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SOCIALLY JUST PLANNING DOCTORAL NETWORK (SJP)

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China's greenway development: Reimagining the rural for urban environmental challenges

Since the introduction of the 'city-leading-county' policy in the 1980s, rural development in China has been embedded within a city-regional governance framework. Many Chinese city governments have taken advantage of their administrative superiority to expropriate land in rural jurisdictions under their control for urban expansion. However, in recent years, there are signs that growing political pressures and popular concerns for urban environmental improvement is driving a reimagination of Chinese rural areas from urban land reserve to urban recreational hinterlands. The widespread state-led development of greenway in recent years is exemplary of this emerging trend. Rather than building more urban parks, Chinese city governments have developed greenways spanning across the urban-rural divide with an aim to channel the growing demand of urban dwellers for green space into their rural surroundings. As the experience of greenway development in the Pearl River Delta suggests, this regional approach to urban green space provision has not only altered the ways urban dwellers meet their recreational needs, but also brought about significant rural transformations in functional, physical and institutional terms. These changes call for greater attention to the role of urban environmental politics in the planning and governance of rural socio-ecological landscapes.



Calvin King Lam Chung, PhD
Assistant Professor, Department of
Geography and Resource
Management, CUHK


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