

T06P07 / China's Subnational Government Relation and Policy Implementation: In the Shadow of Central-local Paradigm

Topic : T06 / Policy Implementation

Chair : Ciqi Mei (Tsinghua University)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Central-local relation has long been a foci of research on China's governing system. Many have used this framework to analyze China's policy implementations. (Lieberthal and Oksenberg, 1986; Lampton, 1987; Lieberthal and Lampton, 1992; O'Brien and Li, 1999; Chung, 1995, 2000, etc.; Montinola, Qian, and Weingast, 1995; Xu, 2011, Chen and Kung, 2012; etc.). While the center could be clearly equated with Beijing or the national government, those governing entities called as the local in current literature, however, could be quite different among themselves. Along the five-level governing pyramid from the center down to province, prefecture, county, and township, all the latter four are literally local. Research on China's central-local relation, in order to make a central-local dichotomy, therefore entails simplification of the dynamics among the subnational governmental entities, either by assuming the subnational dynamics is negligible as compared to the central-provincial one, or by assuming the two are similar or even identical. (Chung, 1995)

Both assumptions could be wrong. First, dynamics among subnational entities carries weights in China's policy implementation process. Without a clear division of labor among levels of governments as is in federal countries, China's policy implementation relies heavily on a top-down mandate system. The level to which a policy mandate is followed or defied is to a large extent determined by the extent to which the mandate is well forced down level by level. Even the provincial government follows the mandates, the long mandate chain at the subnational levels may cause authority leakage and hence noncompliance behaviors, implicit or explicit, at the implementation frontline. Second, dynamics among subnational government entities should be different from that between the center and provincial government. Take the provincial-prefectural relation as an example, it indeed resembles the central-provincial relation in the sense that provincial governments would mandate prefectural ones of to fulfill certain policy goals, just like the central government to provincial governments. However, this relation differs from the central-provincial one as provincial governments also have incentive to cooperate with prefectural governments at all means as far as the top-down mandates are fulfilled at face value.

Several recent literature has elaborated the significance and distinctive characteristics of China's subnational politics, and more importantly, how the latter had impacted policy implementation. Policy bundling, i.e. having unwelcomed policy mandate bundled with popular policy initiatives, has been observed as an instrument for provincial governments to induce better implementation (Kostka and Hobbs, 2012). Some has noticed the strategic cooperation between county and township which produces win-win situation for all in policy implementation (Schubert and Ahlers, 2012). Still others identify different kinds of collusive behaviors of subnational government (Zhou, Lian, et.al. 2013).

This panel aims to deepen scholarly understanding on the vertical relationships of China's subnational governments. We especially welcome papers addressing the following research questions:

- Distinctive characteristics of China's subnational government relation
- Transformation and changes of China's subnational government relation
- Subnational government relation and its impact on policy implementation
- Cadre management system and subnational government relation

CALL FOR PAPERS

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Session 1 Policy and Politics in Subnational China: Trust, Loyalty and Awareness

Wednesday, June 28th 14:00 to 16:00 (Block B 4 - 5)

Discussants

Ciqi Mei (Tsinghua University)

Jiangnan Zhu (The University of Hong Kong)

Do anticorruption campaigns boost government trust in China?

siqin kang (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology)

Jiangnan Zhu (The University of Hong Kong)

Fiscal Decentralization and Political Trust in China

Shengqiao LIN (School of Public Policy and Management, Tsinghua University)

Duck's paddling: the sub-provincial policy distortion in the Case of China's ESER Policy Implementation

Ciqi Mei (Tsinghua University)

Shaowei Chen (21st China Center, UC San Diego)

Bureaucratic Discretion and Behavioral Logics of Intermediate Governments

Xiao Shiyang

Beyond bureaucracy: The Effects of Environmental Policy Experimentation on Citizens' Environmental Awareness in Urban China

Yue Guo (School of Government, Beijing Normal University)

JIE WANG

Zhilin Liu (Tsinghua University)