

Handbook on Local Governance in China: Structures, Variations, and Innovations

Ceren Ergenc and David S.G. Goodman. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023. 484 pp. £210.00 (hbk). ISBN 9781800883239

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Since the publication of Kenneth Lieberthal's canonical book, *Governing China: From Revolution through Reform* (W.W. Norton, 1995), governance structures and practices in China, particularly at the local levels, have undergone tremendous changes. Over the past two to three decades, a voluminous and growing body of research has examined the plethora of new developments from different angles. However, there has been a pressing need for an updated book that systematically examines the complicated structure and intricate dynamics of China's local governance. Against this background, editors Ceren Ergenc and David S.G. Goodman make a timely contribution by putting together the comprehensive *Handbook on Local Governance in China*, which offers thematic breadth and fresh insights into China's local institutional structures, cross-regional and temporal variations, and innovative practices. For scholars and policymakers alike, this handbook provides an invaluable reference and source of information, especially about local governance in the Xi Jinping era.

One notable strength of this handbook is its interdisciplinary approach, featuring authors from diverse fields such as political science, public administration, geography, urban studies, sociology, anthropology, education and China studies. Each chapter provides a unique perspective on a specific aspect of local governance, which woven together provide a wealth of information and contribute to a holistic view of local governance in China. While the book is dense with information, the editors' ability to synthesize complex information into an accessible format is impressive, making the book suitable for advanced students, researchers and policy analysts interested in Chinese governance.

The handbook is divided into three parts, each dissecting different aspects of local governance. Part one delves into the scales of state. After the introduction and overview in chapter one, the following chapters examine the evolution of spatial administrative structures (chapters two and three), internal organization of local governments (chapter four), illiberal institutionalization under Xi (chapter five), policy innovations by local officials (chapter six), urban neighbourhood management (chapter seven), border governance (chapter eight), and public and expert inputs in local policymaking (chapters nine and ten). Although titled "Economic Governance," part two addresses a wide range of issues including the digitalization of local governance (chapters 11 and 12), cyberspace information control (chapter 13), environmental regulation (chapter 14), green urban development (chapters 15 and 18), entrepreneurial industrial policies (chapter 16) and service organization reform (chapter 17). Part three shifts the lens to social governance, discussing housing policies (chapter 19), newly founded local universities (chapter 20), welfare policies (chapter 21), social inclusion of migrants (chapter 22), local responses to the COVID-19 pandemic (chapter 23), labour relations (chapter 24), religious policies (chapter 25), the judicial system (chapter 26) and grassroots corruption control (chapter 27).

The breadth of topics covered in this handbook is commendable. It not only delves into classical themes of governance, such as administrative structures, institutionalization, public participation and corruption control, but also sheds light on emerging areas of research. For example, Genia Kostka, Xiang Gao and Yiran Li examine digital governance and cyberspace surveillance in their respective chapters. These are notable new developments in the digital era. Likewise, Chen Li and Mark

Wang's discussion on urban green transformation reflects China's transition from the long fixation on economic growth to environmental awareness and commitment to sustainability in the recent decade. While the technical aspects of these issues have received growing attention in public administration, information technology, environmental sciences and other disciplines, their political implications for the Chinese Communist party-state, such as regime legitimacy and support and China's international image and foreign relations, are yet to be fully explored. In addition, the handbook offers fresh insights into little-discussed topics. For example, Tak-Wing Ngo's study of informal border governance appears particularly relevant, given China's rising attention to national security. Anna L. Ahlers' discussion of scientific advice in various policy processes is also fascinating, leading readers to wonder to what extent local policymaking is shaped by scientific evidence under the constraints of China's political and bureaucratic system. The handbook does not necessarily provide conclusive answers to various questions that readers may have, but it can be taken as a source of inspiration for future research.

The chapters in the handbook offer both reviews of the existing literature and empirical research based on original data. Most of the chapters nicely review the state of the art on the chosen topic. While the limited space allocated to each chapter prevents an exhaustive analysis with nuanced details of the issue under discussion, the authors effectively guide readers toward relevant research and key scholars in their respective fields. In particular, the inclusion of recent Chinese-language literature can help readers stay abreast of the latest developments in China. The literature reviews make this handbook a handy reference book for future studies of local governance in China. Meanwhile, several chapters employ novel datasets (such as chapters six, 11 and 27) and empirical case studies (mostly from coastal regions including Guangdong, Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces) (such as chapters two, 12 and 16) to reveal understudied patterns or new trends in recent years. These chapters offer valuable data sources for future empirical research on related topics.

Overall, the *Handbook on Local Governance in China: Structures, Variations, and Innovations* is a significant addition to the field of Chinese politics and governance. Its interdisciplinary approach, wide-ranging analyses and valuable information sources make it an essential resource for scholars and policy analysts seeking a comprehensive understanding of local governance in China today.

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Law and Political Economy in China: The Role of Law in Corporate Governance and Market Growth

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As its title suggests, Tamar Groswald Ozery's book *Law and Political Economy in China: The Role of Law in Corporate Governance and Market Growth* uses a political economy lens to examine the role law has played in China's economic development story, the growth of firms and markets, and the evolution of corporate governance mechanisms in China over the past 40 years. Throughout, she focuses on the *political functions* of law to make the case that law's dual economic and political functions have been mutually reinforcing since 1978 but that the political valence of economic