Although open government information (OGI) or government transparency is considered an essential component of good governance, over half of existing OGI laws worldwide were enacted and enforced in the past 20 years. China enacted its open government information law, *The Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Open Government Information* in 2007, despite the fact that it is a non-democratic and authoritarian regime. After its implementation in 2008, the Chinese central government has been supplementing and revising the law to further enhance transparency. Still, research on open government in China is scarce (but see Piotrowski, Zhang, Lin & Yu, 2009; Tan, 2014; Yu, 2011), despite the fact that this piece of legislation is quite important for the country’s administrative and political reforms. Since the policy’s passage, Chinese scholars have been actively promoting the idea and improving its implementation. However, the majority of the research on open government information is normative and prescriptive, with most empirical studies focusing on evaluating the performance of open government information among central and local governments or developing evaluation schemes to assess the practice. With few exceptions (Ma, 2012; Wu &Yu, 2017; Yu, 2013), there is a paucity of research that examines government transparency as the dependent or independent variable, with a particular lack of quantitative studies on the matter. In tandem with the fast development of public administration research in China, recently Chinese public administration scholars have begun to study OGI quantitatively using advanced and cutting-edge research methods and design. In 2019, organized by Professor Qiushi Wang of Sun Yat-sen University, *Journal of Public Administration Review*, a leading academic journal on public administration in China, published a group of three articles on OGI in China. The three articles employ cutting-edge quantitative research methods and designs, such as quasi-experiment design, difference-in-difference models, propensity score matching, and spatial econometric model. These articles have interesting research questions, solid research designs, and findings with significant theoretical and practical implications. They represent the current quality of public administration research conducted in China and indicate the achievement Chinese academics have made in developing the field. It is a pity that these pieces of quality research are written in Chinese, which is not conveniently accessible to an international audience. Therefore, I take it upon myself to introduce these articles to a broader international audience. Not only do these articles illustrate the quality of research Chinese public administration scholars are conducting, they also contribute to the much broader international field of OGI research. In this article, I also include a quantitative article on OGI published in April 2020, which was published by a multi-disciplinary Chinese academic journal, *Ecological Economy*, and written by a public administration doctoral student. The reason why I include the article is not only because it is the latest quantitative academic article on the topic published, but also it demonstrates the quality training and research of future Chinese PA scholars.

In the following paper, first I summarize the four articles respectively. It should be noted that these are not verbatim translations, but rather I introduce these articles with my own interpretation and comments. I end with a closing discussion.

1. 刁伟涛,任占尚. (2019). 公众参与能否促进地方债务信息的主动公开 — 一项准实验的实证研究. *公共行政评论*. 2019(5), 93–114.
Citizen participation is one of the core themes in public administration research. Scholars have widely studied the effects of citizen participation and its determinants. However, the actual and real effects of citizen participation on government reforms and policymaking are hard to be ascertained, mainly due to issues with the endogenous relationship between citizen participation and government reforms and their performance. In this article, the authors examine the effects of citizen participation on administrative reforms in the context of OGI. Their main research question is whether citizens’ request for local government debt information leads to more proactive government disclosure. Although this research question is interesting, it is very difficult to empirically test via traditional research methods, such as survey instruments or interviews, because of reverse causation. Specifically, citizens are more likely to file open government information requests in localities with more transparency. The author innovatively employs a quasi-experimental design to address the potential issue with endogeneity.

Inspired by James Ben-Aaron (2017), the authors filed open government information requests in December 2017 on local government debts to the randomly selected 170 county governments in the three provinces—Jiangsu, Shandong, and Zhejiang—thus securing 141 valid responses (an 82.9% response rate). Subsequently, in 2018, they conducted a national study to evaluate the performance of county government debt information disclosures. First, they employ a Difference in Difference (DID) analysis whereby they compare the 2017 and 2018 OGI performance of counties. By utilizing this quasi-experimental design and various robustness tests, they convincingly conclude that citizens’ open government requests significantly cause more proactive government information discourse. To further validate their findings, they further conduct a Propensity Score Matching (PSM) analysis to compare the treatment groups (counties they filed requests to) to other similar counties in provinces other than the three provinces. Their hypotheses are supported and their findings are cross-validated.

2. Li Xiaofang, Meng Qingguo, Wang Youkui. (2019). Performance information disclosure and government response: A RDD analysis based on the third party evaluation data of government portal. Journal of Public Administration Review. 2019(5), 115-214.

In this article, Li and his co-authors creatively capitalize on a quasi-natural experiment to empirically examine how openness of performance information affects government behavior and performance.

Chinese E-government is grounded in the government web portals of the mid-1990s. Beginning in 2002, a private consulting firm, Saidi Consulting Inc., started to publish its annual evaluation reports for central and local Chinese governments and their agencies in order to promote and improve the quality of government online portals that deliver public services and government information. The consulting firm evaluates and ranks its subjects, with public release of their findings every year. However, since 2013, the firm has not released all ranking information to the public, with only the top 100 rankings—the top performers—being published. The authors consider it a classic quasi-natural experiment scenario since the number 100 is arbitrary, and the termination of the full release of the rankings in 2013 is rather random. Utilizing a regression discontinuity design, the authors explore how these selective releases of performance information affect government behavior and performance. After a series of extensive models and robustness checks, the authors find that releasing performance information increases competition among those entities being evaluated. Those ranked among the top 100 perform differently than those
not ranked in the top 100. Specifically, for those ranked in the top 100, their efforts to further improve their performance as measured by the designated performance indicators decreased, while those ranked below 100 paid much more attention to improving their measured performance.

Although third-party evaluations are prolific, it is relatively under-studied in public administration scholarship, with few exceptions (e.g., Yu & Ma, 2015a, 2015b). To improve its traditional performance evaluation system, the Chinese government has been encouraging and promoting the idea in recent years, as more people believe that independent third-party evaluations would improve governmental responsiveness and accountability. Despite this being an area of research with promising theoretical and practical contributions, empirical articles remain rare. This article takes a small but important step in developing third-party-evaluation research for China specifically, but also for scholarship more broadly.

3. 刘金东, 薛一帆, 管星华. (2019). 财政信息公开为何陷入“低水平陷阱”? — 基于地方标杆竞争视角的研究. 公共行政评论, 2019(5), 75-92.

Jindong Liu, Yifan Xue, & Xinghua Guan. (2019). Why does fiscal information disclosure fall into “low level trap”? — A perspective of benchmarking competition. *Journal of Public Administration Review*, 2019(5), 75-92.

Fiscal information discourse is a true test of the performance of open government information efforts in China (Wu & Yu, 2017). In this article, the authors aim to evaluate the performance of fiscal transparency among Chinese provincial governments. Utilizing the Public Policy Research Centre of Shanghai University of Economics and Finance’s panel dataset of Chinese provincial government transparency, the authors find that the degree of fiscal transparency within provinces fluctuates significantly from 2010 to 2018, while the overall level of fiscal transparency remains rather low and hardly improves across time. To explain these interesting phenomena, the authors posit that, due to various political and economic reasons, provinces are competing among each other. On one hand, they want to be more fiscally transparent because the central government requests it (Reputation Hypothesis). On the other hand, they do not want to risk the potential damage fiscal transparency can cause (Risk Hypothesis). Therefore they try to compare and compete with their neighboring province(s) that maintain similar geographic and economic characteristics. By conducting an unsymmetrical spatial analysis, they find that their Risk Hypothesis is supported. Based on their findings, they recommend that the Chinese government design and revise relevant institutions and regulations to reduce the risk effect, thereby incentivizing local governments to enhance fiscal transparency.

4. 范亚西. (2020). 信息公开、环境监管与环境治理绩效 — 来自中国城市的经验证据. 生态经济, 2020(4), 193-199.

Yaxi Fan. (2020). Information disclosure, environmental regulation, and environmental governance performance: Empirical evidence from Chinese cities. *Ecological Economy*, 36(4), 193-199.

Despite the fact that the Chinese government has won popular support due to stunning economic growth and improved quality of life, environmental pollution has become a serious threat to the Chinese ruling party’s legitimacy. Over years, the Chinese central government has been using environmental transparency as a tool to motivate and control local governments in the implementation of its stringent environmental regulations. In this article, the author tries to empirically test the effects of environmental transparency on the performance of environmental governance using air quality indicators. Using a hierarchical panel data set at both city and provincial levels, the author hypothesizes that environmental transparency can significantly reduce pollution and provincial level environmental monitoring, with controls moderating the effects of environmental transparency on pollution reduction. Their findings indicate that transparency alone is important, but provincial monitoring and control alone do not significantly reduce pollution. Instead, the interactive effects of provincial control and city level transparency are significant. Their findings
reveal the causal mechanism of environmental transparency on pollution reduction with robust data and methodological techniques.

As mentioned before, the four articles reviewed here aim to identify and explain the causal relationship between OGI and other important policy matters. As Whetten (1989) points out, a good theory is to answer why questions. Thus, these articles have potential to make significant contributions to the field of OGI research. However, these articles are not without limitations. I highlight two potential issues here. First, the authors of these articles do not engage with the international academic literature. Yes, they conduct a literature review, which cites geographically diverse pieces. But their sole purpose is to describe and explain Chinese cases and phenomenon. Therefore, the value of these articles is significantly reduced. Second, the English proficiency of these authors needs further improvement. The English titles and abstracts contain many typos and grammatical errors. Most of them are directly translated from Chinese, which is rather difficult to understand for an international audience. Here, I do not revise the English titles and abstracts because then it would be difficult for international academic and scholars to locate them.

Over the last 20 years, Chinese public administration research has progressed remarkably, and these four articles demonstrate as much. Since 2002, CPAR has been publishing public administration research on China, thus providing a venue for international academics and practitioners to understand Chinese public administration and its reforms. We hope to further contribute to the internationalization of Chinese public administration scholarship, thereby supporting collaboration among China and other countries and regions, both in academic research and praxis.

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