Editorial

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In order to meet the challenges brought about by China's opening-up policy and rapid economic growth since 1978, China's urban planning professionals have focused on learning the theories and methods of the western market countries and on meeting the demands of achieving 'problem-oriented planning' and 'goal-oriented developmental planning' within China's reform and opening-up policy. China has also left behind the former Soviet urban planning model and established its own model for an emerging socialist market-led economy (Sit, 1996). Moreover, China's sustained and stable economic growth has diversified its urban areas and produced new strategic focuses, bringing about a change in the spatial pattern of the country. *Urban Design and Planning* will publish two themed issues on China's planning changes and transitions. The two issues will discuss the processes of restructuring and development in Chinese urban planning, and the problem-solving focus and planning-making methods evident over the last 30 years. It is hoped this will serve as a catalyst for more in-depth academic exchange between China and the rest of the world.

In this issue, there are four papers covering spatial policy and urban planning methods in China at a macro level. Wang and Shen (2014) analyse the texts of the national five-year plans (FYs) and corresponding spatial policies, as well as the spatial problems that arose since the foundation of the People's Republic of China. It is argued that market-oriented reform and decentralised economic administration have changed China's political economy and necessitated the transformation of the FYP mechanism since the 1980s. In terms of the transformation of the spatial planning elements of the FYP system, three periods are identified. The paper analyses these three development phases through which the change of policy approach and the spatial and governmental consequences can be tracked. It argues that because of resistance from those with vested interests in fragmented central sectors and local states, the emerging spatial governance mechanism has encountered many challenges and may not continue to function smoothly.

Wang and Liu (2014) focus on the role of urban planning in urbanisation. The paper develops a theoretical framework based on the associations between urban planning and urbanisation. It argues that urban planning in China not only allows local states to manipulate various resources to shape their urban spatial structure and accelerate the pace of urban sprawl, but that urban planning also legitimises the irrational decisions made by local

government. An interesting case city is examined with this framework. The distinctions between 'administrative urbanisation' and some western terms, such as urban entrepreneurialism, are summarised and the limitations and possible applications of this framework are also discussed.

Since the 1980s and China's government-led rapid urbanisation, 'large-scale' urban design has risen as a major city planning approach. Tang (2014) traces the evolution process of large-scale urban design in China and examines it in relation to specific phases of China's socio-economic development. The paper analyses the driving forces, various types, design methods, implementation approaches and the effects of China's large-scale urban design projects. Then, by contextualising urban design within China's unique statutory urban planning and design system, it summarizes the main gains and losses felt during the development of physical planning. Tang argues that it is paramount to transform China's urban design from creating 'political/economic symbol space' to 'livable space', from 'product' to 'process', and from 'technology' to 'institution'.

China's urban planning programming, its implementation and the construction of large infrastructure and public facilities exist under the control of a relatively strong authority. This can result in greater efficiency than is seen in other countries owing to regulations associated with China's traditional planned economy system (although many of these are now being abolished). Amongst the regulations still in place are the tradition of urban land being state-owned and rural land being collectively owned by peasants. Gu *et al.* (2014) focus on the transition of master planning, using Beijing as an example, to divide China's master planning into four periods: the planned economy period; the reform and opening-up period; the socialist market-led economy period; and the toward globalisation period. The paper considers whether China's rapid urbanisation has led to uncoordinated development of municipal infrastructure, open spaces and human settlements since the 1980s. Increasing environmental degradation has become a key constraint to sustainable urban development. China's master planning is building a theoretical framework of ecology–living–production spaces. However, the framework still needs to be improved in planning practice.

Over the past 30 years, the integration and innovation in China's urban and rural planning in learning from western

experiences and building on the special centralised system of a socialist market-led economy has allowed national and city governments to use their power to govern urban land development and to make benefits for national and local governments and thus for the wider populace (Webster, pers. comm., 28 July 2013). However, a more critical phase has inevitably been reached, in which Chinese cities will have to rely on local property tax and the real estate market for funding. To accommodate this rapid transformation, China's urban and rural planning has to start a new paradigm (Shi *et al.*, 2014). It is hoped that these themed issues will provide readers with a better understanding of the process of transformation, existing problems and future prospects of the urban planning system at a macro level.

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