

Reexamining the Electoral Connection in Authoritarian China: The Local People's Congress and Its Private Entrepreneur Deputies^{*}

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Abstract

China holds direct elections for deputies to serve in the Local People's Congress (LPC) at the county and township levels. As the LPC gains more power and private entrepreneur deputies emerge as the second largest deputy group in many regions, it seems possible that the LPC will become more representative and therefore make local government more responsive. The author performed intensive fieldwork to investigate whether this might be occurring, but found that the LPC is more like an inclusive institution, sometimes degenerating into patron clientelism, rather than a representative institution. In addition, direct elections are tightly controlled and sometimes deteriorate into personalized patronages, because private entrepreneurs purchase votes to win personal privileges, rather than to promote institutional reform.

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