

# Periurban Land Redevelopment in Vietnam under Market Socialism

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## Abstract

Starting in the 1990s, the Vietnamese state sought to expand and modernise the country's urban system after four decades of anti-urban policies. This paper examines the reworking of the socialist land regime that followed from this shift. It begins by explaining how new legislation and institutions combined market and socialist principles to lure domestic enterprises into realising the state's new urban ambitions. It then shows how this hybrid reordering of policy triggered local experiments with periurban land redevelopment and new forms of alliances between the state and private capital. Using the case of the Land-for-Infrastructure mechanism, which uses land as in-kind payment for the building of infrastructure, it is found that this experiment undermines the implementing of official planning orientations and regulations. Finally, the paper explores the relationship between this problematic outcome and the political-economic environment within which recent land policy changes have been implemented in Vietnam.

## 1 Introduction

In 1988, the Vietnamese 9th Party Congress set out plans to transform, in a little more than three decades, an impoverished agrarian society into a wealthy industrial one where cities would thrive and urban workers would replace peasants. Things have changed rapidly since then. The party-state took important policy steps to make this ambitious project happen as part of the *doi*

*moi* reform process.<sup>1</sup> These steps involved a progressive relaxing of the central state's controls over the allocation and use of resources, and over people's economic activities and movements. It worked. By the 1990s, Vietnam's urban transition, which had come to a near halt under the planned economic system (1954–86), was back in gear.

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