
Chinese land banking, an imitation from the Western land banking and Hong Kong’s land leasehold system, has introduced a new stage of the overall Chinese urban land reform since the late-1980s. The scheme has promoted governmental interventions in the Chinese land market and deeply influenced the built environment, the land economics, and the social and political environments in China.

This study uses interviews to explore how two different Chinese cities, Beijing and Shanghai, use land banking to direct urban development. The major findings include (1) Chinese land banking differs from Western implementations in terms of goals and approaches; (2) It is inconsistent among different cities because local governments are the dominant players in this scheme who shape the scheme according to their individual development goals; (3) The weakly planned Chinese land banking leads to short-term perspectives and socio-economic risks.