P09 / The Policy Process in China: Formulation, Implementation, and Evaluation in Contemporary Governance

Topic : POLICY, POLITICS AND POLITICAL REGIME

Chair : Yu Du (Jinan University)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

The policy process in China provides an insightful perspective into how public policies are formulated, implemented, and evaluated within a unique socio-political system. This panel aims to explore these aspects by focusing on the factors influencing decision-making, the complexities of policy implementation, and the mechanisms of outcome assessment. Through examining each phase of the policy cycle, the panel will uncover how governance in China operates, reflecting the interplay between central authority, local actors, and emerging societal demands. The study of policy-making in China has gained significant attention due to the country's rapid economic transformation and social change. Historically, the policy process in China has been viewed as highly centralized, with the Communist Party of China (CPC) playing a dominant role. However, contemporary research reveals a far more intricate system characterized by both top-down directives and bottom-up experimentation. In addition, the growing emphasis on pilot programs and experimental governance highlights an adaptive policy approach that combines control with flexibility, allowing the government to manage complexity and uncertainty in an evolving environment. The research question guiding this panel is: How do various factors shape the policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation processes within the context of contemporary Chinese governance? To address this question, the panel will explore several hypotheses: (1) Policy formulation in China is characterized by a hybrid approach, blending centralized planning with local-level experimentation. This hypothesis suggests that while the central government sets overarching priorities, local governments have substantial discretion in adapting policies to suit regional contexts; (2) Successful policy implementation relies on incentive alignment, particularly through cadre evaluation systems that tie officials' career advancement to policy outcomes. This highlights the importance of compliance mechanisms and the performance-based incentives that drive implementation at the local level; (3) Policy evaluation serves dual purposes of accountability and legitimacy, where the emphasis often leans towards showcasing positive achievements to reinforce the CPC's legitimacy, which may lead to selective assessments and overreporting of success. These hypotheses will be contextualized through empirical examples from key policy areas such as environmental regulation, poverty alleviation, public health, etc. The scientific relevance of this panel lies in its potential to enhance our understanding of public policy processes in China's context, where governance combines central authority with a level of local adaptability. By drawing on established theoretical frameworks and presenting case studies from contemporary China, the panel aims to bridge the gap between abstract models and real-world policy practices. This approach will contribute valuable insights for scholars and practitioners seeking to comprehend the complexities of governance in China, providing lessons that may be applicable in other contexts of rapid socio-economic transformation.

CALL FOR PAPERS

We invite paper proposals for our panel, The Policy Process in China: Formulation, Implementation, and Evaluation in Contemporary Governance, to be held at the IPPA. This panel seeks to explore the unique dynamics of policy-making in China, where governance operates through a blend of centralised authority and localised adaptation. We encourage scholars to submit papers that address how public policies are formulated, implemented, and evaluated within the Chinese political system, focusing on the interplay between central government directives, local experimentation, and the evolving needs of society.

Potential topics include, but are not limited to:

The hybrid nature of policy formulation in China, where national priorities are set centrally, yet significant local autonomy exists for adapting these policies.
The role of incentive structures, such as cadre evaluation systems, in shaping successful policy implementation at local levels.
The dual function of policy evaluation, which serves both accountability purposes and contributes to reinforcing the Communist Party of China's (CPC) legitimacy, including case studies of selective reporting or

performance-based assessments.
We welcome empirical studies that draw on specific policy areas, such as environmental regulation, poverty alleviation, public health, and more. Papers that offer comparative perspectives or insights from other rapidly transforming socio-political contexts are also highly encouraged.

Submissions should engage with relevant theoretical frameworks, aiming to enhance our understanding of how China's governance combines central control with local flexibility. By contributing to this panel, the authors will help illuminate how contemporary Chinese policy-making responds to complexity and uncertainty, providing lessons for broader applications in public policy analysis.

We look forward to your contributions to a rigorous and insightful discussion of China’s policy processes.

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Session 1

Thursday, July 3rd 10:15 to 12:15 (SME-G2)

Discussants

Adam LIU (LKY School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore)

Rongxin LI (Jinan University)

Fatigue in Responsiveness: Information Capacity and Local Governance in China

Rongxin LI (Jinan University)

Uncovering the Black Box of Bureaucratic Formalism in China's Policy Process: A Survey Experiment Design

Chunyan RAN (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong, China)

The Political Economy of Bank Regulation in China

Adam LIU (LKY School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore)

How to Understand Innovation Policy Governance? Policy Process in China and the European Union from an Institutional Perspective

Marek ?wistak (Jagiellonian University Cracow)

The Structural Relationships of the Chinese Rural Land Reform Policy Network —A Social Network Analysis Based on the Rural Reform Pilot Zones

Jindi Yang (Beijing Normal University,China)

Yaxuan Zhou (Beijing Normal University,China)

Hongping Lian (Beijing Normal University)