

# **Cross-departmental Collaboration in China's Public Service Delivery: Drivers and Obstacles**

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# Abstract

Nowadays, very few public services could be delivered by only one department or organization. In order to deal with those "wicked" issues, like transportation, housing, environmental protection, food safety or some other problems, collaboration between departments has been a need. Meanwhile, cross-departmental collaboration has been proved to be an important means for governance, which has been widely used in political issues.

Actually, collaboration has been a culture. Most countries around the world have been already involved into this wave. The use of collaboration as a main form of cross-departmental relations allows different agencies to work together and to create a solution to those large, complex or seemingly unsolvable problems, and to deal with the problems that cannot be handled by any single organization.

In this thesis, I study cross-departmental collaborations in China by focusing on its influencing factors during development process, the possible reasons for collaborating, and the collaboration dynamics in China. This research found that, besides those factors like leadership, funding, environmental factors, resources which have been proved in Western studies for years, collaboration in China focuses more on the organizational culture, the relationship between officials (*Guanxi*), the political support, as well as the government' macro-plan and strategies for development.

*Key words:* cross-departmental collaboration, drivers, obstacles, public service delivery

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Collaboration: A global issue

Nowadays, very few public services could be delivered by only one department or organization. In some functional areas like transportation, housing, or environmental protection, or complex production (e.g., aerospace industries), research and development (e.g., semiconductors), or major construction in the private sector, interaction between organizations to address problems of common concern is also widespread. Such issues has been addressed as "policy issue network" which challenges existing patterns of organizations and management, and needs the cross-organizational cooperation (Clarke & Stewart, 1997; Alexer, 1993). Clarke & Stewart (1997) wrote that,

"...wicked problems cannot be dealt with as management has traditionally dealt with public policy problems. They challenge existing patterns of organization and management..." (Clarke & Stewart, 1997, p.2)

Meanwhile, besides these "wicked problems", the dispersed knowledge and resources, first- and second- order effects, and intergovernmental overlays guarantee that managers must engage other governments or organizations (Agranoff & Mcguire, 2003). Moreover, debates from both the academic area and the public management practice are currently emphasizing the benefits from collaboration, or those inter-agency partnerships which can offer as a means of achieving public policy goals (Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998).

This phenomenon is widespread around the world, as known as a globalized issue. Governments from all the countries around the world are trying their best to improve the existing efficiency, and try to attempt various methods or innovations to fulfill it. Among them, collaboration could be one of the most important one and even the core of them.

According to related studies on this issue, wicked issues requires new ways of working and thinking, beyond the traditional approaches that have been found to be inadequate and inappropriate. Therefore, as a result of the inability of more traditional bureaucratic hierarchical arrangements such as departmental programs, new types of collaborative efforts, like networks and network structures, have emerged to deal with complex, social problems (Keast, Mandell, Brown, & Woolcock, 2004; Williams, 2002). Also, Williams further pointed out that a postmodern rather than a classical form of organization is more likely to be in tune with this particular policy challenge for reasons that are summarized in Figure 1.1. Forms of postmodern organization and governance that are designed around collaboration, partnership and networking appear to be more suitable for the task to

solve those difficult (wicked) issues (Williams, 2002).

Figure 1.1: Modern and postmodern forms of organization

	<b>Modern</b>	<b>Postmodern</b>
Domain	Intra-organizational	Inter-organizational
Metaphor	Mechanistic	Systems
Form of government	Administration	Governance
Form of organization	Bureaucratic	Networking, collaboration, partnership
Conceptualization	Differentiation; tasks and functions	Interdependencies
Decision-making framework	Hierarchy and rules	Negotiation and consensus
Competency	Skills-based professional	Relational
Solutions	Optimal	Experimentation, innovation, reflection

From: Williams (2002)

In general, organizations establish inter-organizational linkages to facilitate the procurement, resources relocating, service delivery (Hoffman, Stearns, & Shrader, 1990; Hall, Clark, Giordano, Johnson, & Roekel, 1977). These linkages serves to form a network composed of organization directly or indirectly linked with this specific issue, and then organizations tends to work together, seeming to collaborate with each other.

Actually, to some extent, collaboration between them has been a need, which has been commonly agreed by scholars and operators in practical areas. Flinders examined the British Labor governments' attempt to facilitate cross-departmental inter-organizational collaboration within Whitehall in an attempt to develop innovative responses to seemingly intractable social problems. And he found that the government's desire and strategy to increase its capacity to orchestrate "joined-up" government can be interpreted as both an acceptance and a response to the challenges of modern governance. Therefore, multi-organizational collaboration has become the norm for modern organizations as they seek to survive and prosper in increasingly turbulent environments in recent decades(Flinders, 2002).

This phenomenon has been globalized, which means almost all the countries are facing the same problems. Some countries has started some initiatives to solve this problem, like the United Kingdom has tried the joined-up government practice. Western scholars has began a lot of deep studies on this issue theoretically. However, very few studies are finished in Chinese focusing on

China's case, except some opinion pieces. These reasons push me to study this global issue in the context of China.

## 1.2 The Purpose and the Problems of this study

In practice, even within one specific level of government, different departments had no better choice but to work together to face the same public service delivery process. To promote this boundary-spanning management, government officials should find a way to integrate or coordinate between departments. However, every department has their own interests which cannot be easily balanced. Therefore, this paper tries to apply theories and studies developed in the western world to a different context, China, and provides a case study to analyze cross-departmental collaboration process in public service delivery in China. Collaboration has lots of aspects. Therefore, in this paper, my research questions mainly focus on the collaboration process, and the questions are as follows:

- What are the internal and external factors that influence cross-departmental collaboration?
- How do these factors influence collaboration?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of such collaboration for the public service delivery in China?

Boundary-spanning collaboration is a need in public service delivery. Collaboration has been proved to be successful, and it was possibly the fundamental methods for better and smoothly governance. I argue that most of those factors which have been proved in western studies could be found in China, but the importance of them could be different since China and western societies are experiencing different stages. Therefore, in this thesis, I try to use a western framework- Veliyath & Srinivasan's Gestalts framework (1995) - to explain what happens in China by taking a case study.

## 1.3 The Plan of the Study

This study conducted an empirical case studying the research questions mentioned above. The thesis was separated into five chapters. In Chapter one, I discussed why I chose this topic, and why it was important to study this problem. In Chapter two, I reviewed the existing literature related to this problem, define relevant key terms, and reviewed the Western literature on collaboration in an effort to assess if it might be applicable to the Chinese case as well. Chapter three introduced the research methods of this thesis. Chapter four was the main part of this thesis, and consist of a case study of China. By applying the theoretical framework of western scholars, this paper analyzed the Chinese case and assessed the

applicability of Western factors to cross-departmental collaboration in China. The final chapter summarized the study, and provided suggestions for future practices and theoretical studies.

## 1.4 Delimitations of this study

Different countries have their own political, economical and cultural context. Western scholars have done lots of studies in this area, while very few in China. So this study will apply those theoretical frameworks which were framed by western researchers into the new context –China- and examined the differences in its application between China and western society. By reviewing those existing studies in this area mostly from the western research areas, this paper carries on a case study in China.

Also, China is such a big country that different areas as well as different government levels have different situations. It is hard to discuss all the possibilities in a Master thesis. So this paper will just focus on cross-departmental collaboration at the county level in eastern area because most of those practices from western areas of China is still in its early stage till now. Therefore, I choose Xintai, a county of Shandong Province in eastern areas as a case to study the collaboration process. In order to improve the quality of public services and be a responsible government, Xintai government formed a Public Administrative Service Center (PASC), and almost all the departments of government which are related to public services delivery are integrated into this specific center.

In this thesis, collaboration means cross-departmental collaboration basing on information sharing and integration, aiming at improving the level of information sharing and integration..Moreover, the case in this study is from east part of China, which has above-average economic development level. Therefore, the result of this thesis should be carefully applied to areas outside the Eastern region.



## 2 Theory/Mode of Analysis

Government cross-departmental collaboration has been studied for some decades, especially in the western academic areas. There are lots of related studies in this field. In this section, I will first define the key term "collaboration" in political arena, as well as the different forms of it. I will then dig out the reasons from the literature for why organizations collaborate with each other and what the positive factors and challenges are. Finally, I will conclude this chapter with a possible analytical framework to examine collaboration in China.

### 2.1 Defining the key terms in the literature

Collaboration and its related terms, have been used to describe the nature of inter-organizational relations among different agencies. Interconnectedness or interdependence among organizations is a characteristic of the policy environment that serves as a foundation for collaboration (Alexander, 1995). They are the main methods of collaborative public management which has been defined as:

Collaborative public management is a concept that describes the process of facilitating and operating in multi-organizational arrangements to solve problems that cannot be solved or easily solved by single organizations. Collaborative means to co-labor, to achieve common goals, often working across boundaries and in multi-sector and multi-actor relationships. Collaboration is based on the value of reciprocity. (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003)

#### 2.1.1 The definition of Collaboration

In the organizational literature, there are some variant names of collaboration, like inter-organizational relations, interagency coordination, network governance, inter-sectoral cooperation, strategic alliances of organizations, and so on. Ernst Alexander (1995) finds that there seem to be too many varying definitions with little agreement about the meaning of such terms. They varied from each other though they have the same characteristics by working across boundaries.

So, what is collaboration? Collaboration means taking part in a voluntary inter-organizational relationship that sets forth the responsibilities and benefits of participation (Hill & Lynn, 2003). Interagency collaboration is referred to "any joint activity by two or more agencies that is intended to increase public value by their working together rather than separately" (Bardach, 1998, p.8).

Examples of collaborations range from strategic alliances and joint ventures between business organizations to less institutionalized collaborations among a wide variety of stake holders to address issues of common interest(Ackermann, Franco, Gallupe, & Parent, 2005).

In order to understand collaboration, we should define those relative terms, like cooperation, coordination, and integration, which have similar meanings in every day parlance, but maybe slightly different according to different researcher's work..

**Cooperation** is the most basic but important term among these three terms. Actually, cooperation and collaboration are often taken as synonyms. Some scholars have taken use "cooperation" for a more practical definition of collaboration, because the concept of cooperation provides more information on the nature of the working relationship while collaboration is a more general concept (Kuska, 2005, p.55). Some experts has emphasize the common aspect of cooperation by defining this concept as:

"deliberate relations between otherwise autonomous organizations for the joint accomplishments of individual operating goals".(Rogers & Whetten, 1982)

**Coordination** is one of the oldest problems facing by the public sector. As soon as government was sufficiently differentiated to have several organizations providing different services, or providing the same service in different ways, coordination became an issue (Bouckaert, Peters, & Verhoest, 2010). Although coordination is a commonsense term, we still need to give it a clear definition. However, definitions about coordination varies on a continuum ranging from voluntary adjustment to systematic control. Coordination can be defined also in terms of resource exchange and cooperation (Rogers & Whetten, 1982).

“the process whereby two or more organizations create and/or use existing decision rules that have been established to deal collectively with their shared task environment” (Rogers & Whetten, 1982)

Rogers & Whetten (1982) mentioned that coordination can be defined in term of resource exchange and cooperation. They summarized the distinctions of these two concepts in terms of the following criteria, including rules and formality, goals and activities emphasized, implications for vertical and horizontal linkages, actors, threats to autonomy, as shown in Figure 2.1 (Rogers & Whetten, 1982).

Figure 2.1 Comparison of Cooperation and Coordination Processes

Criteria	Cooperation	Coordination
1. Rules and Formality	No formal rules	Formal rules*
2. Goals and activities emphasized	Individual organizations' goals and activities	Joint goals and activities

3. Implications for vertical and horizontal linkages	None, only domain**	Vertical and horizontal linkages
4. Personal resources involved	Relatively few – lower ranking members	More resources involved – higher ranking members
5. Threat to autonomy	Little threat	More threat to autonomy
<p>Note: * Coordination can also be informal(Hall, Clark, Giordano, Johnson, &amp; Roekel, 1977); **Domain = set of actors that become joined by a common problem or interest, which cuts across traditional organizational boundaries (Gray, 1985).</p>		

Source: (Rogers & Whetten, 1982; Kuska, 2005)

The most inclusive definition sees coordination as coordinating any action that takes other organizations' behavior into account; that is organizations' spontaneous mutual adjustment to their environments. The most limited view defines inter-organizational coordination as controlling organizations' decisions so as to concert their actions and achieve mutually beneficial outcomes(Alexander, 1995). An coordination within the public sector could extend from independent decisions by organizations as the lowest level of coordination (or in this case almost total absence of coordination) of activities among public programmes up to a very high level of cooperation and coherence indicated by a coherent government strategy encompassing all areas of the public sector.

Another important term is **integration**. Integration is defined as "the quality of the state of collaboration that exists among departments that are required to achieve unity of effort by the demands of the environment"(Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). In order to sort out the relationships between the different forms of integration, a distinction can be made between two main dimensions, vertical and horizontal integration,

"Vertical integration takes place between organizations or organizational units on different levels of a hierarchical structure, while horizontal integration takes place between organizations or units that are on the same hierarchical level or have the same status." (Axelsson, R., & Axelsson, S.B., 2006)

As for the differences between collaboration and other terms, Bryson and Crosby (2008: 55) has done a comparison between them and defined cross-sector collaboration as the liking or sharing of information, goodwill, and good intentions; resources; activities; and power or capabilities by organizations in two or more sectors to achieve jointly what could not be achieved by organizations in one sector separately (Bryson & Crosby, 2008: 55). According to those elements shared, collaboration is different from cooperation and coordination as shown in Figure 2.2. Therefore, collaboration is the highest

mechanism for sharing, short of a full out merger.

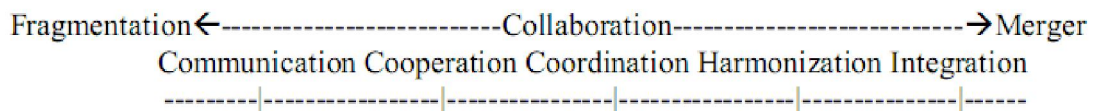
Figure 2.2 Continuum of Organizational Sharing

What Is Shared	Mechanism for Sharing			
Authority			Collaboration	Merger
Power or capabilities				
Activities and resources			Coordination	
Information, good will, and good intentions (i.e., the absence of conflict)	Cooperation			
Nothing	None			

Source: Bryson & Crosby, (2008 : 55)

Moreover, Cicin-Sain and Knecht (1998) have refined this distinction into a spectrum or "Continuum of Policy Integration", which moves from a state of less integration to a state of more integration. Kuska (2005) adopted Cicin-Sain and Knecht's framework, and added cooperation into this continuum (see Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3 Continuum of Collaboration



Source: (Cicin-Sain & Knecht, 1998; Kuska, 2005)

Generally speaking, integration is something like "Merger" in Bryson and Crosby's definition. Compared to coordination, integration means higher level cross-departmental collaboration, which has mutually reinforced objectives and means, and avoids conflicts of different departments. In this thesis, I will deal with coordination, integration and other relevant terms like cooperation and 'working together' as a subset of collaboration. Government agencies may use collaboration to share public authorities and information or resources, to enhance capabilities, or to solve large scale problems by making and implementing public policies together in the form of collaboration, coordination or integration.

## 2.2 Forms of Cross-departmental Collaboration

These collaborations can take many forms, but face problems due to different management styles, different cultures, and different operating modes of the participant organizations (Ackermann et al., 2005). Hall et.al (1977) argued that the inter-organizational relationships take different forms, depending on whether they are mandated by law, based on a formal agreement, or are voluntary. They further studied the degree of coordination among the organizations (Hall, Clark, Giordano, Johnson, & Roekel, 1977). Networks and collaborative initiatives vary in their explicit specification of collaborative performance goals (Herranz, 2010). For example, Selden, Sowa, and Sandfort observed:

Some collaborative efforts are focused on systems change, such as working to alter the existing structure, create new linkages, and decrease service fragmentation. Others are focused on service change, such as increasing client access to services or providing more holistic treatment. therefore, collaborations may have different objectives and consequences, both across and within policy fields, making the assessment of these outcomes or the consequences of collaboration especially difficult. (Selden, Sowa, & Sandfort, 2006, p. 414)

Gray and Jenkins wrote:

Many collaboration are designed not only to improve economy, efficiency, and effectiveness but also democratic quality and legitimacy, social learning, adaptability and developmental capacity, political integration and nation building, and common purpose and trust. (Gray, Jenkins, Leeuw, & Mayne, 2003, p. 237)

Jones, Hesterly, & Borgatti (1997) integrated transaction cost economics and social network theories, and asserted that the network form of governance is a response to exchange conditions of asset specificity, demand uncertainty, task complexity, and frequency. They further insisted that:

When all of these conditions are in place, the network governance form has advantages over both hierarchy and market solutions in simultaneously adapting, coordinating, and safeguarding exchanges. (Jones, Hesterly, & Borgatti, 1997)

According to various context, different forms of collaboration is chosen for specific problems, and the degree of collaboration also differs. No matter what kind of collaboration they choose, the possible reasons and factors would be the same but has different weights.

## 2.3 Motivations or Reasons for cross-departmental collaboration in the west

As mentioned above, cross-departmental collaboration has been a common and old problem in public areas. Practioners as well as scholars have mentioned the motivations of collaboration from different perspectives.

### 2.3.1 Theoretical Analyses

A need for collaboration arises as a result of the interconnectedness between government agencies (Alexander, 1995). Alexander (1995) reviewed the existing theories related to collaboration and found that exchange theory, contingency theory and organizational ecology, and transaction-cost theory have provided an answer as to why collaborating. Exchange theory postulates that resource exchange drives organizational behavior in collaborative efforts. He argued that organizations work together to survive. Contingency theory looks at a single organization's adaptation to its environment, while organizational ecology focuses more on how populations of organizations fit into their particular ecological environment. The traditional economic theory of transaction cost theory, in which the behavior of organizations, given bounded rationality, costly information, and opportunism, is constrained by the desire of those organizations to minimize their transaction costs of doing business. (Alexander, 1995).

Alexander (1995) does not argue for any particular theory among the traditional theories, but he insists that each one is addressing different particular types of collaboration. In this research, exchange theory has been described as explaining more voluntary behaviors, while contingency theory is better able to address more formal collaborative arrangements. Transaction cost theory, on the other hand, focuses on institutionalized forms of collaboration, which are structurally the most formalized form of collaboration.

Hill & Lynn explain this with rational choice theories, in which actors seek production strategies to achieve pre-existing goals. They do not just the efficacy of one theory over another, and suggest that there are 'trade-offs and complementarities' in analyzing collaboration(Hill & Lynn, 2003).

### 2.3.2 Practical Explanations

Collaboration occurs as organizations try to adapt to their environment or to maximize their own goal attainment. It is also the implicit or explicit goal of most social policy makers(Hall et al., 1977), and to improve public effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery. (Bardach,1998). The study of collaboration within arenas of political advocacy are mainly focused on the coalition formation and efforts at collective action (Galaskiewicz, 1985). Collaboration may be an important means of governing and managing public programmes. Lowndes & Skelcher (1998) argued that there are four motivations for governmental departments to work together, including resource dependency, the emergence of the new orthodoxy of partnerships, the complexity and intransigence of the "wicked issues", and the opened up local decision-making processes. Besides this, Janet A. Weiss (1987) thought that reasons for collaboration could be made of financial benefit, shared professional values, political advantage, problem solving, reduction of uncertainty, and legal mandates.

Moreover, the primary determinants for collaboration maybe laid on the pace and quality of social change at this point of history. The societal level changes, the increasingly wicked problems with no solutions but temporary and imperfect resolutions, and the shift in the types of acceptable policy instruments, are also leading public agencies to work together for better governance (Agranoff & McGuire, 2001: 318-322).

Therefore, organizations collaborate with other organizations in response of the challenges posed by the interdependencies that shaper their common environment in order to manage uncertain environments and to satisfy their resource needs (Gulati & Gargiulo, 1999). But they rely on information from the network of prior alliances to determine with whom to cooperate. They propose that to reduce the search costs and to alleviate the risk of opportunism associated with strategic alliances, organizations tend to create stable, preferential relationships characterized by trust and rich exchange of information with specific partners(Gulati & Gargiulo, 1999).

Also, during the last two decades, there has been an increasing specialization and professionalization of roles which has led to an increasing functional differentiation, and also to an increasing structural differentiation of organizations. With the increasing differentiation, however, there is also a growing need for integration (e.g. in the field of public health). Otherwise there will be a fragmentation of responsibilities among the different organizations. Moreover, the involvement of different sectors and the willingness to collaborate has extent the scope of collaboration, as shown in Figure 2.4 (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Axelsson & Axelsson, 2006).

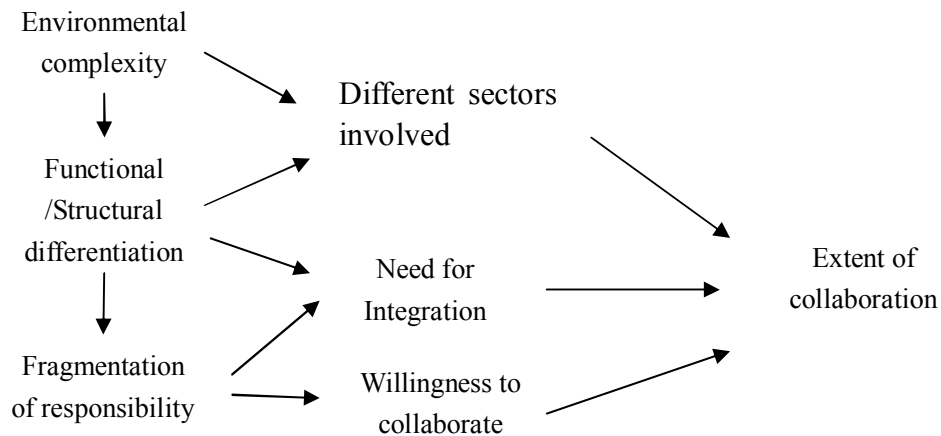


Figure 2.4 Factors and Relationships leading to inter-organizational collaboration

Source: Axelsson, R. & Axelsson, S.B., (2006), pp 75-88

## 2.4 Factors Influencing Collaboration in the west

Before the collaboration begins, there are some issues or factors that promote the attempts of this initiative, as well as some factors that hinder it. Also, even as the collaboration begins, there are still some factors that facilitate the process of collaboration, and also some factors that can slow down the process. In this section, I will review the existing studies on this issue from these two aspects one after the other to list the possible factors which have been figured out by other scholars, and in the end of this section, I will summarize them in two dimensions, static or dynamic factors, and external or inner-organizational factors.

### 2.4.1 Key factors that promote collaboration

Many scholars in this area have tried to figure out what factors are the main driven forces for collaboration. According to Agranoff & McGuire's study (2001: 311-315), trust, a shared belief or common purpose, mutual dependency, leadership and guidance ability within self-managing systems are the main cohesion factors in networks. They further mentioned that network power or the ability to get action is clouded by the rhetoric of networking.

"...Different actors occupy different role positions and carry different weights within networks. Some sit in positions with extensive opportunity contexts, filling 'structural holes', creating unequal opportunity, while others may be less willing or able players. Organizational



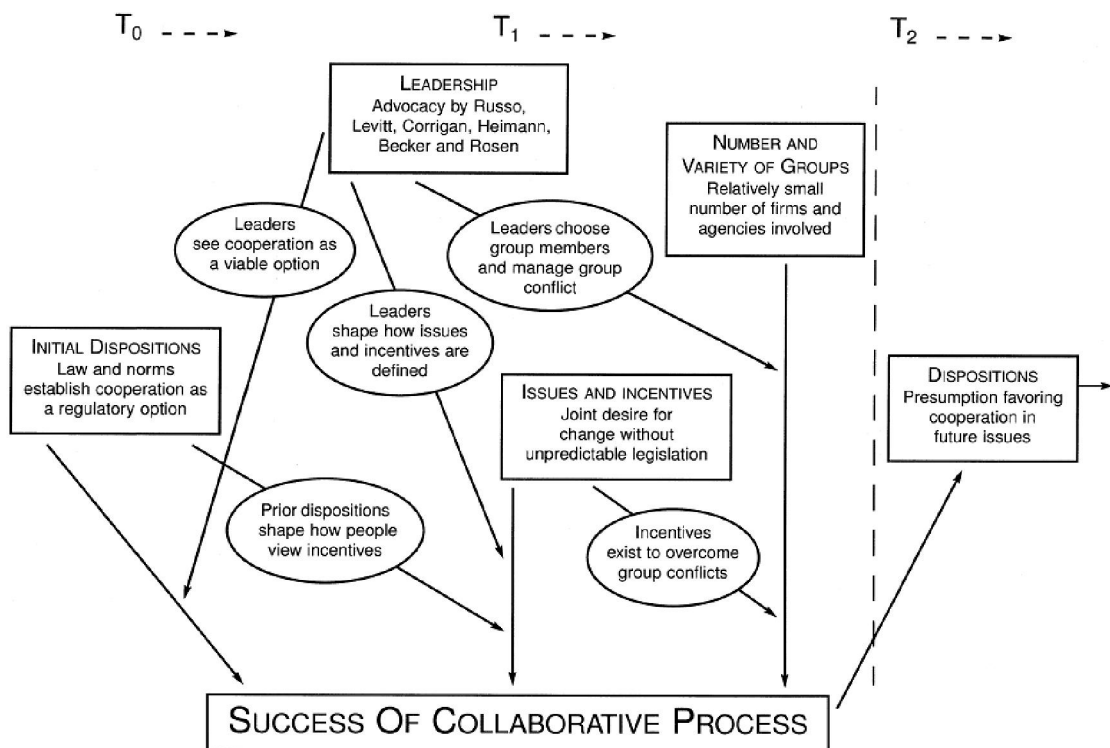
representatives also differ with regard to the resource dependencies they may bring to the network..." (pp. 315)

Klijn further reviewed the existing literature, and found that there was growing attention for trust in literature on inter-organizational cooperation and pointed out that,

"If horizontal, voluntary relations in modern societies are increasing in importance, trust seems to be an important coordination mechanism because we cannot organize all uncertainties in life through hierarchical power, direct surveillance, or detailed contracts." (Klijn, 2007)

Also, besides those four factors above, initial dispositions toward cooperation/collaboration, issues and incentives, number and variety of groups, and leadership- which have been identified as both explaining the success of collaborative systems and also why collaborative systems are so difficult to develop and maintain, as shown in Figure 2.5 (Faerman et al, 2001). From Faerman's study, leadership has been proved to be the most important one

Figure 2.5 Factors Influencing Collaboration



Source: (Faerman, McCaffrey, & Slyke, 2001: 12)

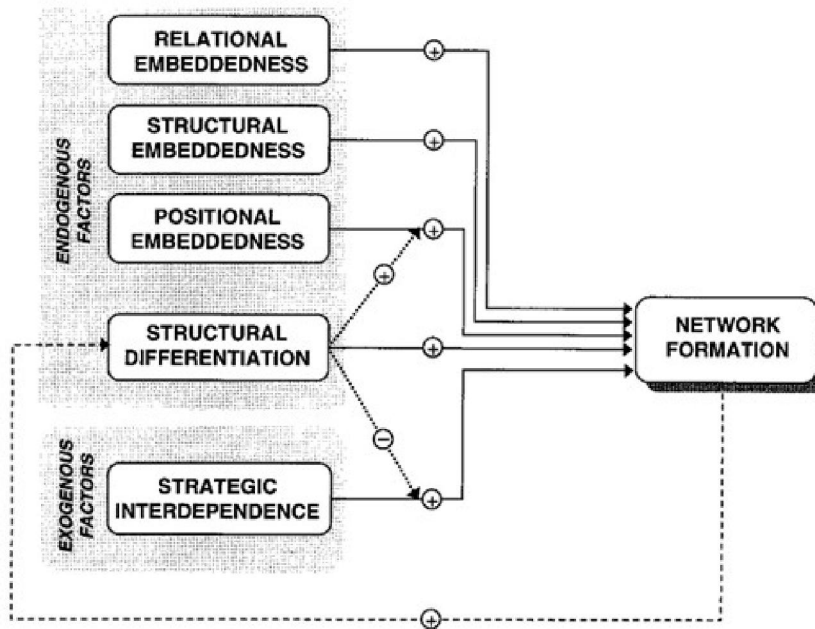
Moreover, the creation of inter-organizational alliances in multiple contexts (e.g., coordinating councils and interagency teams) and at multiple levels (e.g., leader and direct care provider levels) may be a promising venue for facilitating inter-organizational exchanges to promote service delivery integration and improve inter-organizational collaboration (Foster-Fishman, Salem, Allen, &

Fahrbach, 2001).

Great environment uncertainty promoted organizational administrators to seek out inter-organizational partners whose executives have similar backgrounds to theirs. (Galaskiewicz, 1985; Galaskiewicz & Shatin, 1981: 434-438). There is something needed to be clarified that, although cross-departmental collaboration builds an innovative platform in response to social issues, the outcomes and processes are still based on traditional ways of working, which means in traditional working culture, in the original political and economic contexts. Therefore, the policy makers and those practitioners should understand the realities of what can be expected from these network structures in order to maximize the benefits of this mechanism (Keast, Mandell, Brown, & Woolcock, 2004).

Gulati & Gargiulo summarized their dynamic model of network formation and highlights the empirically testable predictions of the model as shown in Figure 2.6. From this Figure, we could easily find that direct effects of the key variables on network formation are strategic interdependence, relational, structural, and positional embeddedness, and structural differentiation (Gulati & Gargiulo, 1999).

Figure 2.6 The endogenous dynamic of inter-organizational networks



Among the dynamic process, cross-boundary Information Sharing and integration has been recognized to be an important factor in facilitating collaboration. Integrating and sharing information in multi-organizational government settings involves complex interactions within social and technological contexts (Pardo, Gil-Garcia, & Burke, 2009). Barki & Pinsonneault (2005) claimed that cross-boundary information sharing was the collaboration or

interconnection of different information systems or telecommunication technologies to share data with a common conceptual schema between entities such as groups, departments, and organizations. Gil-Garcia et al also identified and provided preliminary definitions of four components of cross-boundary information sharing, and thus provide a foundation for discussions about cross-boundary information sharing to seek other undiscovered core components of the phenomenon: trusted social networks; shared information; integrated data and interoperable technical infrastructure.

Information sharing has long been recognized as a critical enabler for enhancing organizational effectiveness and efficiency while better strategic decisions and problem solving can be achieved with aggregated information and knowledge.(Drucker, Dyson, Handy, Saffo, & Senge, 1997; Kim & Lee, 2006). Information sharing can lead to significant cost savings and data reuse without duplicated data collections (Dawes, 1996; Bajaj & Ram, 2003; Gil-García & Pardo, 2005; Zhang & Dawes, 2006; Gil-Garcia, Pardo, & Burke, 2007). Sharing information across government organizations has become more attractive and practical as well (Dawes, 1996).

Network constitution needs to bring new actors and change the positions of existing actors. The managers should do reframing (e.g. changing perceptions fundamentally on goals, interaction, rules or relations between actors), changing (formal) laws that distribute material or authoritative resources, changing (laws on) permanent organizational arrangements ; and changing (formal) interaction rules (example: conflict regulating mechanisms) (Kiun, 1996).

Rogers & Whetten (1982) adapt Gans and Horton's(1975) studies, and recognize that integrating linkages, including administrative and direct service linkage, are mechanisms that maintain coordination by linking various functions of the participating organizations (Rogers & Whetten, 1982;Gans & Horton, 1975). (see Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7 Integrating linkages and direct service linkages

Administrative Linkages		Direct Service Linkages	
1. Fiscal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Joint budgeting</li> <li>b. Joint funding</li> <li>c. Fund Transfer</li> <li>d. Purchases of service</li> </ul>	1. Core Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Outreach</li> <li>b. Intake</li> <li>c. Diagnosis</li> <li>d. Referral</li> <li>e. Follow-up</li> </ul>
2. Personnel Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Consolidated personnel administration</li> <li>b. Joint use of staff</li> <li>c. Staff transfers</li> <li>d. Staff out stationing</li> </ul>	2. Modes of Case Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Case conference</li> <li>b. Case coordinator</li> <li>c. Case team</li> </ul>

	e. Co-location		
3. Planning and Programming	a. Joint development of policies b. Joint planning c. Joint programming d. Information sharing e. Joint evaluation		
4. Administrative Support Services	a. Record keeping b. Grants management c. Central Support Services		

Source: Rogers & Whetten (1982); Gans & Horton (1975)

To promote collaboration, organizers should increase the importance of the future in relation to the present by enlarging the shadow of the future, to adjust the payoffs to the players, and to educate the players about values, facts and skills that promote collaboration by teaching people to care about each other, teaching reciprocity, and improving their recognition abilities. He argues that friendship and trust are not necessary elements for collaboration to occur, but the time factor is more important (Axelrod, 1984).

#### 2.4.2 Challenges or Obstacles for cross-departmental collaboration

Although those factors above could promote cross-departmental collaboration, they also could prevent it sometimes. Mayne & Rieper pointed out that increased collaboration in no way guarantees better quality services. It can work well in specific cases, but they are not panaceas for improving quality service. Also, collaboration may create a variety of problems, like diffuse accountability, unintended competition for consumer, clientele not wanting to be treated the same, private sector efficiency not always appreciated, determining success more of a challenge, and so on (Mayne & Rieper, 2003: 113-114). Jupp also considered that imposing standard models of partnerships can run into problems. There are four consistent management challenges for good management, including developing clear objective, mechanisms for distributing the rewards, building evaluations, and understanding different cultures (Jupp, 2000).

Perri et al examined the obstacles to holistic working - obstacles to achieving and sustaining trust, obstacles to securing an adequate institutional platform, obstacles to securing willingness to behave in a trustworthy fashion, obstacles to creating shared cultures and bodies of shared knowledge (Perri et al., 2002: 122). Christensen and Læg Reid address the relevant problems by taking on the Norwegian case. They focus on the horizontal and vertical coordination, as well as the internal and external coordination. And they found that there are more problems with horizontal coordination than with vertical coordination; that coordination problems are bigger in central agencies than in ministries; and that a low level of mutual trust tends to aggravate coordination problems (Christensen &

Lægheid, 2008). Inter-organizational alliances often have difficulty recruiting critical stakeholders, maintaining active member involvement, promoting a collaborative work culture, and achieving collaborative outcomes, in other words, these could be transferred to challenges for the developing of inter-organizational collaboration (Foster-Fishman et al., 2001).

Although coordination and an exchange of loyalties among political executives are essential in cross-departmental collaboration, if it doesn't work well, lower officials could become confused about what the important decisions are and who makes them. At worst, one uncoordinated appointee undercuts another and gives bureaucratic opponents ample opportunity to subvert leadership by shopping for someone to obey (Hecl, 1977).

However much the "era of the network" is present, hierarchies persist to fulfill the legal and policy functions of government (Agranoff, 2006). Therefore, public power and authority, and their working habit, would to some extent put some pressure on the development of the collaborative initiatives. Also, Axelsson (2006) also mentioned that most of the difficulties are structural barriers, which related to the existence of different administrative boundaries, different laws, rules and regulations, different budgets and financial streams, and different information systems and databases; and there are also some barriers from organizational cultures, different values and interests, and differences in the commitment of individuals and the organizations involved (Axelsson, R. & Axelsson, S.B. 2006).

Some of the obstacles to collaboration include that each agency seeks to preserve its autonomy and independence (defending its 'turf'); organizational routines often are difficult to synchronize; goals of different agencies often overlap, but are not identical; and constituents often bring different pressures and expectations to bear on each of the different agencies (Weiss, 1987).

### 2.4.3 Conclusion of the key factors in two dimensions

Among all the possible factors, some of them are static factors while some of them are dynamic. In order to have a bird view of these factors easily, I further organize these factors based on two dimensions: static or dynamic, and external or internal (in other words, environmental or inner-structural).

Static factors describe the factors that are relatively not stable or developing, like the political and economic context, while dynamic factors are also a relative term, referring to those changing factors or some factors that produces change and effects, like the organizations linkages, leadership, or players' actions. External factors mean environmental factors while the internal factors describe those organizational characteristics, like organizations' goal or purpose, organizational process, leadership, and so on.

Figure 2.8. Summarizing the factors that influence cross-department collaboration in the Western studies

	Static factors	Dynamic factors
External factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political or economic contexts (Keast, Mandell, Brown, &amp; Woolcock, 2004)</li> <li>• Social development level / Humanistic quality / social learning, adaptability (Gray, Jenkins, Leeuw, &amp; Mayne, 2003)</li> <li>• Environmental complexity (Axelsson &amp; Axelsson, 2006)</li> <li>• Development level of ICTs (Pardo, Gil-Garcia, &amp; Burke, 2009)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wicked issues (Clarke &amp; Stewart, 1997; Williams, 2002)</li> <li>• Functional integration (Foster-Fishman, Salem, Allen, &amp; Fahrbach, 2001)</li> <li>• Resource dependency (Hall, Clark, Giordano, Johnson, &amp; Roedel, 1977; Hoffman, Stearns, &amp; Shrader, 1990)</li> <li>• Avoiding uncertainty (Galaskiewicz, 1985; Galaskiewicz &amp; Shatin, 1981)</li> </ul>
Internal factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authority and fragmentation in political structures (Axelsson &amp; Axelsson, 2006; Gulati &amp; Gargiulo, 1999; Keast, Mandell, Brown, &amp; Woolcock, 2004)</li> <li>• Organizational and working culture (Gulati &amp; Gargiulo, 1999; Mayne &amp; Rieper, 2003)</li> <li>• Funding (Gans &amp; Horton, 1975; Rogers &amp; Whetten, 1982)</li> <li>• Number Variety of groups (Faerman, McCaffrey, &amp; Slyke, 2001)</li> <li>• Accountability (Axelsson &amp; Axelsson, 2006; Mayne &amp; Rieper, 2003)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications/ exchange of loyalties among executives (Hecllo, 1977)</li> <li>• Trust (Agranoff &amp; McGuire, 2001; Axelrod, 1984; Christensen &amp; Læg Reid, 2008; Klijin, 2007; Perri, Leat, Seltzer, &amp; Stoker, 2002)</li> <li>• Leadership (Agranoff &amp; McGuire, 2001; Faerman, McCaffrey, &amp; Slyke, 2001)</li> <li>• A shared belief or common/collaborative purpose/outcomes (Agranoff &amp; McGuire, 2001; Foster-Fishman, Salem, Allen, &amp; Fahrbach, 2001)</li> <li>• Mutual dependency on resources and information (Agranoff &amp; McGuire, 2001; Gulati &amp; Gargiulo, 1999; Pardo, Gil-Garcia, &amp; Burke, 2009)</li> <li>• Guidance ability within self-managing system (Agranoff &amp; McGuire, 2001; Axelrod, 1984)</li> <li>• Network Power (Agranoff &amp;</li> </ul>



These factors have been proved to be important in western society in their government cross-departmental collaboration. This study will further check these factors in the Chinese context to figure out those most influential factors in collaboration initiatives.

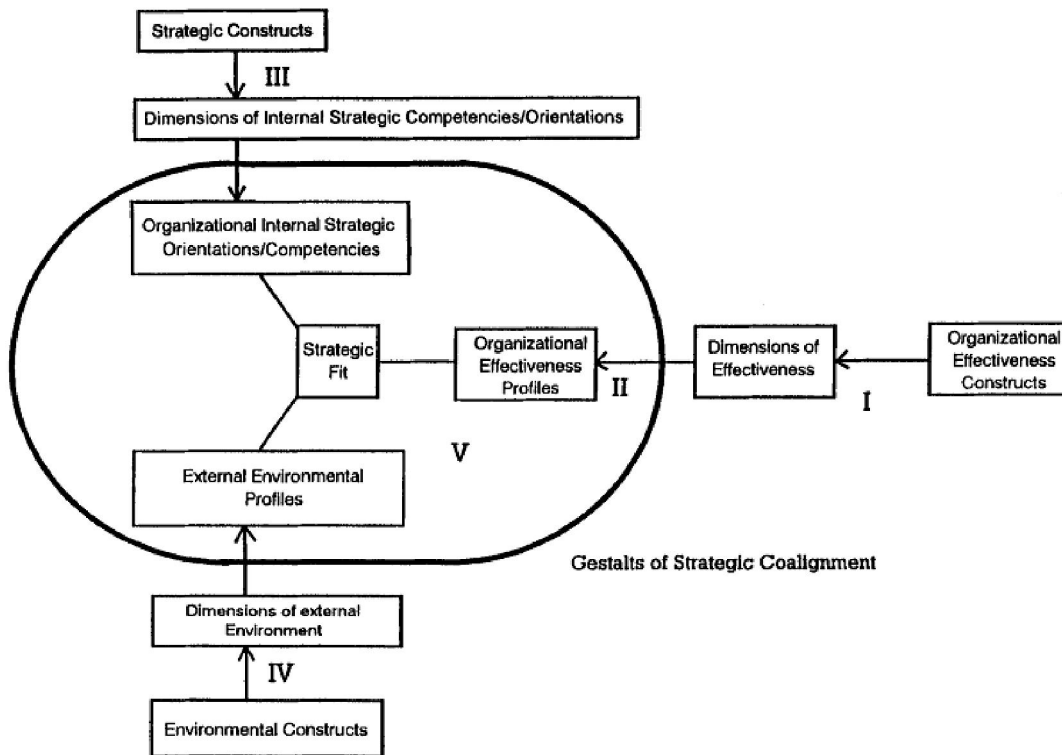
## 2.5 Conceptual Model of Analysis

The Literature review above has given a clearer profile to the meaning of collaboration, its motivations, and its influencing factors. Based on these studies, the final question is how to integrate external and internal factors together; in other words, how these factors influence collaboration process. As mentioned by many researchers that organization context and structure have much to do with network centrality. Hoffman et.al explored the effects of organization structure and context on network centrality in four resource exchange networks, and indicated that organization context and structure were to some degree associated with network centrality (Hoffman, Stearns, & Shrader, 1990).

Cross-departmental collaboration is an organizational form, which is influenced by external environment and internal organizational arrangements. These two factors affect the organizational effectiveness, which forms the whole operational structure (Veliyath & Srinivasan, 1995) . Although those researchers mentioned in previous review have concluded the possible influencing factors in collaboration process, they haven't pay much attention to how to integrate these factors together, in other words, how these factors influence collaboration programmes. However, in Veliyath & Srinivasan study, they develop Gestalts of strategic coalignment framework o explain the relations between those factors and organizational effectiveness. Therefore, this paper will rely on Veliyath & Srinivasan study (1995) and discuss the logics of cross-department collaboration and explore the external and internal factors that facilitate and restrict cross-departmental collaboration by conducting a case study.

According to Veliyath & Srinivasan's study, strategic coalignment involves a configuration comprising the external environment, internal organizational arrangements and organizational effectiveness, as shown in Figure 2.9. These elements are constrained, quasi-deterministic and multi-dimensional (Veliyath & Srinivasan, 1995).

Figure 2.9 Strategic gestalts of environment, strategy and effectiveness



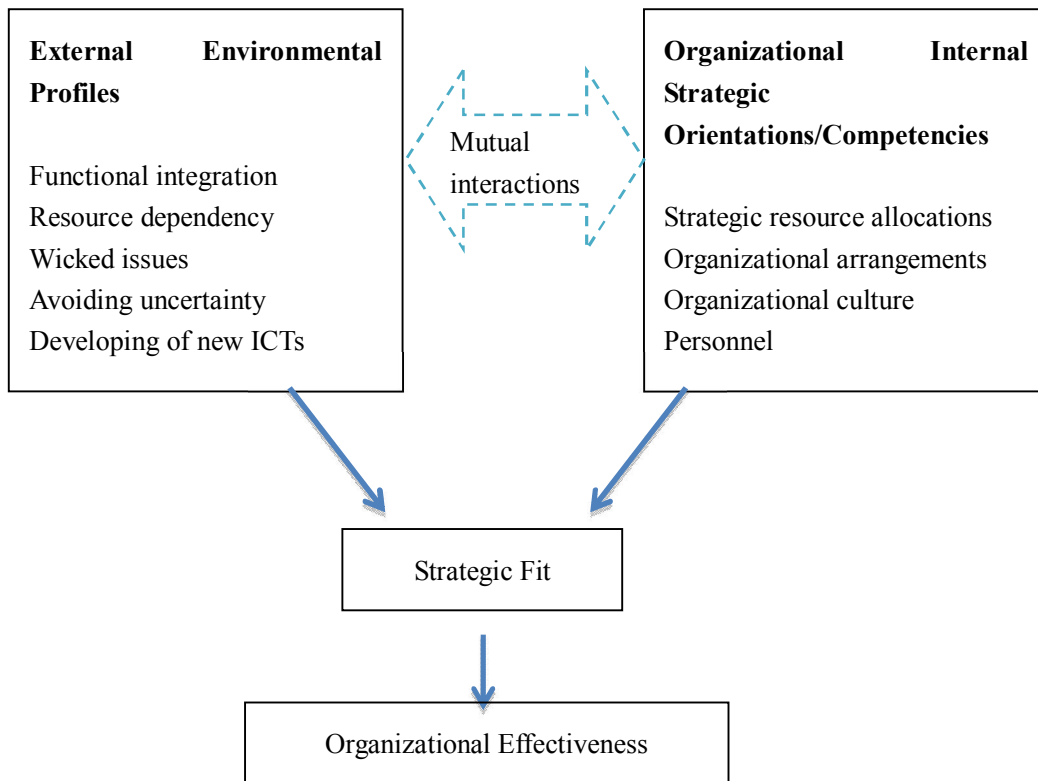
Source: Veliyath & Srinivasan, 1995: 214

Based on the literature review and Veliyath & Srinivasan's framework above, the conceptual framework would be like Figure 2.10. In this framework, the external factors include factors like functional integration, resource dependency, wicked issues, avoiding uncertainty, developing of new ICTs, while the organizational internal strategic orientations refers to strategic resource allocations, organizational arrangements, organizational culture, leadership.

Moreover, the collaboration strategy would be much different with regarding to various situations. For successful collaboration initiatives, the manager should consider two important questions to select the most effective strategy: Which level of the government need to be chosen for collaboration? What should the extent of collaboration be? (In other words, how many government bureaus will be involved in this process?) On what aspects will the management strategies be directed on? Also, there are mutual interactions between those three profiles, the external environmental factors, the organizational internal strategic arrangements and the organizational effectiveness.



**Figure 2.10 Conceptual Model of Analysis**



Source: Veliyath & Srinivasan, 1995: 210-214; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1997

## 2.6 Summary

This chapter has examined the definition of collaboration and its various forms, and has differentiated those relevant terms. Then, this chapter has further reviewed and discussed the reasons why organizations collaborate and what are the factors facilitating or challenging collaboration in the western world. Drawing from Veliyath & Srinivasan (1995: 210) and Tushman & O'Reilly (1997), this chapter goes to discuss the conceptual framework that will be used in our Chinese county level collaboration case.

Western studies in cross-departmental collaboration have been going on for years and have accumulated a certain amount of academic achievements, while it is still new in China. No theoretical work on this topic was found on the Chinese case. I hope this study could give Chinese scholars as well as those practitioners some suggestions, and could promote China's governmental cross-agencies collaboration.

## 3 Methodology

This section provides an overview of the methodology and data collection and introduces the case study. I present the case study as the main research design. Data from the city of Xintai (where the case study was located) was collected from in-depth, face to face interviews with government officials and citizens who benefited from the program, and from government documents. Those documents include minutes of meeting, government reports, government rules and regulations, and other written materials.

### 3.1 An overview of methodology: a case study

Case study is of great use in exploring the evolution of specific social problems. If the case is typical enough, we can even foresee the outcome of similar cases. For this reason, this research takes an inductive and qualitative approach.

According to Yin (1994), a case study design is employed to answer how and why questions. A case study involves detailed, rich and intensive analysis of a case or phenomena ( Yin, 1994; Bryman, 2004), and it is concerned with the complexity and particular nature of the case in question. By applying the case study method, we can use inductive approach to figure out the nature of this phenomenon. Since studies on cross-departmental collaboration is rather rare in China, a typical case study and an inductive approach should be significant in examining the nature of collaboration in China's context.

An inductive approach refers to the relationship between theory and research in which the former is the outcome of the latter. The inductive approach is usually associated with a qualitative research approach, which emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2004). Therefore, this paper will collect qualitative data for analysis.

### 3.2 Selection of the case

#### 3.2.1 Case Selection

A case is chosen either because it is critical, unique, revelatory, or exemplifying in that it will provide a suitable context for the research questions to be answered

and allow the researcher to examine key social processes (Yin, 2003; Bryman, 2004). Currently, China has attempted a lot in cross-departmental collaboration within the public service delivery domain; for example, administrative approval always needs more than two departments' participation.

In this paper, I selected city Xintai's administrative service center as an example. There are two reasons. For one thing, grass-root government is the main public service deliverer, and plays a very important role in public service delivery. Therefore, I choose a county level example to study its public service delivery. For another, although many other counties have already started this kind of attempts, Xintai's history of cross-departmental collaboration is relatively longer and Xintai has also developed its own collaborative mechanisms, which would be useful for other collaborative initiatives. Xintai is at a county level from the east of China which ranks in the Top 100 of Chinese counties' economic development in the Ninth National Hundred County Economic Development Appraisal. Since 2003, Xintai's municipal Government has started practicing service-oriented government and electronic governance, and has established a special system, called Overall Standardization System (OSS), that gains tremendous advantages and benefits. Xintai developed a new agency, called Public Administrative Service Center (PASC), to coordinate every agency in the governments, and provide public services together. This kind of collaboration is not new, but it turned out to be useful in promoting governmental effectiveness in public service delivery.

### 3.2.2 Introduction of the case

The PASC in city Xintai was created in June, 2003, is a municipal institution led and managed directly by the municipal government. With the development of New Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs), Xintai explored a way of developing e-government with informatization and standardization, and developed PASC as a one-stop service system. Every department sent several staff to PASC, and provided services there. Once citizens need administrative services from the government, they come to PASC. This platform makes public services much more effective and more efficiency.

Since 2005, within the existing platform of PASC, Xintai government has creatively brought standardization into administrative services, created standardized implementation rules of administrative service, built an e-government service hall, and established the e-government website of the whole city. Xintai has done a great deal of pioneering work in the implementation of administrative service standardization. According to their standardization principles "simplified, unified, coordinated and optimized", Xintai revised some of the rules which have been traditionally used in ordinary work and promoted them. Xintai has built four main standard systems scientifically (service fundamental standards, service quality standards, service administrative standards and service working standards), 17 subsystems and 551 standards, which together constitute an administrative service system featuring "clarified responsibility,

smooth implementation, connected process, and continuous improvement” (Yu, Zhang, & Yang, 2011).. Thus, it achieves the goals that “each work has a procedure, each procedure is under control, each control has a rule, and each standard is under supervision.” (Yu, Zhang, & Yang, 2011)

PASC has shown a significant role in promoting public service efficiency and quality. According to Xintai's city government report, PASC improved service efficiency, and expanded service functions. According to PASC's online introduction<sup>1</sup>, 69.4% approval matters could be done within one working day, 85% within 3 working days, and the advanced accomplishment rate is 96.5%, the accomplishment rate within promised time has reached up to 100%, which is a great progress than ever. In the development and transformation process of "urban village", Xintai carried out joint site service, joint trial plans, joint explorations and joint inspection, so that 50 serial workflows in the past have been simplified into 20 parallel links. Approval procedures of forty "urban villages" construction projects now take only 2 months instead of one and a half year before.

The whole idea has been summarized by PASC by six words: Standards (*to unify various business needs standards, technical standards, data format standards, software interface standards and evaluation standards*); Integration(*to integrate all kinds of existing systems deeply and fully*); Coordination(*to achieve the inter-departmental coordination of various businesses through integration*); Interconnection(*to overcome fragmentation and accelerate the interconnection and interoperability*); Sharing (*to improve the level of resource sharing on the basis of integration, coordination and interconnection*); Reengineering (*to reengineer those significant basic comprehensive projects according to requirements of the super--ministries reform*). (Yu, Zhang, & Yang, 2011))

Xintai's practice leads local governments in management innovations, and provided tremendous economic and social benefits. The PASC aimed at building a service-oriented government to improve efficiency and effectiveness of public services. It also put the integration and competition system on a same platform. The integration system was to decrease administrative cost and to increase service efficiency, and the competition system was to ensure the service attitude and quality.

Within this platform, PASC stressed integration. This would not only help to realize the combination and the integration of multi-department service progress, but also help to narrow, to the maximum, the distance between the people and the local government. Thus, a synergetic, seamless and integrated government mode was made possible.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sdxtxfw.com.cn/AboutTheCenter/CenterInfo.aspx>, accessed on July 26th, 2012

### 3.3 Data collection

Data was collected from in-depth interviews, random interviews, and government documents on this topic. I conducted in-depth interviews with leaders of each departments who are responsible for this collaboration. To sample the interviewees, a snowballing method is needed to identify and select individuals to interview based on their role and participation in this program. All the possible interviewees consist of public-sector officials and staffs including mayor, governmental officials at municipal level, including vice mayor, Municipal Committee, Municipal Commission for Discipline Inspection, City optimization Office, leaders and workers of PASC, and officials from the Provincial Level who are in charge of this program. Random interviewees consist of departmental staff who are appointed by their original department to work in PASC, and some citizens who come to PASC for services

To examine the effectiveness of this platform, I also interviewed twenty citizens randomly. Government documents reviewed in this study included yearly government reports, statistics records, official PASC documents and PASC's management documents as shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Interviewees and interview questions

Interview Style	Interviewees	Interview questions	Number
Depth Interview	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Officials from the municipal government: vice mayor, municipal Party committee, officials from Commission for Discipline Inspection;</li> <li>2. Leaders and staff from PASC: the director and Party secretary of PASC, ex-director of PASC, staff;</li> <li>3. Leaders and staff from other departments working in PASC;</li> <li>4. Officials from the Provincial government: one staff from Quality and Technical Supervision Department in D Province</li> </ol>	the development of PASC, the main outcomes; favorable external factors and constraints; information sharing and integration, department characteristics, their work details, organizational structure, standardization system, future development	19
Random	Window staff from every	Daily management of PASC,	6

Interview	Department Bureau: including Health Bureau, Trade and Industry Bureau, Construction Bureau, Public Security Bureau	the coordination between PASC and every original department, and the coordination between different departments, their personal career paths, working pressure	
	Citizens	public satisfaction about this working model	8

### 3.4 Data Analyses

All the interviews will be transferred into computer, and then analyzed word by word to develop theoretical patterns and frameworks. In this step, I choose a computer program ATLAS.ti. ATLAS.ti is a very powerful work bench for the qualitative analysis of textual, graphical, audio and video data. I input each of those interview minutes into this computer program and analyze them one by one.

During the analyses, most of the codes comes from those factors mentioned in previous literature review. However, I also keep my eyes open to find those factors With Chinese characteristics. With the help of this software, it is easy to get an overview of the findings through interactive network views.

## 4 Cross-departmental collaboration in the city of Xintai, China: a case study

The functional integration of the demand comes from excessive differentiation in the Government's internal functions, and generated a lot of "gray areas" in the implementation, and has the phenomenon of "pass the buck" when difficult problems happens. During the development of China, various "wicked issues" emerged, like the food safety problems, environmental protection, the House requisition and relocation, inequality of income, the increasing disparity between the east and the west region, as well as the regional gap between the urban and rural areas, and so on. To solve these issues, different departments need to collaborate, especially in public service delivery. Public service delivery needs the participation of different departments; for example, house estate issue matters Ministry of Land and Resources, National Development and Reform Commission, and banks. In order to improve public efficiency and cut public administrative cost, government begins to integrate those department who has similar functions and convergence business.

In this chapter, I will analyze the Xintai case based on Veliyath & Srinivasan's (1995) framework which has been mentioned in Chapter two, and examine its external environmental profiles, organizational internal strategic orientations/competencies and its collaborative strategies separately.

### 4.1 Introduction of China's political system

Since the late 1970s the Chinese Communist Party has gradually changed from an ideology-driven party to a pragmatic party, adopting the East Asia Developmental State Model(Jing & Liu, 2009). As known widely that, China began the "Reform and Opening Up Drive" from 1978 and changed from a centrally planned economy to a market economy. During China's economic reforms, decentralization was adopted and it is seemly to be the most important characteristics. With the decentralization of economic areas, the political decision making powers also need to be decentralized to local government in order to establish the conditions necessary for markets to take root (Mertha, 2005).

### 4.1.1 The "Super-department reform" since 2008

China's administrative reform has been driven by various demands on efficiency, coordination, accountability and governmental effectiveness. Till now, China has undergone six waves of administrative reforms since 1978 which happened 1982, 1988, 1993, 1998, 2003 and 2008. The major characteristics of these reforms is "downsizing-expansion-red downsizing-reexpansion" and this vicious cycle has not been fully overcome. With all these reforms, China is still a highly top-down and centralized system. The problems and challenges are obvious that overlapping functions of government departments, disparities between power and responsibility, and low efficiency are preventing the government effectiveness. The recent "Sixth Round of Administrative Reforms" in which the Western concept of the "super-department", was announced by the Chinese government in March 2008. This reform was aiming at avoiding "overlapping responsibilities" and "power not being matched by responsibilities" in fields such as macroeconomic regulation, industrial management, and public service provision (Dong, Christensen, & Painter, 2010). After over four years' implementation, this "super-department" to a certain extent solves some coordinating problems but still not enough to change the whole nature of coordination status.

### 4.1.2 Regional power in China: Tiao/kuai Authority Relations

In order to regulate and discipline local government in their management of the economy and the implementation of public policy generally, central governments has the partial centralization of a number of key bureaucracies, named "centralized government" (*Chuizhi Guanli*) system. Officials within these bureaucracies are no longer beholden to superiors within local governments (which means "*Kuai*" or "piece"), but directly controlled by their functional administrative superiors (which means "*tiao*" or "line") and have only a consultative relationship with their former local government bosses (Mertha, 2005). "*Tiao*" or "line" administration could bring better control to local government while "*kuai*" or "piece" help local government to get independence from external influence and enhance sensitivity to local conditions in the policy process.

Moreover, in China's largely decentralized political system, leadership relations are often not with administrative supervisors ("*tiao shang ling dao*" which means "leadership along a 'line'"), but with local governments at the same administrative level (or "*kuai shang ling dao*" which means "leadership across a 'piece'") (Mertha, 2005). Therefore, the Tiao/Kuai relations could bring much effectiveness to central control as well as some troubles in the collaborations between different public agencies.



## 4.2 External Environmental Profiles from Xintai Case study

In this section, I first examine one by one the factors present in Veliyath & Srinivasan's (1995) framework. As I will demonstrate, those factors also exist in China's context. But one additional –and possibly most determinant- factor, the institutional reform at the country level, is also found during the analyses.

### 4.2.1 Functional integration and resources dependence on other department

Before the integration of the approval procedures in PASC, people had to hand in required materials and register their information to each respective departments for proceeding with approval process. In this way, departments worked separately and the process was not integrated. Citizens or companies needed to transfer between different bureaus, and they had to hand in basic information repeatedly. Sometimes, they even need to find "Guanxi" (means "interpersonal relationships" or "connections", is supposed to be one of the major dynamics of China's society) to overcome the problems they faced.. This situation is illustrated by Figure 4.1.

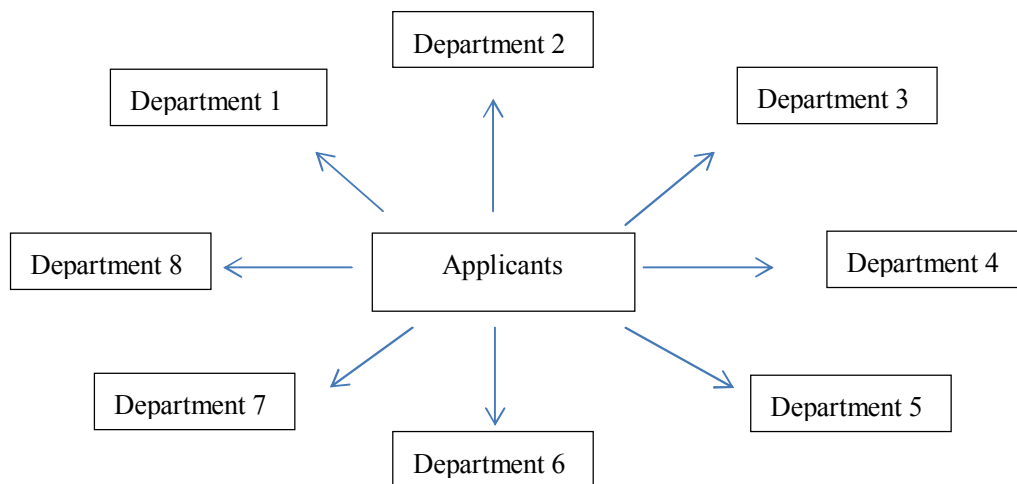


Figure 4.1 No connection between departments

In addition, even for ordinary public services delivery, there is always a need of more than one departments participation in one particular public services delivery or one approval process, which requires the integration or collaboration of different departments. For example, during the interviews, leaders from PASC mentioned that, if people applied for permission of building a house, they needed to apply to departments like "Land and Resources Bureau, the City Planning Bureau, the Construction Bureau , and the Civil Administration Bureau" one after another, this maybe takes quite a long time. With the help of this platform, every

department work together, and this improves working efficiency a lot.

#### 4.2.2 Demand of dealing with the "Wicked issues"

Xintai is going through urbanization process, and different issues require the collaboration of different departments. Also, the high amount of citizens are pressing the government to provide efficiency public services effectively. In the trend of building a service-orientation government, Xintai is trying to do better in dealing with the traditional wicked issues, like business regulatory, environmental protection.

Another important issue is emergency management. Xintai is famous for coal mining, but coal mining could be risky without strict management. For example, on Aug 17th, 2007, an mine accident happened at Xinwen Mining Bureau which is located at Xintai<sup>2</sup>. During the emergency management, coal mine safety supervision bureau, together with other departments like the Commission for Discipline Inspection, Industry and Commerce Administration Bureau, worked together to handle this issue.

#### 4.2.3 Avoiding uncertainty and reducing risk

Among all the uncertainty factors, environmental uncertainty would be the most popular one, which refers to the inability of an individual or organization to predict future events. In real-time world, environments rarely are stable and predictable and these uncertainty factors triggers adaptation, which is the core problem of organizations. Coordination is no more than a systematic relationship which include positive outcomes to the participants and avoidance of negative consequences (Lindblom, 1965).

In the case of PASC, PASC provides other department a platform to work together. They worked in a whole process and would be mutually double-checked on the work of each other. Therefore, this could be used to avoid uncertainty and reduce relative risks in the work. Moreover, during the interview, I found that, this reform can also protect their leaders, too. Some leaders told me that,

"...before the foundation of PASC, leaders (in every departments) have great power. Once citizens want public administrative services (like Land Permission) from the governments, they first come out an idea of 'finding a leader' (Guanxi) to get it. But after this system built, every procedure is embedded with each other, and it is hard to skip anyone. But, this system indeed protects our government officials. With the help of this platform, much fewer citizens come to find a leader but go to the Center..."

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<sup>2</sup> <http://news.sina.com.cn/z/sdxintaimine/> accessed on May 15th, 2012

#### 4.2.4 Development of new ICTs and the public awareness of e-government

The development and effectiveness of PASC has been greatly driven by the development of new ICTs, which provides possibilities for the development of software. Moreover, with the help of new ICTs, PASC could develop new platform which could improve their working efficiency.

Also, the public awareness is also a big driven force. With the spread of internet and computers, more and more citizens, even those from the countryside, could get government information online. E-government has been accepted as "a common occurrence".

#### 4.2.5 The administrative reform at the country level

The factors above have been included in Veliyath & Srinivasan's (1995) framework. However, during my analyses, one more important factor, the institutional reform as a political factor, was also found and seems very important during the collaboration process. For example, officials from Xintai city reflects that the management mechanism that "counties that have been supervised directly by provincial governments" (*Sheng Guan Xian*) could improve the financial situation of counties, and increase the communications between the upper and lower level.

In addition, during this construction of PASC, the central government of China starts its institutional reform in the year 2008, named "Super-Department Reform" (*Da Bu Zhi Gai Ge*). This has promoted the local initiatives in coordinating departments. and can further promote the horizontal integration between the departments.

### 4.3 Organizational Internal Strategic Orientations in Xintai case

In this section, I will check factors affecting the organizational internal orientations of cross-departmental collaboration in China. The first two organizational factors in the following analyses could be found in Veliyath & Srinivasan (1995)'s framework while the other three are specific to China.

#### 4.3.1 Strategic resource allocations: Sufficient funding and political support

As mentioned in Benson's study that (policy) networks is "a cluster or complex of

organizations connected to each other by resource dependencies and distinguished from other clusters or complexes by breaks in the structure of resource dependencies" ( Benson, 1982, p. 148).

Xintai used PASC as a platform to reform the administrative evaluation. It was the support of the municipal government and committee, especially the sufficient political support and funding aid of them, that made it possible that great achievement was gained in just few years.

Sufficient funding aid was offered, as well, by the Municipal Commission and Government for the operation of PASC. These funding was used for infrastructure equipment, the update of software and hardware, etc. As was showed in the interview, each bureau generally didn't list funding as a major problem. The infrastructure was provided by PASC. The home bureaus would equip every window with standard office facilities and hardware according to the requirements of PASC. Because of the great attention of municipal leaders, funds mainly came from financial allocation. If needed, one could request appropriation from their home bureau. And normally it would be approved. According to the interview, almost every department praised the PASC's infrastructure, saying the equipment is new and the system is smoothly.

According to the interview, just now, the biggest obstacles for the development of PASC was the limitation of working space which was so limited that much of the business could not enter in. PASC was renting the building of the local China Post, which restrained more agencies join in PASC. To solve the problem, many departments suggested that PASC should build a building for itself in order to absorb more bureaus to enter and to serve the public better. The good news is that the Municipal Commission and Government is now making plans to put up a brand-new and larger PASC building specially for PASC.

#### 4.3.2 Organizational arrangements

##### A. The heading department of PASC

PASC in city Xintai is a municipal institution led and managed directly by the municipal government. Having considered a variety of alternatives to the heading department taking charge of the PASC's formation, the municipal committee finally decided to choose the Municipal Commission for Discipline. The decision was made mainly because the Municipal Commission for Discipline, especially the Office of Supervision and the Office of Administrative Effective Evaluation in it, have the right to evaluate the work of every municipal bureau, and could directly dismiss the leading cadres of those non-vertical administrative departments if they have ranked the worst three for three consecutive years in the evaluation. As to the leading cadres of those vertical administrative departments, the Municipal Commission for Discipline can put forward suggestions to their superior departments about their evaluation method. During the initial stage of the PASC, some of the participating bureaus met with great resistance. Departments disagreed

on the opinion and profit of working together. So the coordination initially triggered by the Municipal Commission for Discipline was a critical factor.

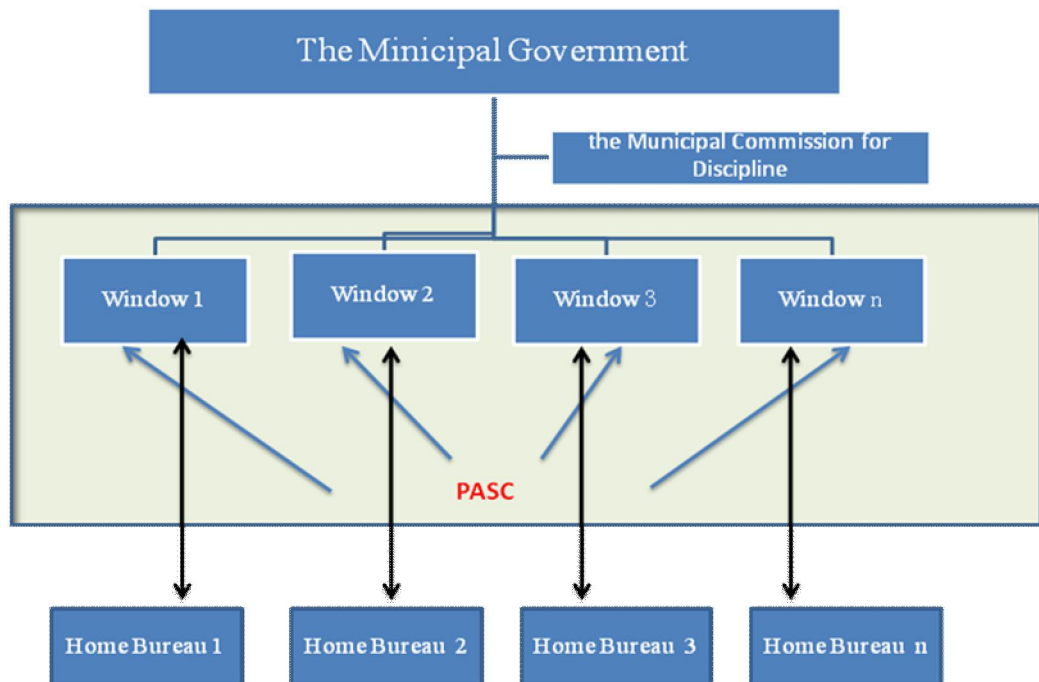


Figure 4.2 The Organizational Structure of PASC

#### B. The conflicts between PASC and the bureaus and solution

During the initial period, conflicts of interest existing between PASC and the bureaus are mainly in three aspects: the department leaders' level, between different departments and between staffs. At the leaders' level, in the process of reforming the administrative approval system in city Xintai, some department leaders feel that their power was "taken over" by letting them work in PASC. Within their department, some office directors who used to be in charge of the approval matters, feel their power weakened if they transfer to PASC.

Also, at the department level, interests of some bureaus were infringed in the initial period. Firstly, there was a legality problem. Originally, the counterparts offices in every bureau were responsible for every approval and service request. Their legality are referring to the "Three Provision Rules"<sup>3</sup> (*San Ding Fang An*), which was the rational and legitimate basis of their daily work. When their business moved to PASC, every bureau began to worry about whether their bureaus was going to be removed or dismissed, and this has touched on their core interests. Secondly, there was a problem about the interests of each bureau. Once some administrative approval business which could charge administrative fees,

<sup>3</sup> The "Three Provision Rules" was made by the State Council, about what the government should do, what their internal structure, what are the responsibilities of the internal organs, the number of staffing and leadership positions.

move to PASC, some bureaus concerned that this might reduce their revenue. Thirdly, the management procedure became more complex. Every bureau worried that when they used a bi-management mode after they collaborated with PASC, the management procedure would be a mess and stressed the complexity with improperly management.

Moreover, at the staff level, the attitude of the staff at each window in PASC also reflect the potential interests conflict between PASC and their relevant bureaus. Firstly, their workload increased a lot. The staff at each window used to have a simple, relatively easy job which required lower service standard. But when they entered in PASC, they must improved their service quality according to the new standardized requirements. Meanwhile, they must coordinate and interact with their home departments which increased their workload, too. Secondly, the working pressure has also increased. After entering PASC, the staff could no longer depend on their home department but be independent at work. Furthermore, because their performance was evaluated and compared equally with others, they need to keep on learning to improve their comprehensive capability of business. Thirdly, the bi-management was a problem. The window services staff should not only follow the leaders from their home department on business management and personnel management, but also be strictly administrated by the systematic and standardized system of PASC.

With the support of the Municipal Commission and government, PASC mainly used the following methods to conciliating the conflicts between PASC and each bureau. First of all, they encourage each bureau leader to participate. With the political support from the municipal government, they finally find a way of collaboration. Secondly, propaganda and education to each bureau's leader and staff was also very significant during collaboration process. The major objectives of propaganda and education was to improve the understanding of each bureau to PASC's essence and significance, and to clear up the misunderstanding of the them so as to improve their motivation. Through continuous propaganda and education, many bureaus realized that the essence of PASC was to provide a multi-department platform and that the only difference was their working site, while their power on personnel and business administration remained as before. And this dispelled the doubts of some departments or individuals, such as whether the department would be eliminated, etc. Some leader s of the bureaus frankly said in the interview that, "it was actually only the shifting of the office location. We don't have any conflicted emotion". In addition, through the propaganda and practice, more and more departments realized the significance of PASC. With the help of PASC, the situation changed to be more convenient for the citizens which improve the overall image of the government authorities. After the implementation of standardization, PASC improved its efficiency, trained its staff and protected their cadres.

Thirdly, strengthening the communication. The mutual communication between PASC and each bureau should be strengthened in order to inform the home bureau of their staffs' performance and achievement in PASC and to be

familiar with the recent requirements of PASC as well. For example, during interviews, quite a few department leaders pointed out that they often communicated with the director of PASC to analyze problems and to improve their work effectiveness and efficiency. And the update of software and hardware was always done in time according to the requirement of PASC.

Fourthly, adjusting the new work style slowly. There were several new problems in the progress of development, such as the culture integration issue. Besides the external driving force, there should also be a period of gradual adaptation. For example, during the interview, some staff said that they couldn't adapt to the new environment at first but fitted in well after some time. With the time going, people's idea and working habit would change a lot, so does the maturity of the system. The inadaptable managing system would gradually become adaptable .

#### C. Legitimizing existing management rules

With all the factors concerned, more than twenty rules and regulations are issued by the Municipal Government and Commission, such as "the management rules for PASC", and "The regulations for responsibilities of administrative examination and approval".

Also, "the Assessment Measures of PASC's Window Services" was also drafted and put into effect, linking the assessment results of PASC up with the evaluation of the evaluation and development of the whole city. Those bureaus ranking high in the annual evaluation would be honored as the "excellent bureau" with high-qualified services by the Municipal Government and Commission. The principal of those bureaus would be honored as the "advanced individuals" .

#### D. Ensuring Data Security

The application system of PASC was developed by outsourcing to companies and did reserve access channel for those up-coming bureaus. Each bureau could use PASC's system and their home departments' at the same time. Physical separation, such as separated cards, was used to ensure security while some bureaus said that the switching of internal and external network was inconvenient.

### 4.3.3 Leadership: The close attention of the municipal leaders

Besides those two factors above, leadership seemed to be the most significant factor in this case. However, its significance hasn't been pointed out in western studies. The interview showed that the successful development of PASC in Xintai and the implementation of standardized administrative service are closely related to the attention of the municipal leaders. With their attention, disagreement between different departments were solved easily, and necessary funds could be served timely. City Xintai used PASC as a platform to reform the administrative evaluation.

It was the support of the municipal government and committee, especially the sufficient political support and funding aid of them, that made it possible that great achievement was gained in just few years. Specific details are as the followings:

First of all, the reasonable understanding of the municipal leaders. The municipal leaders of city Xintai had a fairly deep understanding of the standardized administrative service. At first, departments had complaints about settling down in PASC. A chief municipal leader criticized some department leader:

“Do you know why your business was brought to the center to be done in public? It was because the government did not trust you, the public did not trust you, too. Thus, you must move to PASC.”

Secondly, The present municipal leading group of city Xintai laid a great emphasis on PASC’s work. They often come to PASC for supervisions and surveys and gave proper strategy guidance and supporting ideas to the staff.

Thirdly, the Municipal Commission and Municipal Government also utilize PASC as a platform for the organization, research and pilot of the standardization of administrative services in order to successfully take the experience gained at each PASC bureau and popularize it in a larger area (e.g. from PASC to all the bureaus). Because of the strict requirements of the Municipal Commission and Government and the round- the-clock inspection (24 hours a day) of the efficiency office, problems were announced once recognized, and were seriously treated once investigated. The Municipal Commission and Government had never given unprincipled protection to anyone. It was the driving force of the municipal leaders that made every bureau leader begin to shift perception and that more and more emphasis was placed on the PASC’s performance.

Last but not least, due to positive impact of the Municipal Commission and government, leaders of each bureau all took PASC work very seriously and gave great support. Therefore, leaders from PASC as well as each bureau have appropriate understanding of PASC during its development. The municipal government equipped PASC with excellent leading group and managerial team. The current leader of PASC, who was the former committee member of the Commission for Discipline, was diplomatic, diligent and full of practical strategies. In the interview, he mentioned the following sentences many times:

“...emancipating the mind should not be only a slogan but be put in practical use as well ...”;

“...once companies and people were served properly with high efficiency, problems like economy development and social harmony would be readily solved. And the government itself would benefit from it to gain more public credibility, or to increase welfare or get more chances to promote...”.

Every bureau selected the best staff of their department to work in PASC. Leaders from each bureau who is assigned to be in charge of PASC's Window service and the management of their staff working in PASC would at least stay in the window for half a day per week to instruct the window services. When the window services staff met with relatively great project or business problems, they would directly communicate with the specific leader and listen to their advice.



#### 4.3.4 The role of Coordinator/ Mediator

The role of the manager in PASC is very important, too and should be a big driving force. They are system controllers, as well as mediators and process managers. They have a role of "shaping and changing conditions for successful interaction between actors" (Kiun, 1996). They work for seeking agreement between actors and selecting other actors to work together.

During the interview, both of the former director of PASC and the present director showed great enthusiasm of their work, and they worked together with their staff, to solve the problems they met together.

Also, many interviewees from other departments as well as those from window service units, mentioned that the Leaders in PASC even care about their staff's personal life a lot. One staff from window services unit told us that when their leader found them unhappy at work, they would ask them why and gave them help, for example, she had to look after her mother at hospital and could not continue work, their leader would communicate with their home department for them.

Therefore, the staffs in PASC are encouraged as well as schooled by their leaders to work hard for the development of PASC. Therefore, after they come to PASC, they also work very hard.

#### 4.3.5 The Formal and Informal Coordination system

The interview showed that PASC improved the formal and informal coordination and interaction of every bureau.

First of all, the formal horizontal coordination between bureaus. There were probably three main kinds of coordination, including superior coordination, direct horizontal coordination and PASC's indirect coordination. For supervisor coordination, it means coordination was fulfilled inside the government by their joint superior. For example, one interviewee from the Construction Bureau mentioned that it was easy to coordinate with the Office of Housing Management and the Office of Parks, because both of them are subordinate to the Construction Bureau. Superior coordination was of great importance especially when emergency occurred, such as earthquake, flood, fire, air-attack, contagion, and visiting issue, etc. For these kind of issues, it tends to be led by the municipal government to establish emergency enforcement direction center and to coordinate those relevant departments.

Moreover, for direct horizontal coordination, it is carried out smoothly because those bureaus which were subordinate to the same political and administrative system have already built routinized working relationship. One leader from the Office of Housing Management said that, "we(the Office of Housing Management), together with the Planning Bureau, the Construction

Bureau were subordinate to the same system, so the coordination was easy". Also, for important issues, PASC will have a meeting on coordination to inform every relevant bureau of what they should do. One interviewee from the random interview mentioned that, "once we enter in PASC, we follow the instruction and rules of it, as well as coordinate with other horizontal bureaus". One department leader also said that, "coordination was needed because of system problems. Since PASC has compelling power, it was easy to coordinate. Coordination relies much on PASC."

Secondly, the informal coordination between horizontal bureaus. PASC assembled the staff from every bureau work together, which objectively improves the interaction of the window staff to coordinate across their home departments. Besides formal working relationship, informal interpersonal relationship was established as well. The positive relationship among window staffs helps to promote better multi-department cooperation. However, on the other hand, there is still some potential risk that as a result of the mutual condition, the surveillance between bureaus might be weakened because of the positive relationship. Some staff said that

"...positive relationship among window staff in PASC might probably lead to the weakening of mutual surveillance (between their home bureaus). But we have principles that we could never disobey the regulation. We would help each other as long as it was still within the regulation..."

#### 4.4 Strategies of cross-departmental collaboration in the case of Xintai : system standardization

Strategies for collaboration are very important too. Herranz (2010) has done a critical review of the literature on public network performance and provided a way to conceptualize how different strategic orientations in network coordination may be related to different network objectives. As mentioned in Selden, Sowa, and Sandfort's study that, "some collaborative efforts are focused on systems change, such as working to alter the existing structure, create new linkages, and decrease service fragmentation" , the PASC's case is focusing on system change, which means to let other organizations work together to alter the existing structure of service delivery.

In PASC's case, they choose "system standardization" the main strategy, because the system standardization of PASC provide an important platform for the regulation and integration of multi-department collaboration process. When PASC drafted the standardization process, they adopted many possible methods in order to be accepted by all the bureaus, like strategic balancing, overall situation consideration, and negotiation. While the specific supervision and approval procedure was made, the specific applying qualifications, materials for submitting, the total approval process, the deadline have been all discussed and coordinated as perfectly as possible so as to form a smooth procedures for each approval process,

just as the ex-leader of PASC said during the interview, "...all relevant bureaus should hold a meeting, do some research and solve every single problem once found. Success requires coordination".

PASC has re-organized the approval process with the negotiation of each department. For PASC, it was important to strengthen the combination and integration of departments. But before this, the progress relationship between each department should be first defined. For example, two pre-posed situations should be distinguished according to the specific business character. Taking the establishment of a restaurant as an example, when the owner go do the Industrial and Commercial bureau to open their tax account, they will be asked for the "food service license" (*Can Yin Fu Wu Xu Ke Zheng*), so they should first get the "food service license" before they go to the Industrial and Commercial bureau. But the "food service license" is issued by the Health Bureau. Therefore, the Health Bureau is in the most basic and pre-position in this case. But for another case like the establishment of public facilities, the process is as follows: the Culture Bureau → the Health Bureau → the Environmental Bureau. In this case, the Health Bureau is in a middle position, belonging to the relevant pre-position. The department order is defined by the business nature.

With the system standardization, they reorganized the approval process, from "none connection"(in Figure 4.1) to "series connection" (in Figure 4.3 and updated to "parallel connection"(in Figure 4.4).

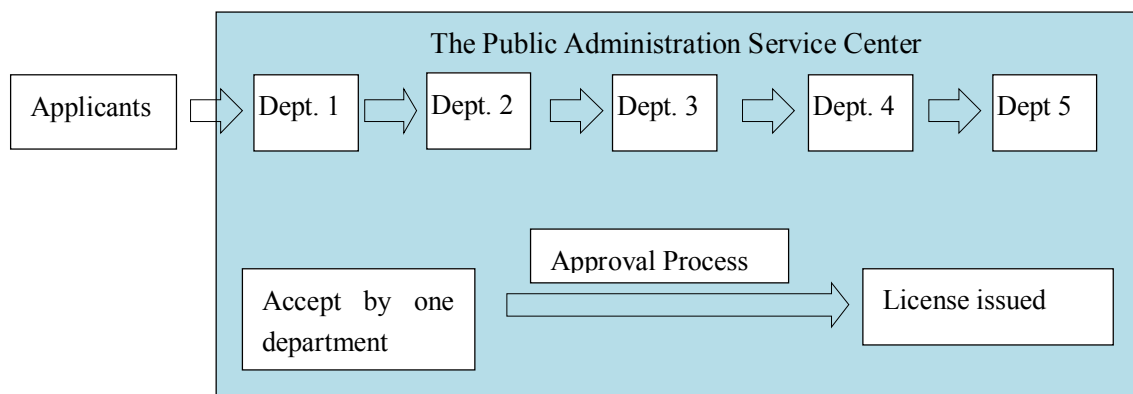


Figure 4.3 Series connection

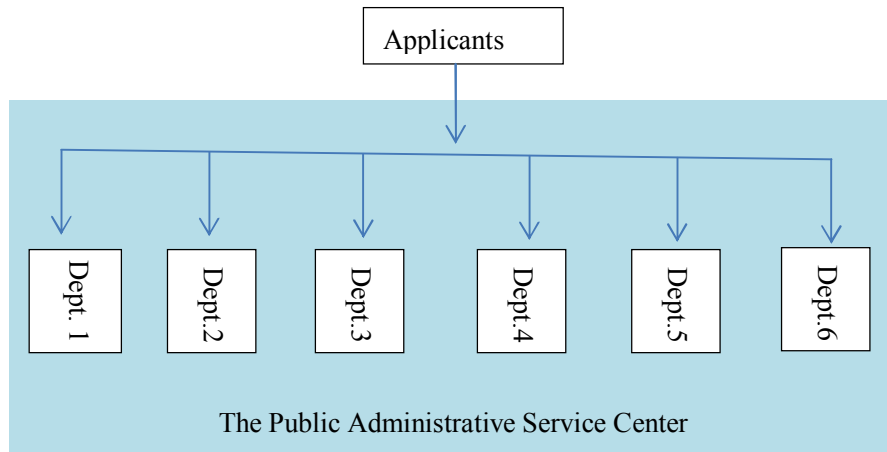


Figure 4.4 Parallel connection

## 4.5 Existing Problems and Obstacles during collaboration in our Chinese case study

As mentioned above, this kind of collaboration is changing working sites, and built a new information sharing platform. But every bureau is under the supervisor of high-level bureaus. Although these bureaus at the municipal level have been integrated, their relations with their leading department in high level (like the Provincial level) is still a big problem for the development of PASC.

Meanwhile, the management reasons caused inefficient of PASC. The parallel connection approval process in this case has not been the most effective. It is mainly because the horizontal integration of window units was far from enough. As to the approval process involving more than one bureau, such as the Bureau of Homeland, Construction, Environment, Development and Reform, etc., the system still could not provide seamless connection, thus the applicant could not completely hand in the materials for one-time during the whole process. The reasons for this situation are mainly laid on: firstly, during the interview, one leader from the Construction Bureau said that, "the approval process was too complicated to combine. The latter department couldn't start to work unless the former department finished its business procedure... They (those materials) might meet the requirements of my departments, but the requirements from different departments are not the same." Secondly, paper-based communication made the approval business fragmented. It was better to be replaced by an internet-based one. Applicants had to hand in paper materials to respective service window. In addition, because of the limited working area and other reasons, some bureaus still hadn't entered PASC, which restrained bigger integration of business progress.

Thirdly, some political and administrative reasons restrict the improve of

cross-departmental collaboration. One of the major job of PASC was to provide window services units with technical and managing support to strengthen the horizontal management. The horizontal integration of window services units and the information sharing. PASC specially developed a platform for promoting the integration of window services units, trying to break the wall between departments to combine the progress. However, the system could still be improved. It was showed in two aspects. Firstly, the horizontal managing platform should be combined with vertical business system. Secondly, information should be shared among departments. Each window services unit relied much on others' information, but the horizontal information exchange between bureaus has not been realized.

It was quite difficult to integrate the vertical department horizontally because of the influence of the administrative managing system of the superior government, and this is also a result of the management mechanism of the central government. One leader from the Office of Housing Management gave me an example that,

"For instance, some department mentioned that the Office of Housing Management is led by the construction bureau in city Xintai, so they could communicate with them well. But since there were conflicts between the Minister of Construction and the Minister of Homeland and Security Bureau at the central level, it was rather difficult to work (collaboration with the Homeland and Security Bureau) at the grass-root level. "

But he also mentioned one solution from other cities for this situation. For example, in cities like Shanghai and Wuhan, the Housing management Bureau and the Bureau of Land and Resources belong to the same department, therefore, the housing estate permission and the land using permission is integrated. In this case, the housing management and the land management could be integrated better, thus they could get better collaboration or even coordination once they form a one-stop center like PASC. Therefore, one leader mentioned that, functional integration, such as big department reform, would be an effective way for improving the platform integration and improve the possible integration.

Last but not least, members are interdependent. In a network structure, members are not just interconnected, they are interdependent, which means that members begin to see himself or herself as one piece of a larger picture. Therefore, when they come together, they do not necessarily see themselves as a whole (Keast, Mandell, Brown, & Woolcock, 2004). During the interview, one leader mentioned that, "we cannot trust the other organizations. Also, we worry about our data security. If we share our data with other department, how to control data misuse? how can we control misuse of data?"

## 4.6 Summary

After six rounds of administrative reform, the "Tiao/kuai relations" is still an great challenge to government cross-agency collaboration. In this chapter, I mainly

relying on Veliyath & Srinivasan's (1995) framework and examine those external environmental factors, organizational internal strategic orientations/competencies and its collaborative strategies. Most of those factors in Veliyath & Srinivasan's framework also exist in China's context and there is one new but probably the most determinant factor, namely administrative reform at the country level was found. Moreover, strategies selecting is very significant in the process of cross-departmental collaboration to integrate those factors together and improve organizational effectiveness.

# 5 Summarizing Conclusions and Implication for Governance

Generally speaking, cross-departmental collaboration has proved to be an efficient way of dealing with the existing complex or even "wicked" problems and improve governmental service efficiency by bringing about systemic change or structure modified both in China and in the West.

## 5.1 Discussion about collaboration in China

As mentioned in Chapter one that the purpose of this research is to figure out those internal and external factors that influence cross-departmental collaboration and how these factors influence collaboration and then influence public service delivery. From the Xintai case study, I find that all those external factors mentioned in Veliyath & Srinivasan's framework, i.e. functional integration, resources dependency, wicked issues, avoiding uncertainty, developing of new ICTs, has also been found in China's case, and a new factor is found, named the administrative reform factor which may be the determinant one. Also, the internal factors like strategic resources Strategic resource allocations, the organizational arrangements are also important in China's collaborative programmes. By taking the suitable strategies, government agencies could facilitate their collaboration effectively.

Actually, the main characteristics of collaboration in China could be summarized as "vertical (line) integration stronger than horizontal (piece) integration". In other words, generally speaking, integration was vertically strong while horizontally weak. "Vertically strong" means the extent of integration of window services unit and its superior department is really high, while "horizontally weak" refers to the integration between each window services unit and the integration between their home bureaus.

Vertical integration stands for the logic of specialization division, and horizontal integration stands for the logic of seamless management. The former emphasizes the top-down authority, while the latter means parallel synergy and information sharing. It was shown in PASC's case that the vertical integration exists in the window service units and their home bureaus, which restricts the seamless cooperation between each window service unit to some extent. However, in general,

the vertical information flow is better than the horizontal one between each window services unit. The seamless integration of horizontal management was still not realized.

Despite PASC's strategy in Xintai, the standardization has achieved some effects, and some bureaus have begun to work together and collaborate more during their daily work, but they still lack of coordination. The vertical management style in China's administrative system could not be changed or even be integrated at the county level easily. The integration of different departments needs different integration process.

In conclusion, the horizontal information sharing and integration was far behind the vertical information communication. With the application of information technology in government operation process, it would be possible that the horizontal information sharing and integration would become more and more frequent and easier. Some department leaders have pointed out that the next reforming goal was to achieve united approval process after they fulfill greater integration. Application would be automatically transferred from one department to another, turning "one-stop services" to "seamless one-window services".

"Political reform" is a big problem factor in cross-sectoral collaboration. Political reforms at the central level promote the administrative reform in local governments. However, sometimes political reasons also could be an obstacle because it is quite difficult to integrate the vertical department horizontally because of the influence of the administrative managing system of the superior government. In other words, because of the "Tiao/Kuai Relations", it is hard to coordinate centralized departments and other departments.

Also, in order to improve the efficiency of public service delivery, cross-departmental collaborations alone are not enough. In some area, maybe the specific service integration should focus on more effective methods, rather than simply deliver services separately in traditional ways.

## 5.2 A possible modification of Velitath and Srinivasan's/ Western framework

Veliyath & Srinivasan's (1995) conceptual framework was an explanatory framework which was based on the Western world and needed to be revised when it was used to China's context. In this part, I will try to revise Veliyath & Srinivasan (1995) explanatory framework after the analysis of the China's case.

According to the analysis above, in the Chinese context, those environmental factors, like functional integration, resources dependency, wicked issues, avoiding uncertainty and developing of ICTs, which are mentioned by Veliyath & Srinivasan's framework, have been proved to be much important, while institutional reform at the county level is a new factor too. For the organizational



internal factors, the first two organizational factors in Veliyath & Srinivasan (1995)'s framework - i.e. strategic resources allocations and organizational arrangements- could be found while new factors emerged as well. Moreover, this study has shown that the same factors have different weight and significance for collaboration in China. First of all, leadership has been proved to be one of the most important factor. In China's political and organizational culture, official rank is considered to be the sole criterion of one's worth. Leadership can bring about resources, authorities, and willingness of collaboration of different departments. It can be seen as a political support to maintain the collaboration culture and work efforts. Meanwhile, leaders' support can ensure sufficient funding for collaboration initiatives. Second, organizational arrangements are also very important. During the first stage of collaboration, there must be a leading department and a heading office for the collaboration units which is taking charge of the whole formation of collaboration structure. Third, there is another important character in the China's case, namely, relationship (*guanxi*). *Guanxi*, in other worlds, human networks, is a complex factor embedded in China's culture. When the leaders between those collaboration departments have better relationship, collaboration becomes much easier. There is informal communications during the whole collaboration process, which sometimes are even more important in building trust and finally facilitate the whole projects.

Technical factors can be the fundamental factor in this case. With the development of new ICTs, the public can get lots of information, which push the government to be as open as possible. Government is still not the owner of information at all, but to get better use of the existing information and release it as much as they can. To provide responsive service, government departments have to work together with sharing and integrating information.

From the previous case study, I have mentioned some new factors that have not embedded into Veliyath & Srinivasan's framework, like administrative reform at the country level, leadership, *guanxi*, and the coordination system. Some of those factors have already mentioned by other scholars like leadership while the other three are especially important in China. So I think one possible modification of Veliyath and Srinivasan's framework is to add political factors to external profile, and add leadership to its organizational /internal strategic orientations. Also, Veliyath & Srinivasan's framework is used to get an overview of the collaboration, so it is hard to explain the collaboration process with it because in different collaboration stage, the influencing factors might be distinguished.

## 5.3 Future Studies

Finally, there are a series of issues on collaboration. This paper only focuses on the factors facilitating and limiting is just focus on the drives and obstacles of collaboration. Therefore, for future studies, there are some possible research questions which are also meaningful for collaboration. As a result of collaboration,

boundaries between departments are weakened, therefore, future studies should focus more on how to fulfill accountabilities. Also, those factors mentioned in this paper may have different weights in the whole collaboration process, so figure out their role in collaboration might brings more successful collaboration initiatives.

In addition, this paper is based on Xintai's case, a town level government in East China, the result I found in this thesis cannot be easily applied to other areas of China. Therefore, in the future, we should do more case studies from other level of government as well as other areas of China, and summarize the characteristics of collaboration in China.

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