

Professor Dr Jill L. Tao
Global College of Law, Commerce and Public Affairs,
Incheon National University, South Korea

**DECENTRALIZING UNITARY GOVERNMENTS WITHOUT A MAP,
OR LEARNING HOW TO SALSA WHEN WE ONLY KNOW THE POLKA**

This paper examines attempts at decentralizing the implementation of environmental policies within two culturally different contexts: first, within the northeast sector of the People's Republic of China; and second, within the heavy industrial bases in South Korea. Both China and South Korea have histories of highly centralized decision-making and somewhat brutal suppression of local attempts to exercise autonomy of any kind. However, like much of the former Soviet bloc, both of these countries have moved toward more decentralized processes for implementing certain kinds of policies. Environmental policy is one area in both countries where the central governments have seen fit to loosen control and have delegated much authority over implementation to local level actors. However, although the understanding of how centralized authority works in each culture is somewhat similar, there are key distinctions in how policy networks function between China and Korea. This paper hypothesizes that Chinese local officials will be far more likely than their Korean counterparts to see other local officials as sources of information as to how decentralization should take place. The paper sets up a framework for testing this hypothesis through matched pairing of local governments in China and Korea, and interviews with local officials as to how they make decisions in areas where they lack former expertise.