls among peasants and local leaders over land disputes.<sup>15</sup> In December 2011, villagers in the town of Wukan, in southeastern Guangdong province, mounted an extraordinarily

at [www.nytimes.com/2007/03/26/world/asia/26cnd-china.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/26/world/asia/26cnd-china.html), accessed January 26, 2015. See also Kent Ewing, "The Coolest Nail House in History," *Asia Times*, March 31, 2007, and Andrew C. Mertha, "From 'Rustless Screws' to 'Nail Houses': The Evolution of Property Rights in China," *Orbis* 53, no. 2 (2009): 233–49.

<sup>12</sup> Yu Jianrong, "Dangqian Zhongguo quntixing shijian de zhuyao leixing jiqi jiben tezheng" (Major Types and Basic Characteristics of Mass Incidents in Today's China), *Zhongguo zhengfa daxue xuebao* (Journal of China University of Political Science and Law) no. 6 (2009): 114–20. One of the reasons that land conflicts displaced tax conflicts is the abolition of the agricultural tax in 2006, which I discuss later and in Chapter 6.

<sup>13</sup> Song Binwen et al., cited in Sally Sargeson, "Villains, Victims and Aspiring Proprietors: Framing 'Land-Losing Villagers' in China's Strategies of Accumulation," *Journal of Contemporary China* 21, no. 77 (2012): 764. On the number of landless peasants, see also Liu Shouying and Ulich Schmitt, "China's Urbanization and Land: A Framework for Reform," in *Urban China: Toward Efficient, Inclusive, and Sustainable Urbanization*, ed. World Bank and Development Research Center of the State Council of the PRC (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2014), 163–336.

<sup>14</sup> Lu Ying, "Chengshihua zuizhong shenghuo anzhi wenti de kaolü" (Reflections on the Problem of Allocating Support to Peasants Rendered Landless During Urbanization), *Nongye jingji* (Agricultural Economics), no. 6 (2006): 56–7.

<sup>15</sup> Examples of the dramatic escalation of these disputes abound in the Chinese press. One of the most famous is the Longnan incident, during which petitions to the local government from thirty people whose homes had been demolished evolved into riots involving thousands of people and at least seventy casualties. See Ma Jiuqi, "Gansu Longnan shijian: Baoli xu qianze, siwei xu geming," *Nanfang baowang*, November 19, 2008, at [www.nfdaily.cn/opinion/opinionlist/content/2008-11/19/content\\_4714177.htm](http://www.nfdaily.cn/opinion/opinionlist/content/2008-11/19/content_4714177.htm), accessed January 26, 2015. In 2004, villagers in Hunan, led by farmer Tang Fei, opened fire on local authorities after protesting against land seizures and being beaten by cadres. Some reports state there were more than twenty deaths. In June 2005, a cadre in Yuhuaizhaimoujia village, under the administration of Xi'an city, sold land without the villagers' permission, culminating in a massive brawl that resulted in eleven serious injuries. These are but a few examples. Reportedly, in 2004, of the 130 collective actions organized by villagers, 87 (66.9 percent) involved land seizures. Yang Liu, "Jingti tudi jiu fen baoli hua miaotou" (Guarding against a Trend of Land Dispute Violence), *Liaowang xinwen zhouban* (*Outlook News Weekly*) no. 29 (July 2005): 32–33.

dramatic protest over the sale of collective land to a real-estate developer. Angered over their meager compensation and their loss of farmland, the villagers eventually took physical control of the village and forced the dismissal of the party leadership. The protests culminated in a siege of the village that lasted ten days, ending only when the provincial leaders acknowledged corruption and promised the fair redistribution of land.<sup>16</sup>

According to the PRC Constitution, land is legally owned by the state in urban areas and by the collective in rural areas. However, a determination of the actors in each category is problematic. From 1949 to 1980, most urban citizens were organized in work units associated with public enterprises, and the business of collective production and consumption was governed by a centralized command economy. As a result, specifying who exactly speaks for the “state” in any given urban center was not a simple task. During the early period of land commodification, described in the empirical chapters that follow, ambiguity about who represents the “state” as the owner of urban land opened space for local political battles over land control.

As detailed in Chapter 2, in the 1990s local governments emerged as the most powerful claimants to landownership, meaning that local governments (municipal- or district-level governments) typically had the right to lease use rights for land and to claim the revenues (see Figure 1.1 for an outline of China’s land rights system). Land-lease revenues, for lease terms that varied depending on the type of land use, were paid in lump sums at the beginning of the term of the lease. Since the mid-1990s, local governments have become increasingly dependent on land lease revenues to meet budgetary obligations, leading the Ministry of Land Resources (MLR), which oversees land policy, to impose limits on the conversion of farmland and to attempt to slow real-estate development within cities.<sup>17</sup> In 2007, galvanized by fears of food insecurity and diminishing land for cultivation, the MLR adopted what it called its “toughest” policy to preserve farmland: a strict quota program by which each subnational jurisdiction is assigned an amount of arable land that cannot be decreased and an annual amount of rural land that may be converted for urban construction. The quota program has spawned a cottage industry of programs to maximize available land for lease and construction while preserving the required amount of farmland. Innovations run the gamut from establishing land exchanges by which rural dwellers exchange their homestead land for urban citizenship (*hukou*, 户口) to trading or exchanging land development rights between jurisdictions to move peasants forcibly into concentrated, high-rise housing so

<sup>16</sup> Michael Wines, “A Village in Revolt Could Be a Harbinger for China,” *New York Times*, December 26, 2011, at [www.nytimes.com/2011/12/26/world/asia/in-china-the-wukan-revolt-could-be-a-harbinger.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/26/world/asia/in-china-the-wukan-revolt-could-be-a-harbinger.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0), accessed January 26, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> See Susan H. Whiting, “Fiscal Reform and Land Public Finance: Zouping County in National Context,” in *China’s Local Public Finance in Transition*, ed. Joyce Yanyun Man and Yu-Hung Hong (Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2011), 125–44.



Land-Use Rights Leasehold System:

- 40-year term for commercial land
- 50-year term for industrial land
- 70-year term for residential land

Land-lease revenues paid for the entire term at the beginning of the lease

Methods of Transferring Land-Use Rights:

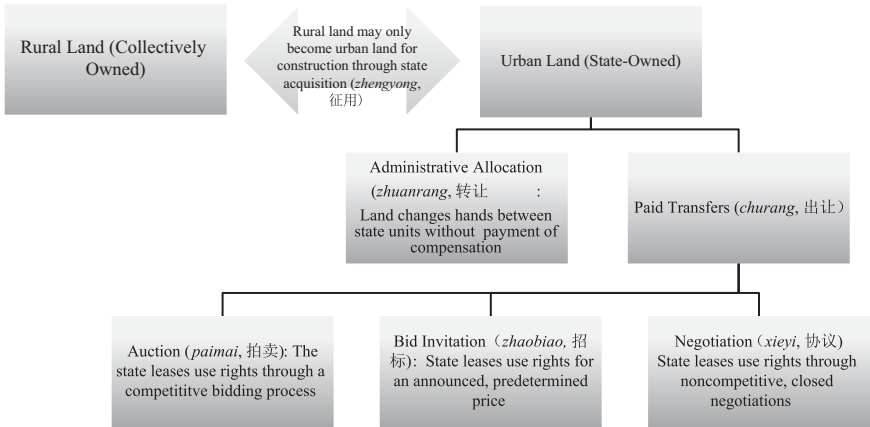


FIGURE 1.1. China’s Land System

as to maximize the amount of arable land.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, survey and land cadastral satellite data suggest that local governments and villagers both continue to encroach on the land for cultivation.<sup>19</sup>

Social scientists have long considered clear and enforceable property rights to be a necessary condition for sound economic growth and development.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Hui Wang et al., “Farmland Preservation and Land Development Rights Trading in Zhejiang, China,” *Habitat International* 34, no. 4 (2010): 454–63; Meina Cai, “Land-Locked Development: The Local Political Economy of Institutional Change in China” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2012); Kristen E. Looney, “The Rural Developmental State: Modernization Campaigns and Peasant Politics in China, Taiwan and South Korea” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> Hui Wang et al., “Rural Residential Properties in China: Land Use Patterns, Efficiency and Prospects for Reform,” *Habitat International* 36, no. 2 (2012): 201–9.

<sup>20</sup> North and Thomas state this most famously and forcefully in their explanation of the economic rise of the Western world: “Efficient economic organization is the key to growth; the development of an efficient economic organization in Western Europe accounts for the rise of the West. Efficient organization entails the establishment of institutional arrangements and property rights.” North and Thomas, *The Rise of the Western World*, 1. See also North and Weingast, “Constitutions and Commitment,” 803–32.



The protection of property rights through established laws and contracts is said to be a major function of the modern state; states that are unwilling to or incapable of protecting property rights are viewed as predatory, weak, or ineffective.<sup>21</sup>

The institutions that determine and enforce property rights in China are often ambiguous and the rules are often arbitrarily enforced. This narrative has been applied to property rights in a number of arenas, including intellectual property, firms, and natural resources such as land and water.<sup>22</sup> The 1988 Land Management Law sanctioned the creation of markets for land use, but it did not – especially at the outset – establish clear regulations about rights of control, income, and transfer in the context of public ownership over land. Although many may agree that property rights institutions are ambiguous, scholars disagree about whether that ambiguity has led inexorably to negative incentives and externalities. The conventional view interprets the extraordinary amount of conflict over land in China as the inevitable result of ambiguous property rights, meaning both unclear laws on the books and the lack of effective enforcement institutions, chiefly the absence of an independent judiciary to arbitrate claims and to enforce findings. According to this view, land markets not only are mired in political and social conflict, but also produce inefficiencies and distortions in land use. Until property rights are clarified by law and enforced through an independent judiciary or some other autonomous bureaucracy, distortions, inefficiencies, conflicts, and injustices will continue to plague land relations in China.<sup>23</sup>

Yet this conventional explanation has gained little traction among scholars who work on property rights practices in China. Instead, research on land property rights in China has challenged the dominant view that private property rights defended by an independent judiciary are a necessary precondition for efficient investment and sustainable growth. In rural China, survey and fieldwork data have indicated that farmers are accepting and even supportive of impermanent rights over plots of land and periodic reallocations if such policies function in ways to enhance fairness and agricultural production.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Margaret Levi, *Of Rule and Revenue* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

<sup>22</sup> Martin K. Dimitrov, *Piracy and the State: The Politics of Intellectual Property Rights in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); William P. Alford, *To Steal a Book Is an Elegant Offense: Intellectual Property Law in Chinese Civilization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995); Andrew C. Mertha, *China's Water Warriors: Citizen Action and Policy Change* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008); Andrew Mertha, *The Politics of Piracy: Intellectual Property in Contemporary China* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> Wang et al., "Farmland Preservation and Land Development Rights Trading in Zhejiang, China"; Wang et al., "Rural Residential Properties in China"; Xiaolin Guo, "Land Expropriation and Rural Conflicts in China," *China Quarterly* no. 166 (2001): 422–39.

<sup>24</sup> Loren Brandt et al., "Land Rights in Rural China: Facts, Fictions and Issues," *China Journal* no. 47 (January 2002): 67–97; Guo Li, Scott Rozelle, and Loren Brandt, "Tenure, Land Rights, and Farmer Investment Incentives in China," *Agricultural Economics* 19, nos. 1–2 (September 1998): 63–71; Xiao-Yuan Dong, "Two-Tier Land Tenure System and Sustained Economic Growth in post-1978 Rural China," *World Development* 24, no. 5 (1996): 915–28; Qian Forrest Zhang, "Retreat from

Comprehensive studies of Chinese land development patterns challenge the idea that property rights are simply bestowed from above and seek to demonstrate that in China property relations are “evolving” apace with social and economic change from the bottom up. Peter Ho has examined institutional change in property rights systems across land types, concluding that “the central state’s choice to allow local, informal institutions a certain space for existence rather than formalizing them through national laws is the fundamental explanation of such institutions’ credibility and successful functioning.”<sup>25</sup> In contrast, top-down attempts to change institutions that govern grasslands, wasteland, and forests have ignored local socioeconomic circumstances, with results ranging from complete disregard for “empty institutions” to violent conflict. George C. S. Lin, on the basis of the 1996 national cadastral survey, examines regional differences in urban expansion and concludes that there is no single model of land development in China and that the conventional view of property rights bestowed from the top down is overly simplistic.<sup>26</sup> Scholars of China with a variety of disciplinary perspectives have carefully documented patterns of state–society conflict over land, variations in justice claims in disputes over land rights, and different patterns of urbanization in China.<sup>27</sup>

Although scholars of contemporary China recognize the heterogeneity in patterns of urbanization and the politics of social “resistance,” the majority of work on urbanization and land in China implicitly imagines local governments to be pursuing similar if not identical projects of state building and capital

Equality or Advance towards Efficiency? Land Markets and Inequality in Rural Zhejiang,” *China Quarterly* no. 195 (2008): 535–57; Q. Forrest Zhang and John A. Donaldson, “From Peasants to Farmers: Peasant Differentiation, Labor Regimes, and Land-Rights Institutions in China’s Agrarian Transition,” *Politics & Society* 38, no. 4 (2010): 458–89.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Ho, *Institutions in Transition: Land Ownership, Property Rights, and Social Conflict in China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 18. Ho’s arguments are similar in spirit to those in an edited volume by Oi and Walder on property rights in China more generally, i.e., not only with respect to land. They conclude that “ownership has evolved decisively, if gradually, away from traditional forms of state and collective ownership toward a mixed economy pervaded by contracting, lease-holding, and various forms of private enterprise – the family firm, the elite industrial empire, and the private companies owned by government agencies and enterprises.” Jean C. Oi and Andrew G. Walder, eds., *Property Rights and Economic Reform in China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 12.

<sup>26</sup> George C. S. Lin, *Developing China: Land, Politics and Social Conditions* (London: Routledge, 2009). Lin’s book examines variations in patterns of urbanization in China. He distinguishes between two such patterns: outward expansion of existing cities (what he calls “city-based urbanization”) and the transition of rural-to-urban settlements in the countryside (“region-based urbanization”). A geographer, Lin is explaining different patterns of land use rather than who controls the land and how property rights are distributed. That said, some of his findings about the relative importance of global and domestic capital are consistent with my study of the politics of land control.

<sup>27</sup> Hsing, *The Great Urban Transformation*; Susan Whiting, “Values in Land: Fiscal Pressures, Land Disputes and Justice Claims in Rural and Peri-Urban China,” *Urban Studies* 48, no. 3 (March 2011): 569–87.