

Hong Kong Geographical Association

Results Announcement for the First Hong Kong Postgraduate Student Research Paper Competition 2011

Zhang Yueming, Department of Geography, The University of Hong Kong, was awarded top honor (First Prize) for his/her outstanding paper 'Emerging Geography of Land-driven Urbanization in China: A Study of Land Development and Local Economic Growth in Prefecture-level Cities, 2002 - 2008'.

Abstract:

Urban land development has become one of the main driving forces of China's accelerate urbanization. This paper examines the relationship between China's urbanization, land development and local public finance. Special attention is paid to the changing role of land leasing in local economic development. The research analyses the nature and dynamics of China's emerging land markets and evaluates the relationships between land-based municipal finance and the level of economic growth as well as the degree of openness. Attempts are also made to probe into the social and political origins of China's land-centered urbanization. The research raises significant theoretical questions concerning the changing nature and dynamics of China's phenomenal urbanization.

Leung Chiuyin, Department of Geography and Resource Management, The Chinese University of Hong Kong was awarded a Merit Award for his paper 'Embedding Hong Kong Enterprises in the Pearl River Delta from the Social Capital Perspective'.

Abstract:

The notion of social capital as a valuable asset in the economic landscape of China is discussed. In the contemporary West, scholars have been conceptualizing social capital for its role in cooperation and innovation in the knowledge economy. However, its empirical reference to the developing economies is particularly missing, which fails to compromise the imperatives of personal network (guanxi) in China. This paper attempts to synthesize the dynamics of social capital in shaping enterprise development within the specified context. In-depth interviews with a dozen of Hong Kong enterprises operated in Pearl River Delta and some other involved officials have been conducted. By taking the egocentric network of the entrepreneurs into investigation, the respective roles of personal guanxi and impersonal institutions as the constituents of enterprise social capital are assessed along different stages.

In the early reform era, establishing good guanxi with local cadres was found crucial to firm development since neither market nor institutional governance was effective. Network typology and nature of reciprocity, meanwhile, determine the resilience and convertibility and thus the efficaciousness of enterprise social capital in long term. While China now enters another stage of marketization, stiff guanxi bonding may however restrain these old-fashioned enterprises from optimizing operation and thus hinder the state's intention towards techno-economic restructuring.

Alternatively, recent institutional breakthrough across the border has boosted the significance of entrepreneurial attention to formal coordinating channels in future. Inferred from the real-life observation, the author suggests a revised perspective in studying the unique firm-environment nexus in China, which sheds some light on a new research agenda.