How feasible is Regional Integration for reconciling land use conflicts across the urban-rural interface? Evidence from Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei metropolitan region in China

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Competition among different uses for land is becoming acute under the process of urbanization, and conflicts related to this competition are becoming more frequent and more complex. This article presents a methodology for confronting this issue. By applying an integrated framework, we explore the implicit role of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Regional Integration (BRI) policy in land use conflicts by focusing on the urban-rural interface, and try to address the research question: “How feasible is BRI for reconciling land use conflicts across the urban-rural interface?” An original structure of the analysis is developed based on the identification of three types of conflicts, namely, conflicts over land use structure, conflicts over land conversion and conflicts over landscape pattern. According to the interactions and relationships among these conflicts, we define broad categories of land use conflict areas. Indeed, these conflicts are all related to the unplanned use of agricultural land reserves, which competes with other more immediate uses, and the over-exploitation of land resources caused by unsustainable urban practices. This policy is clearly a critical objective for optimizing the land use structure. It, however, fails to reconcile the conflicts over land conversion and landscape pattern, especially for considerable agricultural land conversion to non-agricultural uses, and low-density development pattern with mixed residential and industrial land uses. Hence, alternative strategies involving public participation, spatial equity, rural revitalization, land-use system reform, and new type of urbanization, can be identified as viable solutions for land use conflict management, which may be complementary to regional integration. The findings of our paper may also contribute to the policy debate on BRI concerning land use planning and regional sustainability.