

# When Professional Logic Meets Environmental Discontinuity: Interpreting Organizational Response in the Pandemic Crisis

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Yasumoto International Academic Park (YIA),  
CUHK

Hybrid Mode

Face to Face & Online participation



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(UTC+8, HKT)



The Covid-19 pandemic is the most serious global public health crisis since the 1918 Spanish Flu, with far-reaching and still unfolding consequences. Different countries responded to this crisis in different ways, which provides a “natural experiment” for social science inquiry. Drawing on the U.S. experience in the Covid-19 pandemic, I develop the proposition that, of a multitude of contributing factors, the coupling of environmental discontinuity, biased organizational learning, and the limit of professional logic provided a deadly combination, leading to major misjudgments and consequent delays in the U.S. government’s response to the pandemic. The professional logic that insists on systematic and reliable data and belief in the established knowledge exacerbated these tendencies. These lessons have broader implications for rethinking about organizational design, the professional logic, and public policies in preparation for the next major public health crisis or other types of crises.



Xueguang Zhou is a Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Department of Sociology at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. He is also a professor of sociology, the Kwoh-Ting Li Professor in Economic Development, and a senior fellow at Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University. His book *The Logic of Governance in China: An Organizational Approach* (Cambridge University Press, 2022) summarizes his decade-long research on the institutional logic of governance in China. Professor Zhou’s current research examines patterns of personnel flow in the Chinese bureaucracy and historical origins of the bureaucratic state in China.

Welcoming Remarks

Discussant

Discussant



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