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#### Transparency, Participation, and the Institutionalization of Governance Reform in China

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## **Online Consultation in China**

- A recent governance reform
  - Legal foundations (2000~)
  - Dozens of government experiments
- Existing research
  - Case studies: health care reform; criminal procedure law
  - Systematic review: utilization and character across government organizations
- Research question
  - To what extent has online consultation in China institutionalized?

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# **Methodology and Data**

- Ministry of Commerce & Guangzhou Municipal Government
  - Disseminate the full texts of draft laws and regulations
  - Post public feedback to the Internet

	Timeframe	Policy Consultations	Public Comments
Ministry of Commerce	2002-2016	189	2,657
Guangzhou Municipal Government	2010-2016	137	9,098

- Content analysis: consensus coding
  - Number of characters
  - Comment periods
  - Professional/Personal experience
  - Sentiments, etc.

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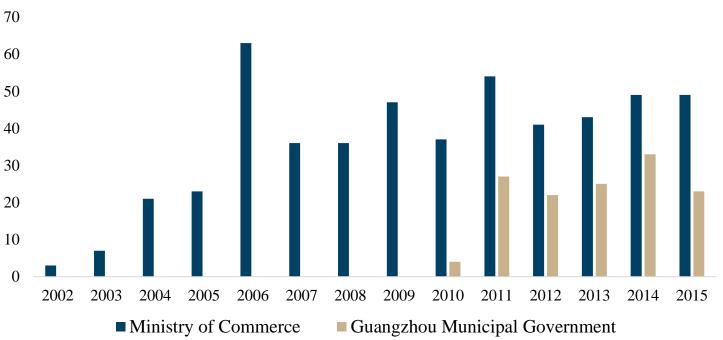
	Government Transparency	Public Participation
<b>1.</b> Durability	<ul> <li>Frequency of online consultation</li> <li>Diffusion of online consultation across offices and policy areas</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Volume of comments</li> </ul>
2. Deepening	<ul> <li>Level of detail of policy proposals</li> <li>Duration of comment periods</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Level of detail of comments</li> <li>Expertise of comments</li> <li>Sentiment of comments</li> </ul>

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#### **Durability of Government Transparency**

#### Indicator 1: Frequency of online consultation



Number of Consultations

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## **Durability of Government Transparency**

Indicator 2: Diffusion of online consultation across offices and policy areas

Ministry of Commerce	Guangzhou Municipal Government
Treaty and law	Housing
Market system development	Environment
Electronic commerce and informatization	Government operations
Outward investment and economic cooperation	Infrastructure
Anti-monopoly	Science and technology
Circulation industry development	Arts, culture, and education

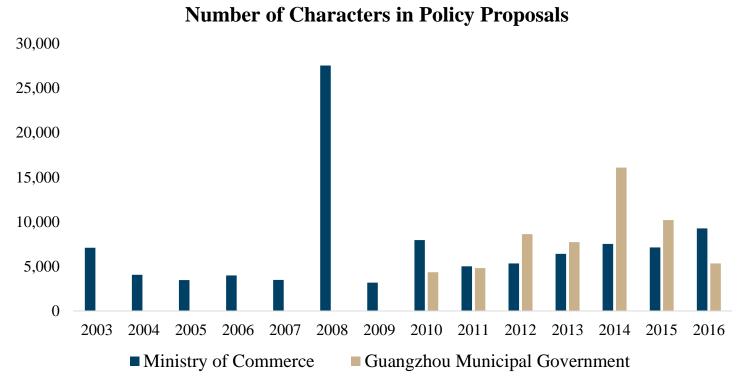
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#### **Deepening of Government Transparency**

#### Indicator 1: Level of detail of policy proposals



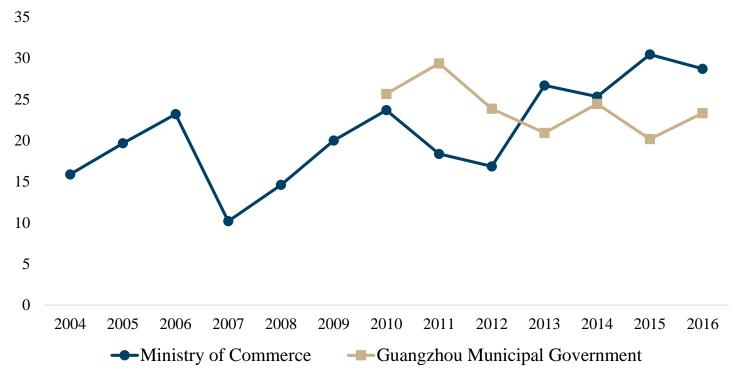
*Note*: The y-axis represents the average number of characters in policy proposals in a particular year.

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#### **Deepening of Government Transparency**

Indicator 2: Duration of comment periods

**Duration of Comment Periods (Days)** 



*Note*: The y-axis represents the average number of days of comment periods in a particular year.

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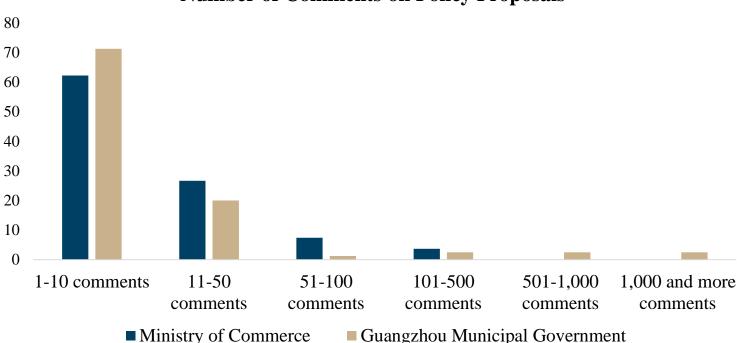
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### **Durability of Public Participation**

Indicator: Volume of Comments



Number of Comments on Policy Proposals

*Note*: The y-axis represents the percentage of policy proposals receiving a particular range of comments.

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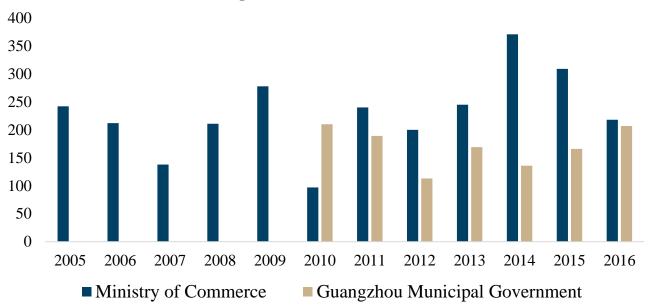
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#### **Deepening of Public Participation**

#### Indicator 1: Level of Detail of Comments



Length of Public Comments

*Note*: The y-axis represents the average number of characters of public comments submitted in a particular year.

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## **Deepening of Public Participation**

#### **Indicator 2: Expertise of Comments**

#### Professional experience:

"As a newspaper courier, I do not support a prohibition on electric bicycles. This restriction would be devastating to our industry and others that rely heavily on electric bicycles. Electric bicycles reduce our delivery times in half and make our work less arduous..."

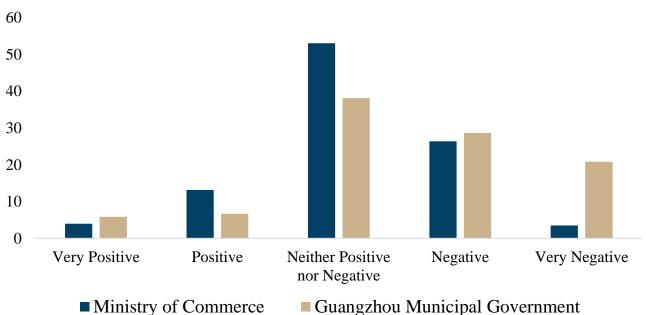
#### Personal experience:

"I am an only child, and my husband had a brother who passed away when he was young. Under Shanghai regulations, my husband is considered an only child. The Guangdong Provincial Health and Family Planning Commission, however, says that my husband does not count as an only child..."

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#### **Deepening of Public Participation**

**Indicator 3: Sentiment of Comments** 



**Sentiment of Public Comments toward Policy Proposals** 

*Note*: Each bar represents the percentage of public comments expressing a particular type of sentiment.

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### Conclusion

Online consultation has deepened government transparency to a greater degree than public participation.

- Government Transparency:
  - Durable consultation practices
  - Detailed policy information & ample opportunities for public feedback
- Public participation:
  - Modest volume of feedback & insufficient transmission of professional expertise
  - Evident communication of political information (e.g., sentiments) – possibility of operating as a "safety valve" in policymaking?

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