

Call for Papers – Special Issue

Digital governance in Chinese smart cities

We invite original empirical and theoretical contributions on:

- the nexus between Chinese smart city experiments and digital infrastructure provision
- comparative case-studies on modes of governance of smart city infrastructure
- governance factors for the failure and success of smart city pilot projects
- consequences of smart city projects for society and environment

Key words:

Smart city, big data, digitalization, experimentalism, governance, infrastructure, Internet of Things, case studies

Information for abstracts and workshop participation:

Authors are invited to submit an abstract (300-350 words) to infrastructure-smartcity@gmx.de for a Special Issue on 'Digital governance in Chinese smart cities'. **The Deadline for abstracts will be February 15th 2019.**

Authors whose abstracts were accepted will be invited to attend a one-day **workshop at Freie Universität Berlin on May 24th 2019** to present their paper manuscripts.

By 2050, 80 percent of China's population is expected to live in cities compared to almost 60 percent in 2018. With such mounting speed of urbanization and an increasing population, China initiated over 500 smart cities as a way to cope with current and future problems associated with mobility, pollution, healthcare, public service efficiency and public safety.

However, smart city development depends on the provision and maintenance of digital infrastructure to sense, transmit and process big data of and between individuals, physical and social infrastructure. At the same time, large-scale Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) infrastructure projects are found to be amongst those with largest cost overrun on a global scale amounting to 200 percent for one project out of six (Flyvbjerg 2014). Especially the Chinese context would expect poor performance for digital infrastructure provision because of often prevalent diverging interests along vertical and horizontal lines of governance, unpredictability for investors due to low levels of transparency and rule of law, and rent-seeking behaviour by governments, enterprises and influential individuals.

Indeed, some Chinese smart cities are lacking laws, standards, clear strategic goals and project coordination, and are subject to problematic information security. Yet, projects vary a lot amongst cities and some smart city initiatives seem to perform surprisingly better such as in Xiamen, Beijing, Hangzhou and Wenzhou.

The Special Issue and workshop will, amongst others, address the following questions: Is China's digital infrastructure ready for the emergent development of smart cities? Why do some pilot projects perform better than others? What are reasons for some projects to be successful despite the apparent unfavourable conditions of the complex and multiple interests-driven Chinese governance system? What other reasons and implementation barriers are at play leading to project failure and how do negative governance-factors play out in individual project cases? How do smart cities deal with privacy and ethical issues, and how do city governments deal with potential risks of misuse of data and technologies?

This Special Issue and workshop bring together scholarly work from the fields of smart city development, urbanization, infrastructure governance, digitalization and big data to discuss these and related questions. The Special Issue and workshop will be part of a 3-year DFG project '[Infrastructure provision in China](#)' at Freie Universität Berlin.

Guest editors of the Special Issue:

- **Prof. Dr. Genia Kostka**, Institute of Chinese Studies, Freie Universität Berlin, Fabeckstr. 23-25, 14195 Berlin, Germany. [Website](#)
- **Wiebke Rabe**, PhD Candidate, Hertie School of Governance, Friedrichstr. 180, 10117 Berlin, Germany. [Website](#)