

Preface

The motivation for writing this book dates back to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) project “Housing Affordability in China,” in which the authors participated under the leadership of Prof. Bengt Turner (1947–2007) from 2004 to 2007. The first author was working as an Assistant Professor at Uppsala University’s Institute for Housing and Urban Research (IBF) during that period. The second author was a Ph.D. student in Economics at IBF in the first stage of the SIDA project, and continued to be actively involved after accepting a faculty position at Fudan University in 2006. Prof. Turner, IBF’s founding director and the founding chairman of the European Network of Housing Research (ENHR), launched the project with his keen concerns regarding housing-related welfare issues in China. His main goal was to determine how China’s housing affordability conditions had been affected by the market-oriented housing reform. This book was written to commemorate Prof. Turner, who dedicated time and energy to inspiring and guiding the authors to achieve more than they thought possible in this area of research.

In spring 2006, an international seminar on “Housing Affordability in China,” organized by the IBF and the Real Estate Institute of Tsinghua University, was held at Tsinghua University in Beijing. At this seminar, the authors of this book presented their initial research findings on housing affordability in urban China. Subsequently, the authors pursued an investigation into the various aspects of housing affordability and housing policies in urban China. Between 2006 and 2012, the authors published a number of self-contained affordability-related papers in international, peer-reviewed journals including *Urban Studies*, *Housing Studies*, *Local Economy*, *China Economic Review*, and *Journal of Housing and Building Environment*. The close connections forged in their research and the correlations in their findings have prompted them to produce a book that provides an overall picture of housing affordability and housing policy issues in post-reform urban China. The authors hope that this book will become a useful reference for individuals interested in post-reform housing developments in China.

On a broad scale, this book engages in the academic debates on the economic reforms and social transformations occurring in transitional and developing countries. It perceives housing policy reforms as part of a larger shift from central planning to a market economy. First, it considers how to depict the changing family-market-state relationship in the housing sector of a transitional economy

such as that of China, particularly how the affordability crisis has been produced and relieved by governmental housing policy. To address these questions, the researchers incorporate analytical tools from economics and political science. Second, this book reflects the authors' efforts to closely examine the social effects of market reforms, especially with respect to the segments of the population that are economically disadvantaged and frequently "left behind." Third, this book is built on previous studies of housing affordability issues in Western economies in addition to the literature on housing reforms as it stands in Russia and Eastern Europe. The massive body of literature on these topics helps to provide a useful comparative framework and theoretical insights to apply in the Chinese context. Finally, this book enters the academic debate on cross-regional variations in China—both with regard to the functioning of market reforms and the differences in local governmental capacity to effectively govern the market environment.

Housing Affordability and Housing Policy in Urban China

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