

CHES5108 Selected Theme on Chinese Politics

Topic: Understanding Policy Implementation in China's Local State: Theory and Practice

2021-2022, Term 1
Tuesdays 11.30-14.15
Venue: ELB 401

Teacher: Prof. Gunter Schubert (gunter.schubert@uni-tuebingen.de)

Course Description

This course focuses on the theorization of the Chinese policy process with a focus on policy implementation in the local state. It traces the evolution of Western and Chinese social science research on China over the last 30 years. Besides the discussion of theoretical concepts such as *fragmented authoritarianism*, *fiscal federalism*, *policy entrepreneurship*, *experimentation under hierarchy* and *effective policy implementation*, the focus is put on the changes of the policy process in the Xi Jinping era which is characterized by 'top-level design', i.e. centralization and steering. The course will also address the ongoing debate of the development of Chinese political science among Western and Chinese scholars in order to highlight their differences in theorizing on policy-making in China.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students are expected to

- be able to discuss major theoretical concepts to explain policy-making and implementation in contemporary China;
- understand the constraints of the institutional set-up of the Chinese political system on policy-makers in the local state;
- to deepen their understanding for (applied) theory in social science research on contemporary China

Learning Activities

In each class, starting from week 3, students will make a presentation based on the selected texts and additional literature followed by joint discussion. The presentation should foremost be a critical reading of the selected texts to highlight the strength and weaknesses of each theoretical concept to grasp the driving forces and mechanisms of the Chinese policy process. The presentations shall be the basis of a topical term paper or essay of 5.000-6.000 words (**due on December 10th**), in which the students reflect on their understanding of theorizing the Chinese policy process in the Xi Jinping era.

Assessment Scheme

1. Term paper (essay) of 5.000-6.000 words (including references, tables and figures, but not appendices): 40%
2. Oral and written presentation of a theoretical concept and a critical discussion of its strength and weaknesses: 40%
3. Course attendance and active participation: 20%

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>. With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of the policies, regulations and procedures.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (September 7th):

Course organization and introduction to the topic

Week 2 (September 14th):

Understanding the local state in contemporary China

Readings:

- Baum Richard and Shevchenko, Alexei. (1999) The 'State of the State'. In: Goldman Merle and MacFarquhar, Roderick (eds) *The Paradox of China's Post-Mao Reforms*. Cambridge/Mass.: Harvard University Press, 333-360.
- Schubert Gunter and Heberer, Thomas. (2015) Continuity and Change in China's 'Local State Developmentalism'. *Issues & Studies* 51(2), 1-38.
- Wang Chunyu, Ye, Jingzhong and Franco, Jennifer C. (2014) Local State Corporatism or Neo-Guanxilism? Observations from County Level of Government in China. *Journal of Contemporary China* 23(87), 418-515.

Part I: Concepts to understand and analyze the Chinese policy process

Week 3 (September 21^h):

Fragmented Authoritarianism

Readings:

- Brødsgaard Kjeld Eric. (2017) 'Fragmented Authoritarianism' or 'Integrated Fragmentation'? *Chinese Politics as Fragmented Authoritarianism: Earthquakes, Energy and Environment*. Abingdon: Routledge, 38-55.
- Huang Dongya. (2018) Top-Level Design and Fragmented Decision-Making: A Case Study of an SOE Merger in China's High-Speed Rail Industry. *Journal of Contemporary China* 27(109), 151-164.
- Lieberthal Kenneth G. (1992) Introduction: The 'Fragmented Authoritarian' Model and its Limitations. In: Lieberthal Kenneth G. and Lampton, David M. (eds) *Bureaucracy, Politics and Decision-Making in Post-Mao China*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Mertha Andrew C. (2009) 'Fragmented Authoritarianism 2.0': Political Pluralization in the Chinese Policy Process. *China Quarterly* (200), 995-1012.

Week 4 (September 28th):

Fiscal Federalism

Readings:

- Feng Xingyuan, Ljungwall, Christer, Guo, Sujian, et al. (2013) Fiscal Federalism: a refined theory and its application in the Chinese context. *Journal of Contemporary China* 22(82), 573-593.

- Montinola Gabriella, Qian, Yingyi and Weingast, Barry R. (1995) Federalism, Chinese Style: The Political Basis for Economic Success. *World Politics* 41(1), 50-81.
- van der Kramp Denise, Lorentzen, Peter and Mattingly, Daniel. (2017) Racing to the Bottom or to the Top? Decentralization, Revenue Pressures, and Governance Reform in China. *World Development* 95164-176.

Week 5 (October 5th):

Selective – Uneven – Effective Policy Implementation

Readings:

- Ahlers Anna L. and Schubert, Gunter. (2015) Effective Policy Implementation in China's Local State. *Modern China* 41(4), 372-405.
- Göbel Christian. (2011) Uneven Policy Implementation in Rural China. *China Journal* (65), 53-76.
- O'Brien Kevin J. and Li, Lianjiang. (1999) Selective Policy Implementation in Rural China. *Comparative Politics* (2), 167-186.

Week 6 (October 12th):

Experimentation under Hierarchy

Readings:

- Heilmann Sebastian. (2008) From Local Experiments to National Policy: the origins of China's distinctive policy process. *China Journal* (59), 1-30.
- Heilmann Sebastian. (2009) Maximum Tinkering under Uncertainty. Unorthodox Lessons from China. *Modern China* 35(4), 450-462.
- Teets Jessica and Hasmath, Reza. (2020) The evolution of policy experimentation in China. *Journal of Asian Public Policy* 13(1), 49-59.

Week 7 (October 19th):

Policy Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Readings:

- Chen Kang. (2016) Two China Models and Local Government Entrepreneurship. *China: An International Journal* 14(3), 16-28.
- Hasmath Reza, Teets, Jessica C. and Lewis, Orion A. (2018) The innovative personality? Policy making and experimentation in an authoritarian bureaucracy. *Public Administration and Development* 39(3), 154-162.
- Zhang Liwei, Zhao, Ji and Dong, Weiwei. (2021) Street-level bureaucrats as policy entrepreneurs: Action strategies for flexible community governance in China. *Public Administration* (DOI: 10.1111/padm.12730).
- Teets Jessica C. (2015) The Politics of Innovation in China: Local Officials as Policy Entrepreneurs. *Issues & Studies* 51(2), 79-109.

Week 8 (October 26th):

Bureaucratic Collusion and Muddling Through

Readings:

- Hillman Ben. (2010) Factions and Spoils: examining political behaviour within the local state in China. *China Journal* (64), 1-18.
- Zhou Xuegang, Hong, Lian, Ortolano, Leonhard, et al. (2013) A Behavioral Model of 'Muddling Through' in the Chinese Bureaucracy: The Case of Environmental Protection. *China Journal* (70), 120-147.

Zhou Xueguang. (2010) The Institutional Logic of Collusion among Local Governance in China. *Modern China* 36(1), 47-78.

Week 9 (November 2nd):

Discussion of Term Paper Topics

Part II: Theoretical approaches to the Chinese policy process

Week 10 (November 9th)

Strategic Group Analysis

Readings:

Heberer Thomas and Schubert, Gunter. (2012) County and Township Cadres as a Strategic Group. A New Approach to Political Agency in China's Local State. *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 17(3), 221-249.

Pieke Frank. (2004) Contours of an Anthropology of the Chinese State: Political Structure, Agency and Economic Development in Rural China. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (10), 517-538.

Week 11 (November 16th):

Theorising the Policy Process under 'Top-Level Design': Political Steering

Readings:

Alpermann Björn and Shaohua, Zhan. (2019) Population Planning after the One-Child Policy: shifting modes of political steering in China. *Journal of Contemporary China* 28(117), 517-538.

Schubert Gunter and Alpermann, Björn. (2019) Studying the Chinese Policy Process in the Era of 'Top-Level Design': The Contribution of 'Political Steering' Theory. *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 24(2), 199-224.

Week 12 (November 23rd):

China's Rise and Political Science – Western and Chinese Perspectives

Readings:

He Baogang. (2011) The Dilemmas of Chinese Political Science in the Context of the Rise of China. *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 16(3), 257-272.

Taylor Jon R. (2016) Between Sinification and Internationalization: Chinese Political Science in the Post-Reform Era. 1(2), 199-208.

Wang Zhongyuan and Guo, Sujian. (2019) The State of the Field of Chinese Political Science: 'Glocalising' Political Science in China? *European Political Science* 18(4), 456-472.

Week 13 (November 30th):

Wrapping up and concluding discussion