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Administrative Burden: Policymaking by Other Means.
By Pamela Herd and Donald P. Moynihan. New York:
Russell Sage Foundation, 2018. Pp. xv+344. \$37.50 (paper).

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the processes and impacts of land expropriation in Landing village in Chongqing Municipality. The expropriation of village land has done away with the rural subsistence economy. Although the displaced villagers were offered urban *hukou* and relocated to a new township, housing and welfare programs were insufficient to cover the escalating costs of urban living. This forced nearly all villagers, including the elderly and women, to look for nonfarm jobs, but few local jobs were available. While the Marxist view holds that land dispossession will lead to the formation of a working class, Chuang argues instead that land dispossession and urbanization in China have not created a free proletariat for political mobilization but a dispossessed labor force competing for meager wages and scant job opportunities.

Weaving together macrolevel analysis and village case studies, the book offers a fresh Polanyian account of Chinese development, filling a critical gap in a large and growing literature on China's rise. Through the lens of labor and land as "fictitious commodities," Chuang reveals how the commodification of labor and land in China has inflicted tremendous pain upon the rural society. The life stories in the two villages depict a volatile rural social structure fraught with family separation, marriage dissolution, fractured networks, weakened community support, subsistence crisis, debts, and suicides. The book is a timely reminder that the glittering façade of China's economic boom should not belie the sufferings and tragedies that it has brought upon millions of Chinese rural residents and migrants. The book also provides a good basis for cross-national comparison. The uses of rural migrant labor and land dispossession are not unique to China but are common strategies of capital accumulation in the world. An important question for future research would be why these have led to decades-long economic growth in China but not in other countries.

Beneath the China Boom is an excellent example of unlocking large-scale social processes through multisited ethnography. It is a must-read for students and scholars who are interested in the rise of China and its impacts on hundreds of millions of rural residents and migrant workers. The book also resonates well with researchers whose work is on the issues of land and labor in different national settings in the Global South.

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After a car accident left my sister-in-law a quadriplegic, she learned to negotiate the maze that is Medicaid to secure the health insurance and personal care assistance she needs. Most painful is the frequent recertification process. To

the intrusive caseworker's questions, Yup, she's still paralyzed (and always will be. Is it really necessary to ask again?). Yes, my brother still makes a pittance (*because* of the program's strictures, thank you). Here, *again*, are the paycheck stubs, the bank statements, and so on and so forth. During the periodic home visit, Yikes, don't let her see the garage, lest my brother's valuable tools be deemed a violation of the asset limit. And this is in a generous, forward-thinking state, California. Thankfully they do not live in Florida, or Tennessee, or Mississippi.

I kept thinking of my family's experience while reading Pamela Herd and Donald Moynihan's essential, incisive book *Administrative Burden*. Herd and Moynihan document the myriad ways in which the designs of public policies undermine the citizen experience of government. The authors go beyond existing work in public administration, social welfare policy, and associated areas touching on onerous program features to offer a comprehensive framework for thinking about the causes, components, and consequences of administrative burden. A fascinating set of brisk case studies—from voting rights to Social Security—brings the framework to life.

Herd and Moynihan focus on the burdens that affect “*individual citizens* who access public services” (p. 20). Examples include ID requirements for voting, parental consent for minors seeking abortions, proof of income for many means-tested programs, the payment of monthly premiums for Medicaid, negotiating among a plethora of insurance choices in Medicare Advantage and Affordable Care Act marketplaces, and so on. Readers familiar with citizen-facing public policies will recognize many of these hurdles (although a few real doozies were new to me), but the authors' contribution is not just in enumerating examples but also in classifying the costs these barriers impose. Learning costs include the time and effort to learn about a program and benefits and to assess eligibility. Compliance costs consist of providing needed documentation, traveling to intake interviews, and paying fees. Psychological costs include stigma, stress, frustration, and the toll of dealing with intrusive or capricious processes that violate norms of procedural justice. These costs vary across programs of varying designs and across states and localities. Their effects exacerbate inequalities across individuals; those with less income, less education, diminished cognitive capabilities, or fewer language skills will have the least access.

Beyond the useful classification exercise, the authors' other valuable contribution is the analysis of the political causes of administrative burden. Sometimes such burdens are inadvertent, but almost always they are “constructed,” an intentional form of “policymaking by other means.” Herd and Moynihan document case after case in which policy makers—typically conservatives—who, having failed to eliminate an existing program or stop a new one, instead achieve their goals of limiting enrollment, punishing “undeserving” citizens (often poor or minority), and imposing their values by making programs harder to access, using opposition to fraud and other fig leaves as justification. Such burdens are typically hidden and emerge only during policy implementation, long after any democratic scrutiny that might have been exercised during debate and passage has moved on to other visible issues. The citizens who

suffer such burdens have little voice (and a policy-feedbacks perspective would argue that such burdens and lack of access further undermine their voice) and are powerless to fight for better access. At the same time, these burdens are supported as well by the nonprofit and for-profit private contractors often tasked with carrying out public policies.

Administrative burdens are not inevitable. A variety of examples, including a chapter on the efficient, accessible Social Security program, shows how burdens can be minimized. The utility of the earlier burden classification comes to the fore in the final chapter, which systematically shows how to reduce learning, compliance, and psychological costs. Rather than relegate the choice of Medicare prescription drug plans to befuddled seniors, the government could standardize the alternatives and use its reimbursement records to recommend optimal plans. Rather than requiring applicants to provide proof of income (over and over and over), the state could use its administrative records. Rather than stifle questions and concerns by making the only contact the caseworker who confers benefits (and can take them away), programs could provide an ombudsperson to adjudicate problems.

There is little I wish to critique in this insightful book. I had hoped there would be a case study of the unemployment insurance system; my students are always stunned to learn how few workers get benefits, particularly in states that have created substantial access barriers. The authors document well the role of federalism in facilitating burdens, but the book's normative undercurrent—that the resultant variation in policies across subnational units is undesirable—does not really wrestle with the pros and cons of uniform federal standards. The more serious critique is that the useful list of ways to reduce burdens in the final chapter does not engage the most difficult question: where would the political will come from? Indeed, the very barriers to voting the authors document in the first case study ensure that conservative policy makers will hold onto office more tenaciously than full democratic participation would allow, perpetuating burdens elsewhere.

Administrative Burden is immensely readable and imminently useful. One can easily analyze the successes and pitfalls of COVID-19 pandemic relief programs in light of the framework: why minority-owned small businesses had a difficult time accessing the Paycheck Protection Program; why the stimulus checks missed the poorest Americans who do not file tax returns; why gig workers had such difficulty getting unemployment benefits that were newly extended to them, and why states varied so dramatically in their ability to deliver those benefits. Practitioners and scholars alike will find much to learn here about making public programs work better for all.