Post-Mao China has long been viewed by many as a case of economic development without political liberalization. While more than three decades’ market-oriented economic reforms have transformed China into the second largest economy in the world, the process of political democratization has never seemed to fully take off. In China Experiments, Florini, Lai, and Tan challenge this conventional wisdom by treating China’s political trajectory as a slow-motion, bumpy transformation of authoritarianism – regulated, and often led, by the Communist Party of China (CPC) since 1978. Arguing that political change in China is much deeper and more extensive than is commonly recognized, the authors decide not to focus on policies and political initiatives from Beijing, but rather to look for hints from the myriad of local experiments.

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Reviewed publication:
Florini, A., H. Lai & Y. Tan. 2012. China Experiments: From Local Innovations to National Reform. Government Innovations (CCGI) at Peking University, had been awarded a bipartisan awards program for best practice in local governance innovation (the award has been solely administered by the CCGI since 2009). This book largely draws its empirical evidence from the cases of the winners.

Since 2000, the China Center for Comparative Politics and Economics at the CPC’s Central Compilation and Translation Bureau, and the Comparative Study of World Political Parties at the Central Party’s Political Bureau, and the Center for Chinese Government Innovations (CCGI) at Peking University, had been administered a bipartisan awards program for best practice in local governance innovation (the award has been solely administered by the CCGI since 2009). This book largely draws its empirical evidence from the cases of the winners.

These have been a large number of inquiries into the political democratization has never seemed to fully take off. In China Experiments, Florini, Lai, and Tan challenge this conventional wisdom by treating China’s political trajectory as a slow-motion, bumpy transformation of authoritarianism – regulated, and often led, by the Communist Party of China (CPC) since 1978. Arguing that political change in China is much deeper and more extensive than is commonly recognized, the authors decide not to focus on policies and political initiatives from Beijing, but rather to look for hints from the myriad of local experiments.

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Notes
1 This review was written in 2012 – prior to Xi Jinping becoming the President of China.