

Local discretion and environmental policy making in South Korea: three models and a test / Jill L. Tao

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Abstrak

In South Korea, policy tools and priorities are set at the national level and are controlled through both budget allocations and audits conducted on an annual basis. I look at the degree to which local officials adapt their budget allocations to address local rather than national concerns in securing better air quality, using three different theoretical models: principal-agent, representative bureaucracy, and democratic responsiveness. I raise questions about the degree of control a unitary state can exercise over local problems and how this is reflected in local policy choices, especially in areas where the national government's zone of indifference is large, such as environmental policy. Panel data across 5 years (2007 to 2012) and from 9 geographically and socioeconomically diverse areas within South Korea indicates that local officials respond to local environmental conditions by allocating more resources when needed. I discuss the implications for autonomy in a local policy space.