Adaptive Social Mobilization in Grassroots Policy Implementation: Administrative Control and Multiple Participation

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基层政策执行是中国治理实践的重要环节。已有研究或从行政控制的角度分析了政策目标异化或执行偏差的成因，或从政策动员的角度探究非正式制度对政策过程的影响。但两种视角均偏好静态或片段式的分析，且限制在科层内部，忽视政府对社会的动员。对Z省T县的案例研究表明，基层政策执行者可依据行政控制和社会动员能力的强弱组合形成不同的动员策略；在政策执行过程中，层级控制与社会动员之间、政府科层与基层社会之间的边界及关系可因政策绩效的需要而发生演变。执行过程总体上表现为"调适性社会动员"。这一发现，可引发对当代中国"社会治理"的本质等问题的重新思考，并解释行政控制与社会参与双双增强的悖论。

关键词：基层治理　行政控制　社会动员　政策执行

Grassroots policy implementation is an important link in China's governance practice. Previous studies have analyzed the causes of divergence from policy goals or distorted implementation from the perspective of administrative control, or explored the impact of informal institutions on policy processes from the perspective of policy mobilization. However, both perspectives incline to static or fragmentary analysis and tend to be confined within the bureaucracy, ignoring the government's mobilization of society. Our case study analysis of County T in Province Z shows that people engaged in implementing grassroots policy can develop varying mobilization strategies on the basis of different combinations of administrative control and social mobilization capacity. In the course of policy implementation, the boundaries and relationships between hierarchical control and social mobilization and between government departments and grassroots society can evolve according to the requirements of policy performance. This implementation process is generally expressed as "adaptive social mobilization." Our findings could lead to a rethinking of the nature of social governance in contemporary China and explain the paradox of the simultaneous strengthening of administrative control and social participation.

Keywords: grassroots governance, administrative control, social mobilization, policy implementation

Grassroots policy implementation lies at the intersection of the two main lines of the "center-local" and "state-people" relationships in China's national governance, and is also an important research subject for public management in contemporary China. Exploring its operational logic can provide the most direct material for analyzing the roles of government and society in social governance. Our research in this field may be able to facilitate the fundamental understanding of the current state of China's social governance in such areas as the micro-mechanism behind the "administrative absorption of society," the contradictory coexistence of stronger political and administrative control and increasing social participation, the characteristics of social governance in China, etc.

The center-local relationship—or, more broadly, the vertical hierarchical relationship—provides an administrative control perspective. Research that adopts this perspective tends to focus on the policy process under institutional arrangements for the centralization of power, especially as regards divergence from policy objectives and distortion of the means of policy implementation. The state-people relationship, on the other hand, implies a policy mobilization perspective, which is appropriate for describing the governance of mass campaigns filled with dramatic conflict. However, perhaps because of their discourse system construction, the two perspectives are not aligned, which makes their observation of the realities static and fragmentary and makes a unified interpretation unobtainable. China's practice has developed more rapidly than its theoretical research. Today's social problems are more and more diversified, popular demands are increasing and policy content is more and more complex. However, grassroots policy implementation has not fallen into the "democratic dilemma" of inefficient and repeated gaming by multiple actors.[1] At the same time, grassroots governments have introduced a great many ways of allowing multiple players to participate in policy implementation. Relying on limited resources and local traditions,[2] they have constructed scenarios for government-society cooperation quickly and creatively. The populace is widely involved in the implementation process. This has given rise to a series of questions that are worth investigating. Why should grassroots governments, accustomed as they are to fulfilling administrative tasks by relying on bureaucratic forces and administrative authority, or even relying on the institutional legacy of the planned economy, incorporate broad public participation into the process of policy implementation while retaining centralized and hierarchical control? How do they design strategies to mobilize the mass of the people under specific constraints? How does the form taken by mobilization evolve?

Our interest in the above issues means that we have focused on the government's mobilization of society. Through the analysis of the set (group) of cases of environmental

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1   Xue Lan and Zhao Jing, "Adaptive Reform and Limitations of the Public Policy Process in the Transitional Period."
2   Xu Lin, Song Chengcheng and Wang Shizong, "Diverse Social Networks in Rural Grassroots Governance."

policy implementation in County T of Province Z, we have attempted to discover the implementation strategy and adjustment logic of the capacity for administrative control and social mobilization and to depict the dynamic and changing laws governing the way grassroots policy is implemented.

I. Literature Review and Research Perspective

Existing research on the implementation of grassroots policy in China is mainly couched in terms of two approaches: administrative control and policy mobilization.

Administrative control focuses on the problem of distorted implementation caused by the loss of top-down control at different levels of government. For example, selective implementation is caused by an imbalance between upper-level decision-making and actual grassroots demand.[3] The government's use of different control tools has resulted in uneven implementation,[4] or the same policy, implemented in different regions, may lead to the loss of full control when it encounters advocates in one place and opponents in another.[5] Administrative control is a necessary means of ensuring policy objectives are met, but its operational logic has inherent limitations because administrative work requires that uncertainty be reduced by following conventional procedures to deal with problems. In China, the Communist Party is the fundamental guarantee for top-down policy implementation, and the work style of Party Committee leadership ensures that the relationship between superiors and subordinates is one of compliance and the relationship between departments at the same level is one of coordination. Such a system provides the cohesion needed for policy implementation, but it is not a sufficient condition for shaping stable and institutionalized administrative behavior. When policy applicability is low, grassroots governments alternate between passive implementation and campaign-type implementation; essentially, neither approach is institutionalized and both violate the rules of public policy implementation procedure.[6] Unlike the grassroots bureaucrats in the classical Western theories of public management, grassroots policy implementers in China have much less room to move than their Western counterparts due to the influence of the institutional environment and that of other policy participants. What looks like changes and adjustments they have made is essentially the result of compromise and passive responses in a complex policy environment.[7]

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3   Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, "Selective Policy Implementation in Rural China," pp. 167-186.

4   Christian Göbel, "Uneven Policy Implementation in Rural China," pp. 53-76.

5   Chung Jae-ho, *Central Control and Local Discretion in China: Leadership and Implementation during Post-Mao Decollectivization*.

6   Chen Jiajian and Zhang Qiongwen, "Fluctuating Policy Implementation and Problems in Grassroots Governance."

7   Zhu Yapeng and Liu Yunxiang, "Institutional Environment, Discretionary Power and the Implementation of China's Social Policy: A Case Study of the Implementation of the Urban Minimum Subsistence Allowance Policy in City C."

The policy mobilization perspective is concerned with two areas: citizens' bottom-up self-mobilization, and the mobilization methods and strategies of the government. The classical Western research on social capital has provided plentiful material for the former. A widely accepted view is that voluntary organizations, interest groups and associations' interactions with government will usually improve government performance,[8] and this is supported by research based on Chinese experience.[9] However, scholars tend to pay more attention to the role and effect of government mobilization, in, for example, government mobilization strategies in mass campaigns,[10] internal government mobilization in campaign-style governance,[11] the mobilization of grassroots rural cadres,[12] etc. These studies tend to understand mobilization as a type of internal government mobilization that goes beyond the conventional and non-institutional or emergency-type mobilization needed to break through existing organizational structures before it can be launched and put into action.[13] In addition to internal mobilization, a small number of studies have also focused on government mobilization of citizens.[14]

It can be seen that administrative control attaches importance to the distortions caused by the conflict between professional policy behavior and irrational institutional arrangements in specific practice, while policy mobilization pays more attention to non-institutional organizational behavior and examines how grassroots governments integrate all stakeholders and resources into unified action. The two perspectives are complementary; however, many researchers regard control and mobilization as either-or types of organizational behavior that cannot be brought together. They overlook the fact that in the existing political and administrative system, although social governance forms may appear to eliminate the administrative control of the authorities, in actuality they still retain or even strengthen existing administrative authority, being constantly developed and used by governments at all levels.[15]

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8   Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy.*
9   Yang Fan and Wang Shizong, "Citizen Participation and Its Administrative Mobilizability: The Functional Spillovers of Community Organizations."
10   Elizabeth J. Perry, "Moving the Masses: Emotion Work in the Chinese Revolution," pp. 11-128; Liu Yu, "Maoist Discourse and the Mobilization of Emotions in Revolutionary China," pp. 329-362.
11   Kristen E. Looney, "China's Campaign to Build a New Socialist Countryside: Village Modernization, Peasant Councils, and the Ganzhou Model of Rural Development," pp. 909-932.
12   Graeme Smith, "Political Machinations in a Rural County," pp. 29-59.
13   Zhou Xueguang, "Campaign Governance Mechanisms: Rethinking the Institutional Logic of China's National Governance."
14   Xun Lili and Bao Zhiming, "Government-Mobilized Environmental Policy and Its Local Practice: A Sociological Analysis of Ecological Immigration in Banner S of Inner Mongolia"; Tan Chong and Yan Qiang, "From 'Compulsory Inculcation' to 'Policy Marketing': Trends and Logic of the Changes in China's Policy Mobilization Mode in the Transitional Period."
15   He Yanling and Wang Guanglong, "The Order in Transitional China and Its Institutional Logic."

From the perspective of the design, implementation and evolution of policy, the sections below provides an overall consideration of the cases of different villages, towns and sub-districts in County T and summarizes the impact of grassroots mobilization on policy performance.

II. Case Selection and Research Methods

In 2012, classification of domestic waste by source ("source classification") was launched in the form of "pilot + summary of experience" to promote the sorting of waste in County T in the northwest of Province Z.[16] The county first chosen rural residents accounting for 60 percent of its total population as the target for its policy intervention. Full coverage had basically been achieved by 2014. All the cases below come from the transitional stage of the source classification policy, from pilot project to management of long-term planning from 2014 to 2017, when policy implementation was shifting from non-institutionalized interaction among multiple players to institutionalized management. Data collection was carried out in four steps. In 2016, researchers conducted several pre-surveys of source classification. By the end of February 2017, they had formulated research questions, completed literature research and designed research tools. In March 2017, they went to County T to conduct a survey; while there, they collected a large number of interview recordings, images, shorthand texts, policy regulations and publicity brochures. They then transcribed the recordings, encoded the texts, extracted meaningful items and worked out core propositions. At the beginning of April 2017, the Environmental Protection Department of County T further provided records of the implementation of the source classification policy for fourteen villages, towns and sub-districts according to information disclosure norms. At the end of April 2017, the researchers returned to County T and interviewed the principal leaders of the Environmental Protection Department and nearly twenty classification policy implementers from different administrative areas using detailed research instruments. Finally, from the beginning of May to mid-May 2017, the authors contacted the leaders of the Environmental Protection Department and those in charge of the relevant villages, towns and sub-districts to confirm any previous invalid answers or missing areas.

In accordance with the logical demands of replication,[17] we selected villages, towns and sub-districts with marked differences in administrative control and social mobilization for our study's multi-case comparative research method. We obtained four pairs of source cases. Within each, we compared cases with similar implementation strategies or results to enhance the validity of our propositions.

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16   In line with research practice, place and personal names appearing in the paper are anonymized by letter codes.

17   Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*.

III. Policy Design

In 2013, County T required residents of towns and sub-districts to carry out waste classification by sorting waste from production and domestic use into compostable and non-compostable waste, with the household as the unit. In the pilot stage of the policy, the County Environmental Protection Department set out the performance appraisal standards for this task. The three most important indicators were people's awareness of waste classification by source and the rates of correct waste classification and domestic waste collection (including production waste).

The performance indicator constraints meant that the process of moving from the pilot scheme to gradual popularization of the task provided villages, towns and sub-districts with opportunities for exploration and innovation. Innovations that produced outstanding effects and reflected universal values were reported to County T's Environmental Protection Department and became models of social governance innovation in the field of environmental protection. Policy design took into account the internal differences between the main villages, towns and sub-districts and left plenty of space for policy innovation in each place. Overall, its main components were publicity, supervision and incentives.

In 2017, the local Environmental Protection Department summed up fourteen innovative models for the implementation of the classification policy at the level of villages, towns and sub-districts and promoted them throughout the county. However, due to differences in resource endowment, administrative authority and the social capital of the populace, there were significant differences in the process of policy implementation in different areas.

IV. Characteristics of and Differences in the Policy Implementation Process

Administrative control here refers mainly to the ability of grassroots policy implementers[18] to formulate implementation rules, allocate policy resources and use hierarchical relationships to guide or restrain their members, while social mobilization is the ability of the government to motivate the populace to participate in the required realization of policy objectives through incentives, rewards and penalties, propaganda, demonstrations and other means. In accordance with the aforementioned logic of replication, we designed an analytical framework based on the strength ratio of administrative control ability to social mobilization ability, and classified the set of cases of County T according to the four ideal types of "weak control and weak mobilization," "strong control and weak mobilization," "weak control and strong mobilization" and "strong control and strong mobilization." The section below presents the policy implementation process in a number of locations.

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18   In this paper, policy implementers include not only village- and community-level policy implementers, but also the administrative staff in town and sub-district government agencies responsible for guiding and supervising the work.

1. Weak control and weak mobilization: Towns L and F

Located in a remote part of the northwest of County T, most of the villages in Town L have a backward collective economy and are indebted to outside creditors. Villagers make a living by working in laboring jobs away from home or relying on local agriculture. In Village C, for example, besides the Party Secretary, the Communist Party committee and the village committee had sixteen staff members between them. In June 2014, Town L was the first in the county to implement the classified waste policy, but it had limited staff and few self-governing organizations and Party members. After consultation, the village committee asked each of the sixteen staff members to take responsibility for the mobilization of dozens of households and to carry out self-supervision to ensure the quality of policy implementation. Almost all of them "were overloaded. At a minimum, that meant one person would need to contact 20-30 households, or even as many as 90 households."[19] In the initial stage, the village administrative staff distributed manuals to each household, went house-to-house explaining waste classification, issued special bags for waste disposal and gave each household a number. The sixteen had full responsibility for all the work, from publicity and guidance to supervision; no other organizations were involved in policy implementation. Some time later, most villagers' classification behavior had not changed significantly. In order to avoid inspection, some villagers threw waste into public areas, or came up with a number of reasons why the waste could not be sorted when they were inspected by the administrative staff. Classification of waste by source deteriorated. The administrative staff lost their sense of efficacy, abandoned the original household-by-household mobilization model and began to conduct random household supervision in the areas they were responsible for. They even chose to carry out the sorting themselves or volunteered to accept punishment for having failed. They felt that "All the upper level departments have tasks (for us to do)[20]... This job is just one of our duties, and the rest of the work sent down or across to us is very demanding. Many tasks overlap."[21] The performance score of Village C in terms of waste classification was regularly the lowest of all the villages under the town; they had often been criticized by the County Environmental Protection Department, but with no visible improvement. It had thus fallen into a cycle of non-cooperation on the part of the masses and negative responses from the administrative staff. Our researchers found that compared with other villages, the performance of this village's other work was also backward, ranking the lowest in the whole town. The town government failed to use effective incentives to mobilize the enthusiasm of Village C committee members.

Town F, similar to Town L, encountered almost the same problems in the mobilization of waste sorting. Town F is underdeveloped with scattered villages and a number of understaffed

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19   Interview Records: 20170425-XC-DL (Coding Rules: Interview Time-Transcription Code-Respondent Code; the same below).
20   The words in brackets were supplemented by the authors on the basis of semantics; the same below.
21   Interview Records: 20170425-XC-ZX.

village committees. In Village Y under Town F, for example, the village committee had only ten or so staff members. In order to implement the policy smoothly, Town F tried to strengthen its control over the implementing the policy implementers to change the existing situation. It established an inspection group, split the village into grids, assigned posts and responsibilities, selected good and bad models and conducted house-by-house and bin-by-bin supervision and inspection. It exposed ineffective grid groups that were lagging in deployment, slow to take action and had no visible results on the village bulletin board, and called the village cadres in for a talk and ordered them to rectify the situation. It also commended and gave awards to farmers whose waste sorting performance was relatively good. Once this approach was implemented, there was a certain improvement in the waste sorting results. This gained the approval of the County Environmental Protection Department, which summarized the method as "calling cadres in for an talk" and popularized it throughout the county. Despite Village Y's weak economic base, scarce human resources and lack of interaction among the populace, it has not subsided into the mire of weak control and weak mobilization like Village C. Under pressure from the town government, the Party and village committees actively tried to use the performance appraisal of administrative agencies to urge policy implementers to complete their tasks.

2. Strong control and weak mobilization: Sub-districts M and J

The community in Sub-district M has long suffered from a general lack of self-governing organizations, with the neighborhood committees basically undertaking all the routine work. Depending on the actual situation, the sub-district office required the neighborhood committees to mobilize Communist Party members into the work team to ensure that sufficient personnel participated in the implementation. It formulated the following work plan: each Party member was to be responsible for the policy's publicity, guidance and supervision for 10-15 households. The administrative staff of the neighborhood committee, together with some external supervisors, were responsible for supervising Party members. Every morning from 7:00 to 9:00, the inspection team would check waste sorting in the area under its jurisdiction and record the results. The neighborhood committee cadres, sub-district office staff and the County T Environmental Protection Department were responsible for evaluating the supervisors' work and rating the responsible person for each area according to performance criteria. As a result, a hierarchical structure was formed, composed of one level of Party implementers and two of administrative supervisors, an arrangement that was approved by the Environmental Protection Department. Shortly afterwards, the neighborhood committee set a target of 20 percent of each supervisor's year-end performance bonus, to be deducted directly if their score was too low. At the same time, the community targeted 300 RMB in each resident's annual collective economic dividend, to be deducted as a penalty if they failed to follow through on sorting their garbage.

The case of Sub-district J was similar to that of Sub-district M. Village P in Sub-district J, for example, also mobilized Communist Party members to become policy implementers and

divided the area under its jurisdiction into seven fields of responsibility. Shortly afterwards, the "two boards and one list" method was introduced. Where the population was closely settled, they put up a rectification bulletin board which marked the daily sorting performance of 550 households with red, green and black markers. At the door of each Communist Party member's household, Party members' star bulletin boards were put up that listed the households they were responsible for supervising; three of these households received a starred rating each day. The community regularly scored the sorting of waste in these Party-supervised households. Every time they arrived at a household, they would take a photo for the record. The list of households with high scores was posted on the bulletin board at the entrance to the community as a Roll of Honor. The scoring of village households' waste-sorting performance was combined with material rewards.

Compared with Sub-district M, the practice of Village P of Sub-district J relied more on an information disclosure system which was conducive to governmental "summing up and publicizing" and "data archiving." At the same time, it improved the operability and institutionalization of the mobilization scheme, and was easy to replicate and disseminate. Shortly afterwards, the village's experience was compiled for the "County T Experience Manual of Waste Classification by Source" by the county's Environmental Protection Department and popularized throughout the county.

It is noteworthy that the villages and communities of Sub-districts J and M also needed to face the multiple management pressures exerted by different government departments. As a result, common people with the status of Party members were often brought into front-line policy implementation by administrative forces, becoming part of the "street-level officials" undertaking the task of social mobilization.

3. Weak control and strong mobilization: Sub-district X and Town B

Unlike Towns L and F and Sub-districts J and M, the residents of Sub-district X had a close social network. For example, Village W of Sub-district X divided the classification policy into clear tasks and adopted the method of third-party subcontracting. They developed a package of dedicated funds and called for unified tenders, with the village committee posting an announcement and publicly calling for bids from subcontractors. During the tender process, the bidders first made a speech to all Party members and villager representatives and made a public bid. The members of two committees and all Party members and villager representatives then collectively evaluated and voted on the tenders, accepting the one with the highest number of votes for a three-month trial period. The village committee presided over the drawing up of rules for incentives and penalties for the subcontractors. If the county government found one instance in which the sorting of waste was not up to standard, 500 RMB would be deducted from the subcontractor's monthly bonus; if the sub-district uncovered a similar flaw, the subcontractor would lose 300 RMB. If deductions amounted to more than 1,500 RMB in one month, the next month's assessment bonus was cancelled; and if Village W received incentive funds from superior departments, 70 percent of the funds

would go to the subcontractors. It can be seen that the classification of waste in Village W was accomplished jointly by multiple players including the contracting enterprises, village committee, other self-governing organizations and the villagers; the main role of most of the administrative staff of the town government was simply advocacy and supervision. But there were risks in this model; policy implementation depended on the cooperation of partners. "... (When you introduce the market) there are a running-in period in relation to the original system. For example, to the combination of professional management experience and a talented team with actual policy requirements really needs to come into effect. This is not a task which can be completed overnight."[22] If any of the market participants suddenly withdrew their cooperation, the Party and village committees would not only face financial losses, but also inevitably be held accountable on multiple occasions for what had gone wrong.

The case of Town B was similar to that of Sub-district X. By the end of 2014, most villages under the town had begun to classify waste by source. In the early stage of policy implementation, Town B designed working rules for grid management, and soon, stimulated by Sub-district X, adopted a composite mobilization scheme that could be summarized as a "final stage supervision method + Agricultural Assessment Committee + pairing assistance + incentives and penalties." In supervision of the final stage, the staff of the waste transit station were responsible for inspecting the garbage that had been transported thither and for scoring the sorting of waste by source based on the percentage of compostable waste. On the basis of grid management, three Party members from the Agricultural Assessment Committee would regularly inform, guide and inspect the farm households in their grid, checking their knowledge of how to sort waste and giving each household a monthly score. The results of the Agricultural Assessment Committee's inspection were used for the monthly evaluation of each grid, and the funds awarded for classifying waste by source were distributed proportionally by the village committees on the basis of the evaluation results. "Pairing assistance + incentives and penalties" meant that Party members and villager representatives were paired with left-behind elderly and uncooperative villagers on the basis of geographical nearness and kinship relations and were responsible for correcting their behavior. If, during the inspection, a farm household got a score of less than three points, the paired Party members and village representatives would be notified and would show up to guide their reform and rectification. If this happened twice, they would be criticized publicly. If after three or more inspections they were still doing it wrong, points would be deducted from the quarterly assessment of the village representatives and the vanguard index of the Party members. The administrative staff of Town B also did not participate in publicity and guidance; their supervision was mainly confined to the core leadership of self-governing organizations. Unlike Sub-district X, Town B did not rely

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22   Interview Records: 20170425-XC-ML.

excessively on market forces, which left more room for initiative on the part of the village's self-governing organizations. Not all the publicity campaign and control strategies were proposed by the town government; self-governing forces were also involved in the drawing up of rules.

Neither Town B nor Sub-district X relied on an informal hierarchical structure to carry out a strict step-by-step assessment of their partners; rather, they attached importance to the establishment of a flat grid system so that the social forces could monitor themselves. When other important tasks came up, the multi-player model of cooperation could be slightly adjusted, being renamed and packaged as an innovative model. "... The number of people stays the same and the methods are pretty much the same. The name change makes it an innovation."[23] Compared with areas where market and social forces were not sufficiently involved, Town B and Sub-district X were more flexible in responding to the pressures of multi-player management.

4. Strong control and strong mobilization: Towns Z and A

Town Z is located in the western part of County T, and the villages under the town generally have a well-developed collective economy. In the initial stage, the town government believed that the content of the work was not too burdensome and could largely be completed by the administrative staff of the village committee. However, by the end of the first quarter, only a few households met the waste sorting criteria. After internal discussions, all the villages agreed that Party members, women's organizations and elderly associations must be used to mobilize the participation of the masses. Town Z also used performance appraisal methods such as "calling in the worst performers for a talk" in each village. It announced the three worst performing administrative villages each month. When a village fell into this category for the first time, the Secretary of the Town Discipline Committee would call in its main cadres for an interview; if this happened a second and third time, the town imposed a heavier penalty. Under this pressure, the village committees dared not slack off; they actively improved their mobilization methods, taking grid management as a platform and establishing a supervisory group composed of the village Women's Congress and Elderly Association to inspect every household and report back. The two village committees monitored the work of the supervisory group and the villagers' actual waste-sorting performance. The relevant staff of the town government formed a third-level supervisory group to supervise the implementation of policies in each village. The cadres in charge of this task in different villages established incentive systems such as "mutual comparison, mutual learning, encouraging each other" and "red and black lists" for commendation and criticism to mobilize the villagers through the dual channels of affective ties and material interests. They used multiple WeChat groups and regular face-to-face summing up of experience to blur the communicative boundaries between villagers,

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23   Interview Records: 20170508-YF-YD.

members of self-governing organizations, village-level administrative staff and town government staff. As a result, their understanding of policy tended to be consistent.

Town A, like Town Z, developed a grid management system. The initial mobilization work incorporated self-governing organizations such as women's associations, elderly associations and volunteer associations into the framework of grid management, and formulated detailed assessment rules. For example, if town government staff found that there were some village households who were not living up to the requirements in an area for which village representatives or Party members were responsible, the former would suffer a cash penalty and the latter would be regarded as failing to meet requirements for one quarter. In addition, the Women's Waste Sorting Group, which was mainly organized by the women's associations, conducted random checks of the garbage bins in each area every week. They rewarded farmers who had an outstanding waste sorting performance and adopted an attitude of "letting no one slip through" toward farmers with poor performance, inspecting their waste sorting each day until it met the standards. If this work was publicly criticized by the county or town, the responsible person in the women's association was to be held accountable and be penalized. The distribution of villages in Township A is concentrated, enabling the administrative agencies to mobilize sufficient economic and human resources for policy implementation. This highlights the centralized management characteristic of policy mobilization, shortens the time taken, and produces more significant results. The bottom-up negative reactions of ordinary people dissipated rapidly as the policy was implemented. Although we cannot accurately judge public opinion on the value of the policy, the constraints of group pressures and social norms meant that almost all of them showed willingness to cooperate with policy implementation.

V. Grassroots Policy Implementation and Adaptive Social Mobilization

Institutional theory holds that institution building occurs not only top down, but also bottom up.[24] The above cases show that grassroots administrative power is not the only factor shaping the policy implementation process. Given the constraints of performance, resources, time, etc., grassroots administration must consider how to combine with market and self-governing forces to form a constructive interactive relationship.

1. Modes of policy implementation at the grassroots level

According to the dimensions of administrative control and social mobilization selected above, we designed four ideal types. The description of different cases can serve to embed the details of these ideal types, from which we obtain four specific policy implementation strategies (see Figure 1).

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24   D. Strang and D.S. Wesley, "Interorganizational Institutions," pp. 497-519.

Figure 1 Modes of Policy Implementation
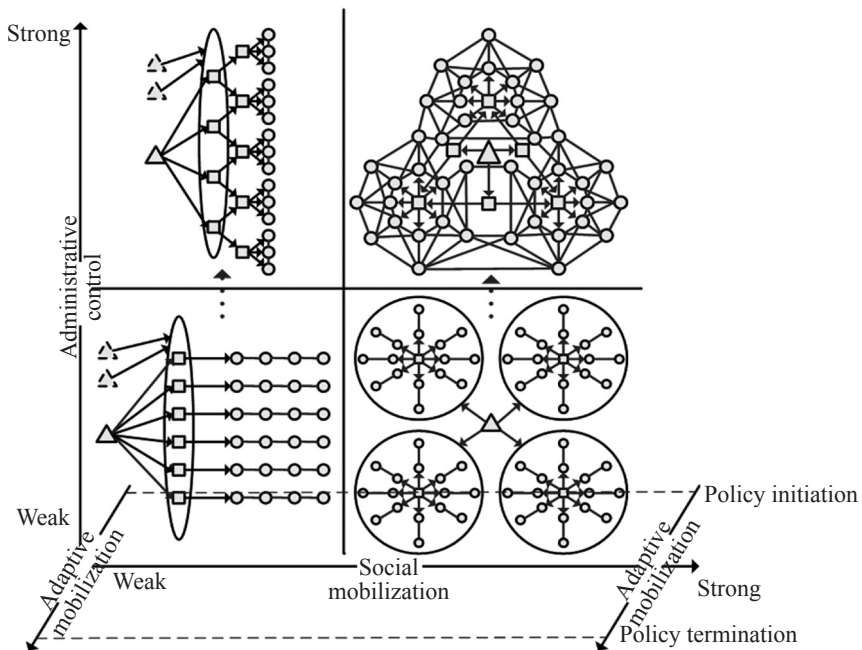
Note: The solid triangle represents the principal person in charge of policy implementation in a particular
area, while the dashed-line triangle represents the people in charge of other policies that exist at
the same time;[25] the box represents frontline policy implementers and the small circles represent
citizens; the arrow indicates the direction of administrative actions such as publicity, control and
supervision; line segments indicate the existence of social interaction; the ellipse in the second and
third quadrants represents the set of policy implementers; and the big circles in the fourth quadrant
represents the interactive boundaries of small groups.

(1) Weak Administrative Control-Weak Social Mobilization (Quadrant 3 in Figure 1)

Where the administrative control of the grassroots government is weak and the targets of
policy (the populace) lack a connection with each other, policy implementers adopt random
interventions to mobilize the masses' participation in policy implementation.

In Village C of Town L, policy implementers' levels, resources, ability and time were
limited and were not embedded in effective patronage networks,[26] which left them without
sufficient administrative authority to undertake top-down tasks. In the absence of performance
constraints and incentives, they chose random targets for intervention and relied on a limited

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25 The actors represented by solid and dotted lines are likely to overlap in one person, but this does
not reduce the policy tasks of multi-player management will not be reduced.
26 Wooyeal Paik and Richard Baum, "Clientelism with Chinese Characteristics: Local Patronage
Networks in Post–reform China," pp. 675-702.

number of people thus chosen to convey the policy requirements to other people.

(2) Strong Administrative Control-Weak Social Mobilization (Quadrant 2 in Figure 1)

When a grassroots government has strong administrative control but those who are policy targets have little interconnection, people with a given political status can be mobilized and absorbed into the policy system. Upper-level organizations assign performance responsibilities to each grassroots policy implementer, and require them to personally guide and supervise other people to work together to achieve policy objectives.

The grassroots governments of Sub-districts M and J required the villages and communities within their jurisdiction to mobilize residents with Party membership into joining an informal hierarchical system as implementers of the waste sorting policy. Under the twofold supervision of grassroots self-governing organizations and grassroots government departments, each policy implementer was to undertake specific policy tasks. If the objective was not met, information on those responsible would be made public and they would be penalized. Grassroots governments improve the efficiency of policy implementation through a system of joint responsibility and an informal hierarchical structure that brings the task of assessment in line with government interests at the same level. However, this also increases dissatisfaction and exhaustion in village and community administrative organizations.

(3) Weak Administrative Control-Strong Social Mobilization (Quadrant 4 in Figure 1)

In the area under the jurisdiction of grassroots governments, recipients of the policy form many scattered but cohesive small groups. Policy implementers can target their intervention on the core members of these groups and pass on policy requirements to all the other members through them.

The self-governing network of Sub-district X and Town B was well developed. The main bodies, such as the local elite and self-governing organizations, could build up social networks and were embedded in public affairs. When the government's administrative forces had difficulty in comprehensively leading the mobilization, policy implementers could use social networks to supervise and coordinate the core members of the various organizations involved in policy mobilization, allowing them to take the lead in designing mobilization programs to complete the mobilization of the rest of the populace.

(4) Strong Administrative Control-Strong Social Mobilization (Quadrant 1 in Figure 1)

When a grassroots government has strong administrative control and ordinary people have close connections, policy implementers can adopt a combination of directed distribution and targeted intervention to carry out policy implementation.

The governments of Towns Z and A had sufficient administrative resources and authority to formulate and implement the grid mobilization scheme smoothly. At the same time, the community and village also had a good basis for self-government. Administrative control and self-governing social networks overlapped and multiple mobilization schemes could be used simultaneously.

The cases also show that over time, different modes can be transformed (as shown by the dotted arrow in Figure 1). For example, in cases of unsatisfactory performance, grassroots

governments would enhance administrative control to promote policy implementation in the region. The emergence of "weak control and strong mobilization" represented by Sub-district X and Town B in County T was also a strategic choice made by grassroots governments to constantly adjust their relations with the masses and actively adapt to the actual conditions of self-government (for example, by obtaining the public's identification with policy legitimacy and reducing administrative costs).

2. Adaptive social mobilization and the evolution of its implementation

With the reference to Suchman's hypothesis of the dynamic mechanism of institutional creation in organization studies,[27] we propose the concept of adaptive social mobilization based on the set of case studies in County T and describe the formative process and logic of these specific modes of social mobilization in the implementation of grassroots policies.

Adaptive social mobilization refers to the comprehensive interaction of grassroots policy implementers and ordinary people, self-governing organizations and market forces as the targets of policy following the top-down formulation of policy objectives, and the continuous evaluative power of administrative control and social mobilization based on performance pressures and bottom-up feedback on their effect. Finally, a stable social mobilization scheme is used as a means of implementing policy. Policy implementers will also attempt to institutionalize policy programs in an effort to gain the popular acceptance that will allow them to be maintained and disseminated. It can thus be seen that the process of adaptive social mobilization is one of full-scale efforts to locate determinate forces of control and integrate indeterminate situational factors (as shown in Figure 2).

Figure 2 The Process of Adaptive Social Mobilization

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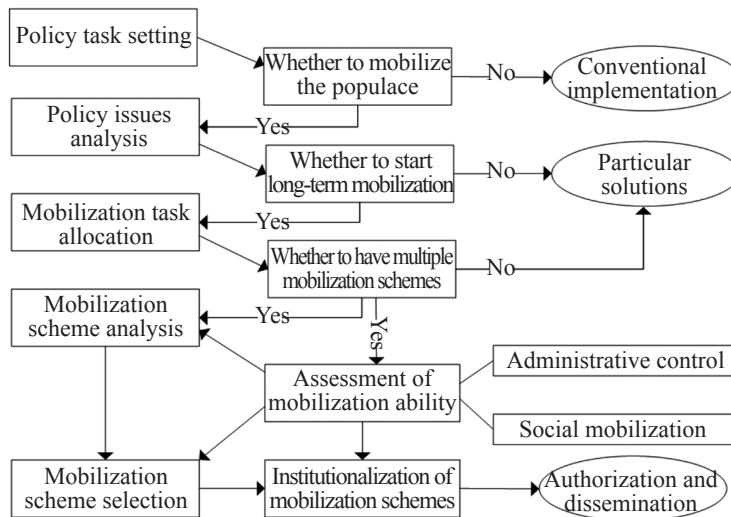
27   M.C. Suchman, "Localism and Globalism in Institutional Analysis: The Emergence of Contractual Norms in Venture Finance," pp. 39-63.

These cases show that in performance-oriented policy implementation, implementers will adjust their judgments of policy objectives, use strategic tactics to combine the resources at hand, constantly select effective policy implementation plans and strive to obtain the approval of policy authorities in achieving institutionalization. Of course, a small number of cases such as that of village C of Town L show that in some circumstances, policy implementation falls into the trap of poor performance; the policy's continued implementation was only a way of handling the pressure from superiors.

3. Further discussion of adaptive social mobilization

There is no contradiction between adaptive social mobilization and top-down administrative control; on the contrary, the former is generally based on the internal mobilization of the bureaucracy under the pressure system.

In the areas with developed self-governing traditions, grassroots policy implementers entering communities and villages prefer to first seek capable local people, self-governing organizations or third party institutions, and make them a priority in policy intervention. These core members then mobilize others within their small group to work together to complete the task of implementation. The closer interpersonal relationships are, the greater is the density of the social network as a whole and the more frequent the daily interaction; consequently, social mobilization will have a more significant effect.[28]

In areas lacking a self-governing tradition, grassroots governments often mobilize policy resources by strengthening administrative control, guiding participants' behavior, strengthening people's identification with policy roles (such as "grid chief" and "advanced Party members"), and promoting a series of experiences of innovative marked by performance management (such as Sub-districts M and J). Consistent with the innovation logic[29] of most local governments, these innovations are low-risk ones in which frontline town and village cadres play an elite role. They have at least three subtle effects. Firstly, they effectively blur the status and responsibilities of administrative bureaucrats vs ordinary people via joint responsibility, thus achieving the effect of handling appraisals from superiors and avoiding responsibility for errors. Secondly, they can alleviate the difficulties faced in policy implementation, such as tight schedules, a heavy task burden and insufficient human and material resources. And thirdly, they can create policy discourse, shape a narrative of policy innovation and enhance policy legitimacy.

VI. Conclusion

On the basis of County T's practice of sorting rural domestic waste by source, we have focused on analyzing the effect on policy processes and performance of grassroots

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28   T. Rogers *et al.*, "Social Mobilization," pp. 357-381.
29   Chen Xuelian and Yang Xuedong, "The Model of Local Government as a Driver of Innovation: An Examination from the Perspective of Local Government Cadres."

governments' capacity for administrative control and social mobilization. We have explored four means of policy implementation, summarizing the different strategies for and changes in adaptive social mobilization over the course of policy implementation. In terms of the overall situation in our set of case studies, performance-oriented policy design, accessible administrative resources and authority and the structure of the social network of the population can influence the administrative control and social mobilization of grassroots policy implementers and thence affect their choice of policy implementation strategies. Over a certain period, the mobilization program gradually becomes institutionalized and the policy effect tends to stabilize. The low performance trap has only appeared in a few villages that lack both administrative control and social mobilization capacity; in them, the policy effect has withered on the vine.

Simply demonstrating the impact of top-down administrative forces on policy implementation can easily present a self-contradictory dilemma. The same empirical material can support different conclusions,[30] making it easy for discussion to revolve around "tautological conclusions" and "administrative proverbs."[31] In the science of policy research, it is unwise to ignore the way policy recipients and informal institutions act on policy processes. On the other hand, "bottom-up" does not necessarily imply that social forces, as some classical theories claim, are capable of changing the government's decision-making processes and policy objectives. This study reveals another possibility; that is, adaptive social mobilization enables the government to extend its hierarchy to grassroots society, making the civil society network into a component that allows the system of hierarchical directives to achieve full coverage and be more effective. Clearly, the concept of adaptive social mobilization seeks to explain how the administrative system can incorporate some self-governing social forces into the chain of control through policy implementation, a concept that is significantly different from the emphasis on co-governance in "adaptive governance."[32]

We have sought to understand the nature of social governance in China. The primary significance of strong personal connections, traditions of social autonomy and organized self-governing networks lies not in "multi-player equal cooperation and co-governance," but in providing a basis for grassroots governments and policy implementers to innovate their models of policy implementation. More directly, unlike the core functions of the new public governance theory—improving the supply of services and the quality of decision-making—the core function of social governance in China lies in strengthening institutional implementation. This conclusion enables us to further explain the current trends in China's twofold enhancement of administrative control and pluralistic participation. Grassroots

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30   For example, as one of the earliest subjects studied in administrative science after reform and opening up, "policy pilots" helped to test a large number of theories, including ones with conflicting views.

31   "Administrative proverbs" refers to seemingly correct but actually contradictory administrative proposals. See Herbert A. Simon, "The Proverbs of Administration," pp. 53-67.

32   C. Folke *et al*., "Adaptive Governance of Social-Ecological Systems," pp. 441-473.

governments can actively adjust their relationships with local society; by interpreting policy objectives, adjusting the allocation of administrative resources and absorbing popular social norms into the basis of policy legitimacy, they can construct innovative social governance and narrative strategies to alleviate the shortage of human and material resources, the tight schedule pressure, and to win the approval of their superiors while trying avoid the risk of being held accountable for errors. Ordinary people usually avoid direct confrontation with administrative officials or else look forward to corresponding returns from cooperating with government, so they comply with the social norms externalized from policy and go along with government requirements. This process of interaction formally blunts the edge of many coercive policy tactics such as compulsion, commands, surveillance and control, reform, etc. In the implementation of policies that still take performance as their fundamental orientation, it introduces a soft "co-governance discourse." We also believe that the autonomy of lower-level governments and their policy implementers plays a vital role in policy implementation at the grassroots level and local social governance: the current system still gives a certain autonomy to lower-level governments and grassroots bureaucrats. If they completely lose the autonomy they have in choosing and innovating the means of implementation, the pattern of grassroots "social governance" in China will have undergone another significant transformation.

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