

**The promises and limits of a strong multi-scalar state in a proto-polycentric system:
Qualitative Comparative Analysis on the decarbonization of the electricity
infrastructure in Taiwan**

Anthony Ho-fai LI
The University of Hong Kong
anthonylih@hku.hk

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Abstract

The need to coordinate a large group of autonomous but interdependent actors renders the multi-scalar state with public authority vital in any polycentric system. To solve large-scale environmental problems with the fundamental transformation of existing infrastructures, cooperation between the national and the local states is essential. In the pursuit of energy transition toward decarbonization, however, local states do not always prioritize the national concern, especially when they are also accountable to the electorates and constrained by limited finances even in a unitary administrative system. Meanwhile, when local policymakers are incentivized, huge uncertainties about how to achieve the policy outcome make it imperative for them to co-produce the policy output with non-state actors. With Qualitative Comparative Analysis on the local states in Taiwan which are democratically elected under a unitary administrative system in 2016-2020, this paper explores the variety of cross-scale institutional arrangements which are facilitative to a higher level of solar energy deployment as the desired policy output. Supplemented by archival research and interviews, this paper discusses what a strong multi-scalar state characteristic of East Asian polities can deliver with the top-down energy policy change, but also evaluates its limits as to whom it excludes in a proto-polycentric system.