Background Brief: Public Consultation in China

Executive Summary

For at least 25 years, China has been trying out a wide menu of public participation mechanisms. These include public hearings, various open meetings (often called workshops), technical seminars with invited experts and publishing drafts for written comment, as well as more traditional means such as seeking input from relevant government agencies and organisations, site visits to talk with members of the affected public at the ‘grassroots’ level, and opinion surveys.

The on and off trials started with the introduction of village elections but the pace has picked up in recent years and shows interesting momentum. More can be expected following the 18th Party Congress. At the moment the most interesting experiments have taken place in Chongqing and Shenzhen.

Main points:

- In recent years, China has become more open, providing much more public information about laws, regulations and law making.

- This has had an immediate impact on both environmental policy-making and wage negotiations.

- Officials are much more aware of the need to prepare for and respond to public opinion.

- China is open to further experiments in public consultation.
1. Introduction

For at least 25 years, China has been trying out a wide menu of public participation mechanisms. These include public hearings, various open meetings (often called workshops), technical seminars with invited experts and publishing drafts for written comment, as well as more traditional means such as seeking input from relevant government agencies and organisations, site visits to talk with members of the affected public at the ‘grassroots’ level, and opinion surveys.

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Public consultation is the most visible part of an effort which Chinese leaders refer to as *tizhi gaige*, sometimes translated as ‘political reform’. This is not be confused with *zhidu gaige*, meaning a switch from a single-party Leninist dictatorship with top down ‘democratic centralism’ to a true multi-party democracy. The aim is to make the existing system work better and to give the actions of the Chinese Communist Party greater legitimacy.

This paper looks at:

- National People’s Congress consultations
- Public hearings
- Workshops
- Public consultation on environmental issues
- Experiments in collective bargaining in Guangdong
- Performance management
- Experiments in direct elections
- Public consultation on local budgets in Sichuan: Deliberative Polling in Wenling
- Open recommendation and selection of officials
2. National People’s Congress Consultations

A 2008 State Council decision on strengthening administration in accordance with the law at the municipal and county levels emphasised the need to improve the public policy decision-making process by increasing transparency and public participation, including by means of written comments, expert meetings and through holding public hearings.

The State Council has also called for establishing and improving a feedback (fankui, 反馈) system for government regulation. Several local governments are already regularly providing responses to the public comments they receive during administrative rulemakings. The adoption of the nationwide Open Government Information Regulations also requires the government to disclose a wide range of government-held information that was hitherto unavailable.


After passage of the Legislation Law in 2000, the NPC began to use the Internet to publish drafts deemed to be of particular interest to the public, the first of which was the 2001 revision of the Marriage Law. The Property Law, one of the most controversial recent enactments, went through the first NPC reading in December 2002 and was not adopted until March 2007, after going through a 40-day public comment period in the summer of 2005 that drew over 11,500 comments.

The draft Labour Contract Law released for public comment in March 2006 received even more - almost 192,000 comments, 65% of which were from ordinary workers. These comments prompted major revisions to the draft that was ultimately adopted a little over a year later.

In April 2008, the NPC Standing Committee announced that, going forward, all drafts submitted to it for review and adoption will ordinarily be made public as a standard practice, observing that an open and transparent legislative process would better ensure the public's ‘right to know, participate, express their views and supervise’ and provide the people with a better understanding of new laws through participation in their formulation.

Most drafts are to be published for comment over the NPC website after the first reading, while those drafts believed to relate to the ‘vital interests’ of the public will also be carried in national media. The Standing Committee subsequently released drafts of all 15 laws that it considered in 2008, and has maintained to do so.
Moreover, each draft starting with the Food Safety Law, which was published for comment in April 2008, has been accompanied by an explanation of the reason for and major issues raised by the draft law. In some cases, this explanation also included specific questions on which the NPC wanted particular input.

Beijing was one of the first local governments to publish a draft regulation for comment, starting in the early 1990s with draft provisions on raising pet dogs, a topic that, like restrictions on fireworks, continues to provoke strong public interest. By the late 1990s, departments under the State Council such as the China Securities Regulatory Commission and the Ministries of Information Technology, Public Health, and Land and Resources also began to release selected draft departmental regulations for public input on their websites and in relevant newspapers.

Although the Shanghai Municipal People’s Congress started releasing drafts of local legislation for comment earlier, the Shanghai government first experimented with public participation in administrative rule-making. After May 2004, all draft government rules have been posted on the Shanghai government website, http://www.shanghai.gov.cn, as well as in local Shanghai newspapers, for public comment.

Although Shanghai has not promulgated any regulation mandating this practice, more than 50 draft rules had been posted by the end of 2008. Moreover, recent drafts have been accompanied by the drafter’s explanation of the legal basis, need for and background on the proposed decision, to help the public better understand the purpose and content of the drafts.

The Guangzhou Public Participation Measures make the written comment procedure the heart of the public participation process and grant the right to participate to everyone, not just Guangzhou residents or Chinese citizens (Guangzhou 2006). Guangzhou has not only published all municipal government and agency rules for comment but is also applying similar procedures to policy-making in land use and other areas and conducting active outreach through various kinds of meetings with associations, individuals and experts to discuss the drafts. While some drafts get zero or few comments, others, like a proposal related to raising pet dogs that elicited more than 5,000 comments during the preparatory stage, draw more public interest.

Following initial experiments by some central ministries and local governments, the State Council Office of Legislative Affairs (OLA) first released one of its own draft national regulations, on property management, for public comment in October 2002. The OLA gradually increased the number of drafts that it chose to make public each year. In March 2007, it published a notice to all State
Council departments reporting agreement by the State Council leadership to establish a procedure for determining at the beginning of each year what draft laws and regulations should be made public for comment, and agreeing to publication of seven named laws and regulations for that year. (State Council Office of Legislative Affairs 2007). As it turned out, the OLA released a total of 12 drafts in 2007.

In January 2008, the OLA announced in introducing its legislative plan for that year, that it and the central ministries would henceforth essentially abandon the test of whether legislation relates to the 'vital interests' of the public and would publish virtually all draft rules and regulations -- other than those involving state secrets or national security -- for public comment.

In line with this new policy directive, the State Council released 25 drafts, most of which were accompanied by a background explanation, for public comment in 2008. The State Council OLA, in announcing its 2009 legislative plan, encouraged expanding the scope of public participation to ensure the opinions of basic level agencies and relevant industry associations and interest groups are heard. Within the first eight months of 2009, 45 central government agency and State Council drafts had been published for comment online.

The State Council OLA has also established and is working to improve a software program that collects, sorts and analyses the comments received, to make it easier to digest large numbers of public opinions. It is also working with provincial and lower-level governments to upgrade their websites in order to provide more standardised and efficient notice and comment procedures. Unofficial estimates are that 27 or 87% of 31 provincial-level government OLAs have sought public input over the Internet, and 17 out of 50 central government ministries and organs have put out departmental rules through their websites as of July 2009.


The Supreme People’s Court has also on occasion held workshops to seek legal experts’ input on their draft annual work reports and in 2003 started issuing selected draft judicial interpretations, which elucidate how laws should be applied, for public comment. The Court now has a column on its website, where it has posted 29 drafts that have gone through that process as of July 2009.
3. Public Hearings

Shenzhen has pioneered the *pangting* [旁听] or audit system of inviting members of the public to sign up for the opportunity to sit in on legislative sessions and listen to the proceedings, a practice now regularly used by the National People’s Congress (NPC) as well. These auditors are not permitted to take part in the discussion or ask questions, but are encouraged to submit written views about their observations, and suggestions for legislation.

The discretionary practice of holding legislative hearings was endorsed by the 2000 Legislation Law. This has been followed by implementing regulations on administrative rulemaking which provide some general guidelines on how all levels of government below the State Council itself should conduct public hearings.

If a government agency decides to hold a public rulemaking hearing, the organiser has to announce the relevant information at least 30 days in advance; the participants are permitted to raise questions and voice their opinions with regard to the draft; a written hearing record is to be kept; and the drafting unit is to carefully study the various opinions provided at the hearing. The drafting unit must also prepare a written explanation of the opinions expressed, and how they were dealt with, in the final draft to be submitted for approval together with the final draft of the rule (State Council 2002, Article 15). However, these regulations do not require public disclosure explaining how the public’s opinions were handled or stipulate such matters as who can participate, when hearings should be open to the general public, and whether the hearing record should be publicly available. Moreover, implementing regulations under the Legislation Law did not provide comparable details on hearing procedures for use by the State Council and the People’s Congresses (PCs).

Many provincial and lower level governments have embraced the idea of public hearings and have established their own local rules. By January 2006, 45 legislative hearings had been held by the standing committees of provincial PCs on draft regulations and by mid-2008, 19 provincial-level governments and many large cities like Shenzhen, Harbin, Jinan and Dalian had promulgated administrative rules for hearings.

At the centre, the NPC and State Council have been cautious, aware of the difficulty of involving too many people in consultations. The NPC Standing Committee held its first and only public hearing to date in September 2005, on draft revisions to the Individual Income Tax Law. A hearing notice, accompanied by an application to speak on background information from the Ministry of Finance on the reasons for the proposed increase in the standard deduction, was posted online and carried in
newspapers. Twenty representatives selected from 5,000 applicants spoke at the four-hour long televised and broadcasted hearing, after which the standard deduction was adjusted slightly higher. The NPC has promised to continue to experiment with public hearings but has not yet held a second hearing.

The State Council has not held any public hearings at all, despite encouraging other bodies to experiment, especially on proposals for imposing a licensing or permit requirement, or when a matter involves the ‘vital interests’ of the public. Ministries regulating areas of such areas like the Ministry of Land and Resources and the State Food and Drug Administration, have legislative and decision-making hearing procedures.

The first online legislative hearing tried out by Chongqing Municipality in November 2005 was an interesting experiment. This hearing was opened to questions and comments from the general public over the Web, or by telephone to a special hotline, for two hours during which 80,000 web users visited the hearing Webcast.

4. Workshops

Another method of public participation mentioned in the Legislation Law is the workshop (zuotanhui, 座谈会), to which affected government organs, social organisations, enterprises, experts such as legal scholars, and selected members of the public are called. These meetings can be run fairly flexibly, and held at different stages of the drafting process. Traditionally, the proceedings themselves are kept confidential to encourage participants to speak frankly. Both government departments and the PCs use workshops to help ascertain preferences and resolve thorny issues. For example, the NPC convened over 100 workshops to discuss the hotly-debated draft Property Law, which went through seven readings rather than the normal three.

Guangzhou Municipality requires at least one workshop for every agency rulemaking under its 2006 Public Participation Measures, which are the first Chinese ordinances to regulate in some detail and mandate public participation for every rulemaking and at each stage thereof (Guangzhou Municipal People’s Government 2006, Article 18).

The Guangzhou Public Participation Measures introduced a new category of consultation literally called ‘seeking opinions in an open manner’ [kaifangshi zhengqiu yijian, 开放式征求意见], which involves announcing and holding informal public meetings where any interested person can provide
suggestions and comments to drafting officials (Guangzhou Municipal People’s Government 2006, Article 20).

This format, considered an innovation in China, has been adopted in the Hunan Administrative Procedure Act (APA) for use as appropriate, along with workshops, consultations (xieshanghui, 协商会) and public hearings, to obtain public input on proposed major policy decisions (Hunan 2008, Article 37).

Some localities are also experimenting with opening up executive government meetings for public observation and sometimes limited participation. Hangzhou in Jiangsu province started in 2008 to invite a few citizens to its executive government meetings that consider various actions, sometimes asking their input.

This ‘government under the sunshine’ practice of open meetings is also encouraged under Hunan’s rules when administrative organs are considering matters involving the ‘vital interests’ of the general public (Hunan 2008, Article 149).

5. Public Consultation on Environmental Issues

The state authorises public participation under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Law. It was promulgated in 2002 and came into effect in 2005. That year the State Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), which has since become the Ministry of Environmental Protection) held a public hearing over a project to seal the eastern lake bed at the Old Summer Palace.

It was the first national public hearing on an environmental issue. For the first time, the EIA was released to the public. It also revealed the strong interest among Chinese Internet users or netizens. More than 200,000 articles about the project appeared on various websites and millions wrote about it. Only 120 people actually took part in the hearing but many of these were from Non-Governmental Organisations which gave them stature and legitimacy. In the end the plastic lining of the water bed was largely replaced with clay.

The publicity storm generated by this small project led to the government suspending 82 large projects, mostly hydro-electric dams, which had not followed the EIA law’s procedures. In 2006 the central government issued the Environmental Protection Administrative Hearing Regulation (Trial) to promote public participation in environmental guidance, including EIA processes. A new regulation
on environmental governance transparency, the Environmental Strategic Planning Law which took effect in May 2008 gave a further boost.

The EIA Law has been instrumental in the growth and influence of environmental NGOs. There may be at least 354,000 at national and local levels. These range from charities to scientific associations, trade and business associations, cultural groups, professional societies and youth groups, but environmental NGOs are the most active in the political arena. They have actively raised the public’s environmental awareness, supervised polluting enterprises and participated in environmental decision-making and policy-making.

One victory for conservationists has been the suspension of the construction of two major dams on the Jinsha River, a tributary of the Yangtze River. The dams at Longkaikou and Ludila were being built by two of China's largest power-generating companies - Huaneng Power and Huadian Power. Both had been started without environmental assessments or ministry approval. The ministry also suspended approvals for the two companies' other projects, except those involving energy-saving and pollution prevention measures. It also suspended construction projects in eastern Shandong province begun by a state-owned steel company because it had not submitted an environmental impact assessment. Another dam planned for the Tiger Leaping Gorge area was suspended after a public outcry in 2005.

In September 2009, 15 top academicians signed a joint letter to Premier Wen Jiabao expressing their concerns about a planned dam project which was included in a blueprint for the Poyang Eco-economic Development Zone. Poyang Lake is in Jiangxi Province. The central government approved the blueprint three months later, but the dam was ruled out. Instead, the province was asked to prepare scientific assessments on the potential impact. Jiangxi invited a collection of academics, including some of those who opposed the plan, to look into key aspects, such as how the dam would affect the water quality, wetlands and migrating birds. The studies funded entirely by the provincial government to the tune of 10 million RMB [Euro 1.125m] were intended to provide scientific recommendations on whether the dam project should go ahead.

All six studies were completed in 2010, but the Jiangxi government did not make the complete reports public. Requests by several conservation groups to see the studies were turned down. The province also organised another environmental assessment for the Poyang Lake Development Plan, of which the dam is a major part, carried out by the Yangtze Water Resources Protection Institute, which is affiliated with the Ministry of Water Resources, and the Jiangxi Environmental Protection Institute. The joint report concluded that the plan 'will have both positive and negative effects on
the ecology and environment, but there will be more good than harm. It said the negative impact will be on migrating birds, aquatic animals and water quality, but added that this could be prevented by certain measures.

Urban planning, land use and major project decisions are other areas of great controversy. The Ministry of Land and Resources promulgated provisions in 2004 that require hearings on the formulation of rules and regulatory documents relating to land use, compensation for land takings and development projects. Continued experiments in this area led to the revised 2008 Urban and Rural Planning Law, which requires that draft urban and rural land use plans must be published for comment for not less than 30 days, the opinions of both experts and the general public must be sought through hearings, expert meetings and other channels, and those opinions must be considered and set forth in a report accompanying the draft plan submitted for approval (Urban and Rural Planning Law 2007, Article 26).

Following large demonstrations in the southern city of Xiamen over plans to build a chemical factory in a suburban area, the Shanghai government responded to massive protests in January 2008 against an extension of a high-speed maglev train line by committing to do a better job of consulting the public on major projects. Residents had voiced concerns over noise, vibrations and possible electromagnetic radiation from the train system, some residents would have to be relocated to accommodate the new line, and homeowners living nearby feared the project would negatively impact property values.

Mayor Han Zheng promised to improve public opinion surveys, public notice of projects and public hearings, and make sure that citizens are effectively involved in major projects. The government eventually postponed the maglev extension while it conducted further studies. Mayor Han similarly announced in February 2009 a new system of prior consultation for major urban redevelopment projects, both to obtain agreement by a given percentage of affected residents to the project itself and at a second stage to obtain general agreement with the compensation and resettlement arrangements.

6. Experiments in collective bargaining in Guangdong

Wang Yang, Party Secretary of Guangdong Province, has responded to a series of damaging strikes by pushing for more collective bargaining. The Guangdong Provincial Federation of Trade Unions made Nanhai Honda a pilot site for collective bargaining after a damaging strike in 2010.
The enterprise union was restructured after the strike. The workers directly elected union team leaders, union committee members and a union vice chairman. On 1 March 2011, with guidance from the Guangdong Federation of Trade Unions, Nanhai Honda’s workers and management signed a new collective contract raising combined wages and bonuses by an average of 611 RMB [Euro 76], a 33 per cent increase.

Wang is also pushing a ‘Democratic Management Act in Enterprises’ and a ‘Collective Wage Negotiation Act’. The current draft states that, where at least a third of an enterprise’s workforce requests it, the trade union should call a democratic meeting among workers to choose delegates who will then bargain with the employer to arrive at collective wage agreements. When enterprises receive a letter of intent to collectively bargain for wages, they shall provide a written reply within 15 days. If, without good reason, they do not respond or do not arrange for negotiations, they may not revoke labour contracts because of union work stoppages or slowdowns. However, the draft also stated that when workers have not yet called for collective wage bargaining according to law, or during collective wage negotiations, they may not engage in work stoppages, slowdowns, or other excessive actions.

For those enterprises without trade unions, the local federation of trade unions should be responsible for guiding the workers in choosing their delegates democratically. Previous laws never gave workers the right to negotiate a collective wage agreement: the Trade Union Law (1992), Labour Law (1994) and Labour Contract Law (2007) simply handed the rights over to the trade unions.

If successfully enacted, the revised draft will provide a regular mechanism, distinct from the previous collective action mechanism, for the workers to demand a collective wage agreement and to defend their interests. It will restore to workers the right of collective negotiation, including the right to choose their delegates under the guidance of the trade unions, which will help workers to play principal role in future collective negotiations. Hong Kong business federations have waged a lobbying campaign both in Guangzhou and Beijing to scrap the revised regulations or water them down.

The Shenzhen Municipal Trade Union announced plans to negotiate and sign collective wage agreements at 550 enterprises in the city in 2011. This was followed by similar initiatives in towns and cities in Hunan, Hebei, Zhejiang and Shandong provinces. The All China Federation of Trade Unions is running pilot programs in ten provinces and cities for enterprise union official wages to be
paid by the higher-level union and not by the enterprise, as is currently the standard practice. If successful, the program would be rolled out nationwide in 2012.

7. Performance Management

The Chinese government has been experimenting with ways to ensure that officials are judged not only by their superiors but also by the public. In other words, to ensure that officials ‘look not only upward but also downward.’

In March 2008 Premier Wen Jiabao stated that the government would introduce something called ‘performance management’ to evaluate the performance of civil servants. When Hangzhou introduced a ‘Comprehensive Performance Assessment Scheme’, half the credits came from public assessment. However by ‘public’ this meant members of the Municipal People’s Congresses and Political People’s Consultative Conference, as well as representatives of ordinary citizens, meaning ‘scholars, businessmen, and journalists.’

A campaign inviting 10,000 people to assess the performance of government was also launched in Zhuhai, Shenyang and Nanjing. Nanjing sent out 8,438 assessment forms and received 6,373 responses. In addition, simplified questionnaires were sent to 23,400 residents. Ninety agencies under the municipal government were ranked in accordance with the results of the public assessment.

A Service Pledge scheme, a local initiative by the Yantai City of Shandong, was tried which was similar in intent with the UK’s Citizen’s Charter.

8. Experiments in Direct Elections

The Organic Law in Village Committees was launched in the late 1980s and since then there have been competitive elections in over 600,000 villages. However interest in direct village elections has worn off. The first township election was held in Buyun Township, Sichuan Province in 1998 but this was later declared illegal and unconstitutional.

More recently, Shenzhen has tried out direct elections for some local officials, creating a more independent judiciary and promoting greater openness and accountability with the party. The plan, formally approved in June 2008, was concocted over three months by 24 specialised teams assigned
by the Shenzhen mayor to make Shenzhen ‘a model for socialism with Chinese characteristics.’ The local People’s Congress has been given the power to supervise the local executive branch and be accountable to the people by allowing an expanding number of candidates to run in elections.

In Shenzhen three ordinary citizens began demanding access to budget information in 2006. They submitted requests to a dozen central governmental agencies and a dozen local governments, but were denied each time until in October 2008 the Shenzhen Department of Public Health permitted them to read the health budget. By the end of 2010, a third of 92 departments in Shenzhen had disclosed budget information.

9. Public consultations on local budgets in Sichuan: Deliberative Polling in Wenling

In the fishing village of Wukan, Guangdong Province, villagers staged widely reported protests last year because they believed officials had sold off their land to developers and failed to compensate them properly. Subsequently they were allowed to directly elect their own representatives.

A key concern across rural China is deciding what happens to the money when farmers’ land is sold to developers. Villagers want adequate compensation and supervision of the funds.

In Wenling municipality, Sichuan, China has tested a new form of deliberative democracy (called ‘democratic consultation’) that allows local villagers to discuss local affairs and to make the local authorities more accountable and transparent.

The first democratic consultation meetings were carried out in Songmen township in 1999 and then in Xinhe and Zeguo township in 2005. The initial idea was to hold a public gathering for both cadres and locals to discuss public affairs rather than hold direct elections. In 2002, Wenling officials standardised the whole consultation process.

A participatory budgeting experiment conducted by local officials in Zeguo township of Wenling City (pop 240,000) was carried out in 2005. This technique was used to garner public feedback on a series of difficult budgetary allotment decisions for proposed infrastructure projects in the township. There were 30 potential public projects that year amounting to a total investment of 137 million RMB [Euro 17.1m] while the government could only award 40 million RMB [Euro 5 m].
Of the entire population, 275 people were randomly selected to participate in surveys and deliberations taking part throughout the months of March and April. Participants filled out an initial questionnaire about their preferences and concerns, then attended a deliberative forum.

At the end of the process, the results of the poll were presented to the Zeguo’s local People’s Congress for further debate and deliberation by local politicians – a majority of whom voted to fund the top 12 projects ranked in the Deliberative Poll. After this, the local government adopted the Poll permanently and opted to open the entire budget to participatory feedback. The next step was to extend it throughout Wenling City.

Xinhe, another township in Wenling, tried to incorporate the democratic consultations within the existing political system by granting more power to the local People’s Congress. In 2005, Xinhe township leaders invited the People’s Congress to discuss the annual budget draft and allow them to propose revisions. However, the local congress was not elected by the villagers but appointed by superior officials.

These reforms were not legalised and in 2007 Xinhe stopped further refinement of the participatory budget making.

These experiments were guided by Professor He Baogang of Deakin University and James Fishkin of Stanford University.

They are just one of a number of consultative and deliberative experiments that have taken place across China. For instance, in the Shangcheng district of Hangzhou city, for instance, a ‘consensus conference’, or ‘consultative meeting’ is held regularly once a month.

The first experiments started back in 1991, when the local People’s Congress in Shenzhen set up a budget committee in which deputies had an opportunity to examine the budget. In 1998, Hebei province introduced sector budgeting, meaning that partial budgets were disclosed to the people’s deputies of the People’s Congress for examination and deliberation. In 2004, Huinan township in Shanghai also undertook an experiment in public budgeting.
10. Open recommendation and selection of officials

This is a half-way house between a conventional party nomination and congress ratification, and a direct election. It was first implemented in the Shizhong District of Suining Municipality in Sichuan and has since been tried out in 18 municipalities and 30 counties in Sichuan Province.

There are usually four steps in the whole open recommendation and selection process: application and qualification, written examination, and nomination. Qualified applicants, based on criteria of education (college degree at least), experience (administrative ranking requirement) and age (usually under 40), are recommended by the Party branch, a group of usually five villagers, or by the applicants themselves.

Then the candidates are cut down to six according to their grades in the written exam, covering economics, public administration, agricultural production, laws, science and history.

The finalists must then pass another oral exam, give speeches on predetermined topics in front of representative groups composed of party members, government cadres, and People’s Congress representatives, the candidates who receive the most votes from the representative group will win the position. Finally, the township People’s Congress approves the results and nominates the elected township head, while the higher-level party committee addresses the party secretary.

11. Conclusions

The CCP’s enthusiasm for such experiments in reforms has waxed and waned over the years but it looks like the new leadership who will come to power at the 18th Party Congress will make a renewed push to deepen public consultation. In his last press conference Wen Jiabao announced the Party’s determination to push through more political reforms. As such, China is open to learning from the experiences of other countries.

Chinese experts interviewed for this paper expressed very different views about what has been tried so far. Some were openly dismissive of their significance but others claimed that in the Chinese context a lot was being done and a body of experience had been accumulated.

We know from what happened to other areas that once the CCP has drawn its conclusions from such experiments, they could then be applied on a national scale.
The EU and its Member States could help by enabling more Chinese experts and Party advisers to travel around Europe observing local democracy at work at different levels of local government. That way they could gather their own ideas of what might work in China and then come back and try to get these tested in China. China could, for instance, explore the effectiveness of the UK’s Citizen’s Charter and the various experiments in the UK and other countries in e-democracy. Or the different methods used by citizens to supervise the formulation of local budgets.

Clearly, the most innovative places in China are Shenzhen and Guangdong, and Sichuan and Chongqing, and the EU could try to foster relations with officials and academics in those places.