

that “the urgent task” facing middle income is “moving from visible to invisible (but still deeply significant) problems” (p. 118).

This book’s contributions are so insightful because Rozelle and his REAP team are deeply embedded in “Invisible China.” Rozelle is far from an armchair analyst. He has traipsed across hundreds of villages, visiting homes and schools, and following his interlocutors to the cities – to mobile phone (p. 34) and electronics factories (p. 52) – and back. He is intensely curious, forever observing and respectfully listening. He listens to the fifth grader who wears glasses for the first time (p. 123), to the parents who only give their child one out of two of a course of worming tablets because “everyone needs some [worms]” for their digestion (p. 113), to the primary school headmaster who observes that his students sleep during break rather than play (p. 105), to the vocational school drop-out who like so many others had learnt absolutely nothing in his classes (pp. 87–92). Rozelle’s conversations with the inhabitants of “Invisible China” and with his collaborators generated the many innovative research questions and experimental research designs pursued by REAP, while also underpinning the tremendous empathy of the analysis and the vividness of this book’s narration.

Rozelle and Hell make the enormity of rural children’s deprivations intelligible to the reader on multiple levels, linking the neglect of individual children and the hopes and hardships of their families to the strategic concerns of the nation and to the global future. The lessons this book synthesizes could help to catalyze the political will for the just treatment of the invisible in China and other middle-income countries. However, even as rendering the invisible visible is an important precursor of change, political will does not always follow. *Punishing the Poor* by Loïc Wacquant (Duke University Press, 2009) and *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* by Robert Putnam (Simon & Schuster, 2015) provide rich evidence-bases for new policies in Western countries, but their messages seem largely unheeded. Hopefully, this book’s messages will fare better – already promising interventions have followed in REAP’s wake. Musings about impact aside, this book is a must-read for China specialists for its new perspectives on the intransigent problems of “rampant poverty, undereducation, undernutrition and undertreated health issues” (pp. 7–8) that lie beyond the China of PISA tables, skyscrapers and international students, and for its illuminating comparisons with other countries.

RACHEL MURPHY  
[rachel.murphy@area.ox.ac.uk](mailto:rachel.murphy@area.ox.ac.uk)

*The End of the Village: Planning the Urbanization of Rural China*

NICK R. SMITH

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How did China’s party-state plan the largest urbanization project in world history? What are the terms of the new social contract under China’s plan for urban–rural coordination (*chengxiang tongchou*)? How did coordinated planning practices originate through local “experiments”? And how is coordinated planning shifting urban–rural relations and the prospects for rural people living on the urban edge? These

are key questions Nick Smith addresses in the book *The End of the Village: Planning the Urbanization of Rural China*.

The distinction between urban and rural society has been engrained in Chinese policy for 70 years. Urban–rural coordinated planning, first announced in 2003 and repackaged in 2014 through the National Plan for New-type Urbanization, marks a departure within the party-state’s approach to governing this binarized system. While the party-state presents a depoliticized version of urban–rural coordinated planning – as a unitary, homogenous and harmonious process across the nation-state – Smith explores the contested politics of early efforts to interpret and implement it at the local level. Enter Chongqing and its peripheral administrative village of Hailong – sites of local cadre experimentation with urban–rural coordination that became a national model. Smith draws on 18 months of research with planners, cadres and inhabitants of these places to explore how this new urban development model took shape.

What can we learn from Chongqing and Hailong? And how does Smith intervene in urban studies of China? One key lesson is that central state urbanization policies emerged as underdefined and underdetermined. Urban planning can be understood as a process of coordinating competing intra-party interests. Plans become formalized through processes of negotiating planning powers between actors within a fragmented party-state, each of whom seeks control over resources. A strength of the book is attention to these fraught negotiations.

Second, experimentation is a key part of how urban planning processes unfold. Chongqing and Hailong’s entrepreneurial cadres actively experimented with urban–rural coordination in ways that would allow them to exercise ownership over land and resources. For instance, local experimentation resulted in processes of including rural areas and rural villages in urban planning, as well as introducing new mechanisms for distributing investment capital to rural areas – now common practices. Cadres represented their experiments as part of the new policy platform or, in cases, were “discovered” by higher-level leaders who retroactively sought to brand the practice for emulation elsewhere.

Third, we learn how local cadres instrumentalize urban–rural categories and relations to shape planning processes for their own ends. Local actors don’t seek to resolve the contradictions inherent to their categorization of “urban” and “rural” or their planning practices. Instead, they compete and cooperate to stabilize categorical meanings and plans, as much as possible, for their own benefit. The socially produced and ever-shifting categories of what counts as “urban” and “rural” remain fluid and contested. Yet, those that become formalized as part of planning processes are highly consequential. Smith attends to the social production of disjuncture as a starting point to theorize urbanization.

Smith introduces the dynamic of “disjunctural urbanization,” which describes the generative tensions between urban categories and urbanization processes (pp. 32, 228). This conceptual apparatus contributes to a growing literature in China studies and urban studies that seeks to denaturalize urban and the rural binaries, instead placing their relations and why they matter front and centre. The ongoing social reproduction of the binary is imminent to new forms of inequality. “Rather than an inevitable outcome of a natural process of development, China’s urban–rural inequities are actively produced by the party-state’s own administrative separation of urban and rural areas, a policy that systematically excludes rural areas and populations from many of the benefits of urban development” (p. 4). Instead of resolving the disjuncture, which has been a common pursuit of urban theorists of China, Smith delves into the ongoing production of disjuncture as a key process through which Chinese society is governed and policies are translated into practices.

The book is organized as follows. The first three chapters engage the challenges of municipal officials, village cadres and villagers as they aim to interpret urban–rural coordination for their own benefit. For instance, municipal officials, in chapter one, reconceptualize the “rural” as functional service providers to the “urban,” which has the effect of subordinating rural areas to urban planning processes. Hailong’s cadres counter this impulse, as chapter two describes, by creatively re-collectivizing agricultural land for commercial use and internal asset redistribution, a process that reframes the “rural” as economically independent from the city. Chapter three focuses on Hailong residents’ social practices and “human feeling” (*renqing*) that creatively constitute rural life on the urban edge. The latter three chapters discuss how multi-scalar sociospatial transformations intersect with Hailong’s inhabitants and their potential futures. Chapter four details Hailong’s village planning process and various intra-party actors vying to shape the national urban-rural development model. Village cadres creatively exploit municipal policies through fissures in urban–rural coordination, which include transforming collective land into real estate and villagers into shareholders, as chapter five reveals. The result, as chapter six explores, is widespread displacement, dissolution of village life, and precarity.

For Smith, state planning under urban–rural coordination portends the “near-total urbanization of China’s population and territory and the incipient end of the village as a meaningful form of sociospatial organization in contemporary China” (p. 7). Villages have historically fostered collective welfare and facilitated semiautonomous self-reliance. Given the underdetermined nature of China’s urbanization and the forms of social inequality it continues to reproduce, how might scholars and practitioners foster more equitable planning processes and advance effective mechanisms for social welfare? Such prescriptive endeavours may be fruitful for others to pursue but remain beyond the scope of this work.

In my view, the book offers interventions that will shape debates in China studies and urban studies for years to come. It stands as an essential authoritative text on urban–rural coordination and the contingencies of China’s urbanization processes. It should be read by scholars not only of urban planning, but also those interested in China’s party-state, development, and rural society.

JESSE RODENBIKER  
[rodenbiker@cornell.edu](mailto:rodenbiker@cornell.edu)

*The Children of China’s Great Migration*

RACHEL MURPHY

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*The Children of China’s Great Migration* fills an important gap in the growing English-language literature on rural children who have at least one parent migrating without them to cities for work. It departs from the urban-centric public discourse that paints a “dismal picture” of left-behind children. By giving voice to children about their experiences and perspectives, it offers critically a nuanced sociological study that highlights the sense of responsibility and reciprocity that bond three generations together despite geographic distance and emotional challenges.