

DAS INSTITUT FÜR OSTASIENWISSENSCHAFTEN/ SINOLOGIE

The Department of East Asian Studies/Chinese Studies is pleased to invite you to the lecture of



Prof. Xiang GAO

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Big Data, Bigger Dilemmas: Navigating Elite and Mass Attitudes in China's Digital Policy Landscape

The recent establishment of the National Data Bureau marks a significant milestone in China's big data journey and also invokes popular concerns that the "big brother" may inevitably emerge. However, big data requires massive data collection and cross-departmental data-sharing, and we argue that there is a restrictive legal framework in China for data governance, and the practical scope of data collection and aggregation largely depends on the public's willingness to authorize. To give a more in-depth understanding of China's big data development landscape, we examined the state strategy, legal framework, and public attitude as regards surveillance in the three most critical cases, including surveillance in physical spaces, data authorization in cyberspace, and data-sharing within the government. In particular, we conducted two parallel and representative surveys of citizens (1,091 valid responses) and officials (1,081 valid responses) in Hangzhou, China's digital pioneer, in 2021. Our findings suggest that officials, compared to the general public, exhibit more conservative views on the limits of physical surveillance and a stronger inclination towards government data collection than private sector data access. Notably, officials are less concerned about intra-governmental data sharing. These insights illuminate the elite-citizen divide in China's big data policy realm and unveil a more nuanced and uncertain trajectory for the nation's digital future.

Xiang Gao is a professor in the School of Public Affairs at Zhejiang University. Her areas of specialization include China's policy process, central-local relations, and digital government. She is particularly interested in China's evolving governance model in response to marketization, digitalization, and globalization. She is the author of the book *Delegation and Development: Local Government in China's Market Transition* (Zhejiang University Press, 2020). Her articles have appeared in such journals as *Daedalus: the Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, *Government Information Quarterly*, *China Information*, *China Review*, and *Journal of Chinese Governance*.

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TIME: 16:45 - 18:15

LOCATION: SIN 1, at the Department for East Asian Studies/Chinese Studies, Altes AKH, Campus, Spitalgasse 2, Yard 2, Entrance 2.3

