

Original Research Article

Research on optimization strategies and paths of land resource allocation under the perspective of urban-rural integrated development

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Abstract: The integrated development of urban and rural areas constitutes a vital strategy for advancing modernisation, with land resource allocation serving as a key element therein. Currently, China faces pronounced imbalances in urban-rural land resource allocation, primarily manifested in excessively high proportions of industrial land in cities, underutilised residential plots in rural areas, and insufficient land for public facilities. These issues stem from long-standing factors, including the prioritization of heavy industry development and regional economic imbalances. Addressing these challenges requires adherence to principles of fairness, efficiency, sustainability, and people-centred development. Building upon this foundation, concrete measures should be implemented, including improving land transfer markets, optimising urban-rural land planning, and safeguarding public rights. These efforts will foster industrial integration between urban and rural areas, enhance infrastructure connectivity, and promote equitable access to public services. Ultimately, this will drive shared prosperity across urban and rural regions, optimising the allocation of land resources.

Keywords: urban-rural integration; land resource allocation; equity; efficiency; sustainable development

1. Introduction

Presently, China exhibits significant disparities in land resource distribution, which not only hampers the pace of integrated urban-rural development but also exacerbates regional economic disparities. Rational land resource allocation not only underpins efficient resource utilisation but also serves as a vital lever for fostering economic integration between urban and rural areas, narrowing the urban-rural divide, and achieving common prosperity. In light of this, this paper aims to explore strategies and pathways for optimising land resource allocation from an integrated urban-rural development perspective. This will enhance land resource utilisation efficiency, promote industrial integration and infrastructure connectivity, and ensure equal access to public services between urban and rural areas, thereby advancing the realisation of shared prosperity across all regions.

2. The current state of land resource allocation in China

2.1. Imbalance in the structure of land use in urban and rural areas

In the course of urban land development in China, the proportion of industrial and warehousing land has been excessively high in certain regions, while the allocation for roads, green spaces, and public service facilities has been relatively inadequate. Particularly in some older industrial cities, historical circumstances led to urban planning that overemphasised industrial growth, resulting in vast tracts of land being designated for industrial use. This has not only exacerbated urban traffic congestion but also diminished residents' quality of life. 'The phenomenon of extensive use of urban industrial land is extremely severe,' and 'the increasingly prominent contradiction between urban development's land requirements and outdated industrial land utilisation methods' ^[1] constrain urban development space.

By contrast, rural land in our country remains predominantly allocated for agricultural purposes, yet it also faces issues such as the idling of homestead plots and insufficient land for public facilities. With the acceleration of urban-rural integration, increasing numbers of rural labourers are migrating to cities, leaving vacated homestead plots largely idle and resulting in resource wastage.

2.2. Unequal investment in urban and rural land resources

In the planning, management, and infrastructure development of land resources, cities are often able to

invest substantial resources. From the formulation of land use plans through to land acquisition and consolidation, and on to infrastructure construction, each stage is overseen by dedicated institutions and personnel. This ensures the effective management and efficient utilisation of land resources. Furthermore, the continuous improvement of urban infrastructure—Such as the expansion of transport networks and upgrades to water supply, electricity, and other utility systems—Further enhances the value of urban land use.

By contrast, the management and investment in rural land resources are markedly inadequate. A shortage of professional planning and management personnel, coupled with constraints in funding and technology, results in a lack of scientific guidance for the conservation and utilisation of rural land. The relative lag in rural infrastructure development—Particularly in weak areas such as transport, water conservancy, and electricity—Significantly hampers the efficiency of rural land development and utilisation.

2.3. Deficiencies in the land system and policy orientation

In the allocation of land resources, the imbalance between urban and rural areas is further manifested in issues of fairness and efficiency. The urban land market, with its clearly defined property rights and mature transaction mechanisms, is better able to reflect the true value of land and promote the logical flow of resources. Conversely, the rural land market suffers from a lack of effective trading platforms and standardised transaction rules, resulting in difficulties in land transfers, distorted market signals, and an inability to effectively guide the optimal allocation of resources. For instance, factors such as 'the absence of unified compensation standards' and 'unclear policy direction coupled with an imperfect transfer market' have contributed to the current inadequacy of China's homestead withdrawal mechanism. Farmers generally hold divergent views on homestead withdrawal and transfer, with low expectations for benefits, often adopting a 'wait-and-see attitude', thereby severely impeding homestead land withdrawal and transfer.^{[2](p54)} The influence of government policy direction is also significant. Moreover, substantial revenues from urban land transfer fees have become a vital source of local government funding, leading some areas to become overly reliant on land-based finances. This has resulted in neglect of long-term planning and sustainable utilisation of land resources.

3. Multidimensional drivers of China's current land resource allocation

The analysis above of the current state of land resource allocation in China reveals significant disparities between urban and rural areas in terms of land use structure, efficiency, value realisation, resource inputs, and institutional mechanisms. This imbalance is not accidental but arises from the influence and constraints of multiple factors.

3.1. The historical dimension: The crucial strategy of prioritising heavy industry

For an extended period, China steadfastly pursued a strategy prioritising heavy industry. Under this strategic orientation, cities—Particularly those of significant stature—Naturally became the core regions for industrial flourishing. Valuable land resources were poured into industrial construction and supporting infrastructure like an unceasing tide. The excessive prioritisation of industrial land use caused imbalances in the functional layout of cities, severely squeezed ecological spaces, and resulted in a decline in the quality of the living environment. With profound economic restructuring and dramatic shifts in market demand, traditional heavy industries now face immense pressure to transform and upgrade. Yet these cities' once-glorious industrial sites have failed to adapt their land use in a timely manner. Vast quantities of industrial buildings now lie idle, land resources wasted. This situation has become a heavy shackle hindering these cities' sustainable development, making it difficult for them to lighten their load and move forward in the new economic landscape. They now face numerous challenges and predicaments.

3.2. Economic dimension: The reality of regional economic imbalances

Disparities in economic development levels play a pivotal role in driving the formation of uneven land resource allocation between urban and rural areas, emerging as one of the core factors behind this phenomenon. As the central engine of regional economic growth, cities typically enjoy more advanced economic development due to their concentrated industrial strengths, comprehensive infrastructure, and abundant public service resources. Against this backdrop, cities generate robust demand for land. Enterprises of all kinds seek suitable

urban land for commercial operations, manufacturing, and office construction to secure greater development space. Concurrently, residents' demand for land for housing, commercial consumption, and leisure activities continues to grow alongside rising living standards. This intense demand drives land values ever higher, transforming urban land into a scarce resource with significant appreciation potential.

In contrast, rural areas face multiple challenges to economic development due to relative backwardness in industrial structure, infrastructure development, and public service provision, remaining at a comparatively underdeveloped level overall. Consequently, demand for land remains relatively insufficient. This limited demand prevents rural land values from being fully realised, resulting in a lacklustre land market where resources often fail to be developed and utilised efficiently. This substantial disparity in urban-rural economic development perpetuates imbalances in land resource allocation through divergences in demand, value realisation, and utilisation efficiency. This creates a vicious cycle that widens the gap between urban and rural areas across economic, social, and other dimensions.

4. Strategies and approaches for land resource allocation in integrated urban-rural development

4.1. Upholding socialist principles and values is the prerequisite for land resource allocation

Against the backdrop of integrated urban-rural development, optimising land resource allocation is not merely a technical matter but fundamentally a process of value selection and institutional design. Such allocation must fully embody the socialist principles of fairness, justice and shared prosperity.

Fairness demands that land resource allocation balances the interests of diverse groups, particularly safeguarding the rights of vulnerable populations to ensure they receive their due share in resource distribution. Building upon this foundation of fairness, efficiency demands scientific planning and rational layout to enhance land resource utilisation, prevent land idleness and wastage, and promote intensive land use. Particularly in rural areas, economic and social benefits can be maximised by revitalising idle land resources—such as converting unused homestead plots into agricultural production land or rural tourism sites. Sustainability mandates that land resource allocation adheres to sustainable development principles, balancing present needs with future potential to ensure land use does not compromise the ecological environment, thereby achieving a win-win outcome for economic-social progress and environmental protection. The people-centred principle requires land resource allocation to prioritise meeting public needs, ensuring land use serves the developmental requirements of the populace and realises equality in production, living conditions, and development opportunities for both urban and rural residents.

4.2. Improving the legal framework is fundamental to optimising land resource allocation

Establishing and refining relevant laws and regulations governing land resource allocation, clearly defining the boundaries of rights such as land ownership, usage rights and transfer rights, provides robust legal safeguards for rational land resource allocation. Particularly in response to rural land system reforms, it is necessary to formulate and improve corresponding laws and regulations to ensure effective protection of farmers' land rights and interests. Concurrently, policy instruments should be optimised, utilising tools such as taxation, subsidies, and credit policies to encourage and support the rational allocation of land resources. For instance, tax incentives could be offered to enterprises developing distinctive industries on idle land, while credit support could be provided to farmers actively participating in land transfers. This approach would stimulate the initiative of market entities and promote the effective utilisation of land resources.

4.3. Safeguarding public interests: The crucial pathway in land resource allocation

Land constitutes the most vital means of production and livelihood security for farmers. Rational land resource allocation directly impacts their quality of life and fundamental interests. To a certain extent, changes in China's land use policies not only influence rural development but also determine the rise and fall of rural communities.^[3] Therefore, safeguarding public rights and interests is particularly crucial in land resource allocation.

It is essential to enhance farmers' awareness of their land rights, equipping them with the consciousness to

protect their own interests. This requires educating village collectives and providing legal literacy training to ensure farmers fully understand their rights and obligations in land use and transfer. Specific measures include organising farmers to attend land policy lectures and establishing rural legal consultation service stations to help them comprehend their economic benefits and other entitlements during land transfers. Such direct educational approaches enable farmers to participate more effectively in land transfer processes, preventing unfair treatment arising from information asymmetry.

Concurrently, market-oriented land resource allocation is also essential for safeguarding public interests. It is crucial to recognise the fundamental principle that 'determining the orientation of land resource allocation under urban-rural integration requires the synergistic action of an effective government and an efficient market'^[4]. Specifically, the decisive role of the market in resource allocation should be fully leveraged. Market mechanisms can optimise land allocation efficiency through supply-demand dynamics, but this process must be underpinned by clear policy support and regulation. Governments should employ scientific land pricing mechanisms to safeguard fairness in land transfers, preventing speculative activities from undermining ordinary citizens' interests.

5. Conclusion

'The emergence and development of urban-rural dichotomy represent an inevitable outcome of the interaction between productive forces and production relations.'^[5] Rational land resource allocation plays an indispensable role in transforming the urban-rural dualism into integrated development, serving as a crucial means to mitigate urban-rural disparities while optimising the flow and sharing of resources between urban and rural areas. Future innovations in land policy should prioritise the rational allocation and efficient utilisation of land resources, facilitating the movement of factors and resource sharing across urban and rural areas to achieve a unified balance of efficiency and equity in land resource allocation. In essence, integrated urban-rural development constitutes a complex systemic endeavour requiring continuous exploration and innovation between theory and practice. By optimising land resource allocation, we can advance industrial integration, equitable public services, and interconnected infrastructure between urban and rural areas, thereby propelling the shared prosperity of both.

About the author

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