

Collaborative Governance, State Corporatism, or Neither? Understanding Chinese NGOs' Engagement in Policy Process and Service Delivery

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Collaborative Governance: Western Theories and Chinese Practices

- Collaborative Governance
 - Increasingly used by governments and non-governmental stakeholders to address problems of downward implementation failures and politicized regulations
- Weaknesses of Existing Literature
 - Most of the existing studies focus on governance phenomena in developed countries, and little has been written on collaborative governance in developing countries.
 - Are the concept and theories of collaborative governance suitable for developing/authoritarian countries? How can the mainstream models of collaborative governance be applied to study the collaborations between government and NGOs in non-democratic countries?

Research Motivations

- Governance challenges to China
 - The rise of NGOs in China; yet it remains a question as to what extent and in what ways NGOs can contribute to improving China's governance
 - The willingness of government to collaborate with NGOs and civil society
 - The necessity to examine the applicability of collaborative governance theory in China
- Two Premises
 - The previous studies on governance in China may help us understand how China's political structures influence the formation of collaborative governance
 - To adapt the mainstream concepts and theories of public administration into non-western settings, it is necessary to contextualize the study of collaborative governance by considering in what ways indigenous contextual factors can be incorporated into existing models of collaborative governance

Conceptual Framework (Ansell and Gash, 2008)

- One relevant framework is the contingency model of collaborative governance developed by Ansell and Gash (2008), which has identified a few key variables that pre-determine the emergence of successful collaborative governance, including “the prior history of conflict or cooperation, the incentives for stakeholders to participate, power and resources imbalances, leadership, and institutional design” (Ansell and Gash, 2008, p. 543).
- This framework deemphasizes the role of political system in the definition of collaborative governance, making the existence (or the non-existence) of a democratic political system relatively less relevant in the study of collaborative governance.
- In their framework, collaborative governance is defined as “*a governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets*” (Ansell and Gash, 2008, p. 544).

Government-NGO Relationships in China

- Strong state and weak civil society.
- *Guanxi* – an informal relationship with governmental officials – has been a core element of social life in China. Existing literature has identified the important role of political ties for business enterprises in China (Nee, 1992, Nee and Opper, 2010). The personal and structural ties between NGOs and government can be characterized as “institutional embeddedness” (Ho, 2007).
- A more recent study (Zhan and Tang, forthcoming) has identified that although there are not well-established democratic channels for public participation, China’s fragmented authoritarian system has created more political opportunities for eNGOs, especially those with better connections with the system, have tried to engage the government in policy process.
- Government-NGO relations in China may move towards a “*corporatist*” regime (Zhan and Tang, working paper)

Research Hypothesis

- *An NGO's policy engagement and collaboration with government are positively associated with the following factors: its prior history of cooperation with government, its incentives to collaborate with government, its power imbalance relationship with the government, leadership's personal guanxi with officials, institutional embeddedness with the government, and its internal governance quality.*

Data

- Data Collection
 - One round of questionnaire survey in the summer of 2012
 - 64 questionnaires issued, with 45 NGOs returned (70.3% response rate).
 - Questionnaires were mainly completed by organizational leaders of these NGOs
 - A five-point Likert-scale was used in the questionnaire

Measurements: Independent Variables	Mean	S.D.	N
<i>Independent Variable A: Prior history of cooperation</i> (Cronbach's Alpha: .849)	3.39	0.99	41
A1. We are often invited by government to participate in decision making/working committee	3.31	1.31	42
A2. We often meet with government officials to exchange information	3.95	1.08	42
A3. We often call for the strengthening of their work to government officials	3.4	1.21	42
A4. We are often invited to participate in the development of regulations and policies	3	1.18	41
<i>Independent Variable B: Incentives to collaborate with government</i> (Cronbach's Alpha:0.781)	4.33	0.90	41
B1. We will actively participate in decision making and policy making within the government	4.07	1.10	41
B2. We will actively collaborate with the government to provide social services to the public	4.6	0.86	42
<i>Independent Variable C: power imbalance relationship with the government</i> (Cronbach's Alpha:0.957)	1.89	0.83	41
C1. We should avoid collaboration with government if we want to maintain our organizational autonomy	1.85	0.85	41
C2. Collaboration with government will change the autonomy of our organization	1.95	0.85	42
<i>Independent Variable D: leadership's personal guanxi with officials</i>	0.65	0.48	43
<i>Independent Variable E: institutional embeddedness with the government</i>	0.19	0.22	44
<i>Independent Variable F: Internal Governance of NGO</i> Our organization has an comprehensive and effective governance system	4.29	0.71	42

Measurements: Dependent Variables	Mean	S.D.	N
<i>Dependent Variable H: Policy Engagement</i> <i>(Cronbach's Alpha:0.781)</i>	3.27	0.94	40
H1. In recent years, we have enhanced our policy advocacy capacity	3.76	1.18	41
H2. In recent years, we have enhanced our policy research capacity	3.47	1.09	40
H3. Overall, we have the capacity to conduct policy advocacy	3.33	1.24	42
H4. Overall, we have policy influence on government	3.05	1.20	41
H5. Overall, we have become a policy advocacy organization	2.85	1.13	41
<i>Dependent Variable G: Collaboration with Government</i> <i>Overall, we have built successful collaborative partnership with government</i>	3.79	1.14	42

Empirical Results (OLS Linear Regression)

		Dependent Variable: Policy Engagement	Dependent Variable: Collaborative Partnership with Government
Independent Variables	<i>Prior history of cooperation</i>	.472*** (3.191)	.129 (.681)
	<i>Incentives to collaborate</i>	.026 (.180)	.009 (.047)
	<i>power imbalance</i>	.089 (.697)	.054 (.329)
	<i>personal guanxi</i>	.400** (2.614)	-.062 (-.316)
	<i>institutional embeddedness</i>	-.153 (-1.052)	.179 (.980)
	<i>Internal Governance</i>	.146 (.959)	.356* (1.827)
Control Variable	<i>Location (Shanghai)</i>	.046 (.356)	.137 (.830)
Sample Size		36	37
R2		0.571	0.267
F-ratio		5.515	1.560
(sig.)		(.000)	(.186)

Discussion and Conclusion

- Major Findings
 - Not all preconditions of collaborative governance are significant
 - NGOs' overall willingness to get support from government
- Implications
 - Western theories and the necessity of contextual study of governance in China
- Limitations
 - Sample size is still too small
 - Over-reliance on self-reported information and the problem of common-source bias

Q&A
Thank You!