

New book launch



Unmaking China's Development: The Function and credibility of Institutions

By Peter Ho

Cambridge University Press, released on 28 October 2017



Why would the removal of authoritarian institutions in some developing countries lead to sustained socio-economic crisis, while others experience explosive growth despite “persisting” informal, insecure and rent-seeking institutional arrangements? A key to solving this enigma lies in understanding China, a country where the paradoxes of development are highly visible. Peter Ho argues that understanding China’s economy necessitates an analytical refocusing from Form to Function, detached from normative assumptions about institutional appearance and developing instead a “Credibility Thesis”. In this reading, once institutions endogenously emerge and persist through actors’ conflicting interactions, they are credible. Ho develops this idea theoretically, methodologically, and empirically by

examining institutions around the sector that propelled, yet, simultaneously destabilizes development: real estate - land, housing and natural resources. Ho shows how this sector can further both our understanding of institutions and issues of capital, labor, infrastructure and technology

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Archaeology of Institutions: A Theoretical Rebuttal of Neo-liberal Postulates of Development; 1. Institutional Change in China's Development: Myths of Tenure Security and Titling; 2. In Defense of Endogenous Development: Urban and Rural Land Markets; 3. The ‘Credibility Thesis’ and its Application to Property Rights; 4. A Theorem on Dynamic Disequilibrium: Debunking Path Dependence and Equilibrium; 5. Understanding Informality and Insecurity: Empiricism as Basis for Institutionalism; 6. Making and Unmaking the Property Bubble: Boom, Bust and Unintended Welfare?; 7. Empty Institutions, Non-Credibility and Power: The Grazing Ban and Mining; Conclusion: Theoretical Implications for Capital, Labor and Beyond

Advance Praise

“This is an important book that challenges many commonly held assumptions about what works in development. It should be read not only by those interested in China’s economic trajectory but also by anyone interested in development theory and the reality of development in place and time.” **Tony Saich, Professor of International Affairs, Harvard University**

“Ho makes a bold argument that the key to understanding the Chinese developmental enigma lies in the distinction between form and function of institutions and the credibility of institutions... The “Credibility Thesis” effectively articulated here is inspirational, innovative, and provocative with great potentials to advance theoretical inquiry into the intriguing nature of China's development.” **George Lin, Professor of Geography, University of Hong Kong**

“Mainstream economics is of little use in understanding China’s economic transitions since the late 1980s. (...). Peter Ho is one of very few scholars capable of explaining the Chinese economy as it is rather than as western economists imagine—or wish—it to be. We have here a profound blending of conceptual clarity and empirical detail. Attention must be paid to this message.” **Daniel W. Bromley, Professor of applied economics, University of Wisconsin–Madison**

“Peter Ho skillfully provides a ground-breaking study of the political institutions underlying economic development in China. A must-read for scholars of international development and a rich and informative analysis of China.” **Tim Forsyth, Professor of Environment and Development, London School of Economics and Political Science**

About the author



Peter Ho is Professor at Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands. He has published 12 books, including with the *Oxford University Press*, *Cambridge University Press*, *Routledge*, and *Blackwell*. He received the Consolidator Grant by the European Research Council (ERC). The ERC Review noted that Ho: “*is a world renowned scholar*” and a “*leading thinker with continuous effort ... to go beyond the state of the art*”. He was awarded the Kapp Prize by EAEPE, one of the largest European heterodox economics associations. Ho has advised many Chinese and Dutch national leaders and members of parliament, which have included the Dutch Prime Minister and the Chinese Minister of Land and Resources. In addition, his research has featured, amongst others in: USA Today, BBC, American PBS, the Dutch National News (NOS Journaal), and the China Daily.

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