



Industrial pollution and health in China; is civil society contributing to policy innovation?

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Jennifer Holdaway and Kathinka Furst

Social Science Research Council and University of Amsterdam



Outline

- Governance and policy innovation
- Industrial pollution and health in China: the problems with current policy
- Issue domains and country specific factors
- Current NGO activities: a limited role
- Constraints on NGO work on pollution and health
- Where is the role for international exchange?



Governance and policy innovation

- *Governance*: “the institutional capacity of public organizations to provide the public and other goods demanded by a country’s citizens or their representatives in an effective, transparent, impartial, and accountable manner, subject to resource constraints. (World Bank 2000)
- *Governance perspective recognizes the role of non-state actors and* wide range of activities beyond policy making
- Civil society an “arena of uncoerced (voluntary) collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In principle “distinct from the state, and market.”
- Role in governance multi-faceted: public information and education; watchdog and reporting activities; legal assistance; service provision; legal/policy advocacy



Policy innovation

- **Policy innovation** “process of involving activists and civil society organizations in influencing policy decisions of existing institutional actors on behalf of the collective interest.”
- **Policy entrepreneurs** “individuals or collective actors who invest their resources in pushing pet proposals or problems.”
- PEs prompt decision makers to pay attention issues
 - Couple solutions to problems
 - Couple problems and solutions to politics
- Innovation is assumed to take place **at the front end of the policy cycle.**
- Definitions are much narrower and this will affect our evaluation of the contribution of civil society in any particular problem area



Why is policy innovation needed in response to environmental pollution and health in China?

- The impact of pollution on health is a new “problem field” The identification, prevention and/or management of pollution-related health risks can not be achieved with existing policies
- Environmental protection policy has focused on aggregate pollution, not pollution that is most damaging to health
- Health policy has focused on traditional environmental hygiene and not on pollution-related illnesses
- Both environment and health policy are reactive but the drivers of the problem lie in development strategies. E and H is not integrated into these related policy streams.
- The impact of environmental pollution on health is already causing a lot of social tension and conflict, and there are no good formal or informal processes in place for adjudicating these.



Studying policy innovation/governance

- A number of factors will affect the difficulty of making progress in particular issue domains
- Characteristics of the issue domain (both generic and specific to the country)
- Characteristics of the governance system (generally and in relation to the issue domain)
- Additional regional/local/ global linkage factors
- These will all affect the ways in which civil society may be able to participate



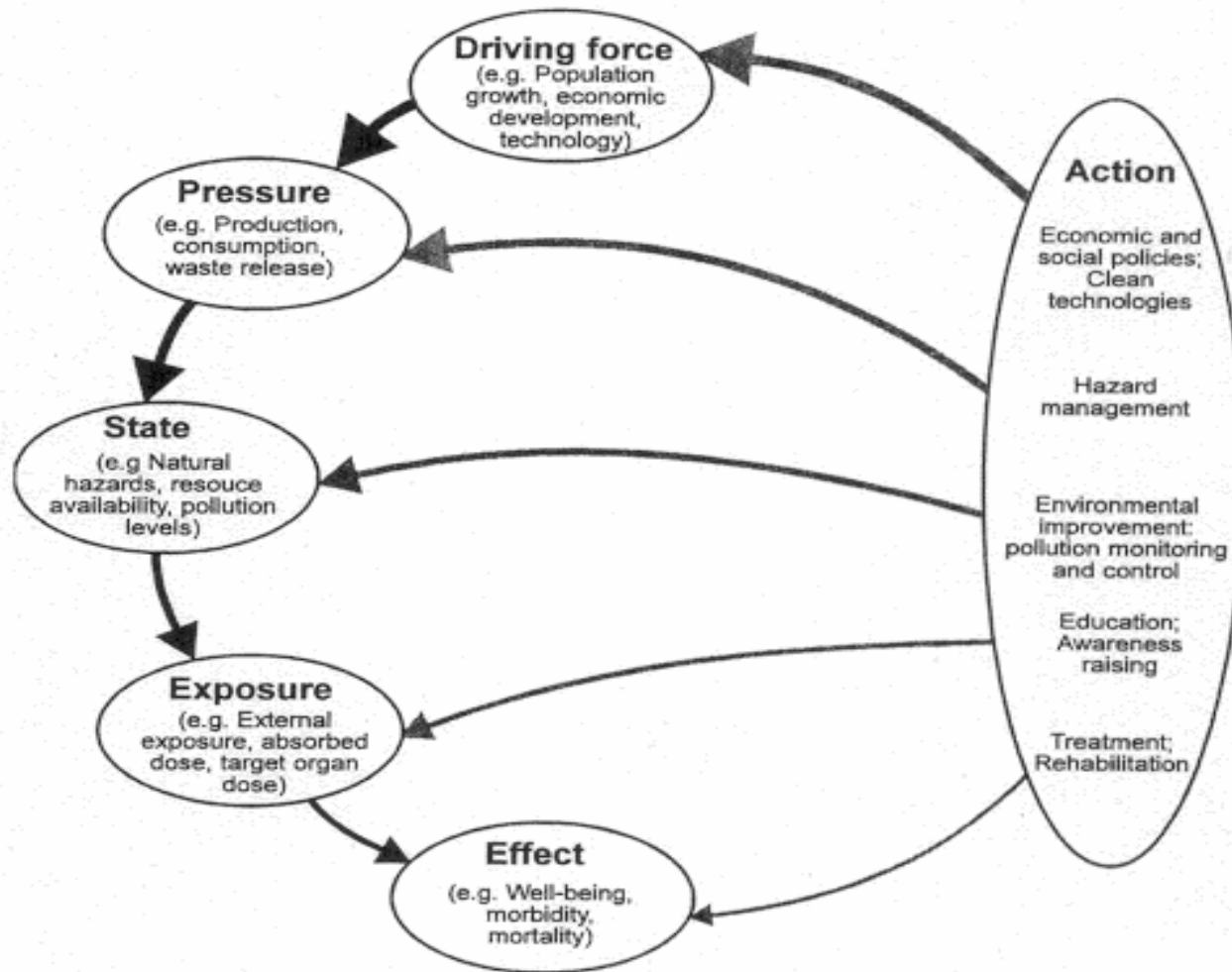
Generic challenges in the governance of industrial pollution and health

- Achieving identification, prevention and/or management of pollution-related health risks requires engagement of multiple policy streams: at a minimum environment, health, industrial and land use policy.

Cross-cutting policy issue.

- High degree of scientific complexity and uncertainty makes it hard to develop clear evidence base for policy
- Also make it hard for non-experts to participate in details of policy making.
- In all countries regulation of pollution to improve health is a conflictual issue affecting profits, taxes, income and employment.
- **These generic factors make it a challenging issue domain for policy entrepreneurs everywhere**

Health and environment cause-effect framework: a simplified diagram



Carlos F. Corvalán, Tord Kjellström, and Kirk R. Smith. 1999 *Epidemiology*, 10:5




Industrial pollution and health in China

- Different countries face different “bundles” of problems relating to industrial pollution depending on level and type of development pathway
- China's are highly complex due to its size, the rapidity of industrialization, and the diversity in level of development and development pathways
- Industrialization was a major driver of growth in coastal areas from the late 1970s. Many are now scaling up to higher value products that are less polluting or are large and profitable enough to use pollution control mitigation technologies. Capacity for monitoring and enforcement is also stronger
- Many poorer areas in hinterland are now industrializing. They see this as the best means of closing gap with affluent areas. But they have much weaker capacity to manage risks.





Transitional societies

- As large transitional country China mirrors global patterns in the transfer of industry and health risks associated with pollution to poorer regions
- Regional variation in problems and governance capacity have implications for policy in all related sectors (environment, health, development). And implications for what civil society participation.
- Affluent areas lower emissions, more straightforward monitoring and regulation tasks and stronger capacity for this. But often have legacy pollution and health problems from cumulative exposure. So investment in resources should reflect this.
- Formerly rural or non-industrial urban areas to which industry has recently transferred (or will under Major Land Use Planning policy are likely to face rapidly increasing emissions with limited capacity for monitoring and enforcement. Health impacts will not be immediate but will rise with time
- Rural areas that are zoned as restricted for industrial development face difficult options. They also want to increase income and industrial agriculture which is the main alternative pathway brings another set of environmental and health risks. 
- So policy needs to be responsive to these different situations.



Pollution and Health is on the Agenda

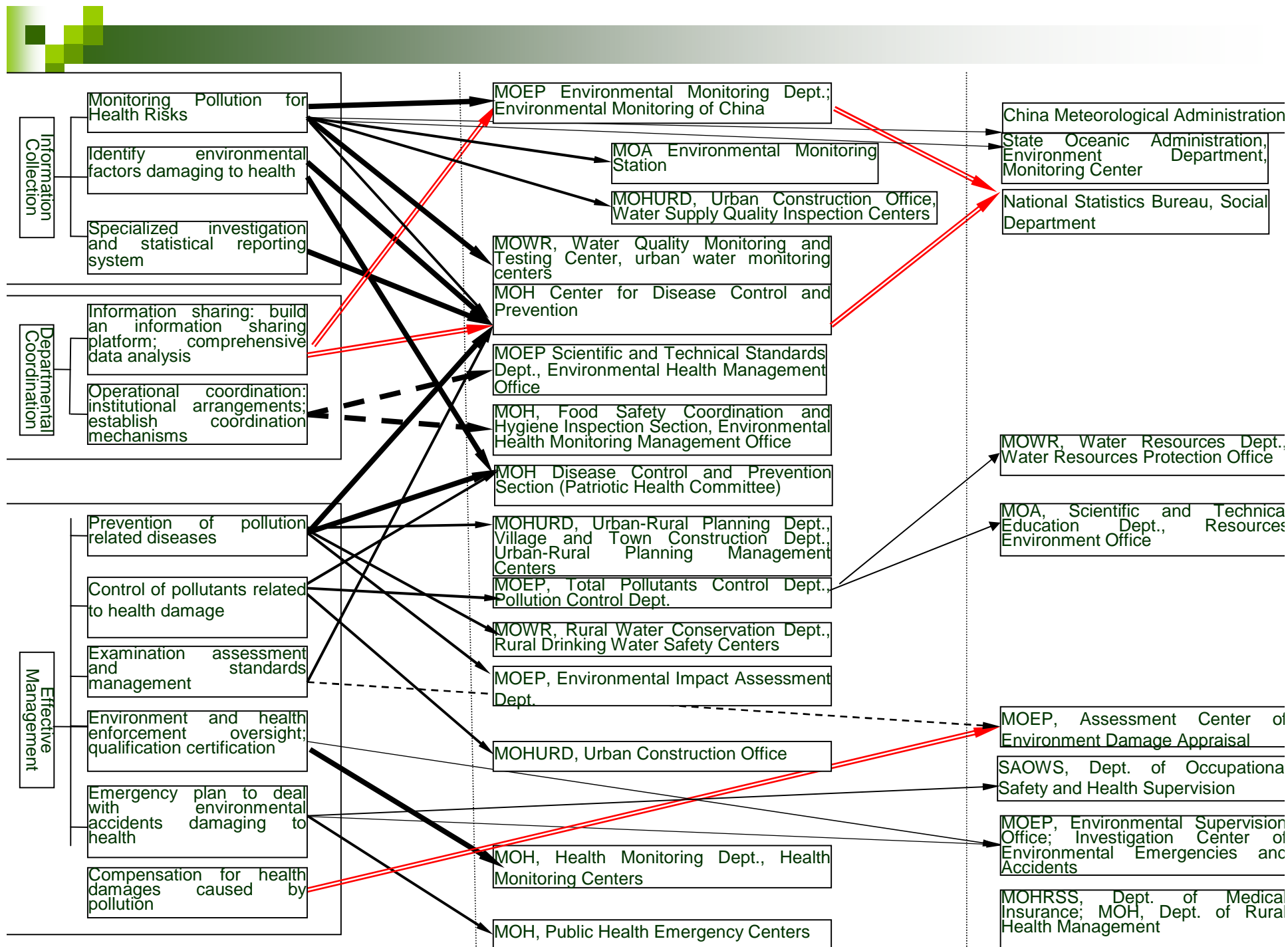
- National Action Plan on Environment and Health (2007-15) Signed by 18 ministries. Set up MOH-MEP coordinating mechanism with parallel offices to provide organizational structure for environment and health work. Mechanism should be replicated at each level of gvt
- Gvt has invested in research. Pollution census. Special investigations (Huaihe, cancer hotspots, heavy metals in Jiangxi, Yunnan etc..).
- 12th 5 year plan has stepped up investment. Heavy metal pollution a priority. 1.5 billion for management and remediation. Superfund program is being explored. New assessment criteria for officials.
- Role of civil society is recognized in central level documents. Issue area is open to NGOs.





Continuing challenges

- E-H work is still marginalized within both Ministries. 12/5 Plan for health does not emphasize assessment or responses to environmental pollution.
- Environmental regulation still primarily focused on overall reduction of emissions not controlling biggest health risks. Exposure not considered
- This beginning to change in 12/5 with land zoning and heavy metal pollution control policies but still minimal integration and policies too general to work well in different local circumstances
- Larger dislocation is between EH work and other sectors, especially land use, and development planning which are drivers of the problem
- In many areas, policy must include consideration of alternative livelihoods






Civil Society: NGOs

- Few Chinese eNGOs work on industrial pollution 40 out of more than 3500 (Furst forthcoming)
- Of these, even fewer make an explicit connection to health
- They can be divided into national (mostly Beijing-based) NGOs, local grassroots eNGOs, and IENGOS.
- National level include IPE, Friends Of Nature, CLAPV
- Local grassroots include Huaihe Weishi, Green Kunming, Green Hanjiang, etc..
- International NGOs are in evidence but also few: Natural Resources Defense Council, Blacksmith, Greenpeace (local office). Hong Kong Civic Exchange
- Even fewer health NGOs work on pollution. (YHDRA is exception)



What are NGOs doing?

- Contributing to drafting of laws and policies
- Pushing for greater transparency and access to information
- Acting as watchdogs (monitoring emissions and reporting to media or EPB; documenting deaths and disease)
- Reducing exposure through remediation of water and soil
- Supporting victims with legal assistance
- Supporting victims in obtaining healthcare
- Mostly implementation and accountability not policy



Providing information and acting as a watchdog (national level)

- Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs 公共环境研究中心
- Expanding information disclosure by making data on pollution more available to the public (PITI)
- Exposing companies that violate the law
- Following supply chains and reporting violations to shareholders
- Makes use of publicly available data on pollution and violations
- Provides info on health impacts but not main focus

公众与环境研究中心 - 中国水污染地图 - Windows Internet Explorer

http://www.ipe.org.cn/

公众与环境研究中心
Institute of Public & Environmental Affairs
中文 / English

中国水污染地图 China Water Pollution Map

中国 污染源分布 污染示意图 中国

行政区图

- 北京
- 河北
- 天津
- 山西
- 辽宁
- 吉林
- 上海
- 江苏
- 浙江
- 安徽
- 福建
- 江西
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空气污染地图

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Institute of Public & Environmental Affairs homepage



评价范围：113个直辖市/地级市

主要涵盖110个环保重点城市*

4个直辖市： 北京、天津、上海、重庆；	25个省会城市： 沈阳、南京、广州、成都、西安等；	5个计划单列市： 大连、青岛、宁波、厦门、深圳；	76个其他环保重点城市： 唐山、临汾、苏州、佛山、攀枝花等；	* 3个环保重点城市未纳入评价： 拉萨、海口、三亚	3个非环保重点城市亦纳入评价： 东莞、盐城、鄂尔多斯
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Providing legal assistance

- Center for Legal Assistance to Pollution Victims
污染受害者法律援助中心
- Provides legal advice through hotline
- Represents victims of pollution and seeks compensation
- Has established “public interest law firm”
- But few cases seek damages for health impacts
- Director consults on drafting of environmental law (but in individual capacity as academic expert not in capacity as NGO representative)



Local level NGOs: Huiahe Weishi

- Monitors pollution emissions and incidence of disease, publicizes problems
- Set up 18 biological wells with filtration systems to improve drinking water quality
- Raises funds for medical assistance for people judged to be suffering from pollution related illnesses
- At the local level the work of other NGOs is almost exclusively focused on monitoring, reporting and awareness raising
- Interactions with local government vary but generally more positive than in the past
- Tend to be limited to one policy stream



Limitations to pollution and health work

- Linkage between pollution and health is latent not specific in most cases
- Most work is on aggregate reduction of pollution not on reducing pollutants that are particularly harmful to health or reducing exposure
- Most work is limited to awareness raising and monitoring
- Only national level and international NGOs are in a position to work on policy innovation per se
- This still rare and mostly limited to policies relating to public information
- Little or no collaboration between NGOs working on health or development; limits ability to suggest solutions



Issue specific challenges for NGOs

- Lack of scientific knowledge and steep learning curve. Few staff have relevant training; those who do have it have many other employment options
- Lack of effective capacity building specific to the issue (needs to be indepth and ongoing)
- NGOs knowledge of policy is limited and usually limited to one policy domain. So are guanxi.
- Lack of knowledge about related legal rights
- Sensitivity of issue at local level: not just government but also communities when victims are also polluters
- Generic NGO challenges: low status and pay leading to staff turnover; etc., are exacerbated in this field 🔊



Implications for impact

- But a focus on policy innovation obscures the larger and growing role of NGOs in governance more broadly conceived
- Improving transparency and accountability, monitoring implementation, organizing community initiatives to reduce exposure or assist pollution victims. All this is important work and there is enormous room for development
- Analysis of US environmental justice movement shows two types of NGO – those that developed scientific expertise that enabled them to participate in policy and legal processes, and those that work primarily on awareness raising in order to create public demand for policy change (without engaging with specifics).



Implications for international exchange

- Need to think about where the “problem fit” lies with other countries. Problems should find partners.
- China faces multiple problems only some of which the EU has experience with. EU standards and practices may be attainable in affluent areas, but are aspirational in others. Policy in China needs to guide a process of realistic change that takes uneven development and governance capacity into account.
- Exchange with BRICS countries tackling similar challenges may be more helpful



Implications for international exchange

- But tackling impact of pollution on health has generic aspects that can be fruitful ground for collaboration
- EU (and OECD) have distilled experience in ways to improve policy making under conditions of scientific uncertainty; also the public communication of risks
- Also the challenge of involving lay people in policy decisions that involve complex scientific knowledge, etc..
- These processes need to be more conscious, structured and long term interactions than in many other issue domains)



Conclusion

- In terms of policy innovation, civil society's role in addressing the problem of pollution's impact on health remains at the level of expressing a demand for more effective policy
- To the extent that NGOs have input into policy making it is mostly through individual leaders who are scientific experts in their fields
- To have useful input into specific policy decisions (couple solutions to problems) NGOs would need to develop a high level of scientific expertise. Only a few can be expected to do this.
- Others (as elsewhere) will focus more on identifying problems, raising awareness, monitoring and reporting, and assisting victims.
- To do these things effectively also requires considerable investment in capacity building specific to the issue.



Thank You!

谢谢！