Rural development in the context of urbanization and industrialization in China

Research background
Since the reform and opening-up policy in 1978 the urbanization and industrialization processes have begun to accelerate in China. Over the past decades, the urbanization in China has been unprecedented in scale and speed (WB & DRC, 2014). These processes have had far-reaching effects on the spatial, social, economic and environmental development of both urban and rural area in China, with key trends including the massive rural-urban land conversion and the loss of arable land (Wang et al., 2012); the increases in the number of both rural migrant workers and the hollowed villages (Liu et al., 2010); the rural industrialization and the environmental pollution (Tian et al., 2017)

Problem statement
Chinese rural area used to be characterized by the relatively stable society and basically self-sufficient agricultural economy and the relationship between rural residents and land remained nearly unchanged for thousands of years. Hence the Chinese government tended to treat the rural area as a singular entity (Long et al., 2012), in spite of its immensity and its geographic and socioeconomic difference. Now the rural development is closely interrelated with the urbanization and industrialization process and has shown an increasingly strong trend towards diversification. The types of development vary from region to region, while the relationship between rural people and land has also changed. These changes increase the difficulty in understanding the current situation of rural development in China and thus bring along challenges of making development strategies and land policies.

Research Questions
The following questions are supposed to be answered in the study:
What is rural development in the eyes of the State in the context of urbanization and industrialization?

Who are stakeholders that has power, interest, and influence in changing, adapting, and deciding on rural development?

How do the stakeholders see rural development differently than the State?

Which socially constructed ideas, concepts exist about rural development among the rural residents?

How have the development strategies and land policies been made and implemented in rural areas and what problems have occurred?

What suggestions could be made for the reform of Chinese land policies and rural development strategies?

**Methodology**

To answer these questions, this research will adopt a case study approach. A case study is an ideal method when the object of the research is the whole rural area in China, whose vastness and complexity is incredible. In addition, without an in-depth analysis of the local economic, social and environmental context, it is impossible to understand the local rural development. This research takes the rural area in Yangtze River Delta as the study area.

Q-methodology is supposed to be used to analyse the different perspectives of stakeholders on rural development. Q-methodology is a hybrid of qualitative and quantitative methodology to explore subjectivity (Duenckmann 2010). The different stakeholders will be asked to rank the statements about rural development based on their degree of agreement or disagreement in interviews. After analysing the Q-Sort, it is possible to interpret their opinions.

**Expected results**

The objectives of this doctoral research are to identify the difference of ideas and concepts of rural development between the State and non-state actors in the context of the urbanization and industrialization, to analyse the consequences of current development strategies and land policies, and then to explore the potential approaches to achieving rural development goals as well as to protect interests of rural residents through reforms.

**References**


Tian, L., Ge, B., & Li, Y., 2017. Impacts of state-led and bottom-up urbanization on land use change in the peri-urban areas of Shanghai: Planned growth or uncontrolled sprawl? Cities 60, 476–486.
