Awardee (Dept): Dr. Hu Zhiyong, Assistant Professor (APS)
Publication Title: Industrial capitalisation and spatial transformation in Chinese cities: Strategic repositioning, state-owned enterprise capitalisation, and the reproduction of urban space in Beijing

A. Briefly introduce your research publication/study for which you have received the prize.

This award-winning paper has important contribution to the thesis of the urbanization of capital, a dominant theoretical framework to interpret the dynamics of urban change under capitalism. It challenges the assumption inherent in such thesis to prioritize the capital interests from the Global North as the core to shape and dictate the (re)production of urban space in the Global South as the periphery. Through a case study of Beijing, this paper has identified the growth and resilience of state capital as an important link that cannot be omitted from any scholarly inquiry into the complex and hybrid nature of China’s phenomenal and endless urban transformation. Contrary to the prevailing tendency toward private ownership and control as portrayed in most urban China studies, this study reveals an intriguing growth pattern of ‘capitalisation without privatization’ characterized by the rising role of state capital in association with the new strategic vision to remake Beijing as a national hub of corporate control and the persistent syndrome of soft budget constraint in Chinese transitional economy. It found that the commodification of land and housing property has not undermined the power of SOEs, but instead has enabled some SOEs, especially those affiliated with central government to claim, reassert and consolidate their power in the reproduction of urban space. The paper also highlighted the potential social-spatial effect of such urban growth dynamics that may lead to eviscerated domestic private investment and the spatial redistribution of rural-urban migrants towards the urban fringe.

B. How you used/will use your prize and perhaps its usefulness to your research development?

I plan to use this prize to pursue further my research on two major fronts. One is to investigate the pattern and process of urban land redevelopment and spatial transformation in association with the growth and evolution of SOEs. Specifically, I am interested in how the
premium land parcels previously occupied by SOEs as the “socialist land masters” have been redeveloped in the context of China’s ongoing ownership restructuring and speculative urbanization. The other project is to evaluate the social-spatial impact of China’s urban growth dynamics centered on land commodification and speculative capital. In particular, I am interested in whether and how has land commodification/land finance has affected the residential settlement of migrants who work and live in the city but with restricted entitlements to urban social services.

C. Expected research outcomes/outputs/impacts arising from this prize.

I expect to submit the findings from this prize to internationally recognized journals such as cities and International journal of urban and regional research.