

# **Aiming at a better impact of the land professions: the role of academic and policy dialogues**

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**Keywords:** Academic Dialogue, Dialogue, land management, land governance, land profession, policy dialogue, surveying profession

## **SUMMARY**

The land professional influences the living conditions of people on earth. Their activities impact people, cultures, the physical environment, and the socioeconomic conditions of the world. From a spatial dimension, they shape the way people live — from the villages and small towns, from small towns to informal settlements in big cities, to streets and homes. They help renew dilapidated settlements, upgrade informal settlements, restore degraded landscapes, and plan smart villages and cities for sustainable livelihood and development. Land professionals constitute a wide range of people, including planners, surveyors, geodesists, architects, economists, agriculturalists, public administrators, engineers, and ecologists (to mention a few). Land professionals, especially surveyors, contribute to why human and vehicular traffics flow in cities and why water runs in taps at home. For the land profession to continue to aim at better impact in a world plagued by several land challenges—tenure insecurity, climate crisis, rural stress, and poor urban and rural liveability—for it to consistently produce knowledge and implement activities necessary to govern the land and natural resources to make transformative change. Therefore, this paper focuses on identifying and presenting the renewed roles of academic and policy dialogues in the future of the land profession in answering the ever-increasing geospatial, environmental, socioeconomic, engineering, policy, and capacity development questions. Theoretically, the paper explores the emerging role of academic and policy dialogues as a means of (co)creating knowledge and policy influence. It presents the experience of the Hanns Seidel Foundation Representative Office Shandong (China)—at conducting academic and policy dialogues for creating awareness and making local impacts in various areas of the land management—to draw lessons for other organisations within the global land sector. The paper is relevant in two critical ways. Firstly, it is essential to grasp opportunities to communicate land-related research outcomes to policy-makers. Secondly, it relates to how the land profession can continue to engage with stakeholders in knowledge building during and after the COVID-19 times.

# **Aiming at a better impact of the land professions: the role of academic and policy dialogues**

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## **1. ACADEMIC AND POLICY DIALOGUES IN THE LAND PROFESSION**

Although land administration and land management are widely recognised and practised in all countries, there is still “a significant need for capacity development,” including “basic and continuous educational programmes which could enable professionals to deal with the complex issues” (Klaus, 2015; Magel et al., 2009: 1). One critical reason for this scenario is that many countries are still unable to solve their looming land challenges due to a severe lack of professional capacity. Another crucial reason is the need to link research to practice ensuring that national and international policy decision-making outcomes are based on evidence or experience on the ground. The first of these reasons is being tackled by strengthening surveying education. In this regard, renewed academic programmes dealing with land management and land administration are being implemented to ensure the development and building of capacities. The latter (i.e., the second) is driven by engagements at the discussion levels (usually involving dialogues) dealing with current national and international challenges. Both are essential for tackling the land problems the world face today.

Land governance is important because it influences the living conditions of people in societies. Land professionals constitute a wide range of people, including planners, surveyors, geodesists, architects, economists, agriculturalists, public administrators, engineers, and ecologists (to mention a few). The activities of land professionals impact people, cultures, the physical environment, and the socioeconomic conditions of the world. From a spatial dimension, they shape the way people live — from the villages and small towns, from small towns to informal settlements in big cities, to streets and homes. Land professionals, especially surveyors, contribute to why human and vehicular traffics flow in cities and why water runs in taps at home. For the land profession to aim to better impact in a world plagued by several land challenges, they must consistently produce knowledge and implement activities necessary to govern the land and natural resources to make transformative change.

Dialogue is a social tool that has been well used in dealing with land and natural resource problems. Through dialogues, participatory processes occur in land management, land policy, land administration or the broader application of land governance and all their associated

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planning processes. Over the past decades, there have been variations in the shape of the academic-policy nexus in the land sector. “The nexus did not adhere to one of the often-formulated clichés of the research-policy nexus such as ‘science speaking truth to power’ or ‘politics on top, science on tap’” (Scholten, 2011: 22). In fact, it has been dominated by uncertainties and controversies, just like the varieties in the eruption of land challenges around the world. But somehow, there appears to still be the belief that academic research and policy dialogues could still be used in deconstructing the complex socioeconomic (and environmental) issues linked to land, its use and management. Unravelling the role of academic and policy dialogues (to ensure a better impact in the land professions) is crucial to (re)shaping the ever-changing ways of understanding land challenges and their solutions around the world.

This paper pursues a better understanding of how academic-policy nexus practice could contribute to critical reflection concerning the land discourse. Our intention in this paper is not to resolve the ongoing land debates. Instead, we take a step back to focus on presenting what has been done in the past to make suggestions for the future. The paper focuses on identifying and presenting the renewed roles of academic and policy dialogues in the future of the land profession in answering the ever-increasing geospatial, environmental, socioeconomic, engineering, policy, and capacity development questions. Theoretically, the paper explores the emerging role of academic and policy dialogues as a means of (co)creating knowledge and policy influence. It presents the experience of the Hanns Seidel Foundation Representative Office Shandong<sup>1</sup> (HSF) in Shandong, China. The paper is relevant in two critical ways. Firstly, it is essential to grasp opportunities to communicate surveying and land-related research outcomes to policy-makers. Secondly, it relates to how the land profession can continue to engage with stakeholders in knowledge building during and after the COVID-19 times. The paper, excluding its introduction (the current section), is structured into four main sections. The second section answers the question: What do we already know about the role of academic and policy dialogues in the land profession? This section taps into available data in contemporary literature to answer this question. The third section introduces the HSF and its dialogue programme. This is followed by the fourth section, which uses the experience of the HSF to provide potential lessons reinvigorating existing approaches to boosting research-policy dialogue in the land sector. Finally, the fifth section (which draws a conclusion from previous sections) presents recommendations.

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<sup>1</sup> HSF Representative Office Shandong is in charge for the implementation of program component “sustainable integrated development of rural areas” within the HSF Cooperation with China, since the last 10 years under the directorship of by Dr.-Ing. Michael Klaus.

## 2. ACADEMIC AND POLICY DIALOGUES: THEIR ROLES IN THE LAND SECTOR

Many have written about the relevance of dialogue as a natural need in resolving human problems (Ackerman, 1989; Asher and Lascarides, 1998; Skidmore, 2006; Klaus and Magel, 2016; Ma et al., 2020; Hoff et al., 2020; Hautli-Janisz et al., 2022). However, in the land sector, dialogue is commonly overshadowed by words such as “participation,” which are crucial in land management but embody (as a driving factor) the elements of Dialogue (Chigbu et al., 2017; Sait et al., 2019). Over the past five decades, modern technology (including television, internet, radio, and various satellite systems technology, etc.) has constituted a web of communications modes that link all parts of the world. Bohm (1996: 1) notes that “despite this worldwide system of linkages, there is, at this very moment, a general feeling that communication is breaking down everywhere, on an unparalleled scale.” Bohm’s (1996: 1) argument is that despite this global interconnectedness, “people living in different nations, with different economic and political systems, can hardly talk to each other without fighting.” Due to the dissatisfaction with the state of the problem of communication in various international development affairs (including the land sector), dialogues have been identified as one of the approaches to solve this problem. This makes the issue of dialogue in the land sector an attempt to improve communication to align people’s understanding of global land challenges towards better awareness and more pro-poor solutions based on cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary experiences. Academic (mainly research) and policy-focused dialogues allow for knowledge-building, knowledge-generation, knowledge-sharing, and knowledge-dissemination. Apart from recognising that academic-policy dialogues are essential for research and policy developments, they have been identified to play crucial roles “in resolving the intractable social problem” (Scholten, 2011: 23).

To understand why dialogues matter in the land sector, it is vital to begin by defining what dialogue is and considering its role in life. Concerning what dialogue entails, we cite Bohm et al. (1991: 1) directly:

*“Dialogue is a way of exploring the roots of the many crises that face humanity today. It enables inquiry into, and understanding of the processes that fragment and interfere with real communication between individuals, nations and even various parts of the same organisation... In dialogue, a group of people can explore the individual and collective presuppositions, ideas, beliefs, and feelings that subtly control their interactions. It provides an opportunity to participate in a process that displays communication successes and failures. It can reveal the often puzzling patterns of incoherence that lead the group to avoid certain issues or, on the other hand, to insist, against all reason, on standing and defending opinions about issues.”*

Bohm et al.'s (1991) explanation of dialogue (as expressed above) represents the understanding of dialogue in this paper. We view dialogue to explore the roots of the many land crises that many people and communities face worldwide, especially in the global South. We consider it a way of collectively sharing knowledge necessary for solving land and natural resource challenges. It provides a platform in which collective learning takes place. A sense of increased harmony, fellowship, and creativity can arise in understanding how people deal with the problems they face.

Academic and policy dialogues in the land sector rely on various learning processes engaged by several actors, including the universities and research organisations, think tanks, government institutions involved in land policy-making and implementations, private sector organisations, civil society organisations, and non-governmental organisations. It consists in delivering the input to the existing land discourses and learning and gaining experiences through defined or guided interactions at all levels of land discourse. In the land sector—where academics, researchers and policy-makers are supposed to always engage to co-produce practical land solutions—the nature of the dialogue is usually exploratory. Hence, “its meaning and methods continue to unfold” (Bohm et al., 1991). This means that its approach can vary under different circumstances, including cultures, sectors and geographies. It also means that there are no firm rules for conducting a dialogue since it is intended to be a knowledge-learning process and “part of an unfolding process of creative participation between peers” (Bohm et al., 1991) in the land sector. Therefore, dialogue, generally hidden within participatory land management or administration processes, can apply in various forms. Boyko et al. (2012) noted how dialogues are a mechanism for knowledge translation and exchange in health systems decision-making. Jagger et al. (2014) emphasised the importance of dialogues at the policy level in understanding REDD+ issues. Mwisongo et al. (2016) viewed dialogue from a health policy dimension. Lee et al. (2017) related dialogue as something necessary for achieving a mix of two governance systems in a post-unified Korea. Fomete et al. (2018) consider dialogue needed in reframing local land-use planning methods and tools in South-West Cameroon. Duran et al. (2019) consider it mandatory to form academic and research partnerships. Chigbu et al. (2020) recommend it for inter-agency collaboration in land registration practices. In addition, Chigbu (2022) discussed dialogue as essential for parity in the tenure-gender nexus in land management and policy. We can provide an extensive list of many ways people can relate to dialogue in academic (or research) and policy spheres. The dialogues, when viewed as a forum for deliberation, can happen online (via internet platforms), by phone (teleconferences), through correspondence (i.e., in writing), face-to-face meetings (brick and mortar discussion forums) or in hybrid forms (a combination of two or more of those mentioned above).

Refocusing on the role of academic and policy dialogues in the land sector: it is necessary to mention that dialogue involves people. These people can be partners, collaborators, or competitors. Academic and policy dialogues in the land sector “involve discussions among stakeholders to raise issues, share perspectives, find common ground, and reach agreement or consensus, if possible, on policy solutions” (Hardee et al., 2004: 15). Academic and policy dialogues occur among academics and researchers, policy-makers, civil society advocates, social critics, activists, non-governmental stakeholders, politicians, and beneficiaries to create positive change. According to the Health Policy Project (2014):

*“When done well, policy dialogue can help stakeholders see problems from each other’s perspectives, improving understanding of policies and programs’ impact on various groups. It encourages participation in the policy process and can increase ownership and more responsive policies. Policy dialogue engages various sectors and diverse stakeholders. It gives people a voice in the decisions that affect their lives and health. Ongoing policy dialogue focuses on health issues throughout the process—from policy formulation to implementation and monitoring—and encourages consensus for policy action.”*

Doing academic and policy dialogues appropriately requires ensuring that all stakeholders carry out specific responsibilities. Roles and responsibilities for academic and policy dialogue can vary, particularly among academic researchers, government officials and civil society actors. Meaningful academic and policy dialogues require these stakeholders (governments, academics and policy-makers, etc.) to recognise and understand their importance and provide the space for dialogue between them and other stakeholders. Facilitating participatory processes and partnerships with diverse stakeholders is a cardinal aspect of the dialoguing process. It also requires that “all involved parties have strong communication, negotiation, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills” (McCullough et al., 2011; Health Policy Project, 2014: 2). We use Figure 1 (based on literature, see Magel et al., 2009; Chigbu et al., 2018) to show those involved in academic and policy dialogues in the land sector. We also use it to illustrate the activity frame of the role of research and academic dialogues in the land sector.

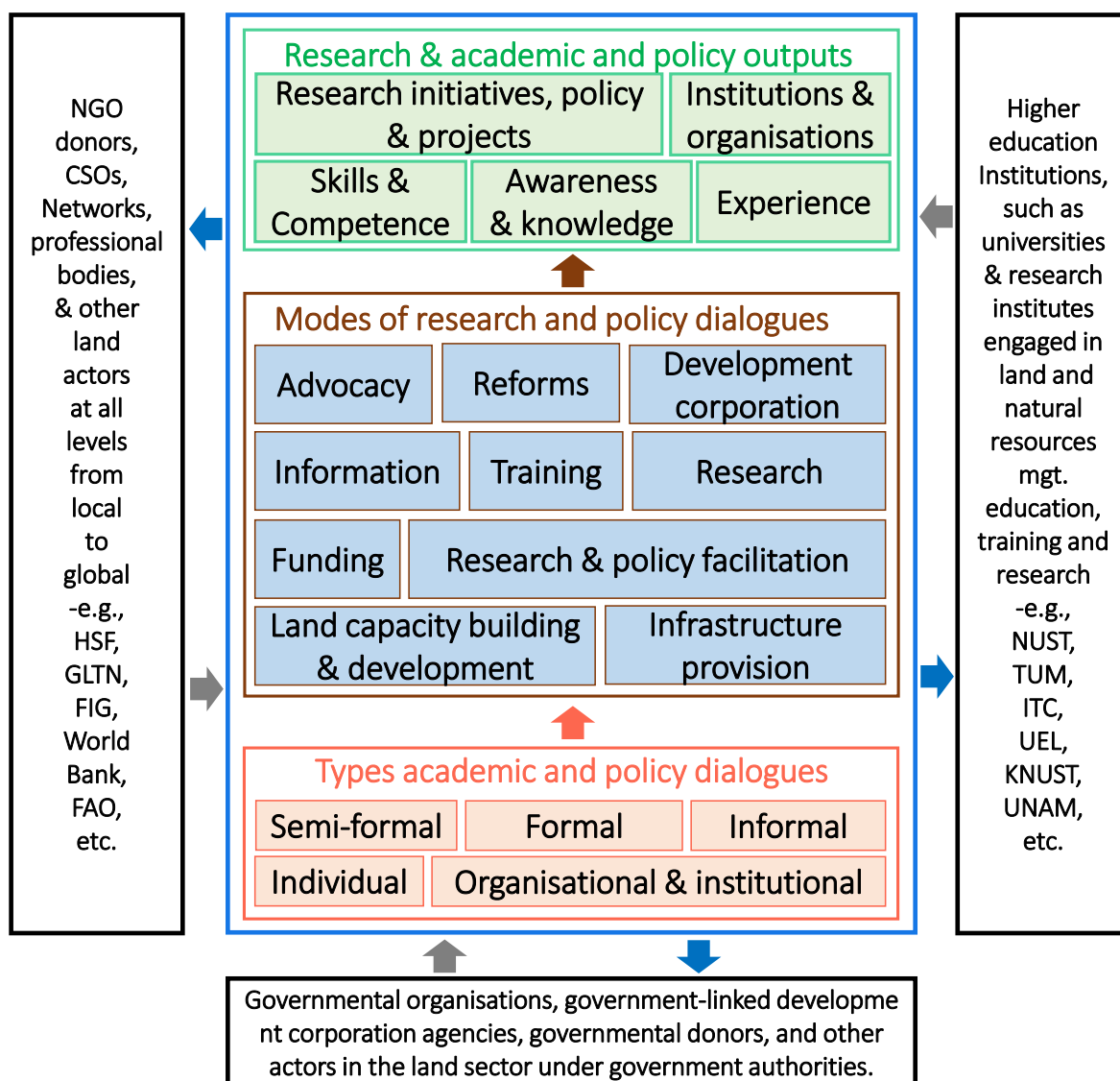


Figure 1: The activity frame of the role of research and academic dialogues in the land sector

Figure 1 shows that three stakeholders participate in land-related academic and policy dialogues. They are stakeholders from academia, Civil society (including NGOs) and Governmental institutions (all abbreviations used in the diagram represent names of organisations only). However, the academic and policy dialogue manifests in diverse types and modes that can have various kinds of results (outputs). The distinct types of academic and policy dialogues include formal, informal and semi-formal. These types can also be driven by individual, organisational and institutional interests. Any academic and policy dialogue can consist of modes linked to advocacy, reforms, development corporation, information, training, research, funding, facilitation of research-policy agenda, and capacity building and capacity

development concerns. In terms of outputs, academic and policy dialogues can lead to the development of skills and competencies, awareness and knowledge, research agendas, new experiences, policies, institutions (i.e., new rules, norms, values, attitudes, etc.) and evolution of new organisations. All of these interact in backward and forward ways with the actors depending on their efforts (inputs).

Academic and policy dialogues constitute the “bolts and joints” of policy-making in land matters (Dovlo et al., 2016: 327). Dovlo et al.’s (2016: 327) argument is hinged on the fact that “policy processes that yield good outcomes are inherently complex, requiring interactions of stakeholders in problem identification, generation of political will and selection of practical solutions.” Its role in the land sector is enormous. Academic and policy dialogues create forums that bring academics (especially researchers) and policy-makers together to share a common aim that relates to land (including natural resources) for careful consideration and discussion to contribute to well-informed land governance (including land policy, land administration and land management) decision. Although land-related objectives may vary in any dialogue process, it usually should lead to the discussion, framing or development of evidence-based knowledge, which can feed into the land governance development process at the various levels of land jurisdiction (local, regional, national or supranational).

### **3. THE HSF: HISTORY, WORK AND DIALOGUE PROGRAMME**

Academic and policy dialogues require individual, group and organisational capacities. This implies that influential academic and policy dialogue is not for everyone. Different individuals and organisations may have capabilities for initiating, conducting and achieving the aim of such a dialogue. This is particularly true in the land sector, where issues of concern can be politically contentious, racially charging and socially demanding. The HSF is one of the organisations that has been involved in academic and policy dialogues in various parts of the world in the past five decades.

#### **3.1 Introducing Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF)<sup>2</sup>**

The HSF is an independent German political foundation established in 1967. It is called *Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung* in German because it is a foundation named after Hanns Seidel (1901-1961), one of the Christian Social Union (Bavaria’s conservative political party) co-founders (1945) and former Minister-President of Bavaria (1957-1960) in Germany. The foundation is headquartered in Munich. Its working principle is “*In the service of democracy, peace and development.*” This principle guides its work, which hinges on political and civic education and

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<sup>2</sup> The information presented in this section of the paper is culled from various websites of the Hanns Seidel Foundation.



policy advisory. It works at the interface of politics and research. It has country offices in various countries and engages in analysing political inter-relations. It engages in public dialogues to create scientifically informed socio-political actions and promote a dialogue between academics, professionals, politicians, policy-makers, civil society, and other decision-makers in developing societies. According to information culled from the official website of the HSF (2022):

*“The Hanns Seidel Foundation has been involved in International Cooperation for more than 40 years, with a special focus on development cooperation, and is active in around 80 projects in more than 50 countries. The goal of the international activity, which is based on Christian social ideals, is to promote decent living conditions and contribute to sustainable development by enhancing peace, democracy, the rule of law, and social market economies. Together with local partners, we implement projects in political consulting and political education. In doing so, equal-footing cooperation and our partners’ independence and self-responsibility are particularly concerned.”*

In cooperation with local partners in various countries, the HSF, based on German development cooperation programs, funds and implements projects in multiple areas, including democracy and political governance, yet with a diverse focus on land management, natural resource management, land consolidation, rural development, and land administration (to mention a few), usually based on the priority of its partners. As part of its work in these areas, the HSF actively facilitates academic and policy dialogues.

### **3.2. Dialogue programme of the HSF**

The HSF facilitates a dialogue platform, which seeks to strengthen civil society, institutions and mechanisms that are key to various national development needs, including land management, natural resource management, land consolidation, rural development, and land administration (to mention a few). The programme seeks to promote dialogue between civil society, academics or researchers, policy-makers and other stakeholders to strengthen the rule of law, promote the spirit of participation and enhance responsible governance and accountability in the planning and management of land and natural resources. Its academic and policy dialogues are born out of dialogue programmes to enable mutual understanding and social stability, promote a culture of responsive governance, raise public awareness about critical socioeconomic trends, and inform and guide policy based on science and applied research. The HSF experience provided in this paper emerges from the land sector experience of the HSF representative office in Shandong, China.

## **4. HSF OFFICE SHANDONG EXPERIENCE IN ACADEMIC AND POLICY DIALOGUES IN THE LAND PROFESSION**

The HSF has been promoting academic and policy dialogue by providing academic support within several land management projects in the frame of international development cooperation. It facilitates dialogue support systems within a global land management network. Regarding

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the land sector, the HSF has been running a project of the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development in China since 1989. It involves ensuring equitable distribution of land and fairness in the participation of citizens in societal development processes in specific areas in China. Using the chances of China’s reform and opening-up policy<sup>3</sup>, the HSF started off from single-pilot projects and grew to cooperate on the national level. These pilot projects expanded beyond the one-village project.

The themes of the HSF projects have grown from single-focused land management topics into sustainable integrated development of rural areas as a kind of policy-making within land governance. In adopting land management approaches in its rural development programmes, it has evolved its activities to integrated rural development that combines different settlement forms and municipalities to get ready to meet future challenges. Its long-time project has embraced integrating the role of scientists (i.e., academics and researchers) and policy-makers during the times. Based on the long term, it also offers the possibility to mirror societal changes and anchor new themes. Hence, knowledge transfer in political, institutional and academic areas arises. This evolution reflects in its movement from learner-to-academic input to creating participatory approaches within the cultural context of China. It also involves the adaptation of the development of processes and tools.

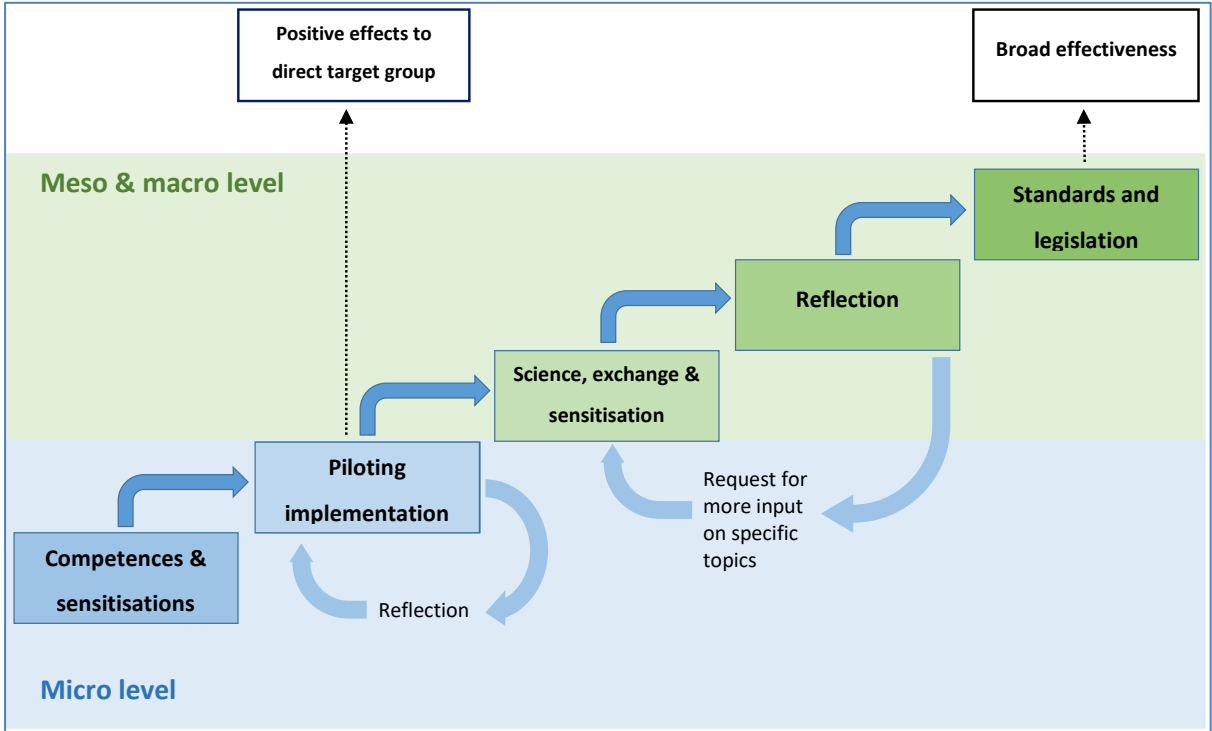


Figure 2: Phase model of the logic of effectiveness in HSF project China

<sup>3</sup> The term "reform and opening up" describes the economic policy initiated (considered as 'open door policy' on Western literature) by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 to open China to foreign businesses that wanted to invest in the country. It is this policy that promoted the economic transformation and political reform Chinas.  
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Figure 2 shows the phase model of the logic of effectiveness of the HSF project in China. Every HSF project needs to develop an operational logic, which must be described within the application process to receive funding from German government institutions for development cooperation. We mean what and how HSF intends to cause influence through its activities by operational logic. In the context of HSF, an operational logic refers to the representational strategy (supported by other sub-activities and processes) that specifies systematic steps carried out at different levels to achieve key development objectives to satisfy the needs of a community or people.<sup>4</sup> The logic combines the features and benefits of equational development corporation activities and programmes designed for rural development, including competencies, sensitisation, knowledge exchange (science), reflection, legislation and standardisation activities. The objectives are always geared towards achieving positive effects on the target groups (through project piloting) and reaching broad effectiveness of adopted measures in the Chinese context (through influencing standards and legislations). These involve efforts from administrative work and inputs from scientific institutions and government ministries through guided dialogues and collaborative activities.

***The advantage of HSF long-term projects in academic and policy dialogues.*** The time effect is societal development depending on society's readiness and the willingness and preparedness of administrative and scientific institutions, government institutions, and policy-makers. Without science and politics, the needs of society (or societal development) would be difficult to achieve. To ensure that single components of HSF long-term projects contribute to academic and policy dialogues, embedding academics and policy-makers in these projects on various levels and stages is of immense importance, which is highly embraced by:

- Meeting local politicians who function as policy-makers to gain support and back up novel approaches.
- Discussing processes with academics, local administrations and administration heads.
- Bringing local politicians (policy-makers) and administrations with academia into a discussion to ensure that theory and data align with practice.
- Facilitating local stakeholders with policy-makers and academia to give input and describe local needs that can be generalised and applied at other levels.
- Seeking guidance from policy-makers at a higher level to support the process, back up local decision-makers, and encourage them to try new paths.

These principles are implemented at local and provincial levels to start and run the first pilot project based on the cooperation between Shandong Province in China and the State of Bavaria in Germany. As Project implementer, the HSF, which already had experience in China in vocational training, took the lead in the organisation and administrative issues. At the same time, the technical and academic input came on the first level from the Bavarian administration of Rural Development in cooperation with the Chair of land management at the Technical University of Munich (TUM), Germany (Magel and Klaus, 2021). The project development

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<sup>4</sup> For more on operational logic, see Ching (2001).

phases must be highlighted to discuss the role of policy-makers and academics and respectively trigger a dialogue process. The period of HSF in Shandong (now 33 years) can be divided into three steps or project phases: phase 1 - Discussion of topics and input (1988 - 2004); phase 2 – Consolidation of the project (2004 – 2012); and phase 3 – Institutional advancement/subsequent Institutional development (2012 – ongoing). In all these phases, academic and scientific support was received from academics at distinct levels and given to other stakeholders to raise awareness and readiness simultaneously. Other stakeholders are not excluded and are often invited to join. A challenging factor was society’s development over time, readiness for topics discussed, and windows of opportunities given by the political framework. In phase 1, only topics that met the people’s actual needs were considered and accepted. For instance, issues related to environmental protection could be ushered in for a discussion with either policy-makers or scientists. The readiness also was not available at that time due to other needs considered of higher priority by the government and people of China.

***Referring to the project operational logic underlying the entire process (see Figure 2), which must face the time factor challenge as a process for instigating societal development. The diverse levels of the operational logic allow for HSF scientific input and opportunities for dialogue processes.*** The operational logic demands the participation of primary stakeholders at the micro-level. And at the meso-macro level, it requires using tools and processes and changing them according to cultural backgrounds (and influence on legal or procedural norms) for potential application all over the country. In operationalising that logic framework, academics and the science community play distinct roles. The more the operational logic applies to the meso-macro level, the more the academic role changes from mere input and training aspects to evaluation and re-entering gained knowledge and experience into the overall HSF process. The task moves towards adopting methods and processes, reflecting on experiences, and turning those experiences back into processes and tools. The adoption of processes is not possible without scientific guidance and methods.

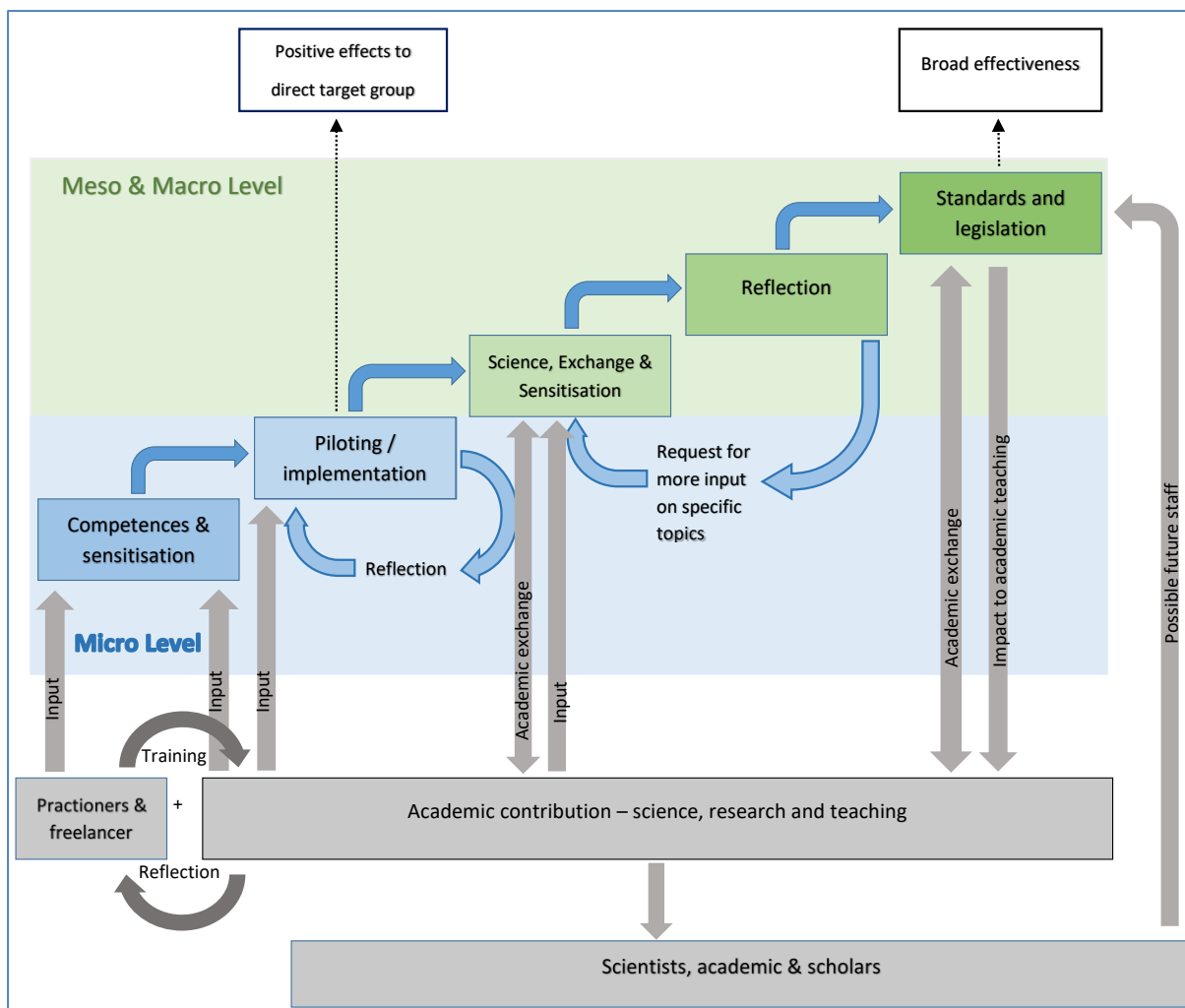


Figure 3: A visualisation of HSF scientific input and opportunities for dialogue processes

Figure 3 describes how the different dialoguing roles (in dark colour) within the process feed into the operational logic. At the micro-level, the idea is to sensitise the local stakeholders (local citizens, politicians, and staff from administrations) to the topic and become acquainted with better tools. Social Sciences have focused on various forms of participation, and engineering (and applicable) sciences approaches are needed to explain tools and methods and their effects on the process. The aim is to implement a pilot project. Slight adaption of tools to the social background in the country's needs is essential.<sup>5</sup> It also shows that lifelong learning is an

<sup>5</sup> In China, HSF have encountered problems in this regard. In general, the problems encountered through this case is threefold: (1) The readiness of people to embrace the topic for discussion on the academic level was not always there. (2) The inputs (on adopting the discussions concerned with) mostly came from institutions from abroad. (3) Key inputs on cultural backgrounds were only possible through translators. Hence, the definition of terms was partly a problem because the accurate translations of technical terms were sometimes not correctly or fully transmitted to Chinese stakeholders.

indispensable part of praxis and academia to catch up with new ideas and provide solutions to new problems. Lifelong learning (and emerging preparedness) akes one fit for upcoming challenges. As already mentioned, within the meso level, the task is constantly changing. Academics and scientists play various roles. The evaluation of the pilot projects allows the adoption of measures, filtering positive aspects and effects. Experiences can be put into the scientific discourse; the reflections can trigger a broader scientific discussion and lead to new pilot projects which can be analysed in the same way. We explain the three phases below.

#### **4.1. Phase 1 – Discussion of topics and input (1988 - 2004): Linking the land activities of government ministries with academics/researchers**

Over the years, the HSF academic-policy discussions have been connected to the understanding and developing of innovative approaches for developing rural areas in China. The topic choices have been influenced by the Chinese government's plan (as well as the HSF interest) to improve the quality of life in China's rural areas. However, within the frame of this rural agenda, some topics that were introduced by HSF were new to China at that level and needed time to be adopted. For example, the issue of land consolidation (the systematic and methodological strengthening and development of villages through land management) were new in both academic teaching and land policy implementation of authorities.

The first national symposium organised by HSF took place in 1997, focusing on developing rural areas through land consolidation and village renewal. This symposium attracted interest from the national level. Representatives of land administration agencies joined this symposium to learn about and study the experiences and primary results of the first pilot project. As a result, based on the newly learned approaches and tools used in the first pilot project and inspired by the first successful outcomes for the village, the National Land Consolidation Center (now the leading partner of HSF) was established in the former ministry of land and resources. Its role was also described as adopting tools and implementing them in national processes. This marked the starting point for linking the policy-makers directly with academics/researchers. As part of the programme, at the end of this phase 1, ministerial staff members are selected and sent to the international master's program in land management and land tenure at the TUM, Germany.<sup>6</sup> After completing the programme and returning to China, they worked in the national Land Consolidation Center (now the Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Center in the Ministry

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<sup>6</sup> To know more about the 20-year based experience of the international master's programme in Land Management and Land Tenure from the Technical University of Munich (TUM) and its transition to Land Management and Geospatial Science, see de Vries et al. (2021).

of Natural Resources, MNR<sup>7</sup>, China)<sup>8</sup>. This opened a broader corporation on the academic level between the TUM, especially the Chair of Land Management, and other universities in China. This policy-academic link was often strengthened by the students connecting bachelor's degree (BSc.) or master's degree (MSc) in China to the TUM Chair of Land Management in Germany. Participation within the master's program marked already the need for consolidation of the approach. Furthermore, delegations from the administrative and political levels would often visit the TUM Chair of Land Management to receive input on the concept and tools for the development of rural areas. Summing up, the role of academics and policy dialogue involved the early participation of Chinese universities and ministry workers.

#### **4.2. Phase 2 – Consolidation of the project (2004 – 2012): Building structures to promote and sustain land dialogues between government ministries with academics/researchers**

Within phase 2 of the HSF projects, a Sino-German Training and Research Center for Land Consolidation and Land Development (German: *Bildungszentrum für Flurnneuordnung und Landentwicklung (BFL)*) was founded in 2004. This training centre is based in the province of Shandong. It serves as a training base for participants up to the national level. The training helps to facilitate dialogues between people of different academic disciplines and people from various policy sectors from the Chinese government agencies. The structure of the centre was adapted from the Bavarian Schools for Village and Land Development in Germany<sup>9</sup>. The implementation was done by the local project partner, the Land and Resource Office of the City of Qingzhou (Weifang District, Shandong Province) in China. The office was involved already in supporting the process in the village of Nan Zhang Lou, which is part of the county Qingzhou. Based on the experiences of Nan Zhang Lou, the administration of Land and Resource Office Qingzhou recognised the urgent need for training staff and creating an exchange platform of knowledge and experience. The idea was to have a training centre for local stakeholders and a dialogue platform on the national level that also involves foreign input. This stage is a significant milestone in the whole HSF-Project. It led to establishing a formal foundation for academic and policy dialogues and a centre for executing training in land management based on international experiences, methods, and lessons learned from the pilot projects. This was an approach to get more (leading) staff into contact with global tools and allowed them to experiment with their own adoptions of tools within mere Chinese pilot projects.

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<sup>7</sup> Due to a structural reform of ministries in China in 2018, the Ministry of Land and Resources was merged with other agencies and entrusted with tasks to other natural resources than land. With new competences and tasks, it was relaunched as Ministry of Natural Resources. According to the land management sector it opened the range to implement more topics on sustainable development especially integrated topics like water protection or biodiversity conservation. This allows more complex approaches in pilot projects and pose challenges to science to develop interdisciplinary competencies.

<sup>8</sup> This education measure can be seen as a link between the three phases. It started at the end of phase 1 and continued to early phase 3. It reflects also the demand arising from changing framework background in China.

<sup>9</sup> The general idea came from the local project guidance and under the scientific leadership of the then head of the TUM chair of land management, Professor Holger Magel, an Honorary President of the FIG.

The founding of the training centre institutionalised the link between education and dialogue among the same level and various levels (hierarchies) of participants (see Klaus and Magel 2016). With the founding of this centre, it became pertinent to start developing our own practical strategies and building knowledge. With the establishment of the BFL, a location for scientific symposia was created, and seminars within the broader context of land management were offered.<sup>10</sup> It also widened the target groups for academic and policy dialogues with a direct link to members of the local communities where land projects are implemented. The entire process was consolidated by the role of the scientific staff of the centre in the TUM Masters' program Land Management and Land Tenure (Magel and Klaus 2021). This phase of the project was triggered off the meso of the project. Based on the successful experiences of the first pilot project (which started in 1989), other provincial governments demanded to start a pilot project to enable them to experiment with different knowledge and approaches from abroad. This led to the start-off of two additional projects in 2008. One in the autonomous province of Ningxia and the other in Chongqing, a municipality under direct administration of the central government of the peoples' republic in China

#### **4.3. Phase 3 – Institutional advancement/Institutional and subsequent development (2012 – ongoing): Sustaining the land activities of government ministries with academics/researchers**

Project phase 3 (with more integrated aspects and in the light of territorial planning as land policy) was renamed “Sino-German Training and Research Center for Land Consolidation and Development of Rural Areas” to reflect the broadness of the interdisciplinary approach. The cooperation with academic institutions (universities-to-university or research-centre-to-universities relations) became energised. Institutional knowledge transfer (including knowledge sharing and knowledge dissemination) was made a cardinal part of the HSF Project. Institutional knowledge (subjected to academic and policy scrutiny) helps support future academic discussion, creating innovative solutions to emerging problems on livelihood and the environment.

As the first step to a new academic-policy dialogue, HSF initiated a bridge to territorial development. Land consolidation, village renewal, or integrated rural development are not standing alone measures. They are measures that must be integrated into a state vision of development and used as an implementation tool. As mentioned in the description of project phase 2, the connection of the HSF project with the TUM Chair of Land Management paved the way for the academic-policy road map of integrating territorial development. This happened by the end of 2011. A dialogue programme on territorial planning was established in 2012 and backed up by a Chinese research group in the former Ministry of Land and Resources. In 2013 a new pilot project consisting of three villages in the Sanbaishan municipality (City of Anyuan, Jiangxi Province) was established through a Memorandum of Understanding with the province. A training centre was set up within the Jiangxi College of Applied Science (department of geodesy). Here, lectures were conducted focusing on innovative approaches to land

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<sup>10</sup> This point is further detailed in the Phase 3.



management, especially the aspects of tools development for strengthening rural areas. The lecturers invited to guide the pilot project in *Sanbaishan* Municipality were further trained by German experts. They led the implementation of new tools and the testing of the project. With this success, the municipal administration could initiate future projects within the district.

At the same time, in coordination with the ministry of land and resources, a new teaching programme in Germany was established. It consists of a 2-week academic teaching course on relevant topics like territorial planning, environmental protection, landscape planning and balancing impact on ecological goods, and land consolidation and village renewal. One week excursion to best practice examples rounded the lectures up and gave an inside to implementation and effects. The program was intended for leading staff of administrations and researchers, also from the university. The participants have been selected from ministries all over China or from Province Ministries within a province. Aim aimed to trigger a dialogue between and within provinces and have a dialogue process between science and practice.

After the involvement of the Central Party School of CPC<sup>11</sup> in this lecture programme and additional discussions, the responsible department was motivated to reflect on the approach of HSF and to guide the pilot mentioned above project in *Sanbaishan*. In addition, they evaluated the other projects of HSF. They integrated their experience in the learning contents in training future party secretaries who are decision-makers on the local levels and further hierarchies. Furthermore, a reflection on the approaches was discussed and published in scientific newspapers<sup>12</sup> of the Central Party School of CPC. It was launched to broaden the national discussion. However, the Scientific-policy dialogue (between academics and policy-makers) went beyond paper publication and has continued in physical and online discussions (conferences, workshops and meetings). This meant that the ideas to solve local problems in rural areas have been launched at a political level—the topic of rural revitalisation as a national goal was established in 2017.

From 2016 onwards, international conferences on land management and land governance have been held yearly. This was to stabilise dialogue between academia and administrations and exchange on solving problems in the development of rural areas. Proceedings had been made available.

In 2017, a summer school program was started by HSF in Partnership with Renmin University of China and supported by the China Land Science Society. The target group was leading staff and decision-makers in administration, university lecturers and students. Also, this measure guided the dialogue process and could be seen as a source of ongoing development.

Cooperation with Sichuan province started in 2014. it was initiated by the research department at the provincial ministry of land and resources. The cooperation led to new teaching programs within the provincial staff, delegation visits, and symposia which prepared the knowledge and

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<sup>11</sup> The corethink-tank of the communist party in China.

<sup>12</sup> This newspaper is one of the obligatory papers in China.

preparedness to start an own project. Following this success, a new rural revitalisation project was launched by the province of Sichuan in collaboration with HSF in 2017. University lecturers and planning firms were invited to participate in the project and guide it. In preparation for the project, scientists and leading administration staff were sent out to existing HSF Projects to evaluate what was good and why, and what went wrong and why. Based on this, a decision-making structure with clear responsibilities on how the gained knowledge should be distributed has been made. The scientific department of the Land and Resources offices at the provincial level took the lead in this project. In addition, on the local level, a symposium was organised to engage the representatives of universities, provincial and local decision-makers, leading staff, and project workers in a development dialogue concerning the potential direction and outcomes of the project, also to make sure that knowledge spreading based on experience can be done within the related administration of the whole province. The Chair and initiator of this symposium was the head of the provincial administration of natural resources. So, universities and local project managers worked together to conceptualise the tools and methods for implementing integrated approaches into the project. The symposium should also enable a dialogue between local administration staff or other institutions and stakeholders with a leading team of the province due to hierarchal issues, not self-understanding. The multi-party exchange also closed the gap between local stakeholders and researchers. They all took part in participatory processes to develop tools that could be used in the whole of the Sichuan province. In addition, they organised further training at the provincial levels to validate their findings, finetune their results and initiate others to work on innovative ideas. Their agreed planning procedure and approach became the model project for the rural revitalisation of the province in the year 2018 and a reference project for integrated land consolidation at the national level in 2021.

## **5. DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION**

Our focus on academic and policy dialogues in this paper has focused on how it relates to formal discourse arrangements meant to contribute to land-related decision-making processes (land governance) in academia and policy-making. We do not state or imply that academic and policy dialogues do not happen in formal settings or do not include informal consultations (e.g., through land posts or electronic correspondence or corridor meetings, etc.). Informal academic and policy dialogues also play a crucial role in creating awareness of land issues. Still, they are not usually backed by formal or official policy positions. For instance, informal meetings in which two or more parties discuss diverse research and land governance issues can help create, build, and disseminate land-related knowledge. We did not focus on the informal dialogues for two reasons. First, “informal dialogue is difficult to capture, not usually documented, and represents a large grey area not explicitly addressed in this briefing note” (World Health Organisation, 2015: 4). Second, our object of investigation (i.e., HSF activities) is an organisation established to promote formal dialogues between stakeholders in society. Our focus on formal academic and policy dialogues—official meetings between two or more parties for which there is a previously established land agenda and for which the discussion points

agreed are documented formally in meeting minutes—is driven by the need to emphasise the need for formal engagements for land governance improvements.

To conclude, it is crucial to specifically explain the scientific and dialogue measures used in the HSF projects. From these, we draw a set of recommendations necessary for the renewed roles of academic and policy dialogues in the future of the land profession. Such recommendations are essential to ensure that policy-makers and academics (researchers) harmoniously contribute to the ever-increasing questions (geospatial, environmental, socioeconomic, engineering, policy, and capacity development) faced by land sectors globally and in various countries.

### **5.1. Summarising: the scientific and dialogue measures applied in the HSF projects**

A critical inference from the HSF experience is that academic and policy dialogues are not mere sit-together-and-talk forums. They are based on linking stakeholders to engage in land matters (phase 1) and built around investments in physical infrastructure and nationalised platforms that connect education (including research and training) with policy-driven activities in government agencies towards developing ideas, concepts and activities that help improve the living conditions of people (phase 2). And the advancement of the achievements of phases 1-2 (i.e., phase 3). On reflection, the three phases of HSF activities in China are best summarised by the model for embracing academic and policy dialogues in the land sector represented in Figure 4.

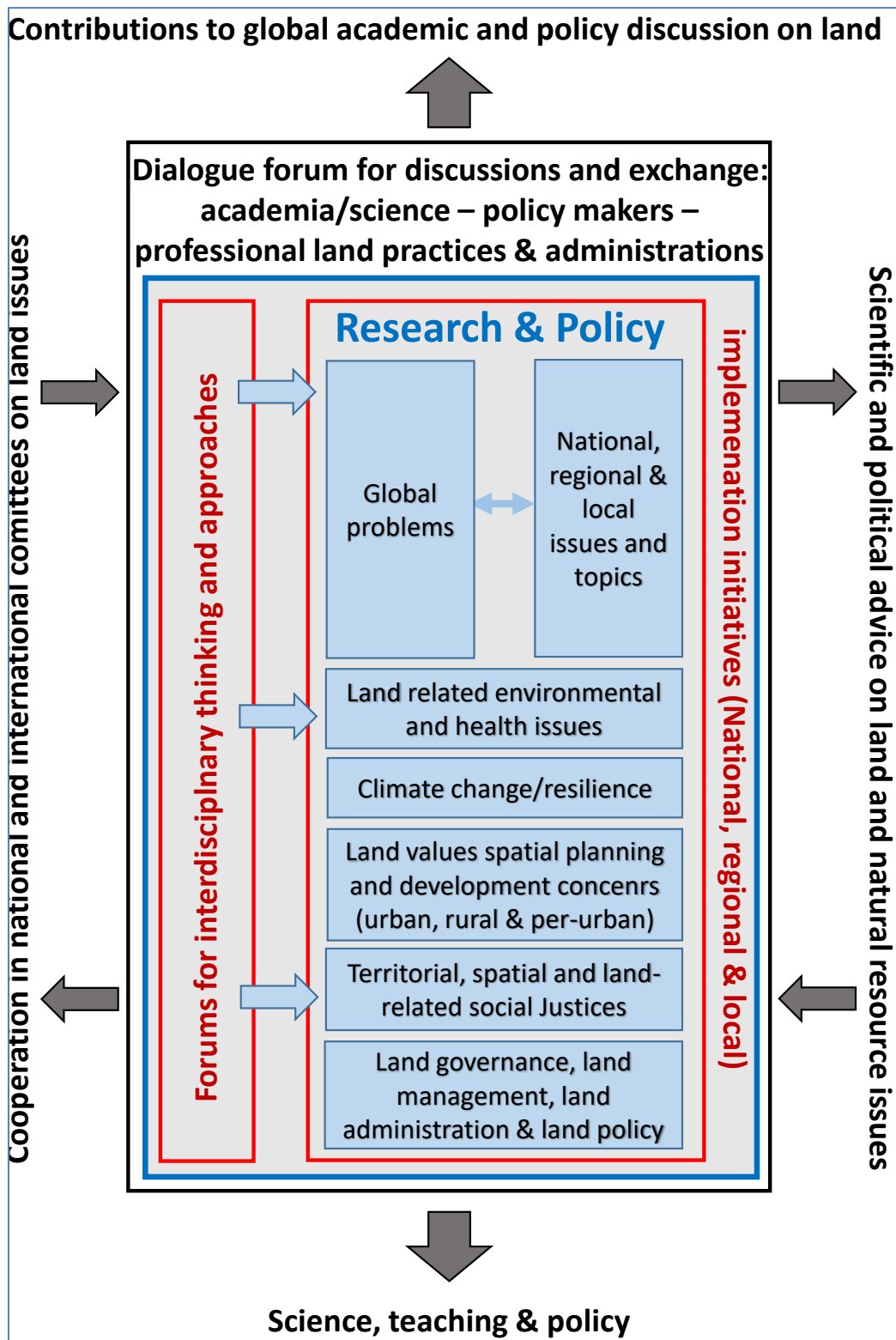


Figure 4: A model for embracing academic and policy dialogues in the land sector

This model description is based on the procedures of the HSF projects with ideas and more experience adapted from Magel et al. (2022). The model reflects the various aspects of academic and policy interactions, which can be adapted or generalised to link scientific and political dialogues within a land research and policy interface. These are based on the following measures implemented in the HSF projects in China. These measures include:

- Academic supervision of the pilot projects was carried out for the HSF by the Technical University of Munich. This applied in project phases 1 and 2, where knowledge transfer was initiated to trigger scientific discussions between Chinese and German universities and a discussion on collaborations between Chinese universities. Phase 3 is related to the organised academic training of study groups.
- Delegation of Chinese policy-makers and leading administrators were organised to visit Germany. Part of that delegation discussed and received academic input on land management topics from academics at the TUM Chair of Land management. Supporting best practice examples of Bavarian administration for rural development had been visited, and staff explained implementation and connection to legislation and societal dependencies.
- Chinese policy-makers were brought together with German policy-makers and leading administrators to share experiences on how land policy, land laws and land management activities are implemented.
- Chinese decision-makers, policy-makers, and leading staff received scientific and professional land management courses within a study program in Germany supported by TUM lecturers and practitioners with teaching experience (e.g., leading staff involved in teaching at TUM as contract teachers). This training involved 2 weeks of academic classes and one 1-week field trip. This brought together Chinese research institutions and administrators with German academics and practitioners to foster discussion and knowledge exchange within a province. It also brought Chinese scholars together with their administrators within a study group to discuss Chinese land management problems and brainstorm together on potential solutions.
- The key forums used for the academic and policy dialogues include the following:
  - Workshops on specific topics in China.
  - Sino-German Symposia served as a platform for bringing together academic stakeholders and policy-makers on various levels.
  - International symposia are organised to take the discussion beyond Sino-German issues to get the global point of view and discussions on solutions to solve common problems in China and elsewhere around the world, and the availability of proceedings
  - Integrating compulsory workshops into the international symposia fosters dialogue and a shared understanding of problems.
  - Creating potentials to enable the participation of scientists and policy-makers within international conferences like FIG Working weeks or congresses.
  - Academic seminars (including workshops and other forms of dialogues within the frame of Sino-German relations) were organised at different scientific institutions in China and Germany.

- In China, summer schools are organised to bring together academics (scientists and students), policy-makers, and leading staff (decision-makers) in political administrations with a stake in land management. The China Land Science Society partnered with the HSF in organising some of the summer schools. The China Land Science Society brought together planners, planning firms, professors and university lecturers (as well as leading staff and decision-makers in political administrations).
- The publication of research findings in obligatory newspapers ensures that policy-makers engage with the opinion of scientists and vice versa.
- Conducting professional publications by the Ministry of Natural Resources – Land Consolidation and Research Center in cooperation with HSF on selected land management topics to broaden the national discourse on land within a science-policy interface.

## **5.2. Recommendations for academic and policy dialogues in land projects**

From the HSF experience, we assert that there are many ways academic and policy dialogues can contribute to a better impact on the land professions through evidence-based land governance. To maximise the benefits of academic and policy dialogues, the following actions are necessary:

- Institutionalise policy dialogues as part of routine land governance processes that help maintain researcher-policymaker engagements for better-informed policy-relevant research and policy outputs.
- Global and local actors in the land sector (including the FIG, GLTN, and others) should contribute to providing resources for the execution of proper policy dialogues, ensuring they use inclusive, bottom-up approaches that link academic and policy positions on land issues.
- Invest in the development of capacity for facilitating academic and policy dialogues (in countries where researchers and policy-makers are disengaged from each other) in land affairs to help in more precise articulation of locally realistic land governance positions.
- Facilitate validity, reliability, and trust in land data from academic research to strengthen politicians' and policy-makers legitimacy and confidence in their use.
- Embed the roles of academics and policy-makers in land projects from the beginning. Academics from universities of applied sciences as well as from universities might help contribute to issues raised by the political and policy think-tanks to pave the road for a broader context
- Bring together practitioners (administration) and science to improve processes and formulate demands for policy-makers
- Enable participation of resource persons and policy-makers at international congresses to widen the view and gain additional ideas for solving problems in the respective countries.

For the above benefits to be realised, it is pertinent to mention that academic and policy dialogues should aim to contribute to land governance development processes or discourse. Academic and policy dialogues in the land sector may vary in how they are intended to feed into the land governance and development processes. Irrespective of how they are initiated (and

designed), it is essential that they fit within specific land governance and knowledge development processes. This is a precondition for them to better impact the land professions.

### **Acknowledgement**

This paper and the research behind it would not have been possible without the staunch support of HSF, allowing insight into the project and the underlying logic of effectiveness. We appreciate that we were granted access to the knowledge and experience. We would like to thank all project members for their dedicated support and openness to answering questions. Special thanks go to Prof. Holger Magel, who guided the project for more than 30 years, selected the first pilot project, and strongly supported the project. His strong effort to step out from the mere transfer of knowledge to the engagement of political decision-makers led to the institutionalisation of academic and policy dialogue in the entire process, leading to knowledge generation and the development of land management approaches. Finally, we would like to thank the Namibia University of Science and Technology for constantly promoting knowledge-generation and development of land management approaches as part of their work as a top university in the African region.

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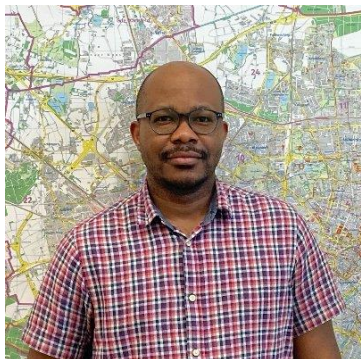
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