Local Politics, Local Citizenship? Socialized Governance in Contemporary China

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Abstract

The demise of collective units that attach citizens to the state in China has been overstated; the hegemonic form of Chinese citizenship today links participation and welfare entitlement to membership in a collective unit in a specific locality. This article presents an ethnographic account of the operation of this "normal" form of local citizenship in resident and villager committees in Tianjin. These committees combine participatory and welfare dimensions of citizenship in one institutional setting. Here, citizens are bound to the state through a face-to-face politics that acts both as a mechanism of control and a channel for claims-making, a mode of rule I term "socialized governance," which blurs the boundaries between political compliance and social conformity, and makes social norms a strong force in the citizenship order. While variably achieved in practice, this form of citizenship represents an ideal that shapes conditions for politics and perceptions of inequality.

Keywords: local citizenship; governance; everyday politics; resident and villager committees; social welfare; *guanxi*; participation; *hukou* system

It is a truism that all politics is local, but does this mean that citizenship, as the means of including citizens in the polity, is also local? Citizenship has generally been assumed to be a creature of the national scale, but recent scholarship has pointed out that the location of citizenship is an empirical question.[1] This rethinking has concentrated on ways citizenship has become transnational, mobile or "post-national,"[2] and also on citizenship as practised, particularly with a focus on the city.[3] Beyond this urban angle, citizenship theorists have begun to explore how different scalar levels form citizenship orders.[4]

The China case provides an intriguing perspective on these questions. This article proposes that in China the "normal" form for the nexus between citizen

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1 Bosniak 2000; Bauder 2013; Urry 2000.
2 Ong 1999; Sassen 2005; Soysal 1994.
3 Isin 2002; Sassen 2005.
4 See, e.g., Neveu et al. 2013; Valverde 2010.

belonging, participation and entitlement and state obligation is primarily local. Small-scale communities built on the framework of Maoist collectives bind people to the state through what I term "socialized governance," direct connections to state agents. From the state's point of view, this style of governance locates citizens and integrates them into state projects, yet from the citizen's point of view, the same connections can serve as a channel for claims. On one level, membership in these institutions is formal: the *hukou* system assigns each person to a locality where they may exercise political rights and claim social support. Yet, formal membership operates in sites where a face-to-face politics enables a local moral sociality that shapes norms of the "good citizen" and the kinds of claims on collective and state resources considered thinkable. Here, the boundaries between compliance with state imperatives and informal pressures for social conformity are blurred.

This article explores the citizenship order that is made possible by the siting of citizenship entitlements and participation in local collectives. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Tianjin municipality, it shows that people's sense of entitlement to a social safety net is situated in the neighbourhood or village of their formal residence, and depends on their right of participation and voice there. My perspective contrasts with accounts in Chinese studies, where citizenship has been viewed as bifurcated along the rural/urban divide, and the focus has been on those marginalized or excluded, whether owing to their rural status or cultural distinctions.[5] By contrast, I view rural/urban as *one* of a number of distinctions that contribute to local variation in welfare, participation rights and relative value accorded to citizens. This local anchoring of citizen membership, participation and entitlement – along with their concentration in one institutional setting – means that social norms play a very strong role in shaping the character of local citizenship.

The resulting differentiation of citizenship highlights the tension between formal equality and substantive inequality that has been a central concern in citizenship studies.[6] By bringing into simultaneous focus the scale on which formal rules on citizenship are made and the institutions through which they operate on the one hand, and the social processes that condition how these work in practice on the other, the approach I propose adds to theorizing on citizenship more generally. It points out that a citizenship order involves a complex interaction between state rules and institutions at various scalar levels, not only the national, and social processes that are *similarly* variable. *Locating* citizens, and governing them through municipal regulatory regimes that situate them in place, has been a consistent feature of citizenship orders but one that has been insufficiently studied. Such an approach seeks to disaggregate the state, identifying its variable locations and practices.

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5 Solinger 1999; Fong and Murphy 2006.
6 See, e.g., Marshall 1992; Somers 2008.

Here, citizenship is conceptualized as an "instituted process"[7] involving routine relationships between the state and citizens that shape the ways citizens participate in state projects and how they contest their engagement in, or their exclusion from, those projects. Inevitably, these institutionalized relationships involve informal social norms and structures. The citizen has long been an important figure in Chinese political life, most recently as an aspirational term for those who critique the lack of political rights in the existing order. The usual translation of "citizenship" into Chinese cements this association, glossing the term as "rights of the citizen" (*gongmin quanli* 公民权利), highlighting an association with Euro-American normative frameworks. However, I deploy the term in its more underdetermined English sense as an analytical category that brings into view the relational and institutional character of citizenship, as well as identifying its normative and substantive aspects. From this perspective, citizenship is "Janus-faced," since it may be empowering but can also serve to legitimate certain forms of inequality and to exclude and govern.[8]

I begin by outlining approaches to the location question in citizenship studies, including in the China context. I then examine the resident committees and villager committees as sites of citizenship, giving an account of the sources of my data. In three following sections, I consider how this institutional location shapes three dimensions of citizenship: membership, welfare entitlement and participation. This exploration aims to uncover the local terms of citizenship practice in contemporary China rather than identifying only an absence of features congruent with Euro-American variants. Conceptualizing state–citizen relations through the framework of local citizenship and socialized governance helps to explain how a common institutional architecture at the grassroots in China results in such heterogeneous outcomes, as well as providing insight on how certain inequalities appear legitimate by highlighting the ways that informal social norms come to exert such power in the citizenship order.

Locating Citizenship

In its common sense meaning, the word citizenship evokes passports and borders, manifestations of belonging to a particular state, linking membership to a set of entitlements that flow from inclusion in a national political community. Citizenship studies addresses these linkages from many different perspectives, with a central concern being tensions between formal equality and the persistence of substantive inequality, often associated with informal distinctions in civil society that condition citizens' exercise of rights.[9] This literature also shows how the citizenship order itself legitimates certain forms of inequality among citizens.[10]

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7 Somers 1993, 611.
8 Lister 2007.
9 See, e.g., Marshall 1992; Somers 2008.
10 Marshall 1992.

The assumption has generally been that the membership that matters for citizenship is where people are "full members of a community,"[11] and that citizenship and the nation-state are coterminous.[12] National institutions – legal systems, parliaments and social welfare bureaucracies – create a framework through which the civil, political and social rights of citizens may be realized.[13] The fact that rules and institutions associated with formal citizenship exist not only on a national scale but also at other levels of governance has often been overlooked.[14] In a prosaic sense, accessing entitlements and participating as a citizen often depends on establishing residence in a particular place, on the *jus domicilii* (the right of residence), a relatively neglected aspect of citizenship.[15] The drawing of electoral boundaries, often a power of local governments, is an obvious example. While such rules may result in exclusion, in some cases they grant citizenship entitlements to non-citizens.[16]

A geographical and socio-legal perspective on citizenship raises productive questions. At what scale are the institutions that matter for citizenship located? How do these scalar locations affect how citizens participate and claim their entitlements? And, most crucially for this article, how do these scalar logics shape the interaction between formal citizenship entitlements and informal modes of differentiation among citizens? It is these interactions that form an actual citizenship order: "space [is] the machine" in forming the relations of power and inequality among groups within social fields.[17] State technologies, such as law and jurisdiction, set the rules of the game at a variety of scales.[18] In order to answer such questions, this article combines an ethnographic focus on citizenship as a set of situated practices with attention to formal socio-legal and institutional frameworks.

Although studies of citizenship in China have often highlighted extreme differences in entitlements, particularly the discriminatory effects of the *hukou* on rural-to-urban migrants, they generally project an urban/rural binary across the territory of the People's Republic of China (PRC). As Li Zhang writes, "[U]rban citizenship in socialist China is the site of an enduring spatial politics whose terms have been set by the *hukou* system, which divides national space into two hierarchically ordered parts: the city and the countryside."[19] In Dorothy Solinger's seminal work, a fundamental division in China between "agricultural" (*nongye* 农业, rural) and "non-agricultural" (*feinongye* 非农业, urban) *hukou* categories[20] results in urban residents enjoying "full" citizenship

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11 Ibid., 18.
12 Bosniak 2000.
13 Marshall 1992.
14 An exception focusing on federal states is Jackson 2001.
15 Bauder 2013; Blank 2007.
16 Spiro 2010; Tsuda 2006; Villazor 2010.
17 Isin 2002.
18 Valverde 2010.
19 Zhang 2002, 313.
20 Solinger 1999. These distinctions are based on place of residence, rather than occupation, and remain difficult to change. See Chan and Buckingham 2008.

based on their access to public goods (such as housing and education), while rural-to-urban migrants are "denied genuine membership."[21]

Recently, a more complex picture of "differential citizenship" incorporates two additional elements: distinctions between officials and ordinary people, and between natives and non-natives of a particular place.[22] Divergent social provision among localities shows that divisions between insiders and outsiders have replaced the urban/rural divide as the organizing logic of citizenship.[23] A particular variant of this pattern is how rich villages exclude migrants from other rural places, a pattern Alan and Josephine Smart call "local citizenship."[24]

Focusing on the spatial dynamics of this differentiation, my approach shows that although rules relating to citizenship are made at various scalar levels, small-scale localities determine what these rules mean in practice through both formal and informal mechanisms. These jurisdictional moves enable a means of connecting citizens and the state in contemporary China that I term "socialized governance." This form of rule operates through two principal modes: first, it relies on establishing and maintaining affective connections (*guanxi* 关系) between local citizens and state agents, with familial metaphors such as "big family" frequently deployed in generating such a sense of connection; and second, in working through these personal ties, it blurs formal and informal authority, a style of local rule that draws on historical forms.[25] This kin-inflected mode of making individuals legible to the state and disciplining them through direct observation and personal affective bonds is a neglected aspect of *guanxi*, which has more often been seen as an informal means of distributing state resources,[26] or more recently, as a means by which firms gain unfair advantage over their competitors.[27] Furthermore, in contrast to the view of *guanxi* as paradigmatically informal, the concept of socialized governance highlights the institutionalized character and location of these relationships. In addition, it shows how the personal connections involved in socialized governance cut both ways: *guanxi* can be a means of control but it also affords citizens channels to express grievances and make claims on the state.

Socialized governance is an ideal that is not always realized in practice. A significant minority of citizens have left their places of *hukou* registration, or escaped such governance by retreating into private spaces created by marketization.[28] Yet, there is much to be learned from concentrating on the terms of "normal" or "hegemonic" forms of citizenship, as I do here, rather than starting from

21 Solinger 1999, 7.
22 Wu 2010.
23 Shi, Shih-Jiunn 2009.
24 Smart and Smart 2001.
25 See, e.g., Huang 2008; Li 2005; Shue 1988.
26 Yang 1994.
27 For a recent review of *guanxi* studies, much of it focused on firms and markets, see Chen, Chao C., Chen and Huang 2013.
28 Bray 2005; Tomba 2005.

the experience of the excluded.[29] Thus, I begin from institutions that are central to governing citizens in place, the residents and villager committees.

Sites of Citizenship

Local collective units have been central to the integration of Chinese citizens into state projects since 1949. Despite changes in nomenclature, there is significant continuity in the conception of these units' role as self-sufficient entities that should provide for most of the needs of their members. David Bray's study of the origins of the post-1949 work unit (*danwei* 单位) traces this autarky back to practices in the pre-revolutionary communist base areas.[30] The norm of collective self-sufficiency combined with the ranking of institutions – from industries, schools and hospitals, to cities and communes – to produce localized sets of entitlements. In rural areas, following collectivization in the 1950s, there was redistribution within units but not between them.[31] By the Cultural Revolution decade (1966–1976), preliminary moves towards centralized welfare systems even in urban areas had been abandoned, and since the 1980s, decentralization has increased local welfare autarky.[32]

The current manifestations of collective units are the villager committees (*cunmin weiyuanhui* 村民委员会), in areas designated as rural, and resident committees (*jumin weiyuanhui* 居民委员会)[33] in urban places, both called "basic level" (*jiceng* 基层) organizations in the Chinese constitution. Conceptualized as self-governing, they are elected by their constituents and are responsible for managing "public affairs and social services."[34] Although not considered part of formal government, they play a key role in implementing state policies. Their leadership is drawn from local residents and villagers, but they work closely with the lowest level of formal government, urban street offices and rural townships.

While resident committees have existed since the 1950s, providing employment and services for the minority of urbanites left outside the work unit system, villager committees were first set up in the late 1970s, replacing rural entities called production brigades that had usually been the lowest level of accounting. In the 1982 Constitution, these two types of institutions were made parallel, and their role was strengthened in subsequent legislation and policymaking. Despite their coupling in the Constitution, the two types of committees are rarely compared.[35] Their importance increased following the dissolution of the communes in the countryside in the early 1980s and of large numbers of work units in the cities from the 1990s onwards. Officially seen as the successors to the collective units

29 Valverde 2010.
30 Bray 2005.
31 Smart and Smart 2001.
32 Croll 1999; Shi, Shih-Jiunn 2009.
33 While these are now formally called "community resident committees" (*shequ jumin weiyuanhui*), in my field sites "community" was usually dropped in everyday parlance.
34 Constitution of the People's Republic of China 1982, Art. 111.
35 An exception is Benewick, Tong and Howell 2004.

of the past, since the late 1990s, resident and villager committees have been given a new role as "communities" (*shequ* 社区).[36]

Between October 2008 and August 2009, I conducted participant observation in two resident committees and two villager committees in Tianjin municipality, visiting their offices daily for sustained periods. The resident committees, "Progress" and "Rising China,"[37] both considered model units, are located in central urban districts, Hexi 河西 and Nankai 南开.[38] I spent about two and a half months visiting each. Rising China's territory incorporates residential and business areas, with two enclosed compounds housing academic and non-academic staff of a major university at its core. It has over 1,200 households, with close to 4,000 people. Progress is composed of three residential compounds, with just over 1,000 households and a total population of around 3,500. The main section of this committee's territory is a large compound of 1950s and 1980s-vintage apartment buildings, but the neighbourhood also incorporates one of the city's first gated commercial housing compounds.

"Zhang Family Village," one villager committee, is in a rapidly urbanizing suburb in Beichen district 北辰区. I spent two months observing there. More than half of the village land was expropriated by the city in the 1990s, and by the time of my fieldwork, two-thirds of the 4,000-plus villagers had non-agricultural *hukou* and none made a living from farming. The village collective had successful businesses leasing commercial and industrial buildings. The second villager committee is in "Dragon Peak Village," a weekend holiday destination for urbanites from Tianjin and Beijing in mountainous Jixian county 蓟县. I lived in the village during the five weeks of my fieldwork there. With only about 250 villagers, its economy is dominated by the tourism business, with some 85 per cent of families running "farmer guesthouses."

Inevitably, localities have a distinctive character, but this is strengthened by regulatory and governance frameworks. Although the architecture for the committees is set nationally, the most authoritative regulations governing their operations are local; divergences from national laws can include additional specifications and omission of key provisions. For example, national law requires that villager committees be supervised by a villager assembly but Tianjin specifies that a villager *representative* assembly constituted by elections exercises these functions. Regulations could be even more local: Zhang Family Village had its own rules on eligibility for the generous benefits provided to villagers with funds from collective businesses.

The institutional genealogy of the committees, as expressed in official discourses and popular perceptions, links them to the collectives of the past. Labour officials in Tianjin described resident committees as successors to work units, while committee workers and leaders imagined the work unit as an ideal

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36 See, e.g., Shieh and Friedmann 2008; Yan, Miu Chung, and Gao 2007.
37 All real names of specific places and people have been changed.
38 Each street office covered an area with about 40,000 to 50,000 residents in my fieldwork locations.

to emulate. This is not just nostalgia: work units in the form of government agencies, universities and research institutions and state-owned enterprises still employ a significant minority of privileged urbanites. Despite changing nomenclature, villager committees also reflect significant institutional continuity: in both field sites villagers referred to the committees by their earlier name, "the brigade."

Socialized governance is apparent in both the form and practice of these institutions: they are intermediaries between the state and the people. Their "autonomous" (*zizhi* 自治) designation situates them outside the formal state, yet they are mandated by the constitution and laws. Work units were effectively autonomous but were designated as state-owned. By contrast, resident committees further distance the formal state from daily life, with their workers no longer "cadres" (*ganbu* 干部) and in the process of becoming "social workers" (*shegong* 社工). The idea of villager committee autonomy relates more to the organization of the economic sphere, and their officials are still called cadres. Despite their variable "stateness," leaders and activists in both types of committees drew on the state's symbolic capital to legitimate their work.

Committee workers are middle people, "double agents," in that they are both state representatives and neighbours, cadres and kinfolk. All the villager committee workers in my field sites were villagers, and the majority of resident committee staff lived in the neighbourhoods where they worked. Each worker was responsible for a territorial "beat" in which they were expected to maintain contact with residents. They engaged their ambivalent status in their daily work, which often involved visits to people's homes, blurring expressions of neighbourly concern and emotion management with administrative business and information gathering. Yet, committee workers are not only on the side of the state; they share in defining the meaning of citizenship in the places where they live and work.

Belonging: Beyond *Hukou*

Under the *hukou* system, each person in China is allocated to a specific administrative territory, usually served by a resident or villager committee. Belonging in my field sites was both a government-ascribed status and a local cultural achievement, with formal membership refracted through traditional notions of place-based identity. The micro-level location of these institutions made cultures of place, developed through moral and political processes of collective sense making, crucial in setting the terms of local citizenship.

Resident and villager committees are the location where people cannot be turned away, where they can legitimately exercise their limited political rights and where the claims for support of people facing the threat of indigence should be dealt with. Membership is historical, concerning personal biography and relationships and the history and cultures of places, reinforced by a degree of stability in places of residence. Despite the massive migration that has occurred over the last two decades across China, the majority of the population in my field sites had

remained in place or moved short distances.[39] This is partly a feature of the state-dominated character of Tianjin's economy.[40] The rise of a housing market in the last decade is certainly changing these patterns.

Local institutions determine how the *hukou* system works. While national regulations outline the *hukou* framework, localities make their own rules on its specific operation.[41] In major cities such as Tianjin, these local rules have similarities to immigration regulations in the global north. For example, Tianjin allows people who have paid a certain amount of tax in previous years to transfer the *hukou* of themselves and their family members into the city. One of the *hukou* "reforms" of recent years has been to grant municipalities formal power to decide such questions.[42]

Maintaining the *hukou* register is the responsibility of urban and rural police stations (*paichusuo* 派出所), but resident and villager committees often make citizens legible to them and other authorities: the police could not maintain reliable records without their assistance. Tianjin regulations require "certifications" (*zhengming* 证明) from the committees for administrative business such as registering the birth or adoption of a child, and moving the *hukou* location of a spouse or an elderly parent.[43] In my field sites, certifications were often needed for claims on state resources, particularly to address discrepancies in documents. If you are recognized as a resident, obtaining a certification can be easy, even if the issue in question is technically beyond the committee's jurisdiction. In contrast, the committee's non-cooperation can make dealing with even minor problems impossible.

The two villager committees had a certain degree of discretion about who to include in formal terms, determining who was a "villager" without reference to the *hukou* system. In Zhang Family Village, this status was in demand owing to the generous welfare benefits paid for from collective funds, and the committee was concerned about the growth in the numbers claiming villager status, particularly women who had married out.

Political citizenship in villages was more exclusive than in urban areas;[44] both the villages I studied did not allow outsiders to vote or become villagers, even if their *hukou* was registered there. A woman from another part of Tianjin who ran an employment and rental agency in Zhang Family Village and had lived there for 10 years looked incredulous when I asked whether she could get villager status. By contrast, both the resident committees allowed people who had been resident for a year or more to vote in their elections, as the task of keeping track of the resident population provided an incentive for the inclusion of some outsiders.

Yet the binary of inclusion/exclusion was generally not the most important measure of what citizenship meant in each place. The parameters for substantive

39 See, e.g., Chan 2011.
40 See, e.g., Blecher 2009.
41 Wang, Fei-Ling 2005.
42 Chan 2011.
43 See, e.g., http://wenku.baidu.com/view/bb1de807de80d4d8d15a4f57.html. Accessed 22 April 2013.
44 See also He 2007.

inequality operated largely *within* the social field of the committee's territory, and involved hierarchies of relative virtue or superiority among residents or villagers.[45] A collective ethos shaped the conditions of possibility for making claims and engaging in local politics. Such processes were visible in how each committee's organization of space and deployment of rationalities of governance conditioned the livelihoods of residents and villagers at the margins of the globalized economy.

In managing Zhang Family Village's urbanization, its elite promoted certain ideals of modern urban living. Their redevelopment plans did not include compensation for most of the household-based small businesses through which many villagers actually earned their living. The village's successful collective enterprises were capital intensive but employed only a small minority of villagers in low-end jobs. Despite its ostensible role in representing all villagers, the committee's ideals prioritized the needs of some villagers, favouring those who pursue higher education, for example. Its economic decisions benefitted the families who had already amassed significant economic, social and cultural capital.

Despite formal citizenship equality among villagers in both rural sites, rationalities of governance – notably a teleological conception of "progress" from a "backward" rural towards "advanced" urban life that privileges certain forms of economy and cultural capital – legitimated inequalities among villagers. Not all forms of economic capital accumulation were equal; cultural capital adhered to endeavours associated with urban globalized modernity and national projects. The ruling elite led the charge to make the villages amenable to the accumulation of economic capital, and their leaderships' deployment of political labels to denigrate their critics – called "reactionaries" in Zhang Family Village, purveyors of "backward thinking" in Dragon Peak – pointed to political struggles within each village over the distribution of benefits from "development."

Resident committees had few resources but their regulation of space could significantly affect those pursuing marginal livelihoods. In Rising China, in the name of keeping the main compound "clean," there were attempts to make invisible the relative poverty of households who collect recyclables for their livelihoods. No such environmental protection logic was applied to limit the growing number of cars or clear out piles of bagged construction waste from apartment renovations that clogged the narrow lanes. This is not to say the area was anti-business: the 400-plus businesses in this committee's territory were situated in a large commercial building and in several street-level blocks, but these were outside the residential compounds. Running a business thus required ownership or rental of a dedicated space.

In the main residential compound of Progress, by contrast, under the rubric of "services convenient to the people," micro-enterprises proliferated. Residents of this area were a heterogeneous group and not dominated by any single work

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45 Isin 2002.

unit or social class, and included a core of elderly activists who had lived in the neighbourhood for 30 years or more and who favoured socialist rhetoric. The gates of the main Progress compound were open during the day so tradespeople and hawkers could go in and out. Many small businesses operated out of first floor apartments, including a clinic, a textbook store, a marriage introduction agency, several shops selling cooked food, one selling alcohol and cigarettes, and a dental office. Such businesses made use of the one asset most middle-aged or older working-class people had: an apartment.

The differing physical and cultural environments of these resident committees thus provided variable opportunities for residents without regular work to engage in income-generating activities, with the open gates of the main compound in Progress making it a more viable space for such ventures. By contrast, Rising China's closed compound privileged the supposed preference of the emerging middle class for an "orderly" environment that excluded small businesses. Here, divisions between impoverished residents (and outsiders) and those in formal employment were emphasized through distinctions of "quality" (*suzhi* 素 质).[46] These distinctions were less to do with differences in formal institutional arrangements but rather resulted from the social norms that circulated within and around these institutions and which were also evident in the differing perceptions of welfare recipients in the two places.

Reliance on a "Guarantee"

Resident and villager committees are the location of the social safety net of last resort, a key aspect of social citizenship. Reflecting a history of decentralized provision, both rule making and administration of welfare are set at a localized scale, contributing to a pattern of distinctively different welfare regimes across the country. Yet, institutional similarities are also apparent: welfare provision depends on citizen needs made legible through socialized governance; and relative equality in provision of state-sponsored or collective welfare *within* these units is usually the norm.[47]

Rather than being framed in terms of social rights, entitlement to local welfare was expressed through what I call the "guarantee" (*baozhang* 保障), which gives people facing indigence a claim to some level of assistance from the collective institution to which they belong.[48] Resident and villager committees are the main institutional location for non-employment welfare programmes, including certifying residents' eligibility for age and disability benefits. As a street office official put it, the government has given resident committees the task of ensuring that no one gets into terrible difficulty owing to circumstances such as illness,

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46 Anagnost 2004; Kipnis 2006; Yan, Hairong 2003.
47 Wang, Feng 2008 makes a similar point.
48 The word *baozhang* appears in several compounds that relate to welfare schemes, including the general *shehui baozhang*, generally translated as "social security."

unemployment or disability. Likewise, villages have an obligation to support villagers who become destitute through assistance from collective funds under the older "five guarantees" (*wubao* 五保) or newer welfare systems that mean applying for benefits from the county level. The entry of the state as an actor in rural welfare is recent, and in the villages people's sense of entitlement was directed at the collective. If the villager committee couldn't help you, there was nowhere else to go. In the urban sites, claims could be made to various institutions, including the committees and people's former work units.

Rules for welfare provision are set at the local level, where broad national frameworks become specific policy measures. Although when under the leadership of Hu Jintao 胡锦涛 and Wen Jiabao 温家宝 (2002–2012) the central government launched a number of new welfare initiatives such as the Rural Cooperative Medical Scheme, these have been implemented through the same local institutions as in the past. An example is the operation of the Minimum Livelihood Guarantee (*zuidi shenghuo baozhang* 最低生活保障), the major welfare programme for the poor. National regulations establish a broad "right" for all urban residents whose income is below a certain locally set minimum to receive this cash benefit.[49] In Tianjin, the municipal regulations qualify this right, limiting the benefit to permanent *hukou* holders and defining eligibility in terms of three lacks: income, capacity to work and family support.[50] In practice, the main criterion for urban eligibility in Tianjin was that the person had "lost the ability to labour" (*sangshi laodong nengli* 丧失劳动能力) owing to sickness, disability or age. In the resident committees, this assessment was based on assumptions about people's chances in the labour market relating to age, gender and disability. For rural areas, the eligibility criteria were less clear, but family status was more important. In Dragon Peak Village, all the applications for the benefit involved older men who had not married or who had no surviving family members, and at the time of my field work, only one household was receiving the benefit. By contrast, in Zhang Family Village, the benefit was being used to make up for the lack of an employment-based safety net, as many people had lost their farmland but had no regular source of income. Zhang Family Village thus had the highest proportion of guarantee recipients of any of the committees I studied.

Socialized governance was central to determining who got the benefit: through their "beat" work, committee staff were expected to identify eligible people, and to initiate applications, checking that all the necessary documentation was provided and reflected the person's actual situation. Local social norms shaped people's sense of entitlement in distinctive ways: in socialist Progress, there did not appear to be any stigma attached to receiving welfare, whereas in Rising China

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49 State Council Regulations on the Minimum Livelihood Guarantee for City Residents (*Chengshi jumin zuidi shenghuo baozhang tiaoli*), effective 1 October 1999.

50 Tianjin Measures for the Minimum Livelihood Guarantee (*Tianjinshi zuidi shenghuo baozhang banfa*), 6 July 2001.

being a benefit recipient was seen as a mark of distinctions in "quality" that naturalized the unequal outcomes of people's struggles to manage in the new economy. When I arrived in Dragon Peak Village, I was told by one of the leaders, "we have no welfare here." Here, too, people's inability to provide for their own security through the tourism economy was a mark of "low quality." Such distinctions were less apparent in Zhang Family Village where the majority of villagers were affected by the urbanization process.

Despite the role of the committees in determining which applications could go forward, final decisions on the minimum livelihood guarantee were made at the county or district level. From the perspective of the committee workers, these decisions often appeared arbitrary. Local discretion in rule making and approving benefit claims reflects the fact that a significant proportion of spending on welfare comes from city districts or rural counties, while the overwhelming majority of funds for this purpose come from the provincial level or below.[51] In urban Tianjin, 50 per cent of funds for the minimum livelihood guarantee came from the municipality, and 50 per cent from the district level; and in rural Tianjin, all the funds for this benefit had to come from the county, township or district level, including a proportion from the village itself.[52] In Zhang Family Village, the villager committee had to pay 10 per cent of the benefit and Beichen district covered the remaining 90 per cent. This was one of a number of significant differences in welfare policy and practice among localities within Tianjin municipality, distinctions that, like the salience of "quality" discourses, did not only map onto the rural/urban divide.

Belonging was a crucial determining factor in eligibility for any welfare in all committees. You could *only* go to the place where you belonged to make a claim for benefits, even if you now lived somewhere else. Local rules in Tianjin exclude migrants from non-employment welfare, as is often the case.[53] In Zhang Family Village, the 8,000-plus "outsiders" in the area were not eligible for any of the benefits administered by the villager committee. These sojourners were only of interest to the committee because the township had made it responsible for ensuring that migrants complied with birth planning policies.

The Dragon Peak villager committee paid almost no attention to the hundreds of workers from nearby villages doing construction or working in the guesthouses. I was told by the foreman of the work crew building an artificial whitewater rafting feature right outside the committee headquarters that there was no accident insurance for these workers. This was a "private" project, contracted by the village Party secretary's family. The foreman had told the labourers before starting work that if they had a minor accident, he would pay for their treatment, but if it was major, they would be on their own. Since they did not belong, they had no recourse to challenge such an arbitrary (and possibly illegal) arrangement.

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51 Shi, Shih-Jiunn 2009.
52 Tianjin Municipal Measures on the Minimal Livelihood Guarantee, 6 July 2001, Art. 18.
53 Smart and Smart 2001.

Local Participation, Local Voice

The political role of resident and villager committees is manifested in their mandate to deal with complaints and act as a mechanism for input on local matters. Insofar as there is a legitimate sphere for political participation, it is at the level of these committees, as they are the channel through which people may exercise their constitutional right to complain.[54] Relative tolerance at this level gives citizens a degree of voice in asserting entitlements to social welfare and in shaping community norms. Active participation in state projects has been integral to PRC citizenship, and the boundaries between work and political engagement often blurred in the collectives of the past, so the concept of participation (*canyu* 参与) retains broader connotations than in the narrowly political meaning generally used in citizenship studies.

Another manifestation of this political role are elections at this level, the most direct form of electoral participation available to people in the PRC today.[55] In principle, all resident and villager committees should be elected, and voting for members of district or county-level people's congresses is conducted through polling in the committees. While rules on elections broadly model the prescriptions of national laws, localities have significant discretion on when and how to apply these laws. One example is the rules on villager representative assemblies, mentioned above; another is that although the 1990 Organic Law on Urban Resident Committees stated that these should be constituted through elections, Tianjin did not start such polling until 2000, and only enacted regulations for them in 2002. In practice, the regulations issued at street office-level seemed to be the most authoritative for the actual conduct of the polls.

All four of the elections in the committees I studied in Tianjin had little to do with choosing between different candidates or policy platforms; direct elections are not necessarily competitive.[56] However, socialized governance was crucial to achieving the main goal: levels of participation that legitimized the process and the leaders duly elected. The network of activists mobilized to achieve these results also serves as a channel to constituents, including identifying people/households in need of the kinds of assistance or intervention described in the previous section. Election rituals strengthened relationships among these local activists and the "leaders" who were eventually elected.

Concerns and criticisms had to be raised through these informal channels; elections were not a platform for discussions of local affairs or grievances. A manual for resident committee workers in Hexi district stated that they had to seek to resolve all complaints raised, even if these were outside their jurisdiction. Committee members are expected to bring their constituents' concerns to

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54 Constitution of the People's Republic of China 1982, Art. 41.
55 There is an extensive literature on the village elections. For a comprehensive treatment, see He 2007. Resident committee elections have been less studied, see Gui, Cheng and Ma 2006; Read 2012.
56 I observed the 2009 triennial elections in the two resident committees and one of the villager committees, but these are not discussed in detail here.

officials; they thus act as gatekeepers for input to the state from below, reminiscent of the "mass-line politics" of the past.[57]

By contrast, taking a complaint outside the committee's territory is often seen as a serious problem, even if it is only to the local street office. A disabled man who pressed his case for his own housing by staging silent sit-ins at the street office responsible for Progress caused consternation, and committee workers put significant effort into persuading him to stop. The central state makes its preference for resolving complaints locally abundantly clear, both by penalizing local officials who do not forestall collective complaints from reaching higher levels of government and by unofficially punishing repeat petitioners.[58]

While neither the elections nor the channels for complaints provided space for open debate on public affairs, as spaces of local sociality committees could become a site for a critical politics of gossip and talk about local leaders and policies. Given the severe constraints on expression in the recent past, the kind of local voice this involved was an important resource. This politics of gossip and talk could have real effect, particularly when the speakers were older people with established authority. Damaging the good reputation of an authority figure was a principal method of critique, with an example being rumours about local leaders circulating in Zhang Family Village during a dispute over election fraud there.

The four places provided distinctly different spaces for political talk. Those who went into the Zhang Family villager committee office with business to conduct often asked about the status of the stalled elections, and lively discussions usually ensued. The two resident committees provided opportunities for informal gatherings and organized social events, such as dances and computer classes, but their distinctive political cultures generated different styles of political talk. Discussions about growing social inequality and complaints about the common people being left out of the benefits of reform, comparing the present unfavourably to the past, often erupted out of conversations at the Progress office, reflecting the neighbourhood's strong socialist identity, but such grousing was largely absent in Rising China.

Even the most loyal of the activists and resident and villager committee workers could be heard on occasion expressing sharp criticism of the formalism of self-governance. The notion that the elections were merely "going through the motions" (*zou xingshi* 走形式) became something of an unofficial slogan for the process: I heard exactly the same phrase in relation to all three of the election processes I observed. Their ambivalence showed that committee activists and workers could be simultaneously state agents and disgruntled local citizens. Depending on the circumstances, they could promote social (and state) control but they were also potential organizers of collective resistance.

57 Chen, Xi 2012.
58 See Minzner 2006; Chinese Human Rights Defenders 2007.

Conclusion

Situating entitlements and participation primarily in local collectives where people are citizens, but also neighbours, friends or enemies with a known history, makes informal social relations powerful in shaping the citizenship order. From the state's point of view, the logic is one of differentiation: the particularities of citizens become visible at this scalar level. From the citizen's point of view, the concentration of aspects of citizenship in these institutions makes state agents accessible in a way they generally are not in formal bureaucracies. Such a citizenship order blurs distinctions between political and social conformity, between neighbourly concern and professional ministrations. It makes collective norms a strong force in many people's lives, especially those who rely on the "guarantee" but also the estimated 50 per cent employed outside the formal economy.[59] It is a deeply familiar style of governance, and although some resent it, the majority find some comfort in the security it provides.[60] This form of state-oriented *guanxi* contributes to maintaining social peace in times of destabilizing change.

Other studies have noted analogous forms, showing how collective moral norms shape patterns of distribution and resistance. For example, village-level "community capitalism" can institutionalize rules that police economic behaviour in authoritarian ways, while also accumulating funds for local welfare.[61] Revived village temple societies and lineages can create collectivist community norms that favour the provision of public goods.[62] As in my study, in these cases local "sovereignt[ies]" employ "the imaginary state" to create their own hierarchies of value.[63] Broadly similar institutional conditions produce heterogeneity in collective norms, with varying effects on how entitlements are perceived and acted upon.

Underlying these examples and my own study is a normative vision of sedentary citizenship. My research elaborates this hegemonic form through its focus on institutions that are promoted as models, and citizenship as it is *supposed* to be, where state–society interactions work "noiselessly."[64] In practice, socialized governance is variable, and remains an ideal rather than a reality in many places. Furthermore, resident and villager committees are not the only institutions involved in forming local citizenship connections. Work units, to which a significant minority are attached, may still operate in similar ways to the patterns I have described,[65] but other institutions and scales also matter. City districts and rural counties are a key part of the local citizenship nexus, making ultimate decisions

59 Some figures put rates of "informal sector" employment (including self-employment) in China above 50% (Huang 2009; Cook 2008). Women make up 65% of workers in "community services" – i.e. small, local businesses, such as those at Progress (Cooke 2006).
60 Read 2012; Cliff 2015.
61 Hou 2011. Hou only mentions in passing that migrant workers are excluded from this "community" and does not address this issue as a challenge to the "model."
62 Tsai 2007.
63 Feuchtwang 2004.
64 Schubert 2008.
65 See, e.g., Cliff 2015.

on benefits and allocating funding for welfare. They are particularly important in setting and interpreting the formal rules for local citizenship institutions. Municipalities and provinces exercise crucial rule-making authority, specifying forms of participation and the operation of the *hukou* system, for example. But institutions at these scales may be less crucial in the formation of social norms, although distinct political cultures relating both to history and the personalities of local officials also shape the terms of local citizenship. Given the small scale of this study, it is exploratory in nature and further research is needed on the full scope of local citizenship and socialized governance, as well as how it varies depending on factors such as housing, local welfare regimes and type of employment.

The lens of local citizenship provides an angle on political change from the perspective of the local.[66] Given severe controls on expression in the recent past, the combination of voice and access to official channels that local citizenship and socialized governance afford helps to explain relatively high levels of satisfaction with government in surveys,[67] including some specifically relating to resident committees.[68] Ethan Michelson found that, in rural China, local solutions to disputes are more satisfactory to claimants, even when they do not achieve the resolution hoped for.[69] Furthermore, local citizenship may affect perceptions of inequality, habituating people to distinctions *between* places and mitigating the effects of such distinctions owing to the relative equality in entitlement to public goods within their home place.[70]

Facilitative elements of this citizenship order are matched by the severe constraints it imposes; what is at stake in the committees is limited, and their politics present few opportunities for citizens to engage in rule-making processes, however local. Engagement in the committees has little impact on policies shaping the broader conditions for citizenship practice. Socialized governance is also deployed to control people who have become estranged from local state agents owing to a history of non-compliance, making every engagement with local officials an opportunity for further pressure.[71]

There are a number of areas of tension between this citizenship order and changing practice. Although everyone is a citizen somewhere, in an era of increasing mobility, growing numbers are disconnected from their citizenship entitlements. A less noted tension is between differentiated local citizenship and the national project of ruling by law. The former presumes that local authorities require discretion to deal with the contexts they face, and thus their rules must be the most authoritative; the latter makes national-level law the standard. In practice, rule

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66 Goodman 2009.
67 Shi, Tianjian 2008.
68 Read 2012.
69 Michelson 2008.
70 Some chapters in Davis and Wang 2009 support such a reading, especially Han and Whyte 2009; Wang, Feng 2008 also finds that within-unit equality continues despite the massive rise in inequality generally.
71 Woodman 2015.

making and interpretation relating to citizenship as defined here remain the pre-rogative of local administrations.

However, legal power, scales of governance and citizenship are not a zero-sum game: institutional jurisdictions are layered and multiple.[72] Such a view presents a more complex picture for theorizing on citizenship, with the China case offering an example of a citizenship order which concentrates citizenship institutions and rule-making authority at a scale where citizens are most legible to state agents, thus amplifying the impact of informal differentiation on citizenship practice.

Biographical note

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摘要: 中国 "单位社会" 已为市场经济消灭的说法被过分夸大。实际上, 中国现行标准的公民身份制度是将公民参与、社会福利享有权与个人的户口所在地联系在一起。简言之, 个人的公民身份依附于一个特定的地方和集体组织。本文通过对天津市居民委员会和村民委员会的观察性研究, 对地方性公民身份制度的 "正常" 运作模式加以描述。这两种集体组织把公民的参与和福利整合在一个机构环境中。在这种情况下, 公民与国家的关系通过一种 "面对面" 的政治结构而联系在一起。这种 "面对面" 的政治结构不仅建立起对个人行为的控制机制, 而且为公民提供了表达自身诉求和不满的渠道。这种 "社会化治理" 模式不区分政治规范与社会规范, 从而使社会风气在公民身份制度执行中起着非常重要的作用。虽然公民身份制度在具体推行过程中存在地方性差异, 但作者认为, 本文所展现的理想化的公民身份制度是公民进行政治参与和理解各种不平等因素的重要条件。

关键词: 地方性公民身份; 社会治理; 居民和村民委员会; 社会福利; 政治参与; 户籍制度; 关系学

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72 Valverde 2010.

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