Growth Politics in Urban China:  
A Case Study of Jiangsu’s Jiangyin-Jingjiang Industrial Park*

Luo Xiaolong

Abstract

This paper examines territorial politics in China, using the case of Jiangsu’s Jiangyin-Jingjiang Industrial Park (JJJIP), jointly owned by the cities of Jiangyin and Jingjiang. By investigating the role of various actors, both state and non-state, as well as the interactions among them in the park’s development process, this paper argues that the construction of JJJIP generates hybrid territorial politics, which combines neoliberal style of city competition with hierarchically territorial coordination by the state. While the state has significant impacts on urban growth, this paper further argues that, with China’s rapid urbanization, the growth coalitions between the local government and large business sector are on the rise. In fact, non-state business sector has been playing a more important role in China’s new territorial politics. In addition, the process of urban growth is facilitated by party-state controlled media, which are very different from the local booster media in the West. The paper also pays attention to the negative impacts of urban growth on peasants. These negative impacts include land expropriation, unreasonable displacement, and lack of employment opportunities, which need to be solved in China’s future urbanization.

Luo Xiaolong is Associate Professor in the Department of Urban Planning, Nanjing University & Nanjing Institute of Geography and Limnology, CAS. His current research interests lie in urban and regional planning and governance in China.

* This research is supported by the Direct Grant of the Nanjing Institute of Geography and Limnology, Chinese Academy of Sciences (No. CXNIGLAS200812), and the National Natural Science Foundation of China (40601031 & 40871077). The author would like to thank two anonymous referees, Professor Fulong Wu, and Professor Chaolin Gu for their constructive comments on the original manuscript.