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# A Survey of Incrementalism, Gradual Experimentalism, Direct Experimentalism, Mass Mobilization, Policy Pilot in Chinese Governance: Governance Models and Policy Innovation

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## Abstract

This survey paper explores various governance and policy-making strategies, highlighting their significance in addressing complex societal challenges. It examines incrementalism, gradual and direct experimentalism, mass mobilization, and policy pilots, with a particular focus on Chinese governance. Incrementalism and gradual experimentalism emphasize small-scale, step-by-step changes, while direct experimentalism involves empirical testing in controlled settings. Mass mobilization leverages large-scale public engagement, and policy pilots test initiatives before broader implementation. The survey underscores China's adaptive approach, using case studies like the Green Finance Reform Pilot to illustrate policy innovation and sustainable development. It also discusses governance models, AI integration, and the necessity of international institutions for AI safety. Challenges such as decentralization and corporate governance reform are identified, alongside the need for robust legislative frameworks. The survey concludes that adaptive, experimental, and participatory governance strategies are crucial for fostering innovation and resilience in policy processes, suggesting areas for future research, including decentralization impacts and performative governance implications.

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Importance of Governance Strategies

Governance strategies are critical in shaping policy-making and implementation, especially in contexts characterized by complex challenges such as privacy, national security, and globalization. The integration of these strategies is essential for managing the privacy and national security concerns associated with social networking sites, necessitating robust policy frameworks to address emerging threats [1]. In the context of globalization, effective governance enhances economic competitiveness and promotes sustainable social growth [2].

The alignment of artificial intelligence with human values further exemplifies the pivotal role of governance strategies. Koster et al. advocate for governance frameworks that ensure AI technologies align with democratic objectives, thereby safeguarding societal interests [3]. Additionally, experimental governance approaches are vital in tackling 'wicked' policy problems, such as those seen in China's healthcare reform [4].

The operational dynamics of Decentralized Autonomous Organizations (DAOs) illustrate the transformative potential of decentralized governance structures. Sharma et al. highlight how these organizations utilize decentralized decision-making processes to enhance efficiency and adaptability [5]. Governance strategies also play a significant role in addressing market failures, facilitating the development of policies that foster innovation [6].

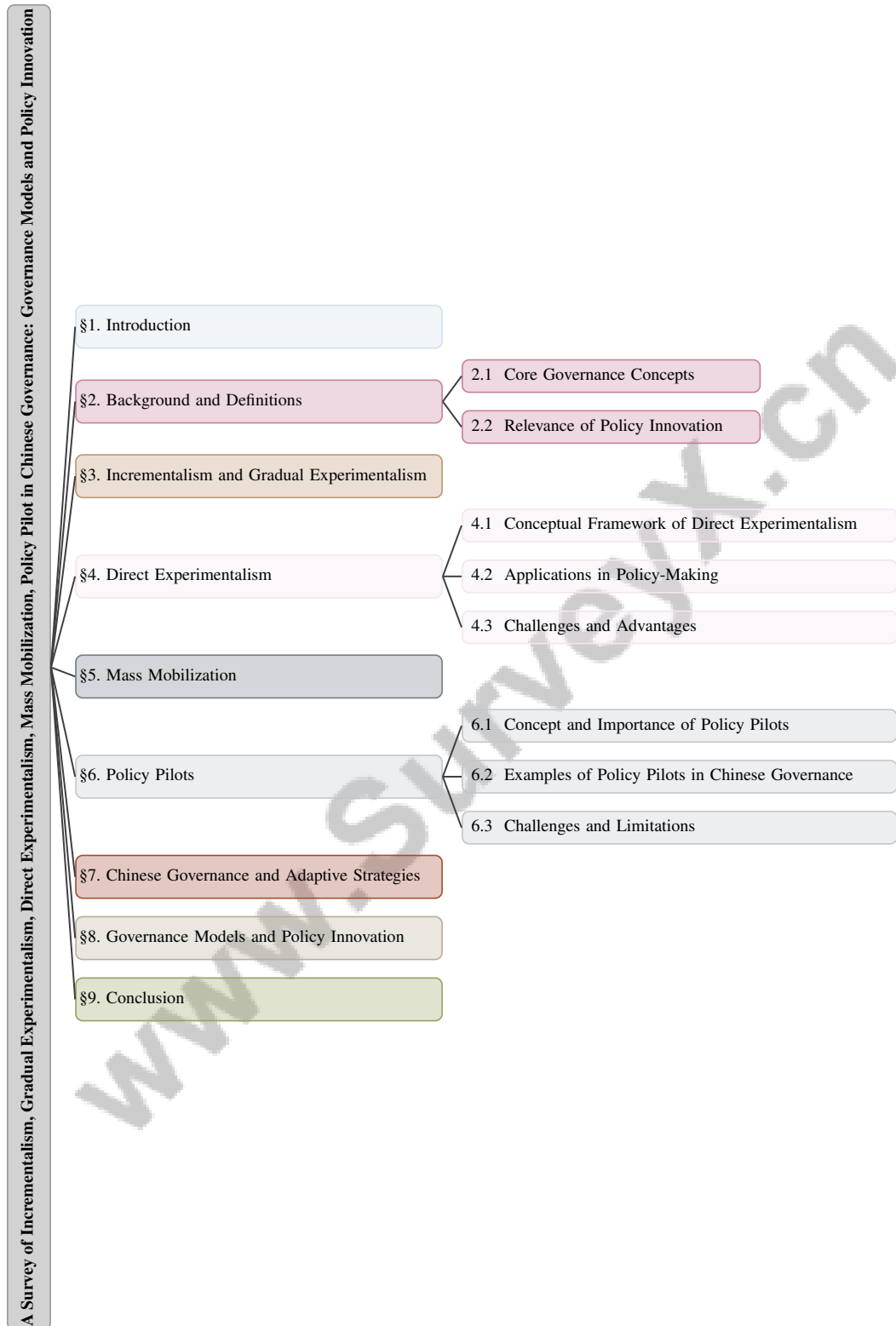


Figure 1: chapter structure

China's absence of a unified spatial planning system underscores the impact of governance strategies on policy coherence and effectiveness [7]. Furthermore, Schipani's analysis of China's corporate

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governance system emphasizes the importance of strategic governance in attracting foreign investment and promoting economic growth [8].

The challenge of antibiotic resistance, as discussed by Aguirre et al., highlights the critical role of governance in public health policy. The agricultural use of antibiotics in food-producing animals necessitates governance strategies to mitigate risks and protect public health [9]. These examples collectively illustrate the essential role of governance strategies in navigating complex policy landscapes and driving effective policy-making.

## 1.2 Scope and Objectives

This survey provides a comprehensive examination of governance and policy-making strategies, particularly within the context of Chinese governance. It analyzes frameworks such as incrementalism, gradual experimentalism, direct experimentalism, mass mobilization, and policy pilots as vehicles for policy innovation. Case studies from low and middle-income countries illustrate the implementation of these strategies, excluding high-income countries and purely theoretical discussions [10]. The survey also explores the design, methods, and reporting of feasibility and pilot studies in implementation science [11].

Additionally, the survey addresses the technical landscape and governance of artificial intelligence, focusing on the intersection of AI politics and ideal governance frameworks, while excluding non-governance-related areas [12]. It investigates governance dynamics among platform companies, users, advertisers, and governments, omitting detailed technical aspects of platform algorithms [13]. Various aspects of decentralization, including political frameworks, fiscal dimensions, transparency, citizen participation, civil society, and subnational government capacity, are also examined [14].

In the realm of social networking platforms, the survey analyzes their structures, user profiles, and associated risks such as cyber crime and identity theft [1]. A large-scale empirical analysis of 100 Decentralized Autonomous Organizations (DAOs) across social, investment, and infrastructure categories is included [5]. The survey further addresses market failures in innovation, scientific norms, market-oriented policies, the diffusion of inventions, and the relationship between innovation and inequality [6].

The historical development, current challenges, and future prospects of national territory spatial planning in China are explored, excluding specific regional planning cases [7]. Lastly, the survey covers the evolution of corporate governance in China, focusing on state-owned enterprises and their transition to modern corporate models [8].

The primary objectives of this survey are to elucidate the diverse governance strategies employed in Chinese policy-making, evaluate their effectiveness in fostering policy innovation, and highlight the adaptive strategies characteristic of Chinese governance. The survey aims to enhance understanding of how experimentalist governance strategies can be effectively implemented to address complex societal challenges, not only within China's healthcare system but also in various global contexts, by examining distinct modalities of experimentation that consider both technical and interest complexities in policy reform [10, 4, 2].

## 1.3 Structure of the Survey

This survey is organized into several key sections, each focusing on distinct aspects of governance and policy-making strategies within the context of Chinese governance. It begins with an introduction outlining the importance of governance strategies in shaping effective policy-making and implementation processes, followed by a discussion of the survey's scope and objectives, highlighting primary goals and specific areas of focus.

The second section provides a comprehensive background and definitions of core governance concepts, setting the stage for a deeper exploration of incrementalism, gradual experimentalism, direct experimentalism, mass mobilization, and policy pilots, which are crucial for understanding frameworks used in policy innovation and governance models.

The third section delves into incrementalism and gradual experimentalism, exploring their roles as strategies for implementing small-scale, step-by-step changes in policy-making. This includes

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a discussion on creative incrementalism in governance, supported by case studies from Chinese governance.

Following this, the survey examines direct experimentalism, which involves testing policies in controlled environments. This section discusses the conceptual framework of direct experimentalism, its applications in policy-making, particularly in the Chinese context, along with associated challenges and advantages.

The fifth section focuses on mass mobilization as a strategy for leveraging large-scale public engagement in policy-making. It explores implications for democratic durability, regulatory reform, and public policy changes, illustrated by contemporary examples such as the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement.

The concept of policy pilots is discussed in the sixth section, highlighting their significance in fostering policy innovation. This section provides examples of policy pilots in Chinese governance and examines challenges and limitations associated with their implementation.

The seventh section explores how Chinese governance exemplifies adaptive strategies through its pragmatic approach, discussing the role of democratic experimentalism and the management of policy transfer and local adaptation.

In the eighth section, the survey analyzes governance models and policy innovation, focusing on institutional architectures, environmental governance, and frameworks for governance in AI and technology, emphasizing their role in addressing complex societal challenges.

Finally, the conclusion summarizes key findings and insights from the survey, reflecting on the implications of various governance and policy-making strategies for Chinese governance and beyond, while suggesting areas for future research and potential applications of these strategies in other contexts. The paper is structured around fundamental concepts addressing market failures, the inefficiency of innovation production, and empirical challenges in analyzing innovation policy [6]. The following sections are organized as shown in Figure 1.

## **2 Background and Definitions**

### **2.1 Core Governance Concepts**

Governance strategies and models are essential for addressing societal challenges through effective policy-making and implementation, involving processes, structures, and institutions that regulate political, social, and economic interactions. Incrementalism and gradual experimentalism are key, focusing on small-scale changes to facilitate adaptive learning and minimize risks of large-scale reforms [15]. This is particularly relevant in health systems, where gradual integration of innovative practices addresses scalability concerns [16].

Direct experimentalism, testing policies in controlled environments, is vital for managing uncertainty and social diversity, allowing policymakers to refine solutions based on empirical evidence [17]. The absence of international processes for assessing risks from advanced AI highlights the need for robust experimental frameworks for technological advancements.

Mass mobilization, involving large-scale public engagement, is another critical governance concept, often resulting in 'dialogic struggles' where elite conflicts and grassroots movements influence policy outcomes [18]. Historical and contemporary movements demonstrate mass mobilization's impact on governance, driving regulatory reforms and policy changes [19].

Policy pilots act as intermediaries between experimentalism and full-scale implementation, testing initiatives on a smaller scale. They are crucial in implementation science, addressing challenges in translating research into practice and providing insights into new policies' feasibility and effectiveness [14]. In decentralized governance, policy pilots enhance trust and accountability by involving local stakeholders, reducing manipulation risks by central authorities.

Policy innovation is linked to governance models addressing market failures, inefficiencies, and modern economic complexities, requiring understanding of policy transfer and adaptation [20]. In the environmental domain, governance models integrating Green Credit Policies with local support exemplify the need for robust frameworks for sustainable outcomes [21].

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Establishing a governance framework that integrates public and private sectors is crucial for addressing social and economic issues in a changing global landscape [2]. Distributive justice highlights the complexity of aligning AI with diverse human views on fairness and efficiency [3]. The decentralization within DAOs and factors like governance token design and voting mechanisms are core issues in governance contexts [5].

Critiques of traditional federalism emphasize the innovative potential of dynamic interactions among government levels [22]. The challenge of antibiotic resistance linked to subtherapeutic antibiotic use in animals highlights governance challenges in agriculture [9].

The literature stresses the need for adaptive, experimental, and participatory approaches in policy-making to tackle contemporary governance challenges. These approaches foster collaboration among diverse stakeholders, enabling policy innovations and ensuring governance structures can adapt to changing circumstances, promoting sustainable social growth and economic competitiveness [12, 23, 4, 2, 24]. By leveraging incremental changes, experimental trials, mass mobilization, and policy pilots, governance models can navigate uncertainties and diversities inherent in complex societal challenges, fostering innovation and resilience in policy processes.

## 2.2 Relevance of Policy Innovation

Policy innovation is crucial for adaptive and responsive policy-making in addressing evolving societal challenges. The complexity of global issues necessitates a shift from traditional governance models to dynamic frameworks capable of addressing contemporary crises. The underutilization of computational models in public policy-making, as noted by Gilbert, presents an opportunity to enhance adaptive governance through advanced analytical tools [25]. These models facilitate informed decision-making, improving the responsiveness of policy frameworks to emerging challenges.

In economic development, policy innovation addresses market failures and enhances innovation efficiency, critical for economic growth [6]. This is evident in green finance, where innovative policies promote green economic development and ecological protection in China [26]. Such policies drive sustainable development and ensure governance systems remain responsive to environmental challenges.

The establishment of a unified national territory spatial planning (NTSP) system exemplifies policy innovation's role in addressing governance challenges and promoting sustainable development [7]. By facilitating strategic resource allocation, innovative policies enhance governance frameworks' coherence and effectiveness [27].

Public opinion and citizen engagement significantly shape state behavior, highlighting policy innovation's role in bridging perceived and actual governance quality [28]. This engagement fosters transparency and accountability, essential for effective governance.

Decentralized Autonomous Organizations (DAOs) represent innovative governance models facilitating equitable decision-making compared to traditional organizations [5]. Leveraging decentralized decision-making, DAOs enhance governance systems' adaptability and resilience in addressing complex challenges.

The challenge of climate change adaptation underscores the need for innovative governance models balancing traditional federalism with collaborative approaches [22]. This balance is essential for developing adaptive and responsive policies to the multifaceted nature of climate change.

Policy innovation is integral to governance, enabling adaptive, responsive, and context-sensitive policy-making frameworks. By promoting experimentalism and decentralization, policymakers can effectively tackle contemporary society's complex and unpredictable challenges. This approach facilitates adaptive management and policy learning, leveraging diverse local innovations and solutions, enhancing the capacity to implement effective and sustainable policies within a multilevel governance framework [4, 22, 2].

In examining the frameworks of governance, it is essential to understand the nuances of incrementalism and gradual experimentalism. These concepts are not merely theoretical; they are deeply rooted in practical applications that shape policy and decision-making processes. Figure 2 illustrates the hierarchical structure of these frameworks, emphasizing the role of creative incrementalism. This figure highlights innovative approaches, operational tools, and adaptive governance strategies that

are pivotal in navigating complex governance landscapes. Furthermore, it showcases relevant case studies in Chinese governance, which provide insights into policy transfer, adaptation, and the effects of decentralization. By integrating these visual elements into our analysis, we can better appreciate the dynamic interplay between theory and practice in contemporary governance.

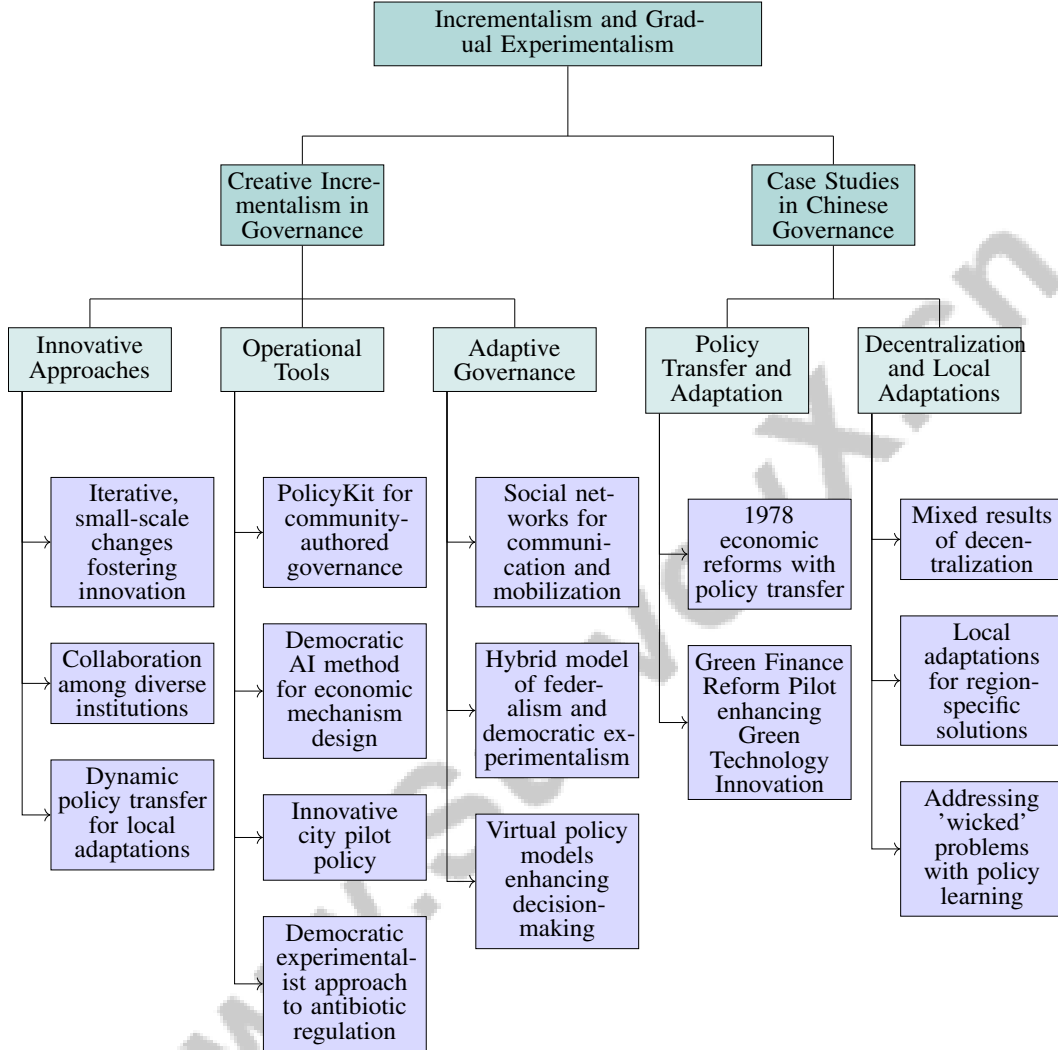


Figure 2: This figure illustrates the hierarchical structure of incrementalism and gradual experimentalism in governance, highlighting creative incrementalism through innovative approaches, operational tools, and adaptive governance strategies. It also showcases case studies in Chinese governance, focusing on policy transfer, adaptation, and the effects of decentralization.

### 3 Incrementalism and Gradual Experimentalism

#### 3.1 Creative Incrementalism in Governance

Creative incrementalism emphasizes iterative, small-scale changes that foster innovation across technological, social, institutional, and behavioral domains, supporting continuous learning within policy processes. This approach aligns with governance theory, which advocates for collaboration among diverse institutions beyond the state [2]. Dynamic policy transfer processes facilitate innovative adaptations tailored to local contexts, as seen in the transformation of China's SOEs from state-controlled to shareholder-based governance [29, 8]. Integrating Schumpeterian innovation with Weberian public policy capacities underscores the synergy between innovation and policy capabilities for sustainable change [20].

Creative incrementalism is operationalized through tools like PolicyKit, enabling community-authored governance procedures on digital platforms [23], and the Democratic AI method, which incorporates democratic preferences into economic mechanism design [3]. The innovative city pilot policy and the democratic experimentalist approach to antibiotic regulation in agriculture demonstrate tailored policy implementation and localized experimentation, respectively [27, 9].

Social networks enhance communication and mobilization, aligning with creative incrementalism by enabling adaptive governance transformations [1]. A hybrid model combining traditional federalism with democratic experimentalism for climate change adaptation exemplifies the pragmatic application of creative incrementalism in policy development [22]. This strategy fosters innovation and adaptability, empowering policymakers to address complex societal challenges through continuous learning and improvement, with virtual policy models enhancing decision-making processes [25].

Figure 3 illustrates the hierarchical structure of creative incrementalism in governance, highlighting key policy tools, application examples, and the role of social networks in facilitating adaptive governance transformations. This visual representation reinforces the concepts discussed, providing a clearer understanding of how these elements interact within the framework of creative incrementalism.

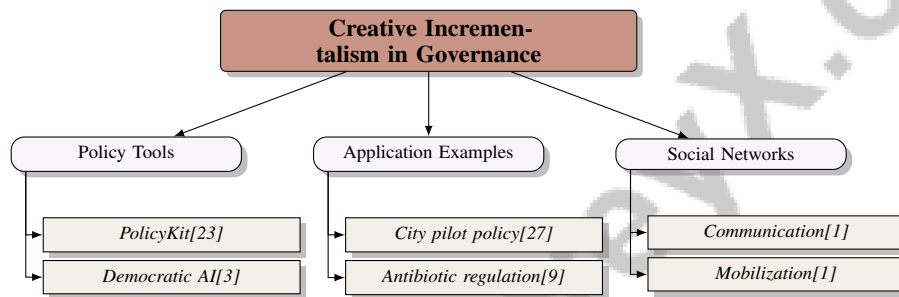


Figure 3: This figure illustrates the hierarchical structure of creative incrementalism in governance, highlighting key policy tools, application examples, and the role of social networks in facilitating adaptive governance transformations.

### 3.2 Case Studies in Chinese Governance

Chinese governance exemplifies incrementalism and gradual experimentalism, particularly since the 1978 economic reforms, characterized by policy transfer through hybridity, synthesis, and local adaptation [15, 29]. The Green Finance Reform Pilot (GFRP) illustrates strategic policy experimentation, enhancing Green Technology Innovation capabilities [26]. Such pilots allow China to test and refine policies in controlled settings, minimizing risks and ensuring sustainable outcomes.

Decentralization in China presents mixed results, improving accountability and service delivery while increasing regional disparities and corruption [14]. This complexity underscores the need for local adaptations to address specific challenges in a diverse nation. These case studies highlight the effectiveness of incrementalism and gradual experimentalism in fostering adaptive governance, with policy pilots and localized adaptations addressing complex societal challenges and implementing region-specific solutions, particularly in healthcare. This approach enhances policy learning and adaptive management, aligning governance arrangements and policy capacity to tackle "wicked" problems lacking clear solutions [4, 2].

## 4 Direct Experimentalism

### 4.1 Conceptual Framework of Direct Experimentalism

Direct experimentalism is a governance methodology that focuses on empirical testing and iterative refinement of policies in controlled settings. It is rooted in democratic experimentalism, prioritizing pragmatism, adaptability, and empirical learning as core components of effective policy-making [9]. This framework resonates with transformative innovation policy discourse, advocating for flexible structures that institutionalize innovation through argumentative discourse analysis [24].

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Digital platforms like PolicyKit exemplify this approach by enabling online communities to codify governance procedures for automated execution, facilitating direct experimentalism in digital governance [23]. The Democratic AI method further illustrates practical applications by employing deep reinforcement learning to design redistribution mechanisms based on human preferences expressed through voting, showcasing the integration of human-centered design and empirical testing in policy-making [3].

In public policy, direct experimentalism requires a blend of capacities to navigate innovation complexities, framing policy-making as a complex, iterative process that enhances responsiveness to societal challenges [25]. Evaluations of pilot programs, as discussed by He, involve qualitative analysis, outcome monitoring, and iterative feedback mechanisms, reinforcing the empirical and adaptive nature of this approach [4].

The dynamic nature of direct experimentalism is evident in the governance of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) in China, where the transition to modern corporate models reflects iterative policy refinement [8]. Furthermore, dynamic, adaptive federalism underscores the importance of overlapping jurisdictions and regulatory adaptability to environmental challenges, showcasing the flexibility inherent in direct experimentalism [22].

Direct experimentalism thus provides a comprehensive framework for policy innovation, enabling governance systems to empirically test and refine policies in response to complex societal issues. By prioritizing pragmatism, adaptability, and empirical learning, this approach cultivates sustainable outcomes and enhances governance systems' capacity to address "wicked" policy problems through diverse experimentation modalities and collaborative strategies [4, 24, 2].

## 4.2 Applications in Policy-Making

Direct experimentalism has been effectively utilized in policy-making to empirically test and refine policies within controlled environments. Singapore's Smart Nation initiative exemplifies this by integrating experimental practices with business objectives to drive innovation and policy development [30]. This initiative illustrates how direct experimentalism aligns technological advancements with governance goals, fostering a dynamic interplay between innovation and regulatory frameworks.

In China, direct experimentalism is evident in the iterative development of governance frameworks for State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), allowing continuous policy adaptation to meet evolving economic and social conditions [8]. This iterative process underscores the flexibility and responsiveness characteristic of direct experimentalism.

The theory of dynamic, adaptive federalism emphasizes the significance of overlapping jurisdictions and adaptive regulatory responses to environmental challenges, as evidenced by successful state-level initiatives influencing federal policy [22]. This iterative nature of regulatory innovation exemplifies direct experimentalism, facilitating empirical policy testing and refinement in response to emerging issues.

Direct experimentalism thus enhances the development of adaptive governance frameworks. By prioritizing empirical testing and iterative refinement, this approach strengthens governance systems' ability to address intricate societal challenges, aligning policy objectives with dynamic technological and economic environments. Its relevance is particularly pronounced in contemporary governance theories that advocate for innovative frameworks to manage "wicked" policy problems and improve public administration practices, as seen in successful experimentalist governance models in sectors like healthcare reform in China [4, 2].

As shown in Figure 4, the exploration of "Direct Experimentalism" in policy-making is illustrated through two examples that highlight systematic approaches in the field. The first, "The Evolution of Innovation Policy Over Time," presents a line graph detailing the shifting significance of various innovation policies from World War II to the present, capturing three significant phases that reflect the evolving landscape of innovation policy. The second example, depicted in a flowchart, outlines the meticulous process of policy evaluation, bifurcated into "new action" and "periodic task," detailing steps from filtering and initializing to checking and notifying, ensuring thorough policy evaluation and implementation. Together, these examples encapsulate the essence of direct experimentalism in policy-making, illustrating both historical evolution and structured methodologies driving effective policy evaluation and innovation [24, 23].



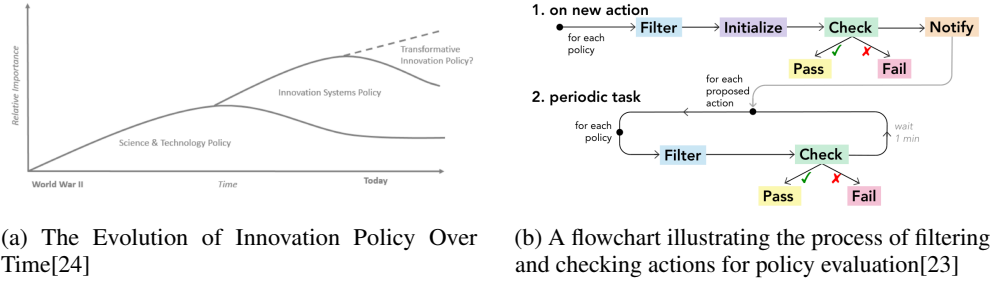


Figure 4: Examples of Applications in Policy-Making

### 4.3 Challenges and Advantages

Direct experimentalism as a governance strategy presents notable advantages alongside significant challenges. One primary challenge is the inherent complexity of policy environments, which demands high transparency and adaptability for effective implementation [25]. The absence of standardized frameworks for platform governance complicates the analysis and application of experimentalist practices, particularly in digital contexts [13]. Additionally, entrenched bureaucratic structures and excessive government control in the governance of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) can impede the flexibility necessary for effective direct experimentalism [8].

In environmental governance, challenges such as recentralization and the lack of binding targets for local governments complicate consistent policy implementation across regions. These issues are exacerbated by the potential for performative governance, where temporary solutions may lead to public disillusionment if not accompanied by genuine capacity-building efforts [28].

Despite these challenges, direct experimentalism provides significant advantages in fostering adaptive governance frameworks. By enabling empirical testing and iterative refinement of policies, this approach enhances governance systems' capacity to effectively address complex societal challenges. The integration of computational models in public policy exemplifies how direct experimentalism can improve decision-making processes and outcomes [25]. Moreover, its iterative nature allows for continuous adaptation to evolving challenges, as demonstrated by Singapore's Smart Nation initiative, which aligns technological advancements with governance goals [30].

While direct experimentalism faces obstacles, its advantages in promoting innovation and adaptability render it a valuable approach for addressing contemporary governance challenges. By leveraging empirical learning and iterative policy development, direct experimentalism can significantly enhance the resilience and effectiveness of governance systems, enabling them to better manage the intricate challenges posed by "wicked" policy problems in complex environments, including healthcare reform and environmental governance. This approach fosters the exploration of innovative solutions through various experimental modalities, promoting adaptive management and policy learning within multilevel governance structures [4, 31, 32, 22, 29].

## 5 Mass Mobilization

### 5.1 Mass Mobilization and Democratic Durability

Mass mobilization is pivotal in reinforcing democratic resilience by enhancing political consciousness, establishing organizational frameworks, and strengthening state-society connections. Historical instances, such as colonial India, demonstrate how mass mobilization democratized political engagement and increased citizen awareness, facilitating broader democratization [33]. This heightened political consciousness is crucial for the resilience of democratic institutions amid evolving challenges.

The Cultural Revolution in China exemplifies mass mobilization's transformative power in reshaping societal structures and influencing governance outcomes through dialogic struggles among diverse actors [34]. Inclusive participation and varied tactics in decentralized mobilization efforts enable widespread engagement across different societal sectors [19].

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Mass mobilization also supports new democracies by fostering robust organizational structures and leadership. Sustained, non-violent mobilization cultivates networks between the state and society, essential for the stability and longevity of democratic systems [35]. These networks facilitate cooperation and coordination, resulting in more effective governance [2].

The impact of local political contexts on postprotest strategies underscores the nuanced role of mass mobilization in sustaining political engagement beyond initial protests [18]. Continued engagement is vital for maintaining the momentum of democratic movements and ensuring that the demands of mobilized groups are integrated into governance frameworks.

Mass mobilization significantly contributes to democratic durability by enhancing political awareness, fostering organizational structures, and reinforcing state-society links. It promotes inclusive participation and utilizes diverse strategies to drive substantial social and political change, ultimately leading to more resilient governance systems [36, 35, 32, 2, 14].

## **5.2 Contemporary Example: Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement**

The Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement in Hong Kong is a contemporary example of mass mobilization characterized by widespread participation and decentralized coordination. This movement illustrates 'total mobilization from below,' with large segments of the population engaging in sustained protests against legislative changes [19]. The decentralized nature enabled diverse tactics and strategies, enhancing resilience against government responses.

Comparisons with historical instances, like the Non-Cooperation Movement in colonial India, reveal the transformative potential of collective action in influencing political landscapes. The Hong Kong protests invigorated a new generation of activists and increased political awareness among citizens, similar to how the Non-Cooperation Movement catalyzed political involvement and leadership changes [33].

The movement also highlights the complexities of postprotest transitions. While some activists transitioned into political roles, others faced significant challenges, reflecting diverse trajectories observed in different contexts [18]. This underscores the necessity of strategic planning and adaptability in maintaining the momentum of mass mobilization and achieving long-term political objectives.

The case of South Africa further illustrates the dynamics of prolonged mobilization in establishing durable democratic institutions. Prolonged efforts in South Africa contributed to democratic consolidation by fostering strong organizational structures and leadership [35]. Similarly, the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement has influenced ongoing discourse on governance and democracy in Hong Kong, emphasizing the critical role of mass mobilization in driving political change and shaping governance outcomes.

## **5.3 Mass Mobilization and Regulatory Reform**

Mass mobilization catalyzes regulatory reform and public policy changes by utilizing collective action to influence governance frameworks. The dialogic struggles during China's Cultural Revolution illustrate how mass mobilization can challenge existing power structures and prompt significant policy shifts [34].

The effectiveness of mass mobilization in driving regulatory reform is further demonstrated by sustained unarmed mobilization efforts, which enhance prospects for democratic survival. These efforts contest elitist narratives and highlight grassroots movements' significance in establishing durable democracies [35]. However, reliance on informal networks may limit the organizational strength necessary for long-term mobilization [19].

In regulatory reform, the Green Credit Policy (GCP) in China exemplifies the challenges of implementing policy changes in environments marked by information asymmetry and varying institutional conditions. Issues such as moral hazard and credit mismatches complicate aligning regulatory frameworks with mass mobilization objectives [37]. This underscores the necessity for robust organizational structures and strategic planning to effectively translate mass mobilization momentum into sustainable policy changes.

Postprotest transitions present additional challenges, including government repression, movement fragmentation, and difficulties in maintaining momentum and solidarity [18]. These challenges

highlight the importance of strategic planning and adaptability to ensure that mass mobilization efforts lead to meaningful regulatory reforms and public policy changes.

Mass mobilization serves as a catalyst for regulatory reform by challenging entrenched governance structures and advocating for significant policy changes, as evidenced by the survival of new democracies emerging from sustained popular uprisings and recent mass protests in Hong Kong, which illustrated the power of grassroots organization and collective action in the face of political repression [19, 35]. By fostering political consciousness and leveraging grassroots movements, mass mobilization can drive transformative changes in public policy, contributing to more responsive and adaptive governance systems. However, the complexities of sustaining long-term mobilization and the challenges of postprotest transitions necessitate careful consideration of organizational strategies and institutional contexts to achieve lasting policy impacts.

## 6 Policy Pilots

### 6.1 Concept and Importance of Policy Pilots

Benchmark	Size	Domain	Task Format	Metric
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Table 1: This table presents a structured overview of representative benchmarks utilized in the evaluation of policy pilots. It categorizes benchmarks by their size, domain, task format, and metric, providing a comprehensive framework for assessing innovative policy interventions.

Policy pilots function as strategic experiments to evaluate innovative approaches on a smaller scale, providing critical insights into their practicality, effectiveness, and potential challenges before wider implementation. These pilots are crucial for fostering policy innovation, generating empirical evidence that informs the scaling and adaptation of interventions across varied contexts. Their flexibility allows for customization to local conditions, promoting stakeholder collaboration and producing evidence that guides policy and practice [14].

Aligned with democratic experimentalism principles—provisionality, deliberation, and decentralization—policy pilots enable continuous reassessment of norms through experiential learning, enhancing governance frameworks’ adaptability [4]. By integrating central oversight with local experimentation, they develop innovative governance mechanisms that improve environmental and policy outcomes [20].

In decentralized governance, policy pilots can utilize blockchain technology to ensure transparency and accountability, enhancing stakeholder engagement through decentralized review systems [5]. This approach aligns with co-governance models emphasizing stakeholder engagement as a key component of policy innovation [25].

Employing ‘regulatory sandboxes,’ policy pilots allow experimentation by relaxing regulatory constraints, providing a flexible governance approach [30]. Evaluating these pilots involves assessing various indicators to ensure they yield reliable insights [38]. Table 1 provides a detailed overview of the benchmarks employed in the evaluation of policy pilots, highlighting their characteristics and the metrics used for assessment. By enabling the scaling of evidence-based interventions (EBIs), policy pilots facilitate quicker adaptation to new contexts while leveraging existing evidence, necessitating additional empirical data based on the adaptation degree [24].

The Green Financial Reform Pilot (GFRP) in China exemplifies policy pilots’ role in transitioning to a green, sustainable development model, underscoring their significance in economic transformation [26]. Similarly, the innovative city pilot policy aims to enhance urban innovation as part of China’s strategy for building an innovative nation, particularly in economic transformation and sustainability [27].

Exploring state-society relations through performative governance further elucidates policy pilots’ role in fostering genuine governance [28]. A hybrid governance model combining democratic experimentalism’s flexibility with dynamic federalism’s safety net is crucial for addressing complex challenges like climate change adaptation [22].

Policy pilots are pivotal in fostering policy innovation by enabling empirical testing of new approaches, facilitating stakeholder collaboration, and enhancing governance systems’ adaptability. Through

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strategic experimentation and evidence generation, they contribute to developing effective and sustainable policy solutions for complex societal challenges [6].

## 6.2 Examples of Policy Pilots in Chinese Governance

Policy pilots have significantly shaped Chinese governance by testing and refining innovative approaches before broader implementation. The Green Finance Reform Pilot (GFRP) enhances green technology innovation (GTI) across regions, providing a strategic framework for transitioning to a green, sustainable development model, aligning financial incentives with environmental goals [26].

The Green Credit Policy (GCP) further illustrates policy pilots' impact on promoting green innovation. Using a Difference in Difference (DID) model, empirical evidence shows that the GCP significantly advances green innovation in heavily polluting enterprises, highlighting targeted financial policies' effectiveness in driving environmental improvements [37]. This aligns with the GFRP's objectives, reinforcing financial mechanisms' role in facilitating sustainable development.

Low-carbon city pilot policies demonstrate how policy pilots stimulate innovation, especially in high-carbon emission industries, contributing to carbon emissions reduction and supporting China's broader environmental goals [39]. The expansion of the innovative city pilot policy to 78 cities by 2018 further illustrates pilot initiatives' scalability and adaptability in addressing urban challenges and enhancing policy innovation [27].

In digital governance, experiments using PolicyKit have showcased various governance models, such as random jury deliberation and multi-stage caucuses, across platforms like Slack and Reddit. These pilots reveal digital tools' potential to facilitate innovative governance practices, allowing communities to tailor governance models to their specific needs [23].

Smart city pilot projects in China, particularly in energy and mobility, provide insights into scaling innovative solutions. These pilots explore integrating smart technologies into urban infrastructure, offering valuable lessons on the challenges and opportunities associated with upscaling smart solutions [40]. They serve as testing grounds for innovative urban policies, contributing to developing sustainable and resilient cities.

Policy pilots in Chinese governance play a crucial role in fostering policy innovation by providing controlled environments for testing new ideas and approaches. By generating empirical evidence and facilitating stakeholder collaboration, they contribute to developing effective and sustainable policy solutions for complex societal challenges. Refining methodologies through pilot studies, as recommended by Teresi et al., enhances policy innovations' robustness and reliability [41].

## 6.3 Challenges and Limitations

Implementing policy pilots presents several challenges and limitations that can hinder their effectiveness and scalability. A primary challenge is power imbalances within Decentralized Autonomous Organizations (DAOs), where wealthier token holders often dominate participation and decision-making, leading to centralization that undermines the decentralized ethos [5]. This centralization can skew policy pilot outcomes, as decision-making may not accurately reflect diverse stakeholder interests.

Another significant challenge is the empirical measurement difficulties associated with innovation policies, complicating the isolation of variables in innovation processes and quantifying spillover effects [6]. These measurement challenges impede accurately assessing policy pilots' impacts and deriving meaningful insights for broader policy implementation.

Current studies' limitations, such as the absence of a cohesive legal framework, lead to fragmented planning efforts that inadequately address spatial governance complexities [7]. This fragmentation can result in inconsistent policy outcomes and hinder policy pilots' ability to yield reliable insights.

The GFRP exemplifies specific limitations, including the instability of its promotion effects over time and varying effectiveness across economically developed and underdeveloped regions [26]. These regional disparities highlight the challenges of ensuring consistent policy impacts and the necessity for tailored approaches considering local economic contexts.

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Additionally, selection bias in choosing pilot cities and the challenge of accurately measuring innovation across diverse urban contexts present further limitations [27]. Such biases can affect findings' generalizability and limit successful pilot initiatives' applicability to other settings.

Addressing these challenges and limitations requires developing standardized methodologies, robust measurement frameworks, and collaborative efforts among stakeholders to enhance policy pilots' scalability and impact. Successfully navigating these challenges, policy pilots can significantly contribute to creating innovative and sustainable policy solutions that effectively tackle complex societal issues, as evidenced by the positive impacts of initiatives like the innovative city pilot policy and low-carbon city pilot policies in China, which have demonstrated potential to enhance urban innovation, promote green technology advancements, and stimulate economic growth while addressing pressing environmental and social concerns [26, 4, 39, 27, 24].

## **7 Chinese Governance and Adaptive Strategies**

Examining Chinese governance reveals the necessity of adaptive strategies to enhance its efficacy, particularly in addressing globalization, public demand, and complex policy-making within a multi-level governance framework. These strategies reflect the state's responsiveness to public expectations, emphasizing governance arrangements, policy capacity, and experimental approaches for sustainable social growth and effective administration [28, 4, 8, 2]. Democratic experimentalism emerges as a crucial strategy, fostering innovation and responsiveness, enhancing problem-solving capacity, and integrating various governance levels. This section explores democratic experimentalism's principles, implications for adaptive governance in China, and its role in addressing contemporary challenges and promoting sustainable development.

### **7.1 Democratic Experimentalism and Adaptive Governance**

Democratic experimentalism is vital for adaptive governance in China, promoting iterative policy experimentation and empirical learning to enhance governance systems' problem-solving capacity. This approach facilitates responsive regulatory frameworks capable of addressing complex societal challenges by integrating multiple governance levels [22]. In China, it balances development-oriented empowerment with political control, maintaining stability while pursuing innovative policy solutions [9].

The Green Finance Reform Pilot (GFRP) illustrates democratic experimentalism's role in aligning financial and ecological goals, promoting sustainable development and innovation [26]. This highlights adaptive strategies' importance in managing central-local interactions, particularly in environmental governance, where oversight and local experimentation interplay is crucial for effective policy implementation.

Public-private partnerships are essential within democratic experimentalism for achieving mission-oriented goals. They leverage both sectors' strengths, enhancing governance systems' capacity to address societal challenges, including those from technological advancements and economic development. Aguirre et al.'s regulatory reform approach demonstrates significant public health improvements through localized experimentation [9].

Democratic experimentalism enhances China's adaptive governance by enabling a flexible, innovative policy-making approach sensitive to local contexts. This framework supports diverse policy solutions through experimental modalities like pilot programs and crowdsourcing, essential for addressing complex policy problems in a multilevel governance structure. By aligning governance arrangements, policy capacity, and informational devices, it fosters effective policy learning and adaptive management, leading to more responsive governance amidst evolving challenges [4, 28, 31, 22, 2]. Through iterative experimentation, empirical learning, and strategic public-private partnerships, this approach strengthens governance systems' resilience and effectiveness in tackling societal challenges, enabling China to navigate its socio-political landscape's uncertainties while driving sustainable development and innovation.

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## 7.2 Policy Transfer and Local Adaptation

Policy transfer and local adaptation are integral to China's governance framework, allowing navigation of complex policy environments and strategy tailoring to local contexts. This involves adopting and adapting policies across contexts, facilitating knowledge exchange and best practices across governance levels. In China, it is marked by strategic uncertainty and de facto polyarchy, contributing to cyclic policymaking variations rather than linear trends [17].

China's policy transfer architecture balances central oversight with local experimentation, allowing policy customization to address regional challenges. This is evident in environmental governance, where central-local interactions facilitate policy adaptation to diverse ecological and economic conditions, reflecting governance complexities. Recentralization under Xi Jinping introduces nuanced government level interactions, showing central control doesn't always improve environmental outcomes. This mirrors the U.S., where federalism allows local and regional policy experimentation, showcasing adaptive governance's potential for addressing environmental challenges like climate change [21, 22, 2]. By leveraging local knowledge and expertise, China's governance can effectively integrate global best practices with regional priorities, enhancing policy interventions' responsiveness and effectiveness.

Local adaptation is supported by democratic experimentalism principles, emphasizing iterative learning and empirical testing. This enables policymakers to refine policies based on local feedback and evidence, ensuring contextually relevant and sustainable interventions. China's policy adaptation highlights flexibility and pragmatism in governance, allowing continuous policy framework refinement to address complex challenges. This is seen in China's experimentalist governance model, employing various modalities to tackle policy problems, fostering a governance structure supporting policy learning and adaptive management. Thus, China's governance evolved to incorporate creative incrementalism, facilitating balanced reforms responding to strategic and cognitive factors, enhancing capacity to meet public expectations and navigate systemic complexities [15, 4, 28, 20, 2].

Policy transfer and local adaptation in China's governance are managed through strategic oversight and localized experimentation. By fostering dynamic central directives and local initiatives interplay, China addresses policy implementation complexities, particularly in environmental governance and spatial planning, promoting sustainable development across diverse regions. This approach acknowledges central-local governments' overlapping interests and the necessity for experimental governance to tackle policy issues, leading to more effective solutions amid systemic challenges [7, 4, 21].

## 8 Governance Models and Policy Innovation

Understanding the intersection of governance models and policy innovation requires examining the foundational elements that facilitate effective decision-making. Institutional architectures serve as structural frameworks that enable policy innovation across diverse governance contexts. Analyzing these architectures reveals their role in fostering innovative solutions to contemporary challenges.

### 8.1 Institutional Architectures and Policy Innovation

Institutional architectures are pivotal in enabling policy innovation within governance models by providing a structural framework for decision-making and implementation. Differentiating between governance architectures, which involve institutional arrangements, and policymaking processes, which pertain to decision-making operations, is crucial for understanding policy innovation dynamics [17]. This distinction allows for a nuanced analysis of how institutional structures can support or hinder innovative policy development.

International governance institutions, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), exemplify the application of institutional architectures in AI safety and other technological domains [42]. These institutions demonstrate how structured governance frameworks coordinate complex international efforts, ensuring effective and globally aligned policy innovations.

The typology of upscaling, encompassing roll-out, expansion, and replication, illustrates how institutional architectures facilitate the dissemination and adaptation of innovative policies across various

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contexts [40]. This framework underscores the necessity of context sensitivity in implementing policy innovations, as different environments may require tailored approaches for optimal outcomes.

Decentralized Autonomous Organizations (DAOs) highlight the potential of institutional architectures as testbeds for social choice experiments, enhancing governance structures across domains [5]. By leveraging decentralized decision-making, DAOs improve governance systems' adaptability and responsiveness, fostering innovative policies that address complex societal challenges.

Institutional architectures are integral to supporting policy innovation within governance models, establishing a robust framework for effective decision-making and implementation. This approach emphasizes dynamic capabilities within the public sector, enabling coordinated public investments and market-shaping initiatives that encourage experimentation across private and third sectors. It incorporates an experimentalist governance model that navigates multilevel governance intricacies, fostering adaptive management and policy learning in response to systemic challenges [4, 24, 20].

## 8.2 Environmental Governance and Green Innovation

Environmental governance and green innovation are crucial for addressing climate change and ecological degradation. Integrating these elements into policymaking is essential for sustainable development and enhancing urban and industrial systems' resilience. The architecture of environmental governance significantly influences policy frameworks' effectiveness in promoting green innovation. Introducing clear indicators to differentiate between experimentalist and hierarchical policymaking processes, as noted by Rangoni, marks a significant advancement in understanding governance structures' support for environmental objectives [17].

The Green Credit Policy (GCP) in China exemplifies the successful integration of environmental governance and green innovation. Evidence indicates that the GCP promotes green innovation in heavily polluting enterprises, particularly when supported by strong institutional frameworks [37]. This policy aligns financial incentives with environmental goals, encouraging cleaner technologies and practices. The GCP's effectiveness underscores the importance of robust institutional support in driving green innovation and achieving sustainable outcomes.

Smart city initiatives further demonstrate the benefits of integrating technological innovations into environmental governance. Research highlights improvements in urban services and sustainability, showcasing technological advancements' transformative impact on urban environments [40]. These initiatives illustrate how strategic technology application can enhance urban systems' efficiency and sustainability, contributing to broader environmental governance objectives.

Integrating environmental governance and green innovation into policymaking is vital for addressing sustainability challenges. Innovative policy frameworks, such as green credit policies and low-carbon city pilot initiatives, alongside technological advancements, can significantly stimulate green innovation in enterprises. This approach promotes environmental sustainability and enhances urban and industrial systems' resilience, particularly in heavily polluting sectors and regions with varying financial development levels. Empirical evidence suggests that these policies, supported by local government environmental protection systems, can alleviate financing constraints and drive corporate green technological innovation effectively [39, 37]. Successful examples of the GCP and smart city initiatives offer valuable insights into environmental governance's potential to drive sustainable development and ecological protection.

## 8.3 Frameworks for Governance in AI and Technology

Governance frameworks in AI and technology are crucial for shaping policy innovation by providing structured approaches to manage emerging technologies' complexities. Establishing international institutions for AI safety, as proposed by De Castris et al., plays a vital role in risk assessment, governance, and research, ensuring AI developments align with global safety standards and ethical considerations [42, 12, 2]. These institutions coordinate international efforts to establish comprehensive governance frameworks that address AI technologies' diverse challenges effectively.

Incorporating AI into governance frameworks requires understanding how technological advancements interact with policymaking processes. This integration is critical as AI, a transformative general-purpose technology, presents significant opportunities—such as advancements in health, transportation, and sustainability—alongside substantial risks, including labor displacement and

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geopolitical instability. Research into AI governance is essential to develop global norms and institutions ensuring responsible AI development and deployment [23, 12, 2]. Leveraging AI capabilities can enhance decision-making efficiency, improve service delivery, and foster innovative policy solutions, highlighting the importance of adaptive governance models that respond to rapid technological evolution while safeguarding societal values and interests.

Applying AI in governance frameworks can drive policy innovation by enabling data-driven insights and predictive analytics that inform policy decisions and enhance governance systems' responsiveness. Establishing AI governance frameworks necessitates focusing on transparency, accountability, and inclusivity, as these principles are essential for AI technologies' ethical and equitable deployment. This approach addresses potential AI risks, such as labor displacement and inequality, while fostering global norms and policies that navigate AI's rapid advancement complexities and implications for society, economy, and governance [12, 2].

Examining governance frameworks in AI and technology underscores their essential function in facilitating innovative policy development, particularly in addressing AI's rapid advancements' challenges, such as labor displacement and strategic instability, while promoting equitable and sustainable growth across various sectors [23, 12, 2]. By establishing international institutions for AI safety and integrating AI into governance models, policymakers can navigate technological advancements' complexities and develop adaptive, responsive, and ethical policy solutions addressing contemporary societal challenges.

## 9 Conclusion

The survey provides a comprehensive analysis of governance and policy-making strategies, emphasizing the pivotal roles of incrementalism, experimentalism, and mass mobilization in constructing robust governance frameworks. The application of creative incrementalism within Chinese governance has catalyzed rapid modernization, positioning China as a significant global player. By integrating these strategies, adaptive and innovative policy solutions have emerged, particularly through policy pilots that facilitate empirical testing and iterative refinement of interventions.

Digital tools, such as PolicyKit, enhance online community governance by increasing participation and adaptability, thus fostering innovative governance models. The incorporation of AI into governance frameworks offers promising opportunities for developing value-aligned policies and embedding fairness constraints. These advancements necessitate interdisciplinary collaboration and proactive strategies, including the establishment of international institutions dedicated to AI safety.

In Chinese governance, the integration of policy transfer and local adaptation processes is crucial for tailoring strategies to diverse regional contexts. Recognizing policy transfer as a complex, non-linear process requires flexible and context-sensitive governance models. Establishing a unified national territory spatial planning system, supported by robust legislation, is essential for addressing planning challenges and promoting sustainable development in China.

Future research should explore the impacts of various decentralization forms and the role of civil society in enhancing accountability. Reforms to improve corporate governance in China, particularly regarding the independence of State-Owned Enterprises, are also critical. Additionally, the long-term implications of performative governance on public trust and state legitimacy warrant further investigation.

This survey highlights the significance of adaptive, experimental, and participatory approaches in governance. By leveraging these strategies, governance systems can effectively address the uncertainties and complexities of societal challenges, fostering innovation and resilience in policy processes.



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