



Equity for Rural Land Development in the Process of Urbanization in China: Three Types of Governmental Interventions in Rural Communities

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For more than two decades, China's rapid urban expansion encroached onto the urban fringe. As a result, residents in these peripheral areas were most affected by the urbanization process, but their well beings were of the least concern to the government. Uneven distribution of land development benefits between rural and urban sectors is considered as the salient factor fuelling the discontentment of the villagers. Despite a growing recognition of the need to improve the situation of the affected villagers, there is significant divergence in the ways of tackling this multi-faceted issue. Should the rural residents be simply incorporated into the urban system by the government and be treated equally as the urban residents? Or should they be given the rights to develop the land themselves and to enjoy all the development benefits and bear all the risks? Inequality between rural and urban sectors in China underscores the divergence in dealing with this divergence. To establish a better understanding of the complexity of the above urban-rural interface problems during the urbanization process, this paper assesses the performance of Tianjin government in rehabilitating rural communities which have been affected by urban expansion. Three rural communities are chosen as case studies; and they are respectively government constructed, or self-developed for sale and rent, or self-constructed and self-accommodated. The Tianjin government tries to improve the rural residents' situation through endowing them with the same welfare benefits as urban residents, so long as they agree to give up their property rights over the rural land that they occupied. This paper investigates the effects of the rehabilitation programs across the three communities by using the concepts of social equity, mainly from the horizontal rural-urban distributive equity perspective. Information of the villagers' social-economic activities and their possession of assets and land rights will be collected and compared with those of the urban residents, in order to assess the distributive effects of the governmental rehabilitation policy. The paper argues that the complex nature of rural land in China makes it impossible to achieve economic efficiency and equality simultaneously. Further, the effects of governmental intervention are greatly influenced by the social-economic status of the villages. The villagers' personality also played a role, as it influenced their perceptions of equity and fairness.