The Improvement Approach and Evolution Logic of China’s Villager Autonomy System—Content Analysis Based on 184 Policy Texts

Shu-wang ZHANG¹, Qiu-ting YANG¹, Can ZHAI¹ and Jeff WANG²,*

¹School of Public Administration, South China University of Technology, Guangzhou, China
²Rutgers School of Social Work, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey–New Brunswick, New Jersey, US
*Corresponding author

Keywords: Village self-governance, Policy text, Content analysis, Rural governance.

Abstract. Based on the content analysis of 184 villager autonomy system policy texts, using the ROST and NVivo software, through keyword screening, construction of analysis dimension, policy text encoding, and statistics of code coverage, the evolution logic of China's villager autonomy system from 1987 to 2017 was examined from four "democracies" and levels dimensions. The results show that in the 30 years of the development of the villager autonomy system in China, the attention on democratic management has declined, and that on democratic supervision has increased. Local departments have paid more attention to democratic elections than national departments, which has led to deviation of policy implementation.

Research Background

The 19th CPC national congress in 2017 coincides with the 30th anniversary of the promulgation of “the organic law of the villagers' committees of the People's Republic of China (for trial implementation)”. In the past three decades, “the organic law of the People's Republic of China on villagers' committees” has been amended twice. The provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government have also formulated measures for the implementation of “the organic law of the villagers' committees” in accordance with their respective actual conditions, villager autonomy gradually moves toward institutionalization, standardization.

Research Methods

Content analysis, initially applied in the field of communication, is a research method to obtain conclusions through the analysis of "content", with the characteristics of objectivity, systematic and quantitative. The implementation of content analysis mainly includes six steps: (1) to determine the research problem; (2) select samples; (3) determine the analysis unit; (4) code the research content; (5) coding reliability test; (6) conduct statistics and analysis on the data obtained by coding⁴⁵⁶⁷.

Research Process

Sample Selection and Data Sources

This study selected 184 copies of policy texts on the implementation of the villager autonomy system issued by the central and local governments from 1987 to 2017: the central level has 3 and the local level has 181.

Establish Analytical Dimension

The core content of villagers' autonomy is the "four democracies", namely, democratic election, democratic decision-making, democratic management and democratic supervision⁸⁹.
Filter Keywords

In this study, ROST NAT4.6 software was used to screen keywords of policy text. Firstly, six policy texts were merged into one and imported into the software and word frequency statistics was conducted. Words less than 5% of the total word frequency were eliminated to form a high-frequency word library. Secondly, combining with the policy text to analyze the lexical meaning, to remove the non-substantive meaning and ambiguous words; thirdly, words belonging to the four analytical dimensions are selected as keywords.

Coding of Policy TEXTS

After determining the analysis dimensions and keywords, NVivo 11 software was used to code the policy text. Firstly, "democratic election", "democratic decision-making", "democratic management" and "democratic supervision" are established as tree nodes. Under the tree node, the first-level keyword is established as the child node. Then, the policy text is coded, and the words or sentences that reflect the information of the node are taken as the reference points and placed under the corresponding nodes to form the coding level of "reference points -- child nodes -- tree nodes".

Statistics and Analysis

(1) Analysis of four "democracy" dimensions

![Four "democratic" coding coverage statistical chart.](image)

Figure 1. Four "democratic" coding coverage statistical chart.

Figure 1 shows the code coverage on the node on local level and national level policy texts in democratic elections, democratic decision-making, democratic management and democratic supervision. As seen from the figure, the highest coding coverage is democratic oversight, secondly, from high to low are democratic decision-making, democratic election and democratic management; at the local level, democratic elections have significantly higher coding coverage than the other three democracies, democratic supervision came second, and then democratic decision-making, democratic management; compared with different levels, national laws have higher coding coverage in democratic decision-making and democratic management nodes than local regulations, while local regulations have higher coding coverage in democratic elections and democratic supervision nodes than national laws, especially for democratic elections, the coding coverage of local regulations is significantly higher than that of national laws.
Figure 2 shows the coding coverage of different levels of policy text on child nodes. National laws have a higher coding coverage rate than local regulations in terms of decision-making subjects, decision-making contents, management means, management matters and supervision means, while local regulations have a higher coding coverage in voter registration, candidate selection, election mechanism, election procedure and content of supervision than national laws, especially in the election process, local laws and regulations pay much attention, which reflects the macro guidance of national laws and the micro practical characteristics of local laws and regulations.

References

[1] Liu Wei, Application of Content Analysis Method in the Study of Public Management Science, China Administration. 6 (2014) 93-98.

[2] Yang Xue, Explore the Prospects of the Application of Content Analysis Method in the Study of Administrative Management, Education of the Times. 21 (2015) 276-278.

[3] Information on http://www.pkulaw.cn/fulltext_form.aspx?Db=ch1&EncodingName&Gid=48485