



The Local Future

State-Building at the Grass-Root Level

Conceptualisation of 'local China': What's 'local'?

Which dictionary definition is closest to 'local' in 'local state' and 'local China'?

- a) of, relating to, or characteristic of a particular place: not general or widespread
- b) of, relating to, or applicable to part of a whole
- c) from, existing in, serving, or responsible for a small area, especially of a country

Geographical, hierarchical, or both?

'Local' as used in China studies and in China

- **A. A common frame of reference in the English-language literature: 'central vs local' or 'local vs central'**
 - 1) Central: the central Party-state, or a part/parts of it
 - 2) Local: provinces, prefectures, counties, townships and villages, or equivalent political units

- B. The official frame of reference in China in the past: 'central and local' (中央和地方)**
 - 1) Central: as above
 - 2) Local: as above

- C. A new frame of reference in China: 'central, local and grass-root levels' (中央, 地方和基层)**
 - 1) Central: as above
 - 2) Local: provinces, prefectures and (counties?)
 - 3) The grass-root level:
 - a. Bottom of central and local
 - b. Urban: community neighbourhoods (社区)
 - c. Rural: (counties?), townships and villages

Local China

Local state, local government, local society, local communities, local economy, local languages, local customs, local cultures, local characteristics...

State-Building at the Grass-Root Level

- A. Urban
- B. Rural
- As far as state-building and governance are concerned, the grass-root level deserves more academic attention than at any other time since 1978.
- State-building and governance at the grass-root level deserve more academic attention than at higher levels.
- Why?

Why?

- The central Party-state advances instead retreating.
- It is paying more attention to the ‘construction of grass-root state institutions’ (基层政权建设) than ever since 1978.
 - CCP leaders refer to grass-root governing bodies as ‘nerve endings’ (末梢神经) of the state and government.
 - Sensory nerve endings receive external and internal stimuli.
 - Motor nerve endings transmit nerve impulses to muscle and glandular tissues, causing them to produce movement and secretion activities.
- Social governance is gravitating towards the grass-root level (社会治理下沉).
- ‘New Urbanisation’, which is designed to turn towns into new urban centres.
- Major changes are already taking place – more at the grass-root level than elsewhere.
- The present trends are likely to continue in the Xi era, and the future of local China will look quite different from its past and present.

State-Building at the Grass-Root Level: 4) and 3)

A. Urban

1) City

2) Districts (区)

3) Sub-districts (街道): the expansion and strengthening of sub-district offices (街道办事处)

4) Community neighbourhoods (社区): the expansion and strengthening of residents' committees (社区居民委员会)

State-Building at the Grass-Root Level

B. Rural

1. Townships

- 1) Central agencies
- 2) 'Stations' and 'offices' under county and township leadership
- 3) 'Stations' and 'offices' under township leadership

2. Villages

- 1) CCP branches
- 2) Villagers' committees
- 3) Rural collective economic organizations

1. Townships

1) Central agencies

- Taxation Office (税务所)
- Post Office (邮政/电信所)
- Power Supply Station (供电所)
- Industry and Commerce Office (工商所)
- Credit Cooperatives (信用社)

Townships

2) 'Stations' and 'offices' under joint county–township leadership

- Judicial Administrative Station (司法所)
- Land Management Office (土管所)
- Public Finance Office (财政所)
- Police Station (派出所)
- Civil Affairs Office (民政所)
- Forestry Station (林业站)
- Public Health Centre (卫生院)

Townships

3) 'Stations' and 'offices' under township leadership

- Housing Management Station (房管所)
- Farming Machinery Station (农机站)
- Agricultural Technology Station (农技站)
- Water Resources Station (水利站)
- Construction Station (城建站)
- Family Planning Station (计生站)
- Culture Station (文化站)
- Broadcasting Station (广播站)
- Economic Management Station (经管站)
- Transportation Station (客运站)

Villages: State-building through Party-building

1) CCP branches

- The CCP had 4.864 million grass-root branches in 2021 – 182,000 (3.9%) more than in 2019.
- By 2021, 491,748 administrative villages, or 99.9% of the total, had established CCP branches.

2) Villagers' committees (VCs)

- CCP branches are playing more important roles in VCs.
- VCs are beginning to concentrate on social governance.
- VCs will hand over economic management to rural collective economic organizations.

• 3) Rural collective economic organizations (RCEOs)

The township government and the township CCP committee as well as the village CCP branch will have formalised control over RCEOs.

- RCEOs will be directly under the ‘supervision and management’ of township governments.*
- The township CCP committee or village Party branch ‘can nominate and recommend candidates for members of RCEOs’ board of directors’.*
- The Party secretary of the village branch ‘can serve as the chairman of the board of directors’.*

* The Law of the People’s Republic of China on Rural Collective Economic Organizations (adopted on 28 June 2024 and coming into force on 1 May 2025)