

ground by interweaving a more traditional institutional analysis with careful attention to the culturalist and performative aspects of state power.

PATRICIA M. THORNTON

patricia.thornton@politics.ox.ac.uk

On Shifting Foundations: State Rescaling, Policy Experimentation and Economic Restructuring in Post-1949 China

KEAN FAN LIM

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How has the Chinese Party-state reconciled the competing goals of political stability and policy innovation and the conflicting priorities of central and subnational state actors? In *On Shifting Foundations*, Kean Fan Lim suggests that throughout both the Mao era and the post-Mao decades of reform the Party-state has managed these feats in large part by adopting spatially differentiated policies and successive waves of “state rescaling.” Building upon the work of geographers and urbanist theorists, Lim defines such rescaling as “the reconfiguration of regulatory relations between the national, subnational, and supranational governments” (p. 14). Lim contends that state rescaling, used strategically by both central and subnational governments, takes on distinctive importance in the PRC context. To develop new insights into these rescaling dynamics, the study explores in depth the political drivers and policy consequences of China’s recent efforts to create state-level New Areas – special territories of regulatory and developmental privilege – in different regional settings.

The book’s opening chapters provide a detailed review of previous literature on state rescaling and an overview of evolving state rescaling practices in China between 1949 and the present. Together, these chapters call attention to the fluid and continually contested ways that state power and policies operate in space. This discussion sets the stage for Lim’s conceptual framework in chapter three, which emphasizes the intentional and deeply politicized nature of state rescaling processes in the PRC context (as opposed to more market-led rescaling processes in the European context) and highlights key continuities as well as shifts between the Mao era and post-Mao era in the state’s use of uneven development strategies and territorial adjustments.

The book’s empirical heart, running from chapters four to seven, examines the political and economic dynamics around the creation and early development of state-level New Areas in Guangdong’s Pearl River Delta (PRD) region and in the province-level municipality of Chongqing. In both settings, the establishment around 2009–2010 of these special territorial entities was closely tied to the pursuit of large-scale economic restructuring and policy innovation. After discussing the varying development challenges and institutional constraints faced by an economic core region like the PRD and an inland metropolis like Chongqing in the early 21st century, Lim traces how central and subnational actors vied in each setting to influence the stated missions and practical workings of New Areas. Lim shows how, in the PRD region, the Hengqin and Qianhai New Areas became part of provincial Party secretary Wang Yang’s controversial quest to upgrade the industrial structure and clear out low-end manufacturing. In the analysis of Chongqing’s Liangjiang New

Area, meanwhile, Lim describes how Mayor Huang Qifan used rescaling practices to leverage central state resources and also lure clusters of multinational investment.

To flesh out these case studies, Lim draws upon first-hand interviews conducted in Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing and the PRD region from 2012 to 2015, numerous policy documents, as well as large quantities of material from Chinese-language media reports. Given how prominently the latter – particularly translated portions of media interviews with key Chinese politicians and policy experts – feature in Lim’s analysis, further methodological discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of such sources would have been interesting. Still, Lim’s research is a testament to the rich and diverse perspectives on China’s economic policy-making that can be gleaned from official policy documents and media articles.

As one of the few book-length studies of contemporary issues around state-rescaling and New Area development in China, Lim’s work breaks important ground. Challenging uncritical application of Western state rescaling theories to the Chinese context, the book stakes out a new position from which to challenge the narrative of China’s post-1978 development as part of a global neoliberal shift. And with its carefully contextualized case studies of New Area development in Guangdong and Chongqing, the study provides a useful resource for China scholars as well as students of geography, urban planning and political economy seeking to understand the politics and policy logics behind spatially differentiated governance in China.

Certain aspects of the study are less satisfying, however. Some of the book’s theoretical claims, such as the assertion that “the elevation of city-regions to ‘nationally strategic’ status through resource mobilisation at *both* subnational and national levels has become a primary regulatory process within the party-state apparatus” (p. 205), are pitched at an overly abstract level. Although Lim on the whole does an admirable job of addressing previous literature, engagement with David Zweig’s *Internationalizing China* (Cornell University Press, 2002), which also analyses the central–local contestation and unintended outcomes of China’s special zones, would have been helpful. Finally, given the book’s emphasis on the spatial dynamics of statecraft, some readers might wish for further discussion of how development policies and economic reforms in Guangdong’s and Chongqing’s New Areas were shaped by, and in turn reshaped, their geographic environs.

In some sense, these limitations reflect the ambition of the study, which seeks to provide a thorough reinterpretation of China’s reform-era development and governance practices, and which in any event makes a strong case for study of the territorial practices that have enabled institutional persistence amid China’s explosive growth.

KYLE A. JAROS

kyle.jaros@area.ox.ac.uk

Borderland Memories: Searching for Historical identity in Post-Mao China

MARTIN FROMM

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Martin Fromm’s book explores the politics surrounding the production and distribution of *wenshi ziliao* (“cultural and historical materials”) in Heilongjiang Province on the China–Russia border in the 1980s. *Wenshi ziliao* were eyewitness testimonies of