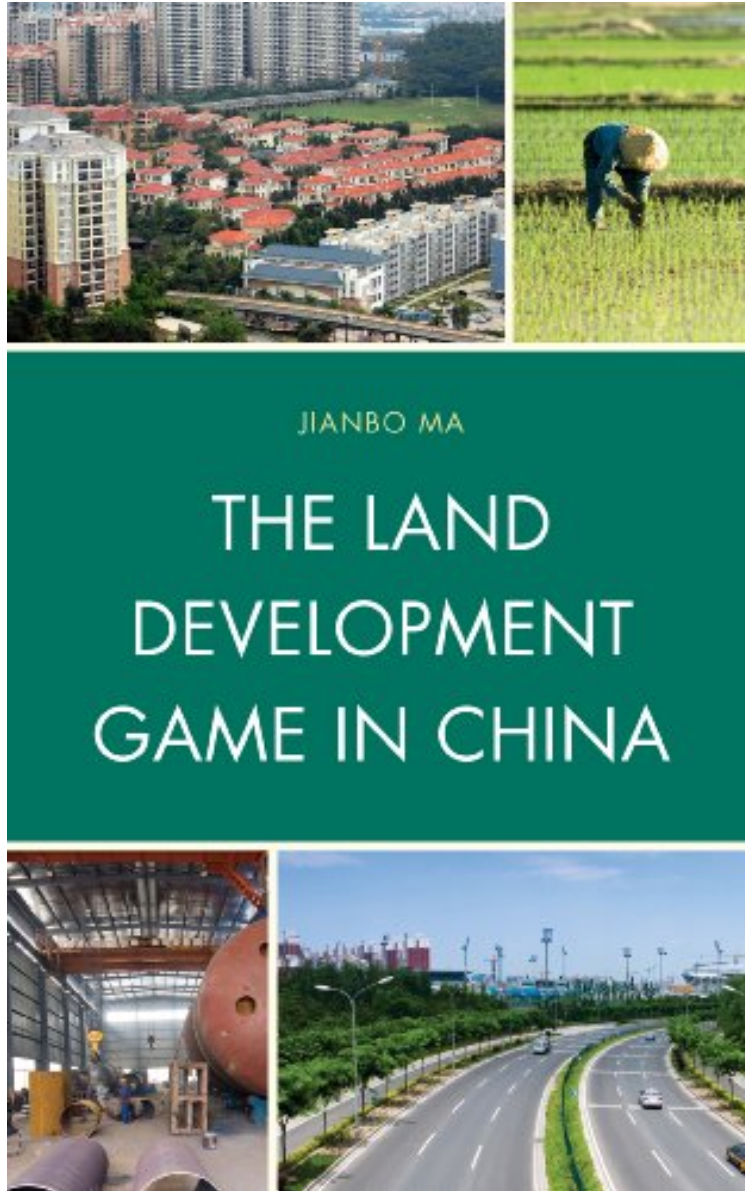


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The Land Development Game in China

Jianbo Ma

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Jianbo Ma : The Land Development Game in China before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Land Development Game in China:

The book describes how land plays a central role in the rapid economic growth of a Chinese region (with the fictitious

name of Dragon County). Concerned with grain self-sufficiency, the national government of China employs a central planning approach to control the amount of farmland to be converted to urban uses each year. However, the scarcity of land development rights creates high incentives for various local players to evade national policies. Supported by a large number of specific examples, the book illustrates how local players adopt many kinds of strategies to engage in informal land development, and how the national government maneuvers its policies such that both farmland protection and economic growth objectives are achieved. The story of Dragon County, though not necessarily representative of other Chinese regions, suggests that the existing land system has worked reasonably well in promoting land use efficiency and economic growth at the same time, but the distributional problems created reflect a strong need for changing the rules of the game.

The Land Development Game in China is a fine example of the large and growing body of literature that applies game theory to the analysis of land development behaviors and outcomes in China. ... The Land Development Game in China is well researched, makes a plausible argument, and contains many entertaining anecdotes about how people game the system. (The China Journal)Ma has provided a vivid account of how the land system works in practice, and uncovers the behaviors of various public and private players. . . .[T]his book represents a major concrete step towards this aim, by providing one case study of the land development game in China and paying extra attention to the informal actions of local players. . . .The book is well illustrated and very readable. The chapters together provide us with insights into the on-the-ground realities of a sophisticated system and enrich our understanding of the centralised approach with Chinese characteristics. Readers who are interested in Chinese urban and rural studies may find interest in this book. (Urban Studies)The Land Development Game in China is extremely timely, novel in its approach, and well-written. Few topics are as politically charged as land tenure in China, particularly as more and more rural land is requisitioned for urban and commercial development. But the real power of this book is the way that it deals with the on-the-ground realities of a complex subject, from the point of view of farmers, developers, government officials, and other affected parties. It will have a very significant impact on the fields of China Studies, public policy, and natural resources. (Bryan Tilt, Oregon State University)Many years ago I read Richard Babcocks classic The Zoning Game to discover how land use regulation really worked in practice in the United States. Now we have The Land Development Game in China by Jianbo Ma that performs this same service for China. If you want to understand the behavior of the various public and private players, showing how land use is actually formed in China, this is the book for you. (Robert H. Nelson, School of Public Policy, University of Maryland)Chinas breakneck development requires continuing, large-scale transfers of land to more productive users. Yet formal laws and regulations, linked to outmoded ideas of agricultural self-sufficiency, stand in the way. How does China square this circle? Jianbo Ma tells us how, in a fascinating, multi-level depiction of the 'land development game' in an important Chinese province. Informal procedures and personal connections bring needed flexibility and adequate efficiency, though equity is often the loser. Ma has provided us with a path-breaking account of actual governance in Chinafrom Beijing to local authorities, and at multiple levels of each. The Land Development Game in China is a major work of empirical research and political analysis. Read it and learn about the real China! (I.M. Destler, School of Public Policy, University of Maryland)About the AuthorJianbo Ma is an independent researcher based in Beijing, China. His research interests include Chinas land, environmental and education policies. Before becoming independent, he had worked at Tsinghua University, the National Environmental Protection Agency of China, and the secretariat of a high-level advisory body to Chinas top leaders on sustainable development. In addition to being a policy expert, he is also a professional interpreter (Chinese/English), and has worked for numerous high-level policy makers from China and around the world. He received his BA in English from Beijing Foreign Studies University, China and his PhD in policy studies from the University of Maryland, USA.