Sustainable Development of Urban Regions

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Taizhou, China; Huangyan-Taizhou, China

# URA

## Strategic tools for integrated territorial planning enhancing urban-rural integration and circular economies in the Huangyan-Taizhou region

The focus of the URA project's R&D activities lies on strengthening integrated and socio-ecologically sustainable urban-rural development in the Chinese region of Huangyan-Taizhou. Based on interdisciplinary research on urban-rural linkages, a regional guiding strategy is developed in a transdisciplinary process using participatory and actor-oriented planning and governance tools. The establishment of a global network will ensure the transfer of knowledge between international urban-rural regions and partners from research and practice.

## Project Objectives

URA develops strategic planning and governance tools with the aim of strengthening an integrated and socio-ecologically sustainable transformation of urban regions. Therefore, a change of perspective is undertaken: urban and rural areas are no longer seen as isolated socio-spatial entities but as an integrated whole. To this end, the project pursues an interdisciplinary research approach to develop quantitative and qualitative methods. Moreover, URA aims at the trans-disciplinary development of a participatory and actor-oriented guiding strategy that identifies specific transformation scenarios for the study region and makes statements on socio-ecologically sustainable action paths for selected sub-regions. Following this, the developed instruments and guiding principles are tested for their transferability and recorded in the form of policy recommendations for integrated urban-rural planning. The project examines the urban region of Huangyan-Taizhou in the province of Zhejiang in China and includes multi-scalar approaches to integrated urban-rural development using the comparative example of the International Building Exhibition IBA Thüringen in Germany.

## Challenges

China is experiencing rapid urbanisation processes that entail profound social, economic and environmental impacts. These are particularly evident in the context of urban growth processes, land use changes and infrastructure projects. Social and economic polarisation processes between urban centres and rural hinterland regions are concrete consequences. In addition, cities face ecosystem degradation, biodiversity loss, air and water pollution and other negative consequences of rapid urbanisation and land use change. Increasing urbanisation processes promote the material and immaterial urban-rural metabolisms and change everyday coexistence and economies. This again results in new forms of trans-local relations and lifeworld experiences between urban and rural places. In order to investigate these interrelationships, including challenges and potentials, URA builds on the real lab approach and particularly focuses on exemplary transformation areas (Urban-Rural Living Labs) that are allocated between the urban centre Taizhou City and its Western hinterland Huangyan.

**Addressed Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations**

2 ZERO HUNGER

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Image provided by Jörg Gläscher / TU Berlin

## Research Approach and Methods

URA sets up mutually beneficial learning partnership linking German and Chinese consortium partners. The project team demonstrates its interdisciplinary competence by integrating urban planning and landscape architecture, ecology and environmental protection as well as sociology and circular economy. The URA team works together with local stakeholders from business and politics to investigate the multiple sustainability risks and transformation potentials inherent to urban-rural linkages. Inter- and transdisciplinary research methods are used for this purpose building the ground for a participatory and actor-oriented planning process that aims at the development of a guiding strategy for the Huangyan-Taizhou region. Approaches of quantitative material flow analysis, qualitative methods regarding social space as well as political and network analysis are applied to three selected transformation areas. The interdisciplinary approaches pursue a multi-scalar research approach that examines the trans-local interrelations at the urban-rural interface across local, regional and supra-regional levels. The developed strategic planning and governance tools will be tested for their transferability and recorded in the form of policy recommendations for integrated urban-rural planning.

## Focus Topics

- Strategic planning and governance tools
- Integrated territorial development
- Strengthening urban-rural relations
- Strengthening circular development
- Urban-rural material flows, socio-spatial practices and migration
- Urban-rural landscape typologies and ecosystem services

»URA explores new inter- and trans-disciplinary planning tools to achieve integrated and sustainable development at the urban-rural transition zones, using the Huangyan-Taizhou region as an example.«
**Prof. Dr. Guiqing Yang.**

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## Expected Solutions and Innovations

The socio-economic polarisation processes between urban centres and rural areas in China as well as the ecological challenges in the context of advancing urbanisation could so far only be counteracted to a limited extent, despite several existent territorial planning approaches, development programmes and investments. This is where URA comes in and aims to use strategic planning and governance instruments to promote the development of an actor-oriented vision and guiding framework for the study region, including socio-ecologically sustainable paths of action. These should particularly strengthen approaches and networks of an active circular economy within the urban region. Special attention is paid to the long-term safeguarding of urban-rural ecosystem services, the efficient use of urban-rural material flows in agricultural production and waste disposal, and the sustainable strengthening of social and economic inclusion processes at the urban-rural interface. The current results will be compared with German planning approaches for integrated territorial development and tested for their transferability to other Chinese and international regions.

»Urban-rural systems are the basic elements of a regenerative economic and social model: new planning tools are needed to replace the extractive, outdated and linear juxtaposition of urban versus rural with circular thinking and action in resource regions.«

**Philipp Misselwitz**

URBAN – RURAL ASSEMBLY

## Cooperation Partners

**German Partners**
- TU Berlin, FG Kreislaufwirtschaft und Recyclingtechnologie
- TU Berlin, Center for Cultural Studies on Science and Technology in China
- Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, Department for Landscape Architecture and Planning
- Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development, Research Area Landscape Change and Management
- Urban Catalyst GmbH
- International Building Exhibition IBA Thüringen GmbH
- AEDES Architecture Forum GmbH
- ANCB AEDES Network Campus Berlin gGmbH

**Chines Partners**
- Tongji University Shanghai
- Zhejiang University Hangzhou
- Shanghai University
- The People's Government of Taizhou Municipality
- The People's Government of Huangyan District, Taizhou
- Taizhou University
- Chinese Association of Circular Economy
- Chinese Academy of Urban Planning and Design

**Other Partners**
- UN Habitat, Nairobi
- ICLEI EA Secretariat, Seoul/Beijing


**Project Coordination**
**Prof. Dr. Philipp Misselwitz**
Technische Universität Berlin

Institute for Architecture
FG International Urbanism, Habitat Unit

+49 30 314 21908
misselwitz@tu-berlin.de


**floodadapt.eoc.dlr.de**

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