

Online Appendix A: Topic Model

	Topic Label	Category	Most frequent words, Chinese	Most frequent words, English	Representative Cases Primarily Third-Party Cases?
1	Re-education through labor	Fines/punishment	劳动, 教养, 决定, 公安, 决定书, 笔录, 劳教	labor, re-educate, decision, public security, decision letter, record, re-education through Labor	No
2	Petitioning rejections	Procedure	处理, 信访, 事项, 意见, 问题, 反映, 投诉	deal with, letters and visits, matter, opinion, problem, make known, complaint	No
3	Rural building disputes (宅基地)	Land	宅基地, 建房, 宅基, 使用权, 使用, 居住, 村民	rural buildings land, constructing houses, rural buildings, right to use, use, reside, villager	No
4	Rural land-use permitting	Land	土地, 使用证, 集体, 颁发, 用地, 建设, 使用	land, use permit, collective, issue, land used, construction, use	Yes
5	Administrative penalties	Fines/punishment	处罚, 决定书, 听证, 告知, 罚款, 责令, 笔录	penalty, decision letter, hearing, inform, fines, order, record	No
6	Workplace injury awards in context of corporate acquisition	Benefits, Labor and Compensation	鉴定, 材料, 结论, 内容, 主要, 其局, 成立	appraisal, materials, conclusion, content, mainly, the bureau, establish	Yes
7	Land contracts	Land	承包, 经营权, 土地, 合同, 第三人, 证书, 签订	contract (verb), right to operate, land, contract (noun), third person, certification, sign	No
8	Government land takings	Land	批复, 公告, 征地, 征收, 方案, 批准, 年度	official reply, open notice, land taking, expropriate, plan, approval, annual	No
9	Food safety	Benefits, Labor and Compensation	食品, 生产, 举报, 处罚, 安全, 产品, 销售	food, produce, report, penalty, safety, product, sell	Yes
10	Urban planning permits	Land	项目, 建设, 规划, 用地, 第三人, 许可, 日照	project, construction, planning, land used, third person, permit, sunlight	Yes
11	Withdrawals (individuals)	Procedure	撤回, 准许, 撤诉, 收取, 减半, 自愿, 应予	withdraw, approve, withdrawal of lawsuit, charge (fees), cut into half, voluntary, should	No
12	General word topic	General	是否, 存在, 问	whether, exist, question,	No

			题, 答辩人, 权利, 因此, 可以	respondent, right, therefore, may	
13	General word topic	General	第三人, 清楚, 辩称, 告诉, 及其, 代理, 正确	third person, clear, defense, inform, and its, agent, correct	Yes
14	Timing of workplace deaths	Benefits, Labor and Compensation	工作, 死亡, 时间, 疾病, 岗位, 抢救, 突发	work, death, time, illness, working position, rescue, emergency	Yes
15	PSB fines	Fines/punishment	处罚, 治安, 公安, 殴打, 管理, 决定书, 拘留	penalty, public order, public security, management, decision letter, detain	No
16	Re-settlement compensation	Benefits, Labor and Compensation; Land	移民, 补偿, 实物, 小浪底, 安置, 黄河, 市移民局	relocatee, compensation, object, Xiaolangdi, resettle, Yellow River, city relocatee bureau	No
17	Remands for new trial – general	Procedure	上诉人, 被上诉人, 原审, 二审, 原判, 终审, 正确	appellant, appellee, original trial, second instance, original decision, final trial, correct	No
18	Remands for new trial -- land cases	Procedure; land	一审, 二审, 正确, 原判, 答辩, 提交, 错误	first instance, second instance, correct, original decision, defense, submit, wrong	No
19	Land and housing permits (employee claims)	Land	市政府, 街道, 办事处, 门面房, 东街, 居委会, 西关	city government, street, office, store-front apartment, east street, neighborhood committee, west gate	Yes
20	General word topic	General	文件, 通知, 管理, 部门, 工作, 实施, 有关	document, notice, management, department, work, enforce, related	No
21	Land/ housing disputes -historical policies	Land	国家, 政策, 落实, 遗留, 当地, 按照, 历史	state, policy, implement, remaining, that place, according, history	No
22	Land-use permits (3rd parties)	Land	出具, 复印件, 编号, 原件, 情况, 说明, 作为	issued, copy, number, original copy, situation, explanation, as	Yes
23	Land cultivation subsidies	Land	退耕, 补助, 粮食, 资金, 补贴, 兑现, 土地	returning arable land, assistance, crop, fund, subsidy, fulfill, land	No
24	Housing permit measurements	Land	面积, 平方米, 建筑, 市场, 测绘, 部分, 显示	area, square meters, construction, market, survey, part, show	Yes
25	Forestry-use permits	Land	林权证, 林地, 林权, 泌阳县人民政府, 颁发, 林木, 村民	forestry right certificate, forest, forestry right, People's Government of Biyang County, issue, lumber, villager	Yes

26	General word topic	General	决定, 决定书, 处理, 重新, 错误, 第号, 正确	decision, decision letter, deal with, again, wrong, number, correct	No
27	Housing permits and registration (3rd party)	Land	房屋, 登记, 所有权证, 房产, 颁发, 房产证, 办理	house, register, ownership permit, real property, issue, housing permit, process	Yes
28	Petitioning detention	Fines/punishment	xx, 处罚, 秩序, 上访, 治安, 拘留, 公安	XX (redacted name), penalty, order, petition, social order, detain, police	No
29	Environmental impact	Land	中原, 中国, 银行, 重复, 农业, 濮阳市人民政府, 意见	Zhongyuan (central plains), China, bank, repeated, Agricultural, People's Government of Puyang City, opinion	Yes
30	Pensions	Benefits, Labor and Compensation	退休, 养老, 职工, 企业, 养老金, 事业单位, 保险	retire, elder care, employee, enterprise, pension fund, public institutions, insurance	Yes
31	Collective land ownership	Land	土地, 征用, 使用, 所有权, 占用, 所有, 争议	land, expropriate, use, ownership right, occupy and use, own, dispute	Yes
32	Police fines and detention	Fines/punishment	笔录, 证言, 证人, 调查, 询问, 异议, 证实	record, testimony, witness, investigate, inquire, objection, prove	No
33	Standing (evidence of harm)	Procedure	主体, 资格, 关系, 利害, 具有, 权益, 侵犯	subject, qualification, relationship, interest, have, rights and interests, violate	No
34	Land grants	Land	土地, 使用权, 国有, 出让, 用地, 收回, 批复	land, use right, state-owned, grant, land used, take back, official reply	Yes
35	Withdrawals by individuals: unpaid fees	Procedure	履行, 职责, 不作为, 处理, 办理, 判令, 查处	fulfill, duty, inaction, deal with, process, decide, investigate	No
36	Demolition and rezoning	Land	拆迁, 建设, 许可证, 项目, 规划, 用地, 改造	demolition and relocation, construction, permit, project, planning, land used, alter	Yes
37	Parking and traffic violations	Fines/punishment	交通, 处罚, 道路, 机动车, 公安, 安全, 交通警察	transportation, penalty, road, motor vehicles, public security, safety traffic police	No
38	Workplace injury	Benefits, Labor and Compensation	工伤, 社会, 保障局, 人力, 资源, 保险, 劳动	work injury, society, welfare bureau, human, resources, insurance, labor	No
39	Illegal demolition	Land	拆除, 改造, 拆迁, 房屋, 实施,	demolish, alter, demolish and relocate, house, implement,	No

			强制, 协议	forcible, agreement	
40	Taxi and transport permits	Permits and Registration (non-land)	经营, 出租汽车, 车辆, 出租车, 运营, 回复, 汤阴县人民政府	manage, taxi, car, cab, operate, reply, People's Government of Tangyin County	No
41	Illegal construction (failure to act)	Land	施工, 工程, 建设, 项目, 停止, 备案, 工地	construct, project, construction, program, cease, record a case, construction site	Yes
42	Land takings compensation	Land; Benefits, Labor and Compensation	拆迁, 房屋, 补偿, 安置, 裁决, 评估, 拆迁人	demolition and relocation, house, compensation, resettle, adjudication, appraise, demolishing party	No
43	Labor payments and benefits	Benefits, Labor and Compensation	劳动, 保障, 工资, 监察, 处理, 支付, 投诉	labor, protection, wages, supervise, deal with, pay, complain	Yes
44	SAIC business/share registration	Permits and Registration (non-land)	变更, 登记, 代表, 股东, 转让, 股权, 材料	change, registration, representative, shareholder, transfer, share rights, document	Yes
45	Mining licenses	Land	资源, 国土局, 国土, 许可证, 采矿, 矿产, 勘查	resources, land bureau, land, license, mining, mineral, exploration	Yes
46	Land takings plan and process	Land	征收, 房屋, 补偿, 决定, 改造, 项目, 方案	expropriate, house, compensation, decision, alteration, project, plan	No
47	Construction permits 3rd party (air & sunlight)	Land	规划, 建设, 许可证, 工程, 建筑, 用地, 颁发	planning, construction, permit, project, building, land used, issue	Yes
48	Divorce/marriage registration	Benefits, Labor and Compensation	登记, 办理, 离婚, 结婚, 婚姻, 结婚证, 去世	registration, process, divorce, marry, marriage, marriage certificate, die	Yes
49	Police inaction	Land	刑事, 公安, 机关, 公安局, 报警, 民警, 调查	criminal, public security, government organ, public security department, report to police, police officer, investigate	No
50	Birth planning	Fines/punishment	征收, 人口, 社会, 决定书, 生育, 抚养费, 计划生育	levy, population, society, decision letter, birth, upbringing fee, case wit	No
51	Open Government Information	Land; procedure	资金, 联合, 新城, 开发商, 存在, 凭证, 第二	fund, united, new city, developer, exist, certificate, second	No
52	Jurisdiction and case transfers	Procedure	管辖, 指定, 移交, 属于, 报请,	jurisdiction, appoint, transfer, belong, submit,	No

			所在地, 第一审	location, first trial	
53	Statute of limitations	Procedure	期限, 超过, 或者, 知道, 其他, 公民, 问题	time, passed, or, know, other, citizen, problem	Yes
54	Retirement benefits	Benefits, Labor and Compensation	上诉人, 期限, 退休, 被上诉人, 知道, 复议, 第三人	appellant, term, retire, appellee, know, reconsideration, third person	Yes
55	DOB Changes	Benefits, Labor and Compensation	办理, 时间, 审批, 档案, 印章, 加盖, 手续	process, time, review and approve, file, stamp, seal, procedure	Yes
56	Land-use rights (transfer from collective to state owned)	Land	土地, 集体, 村民, 登记, 使用证, 国有, 注销	land, collective, villager, register, permit, State-owned, cancel	Yes
57	Compensation from state	Benefits, Labor and Compensation	赔偿, 损失, 造成, 经济, 国家, 确认, 责任	compensate, damage, cause, economy, State, confirm, liability	No
58	Appeals rejections, land rights	Procedure; Land	提交, 副本, 递交, 质证, 异议, 无异议, 通知书	submit, copy, deliver, dispute evidence, objection, no objection, notification letter	No
59	Rural land (surveying)	Land	南北, 宅基, 东西, 使用, 出路, 房屋, 双方	south and north, rural buildings, east and west, use, exit, house, both parties	Yes
60	Retirement and other workplace benefits	Benefits, Labor and Compensation	职工, 待遇, 保险, 支付, 医疗, 破产, 缴纳	worker, treatment, insurance, payment, medical, bankrupt, pay	Yes
61	Withdrawals (commercial)	Procedure	审查, 过程, 违反, 承担, 诉讼费, 表示, 为由	review, process, violate, undertake, litigation fee, show, for the reason	No
62	Workplace injury (employer challenges)	Benefits, Labor and Compensation	工伤, 工作, 伤害, 决定书, 受伤, 认字, 关系	work injury, work, hurt, decision letter, get injured, literate, relationship	Yes
63	Land-use rights (ownership and use)	Land	争议, 处理, 土地, 确权, 使用权, 土地权属, 使用	dispute, deal with, land, confirm rights, right to use, land rights ownership, use	Yes
64	Land-registration (3rd party)	Land	土地, 国有, 登记, 使用证, 颁发, 使用权, 使用	land, State-owned, register, use permit, issue, right to use, use	Yes
65	Home registration for bankrupt property	Land	抵押, 登记, 办理, 执行, 合同, 协助, 房地产	pledge, register, process, enforce, contract, assist, real estate	Yes
66	Construction permits	Land	建设, 规划, 土地, 许可证, 工	construct, planning, land, license, project,	No

			程, 驻马店市人民政府, 张运生	People's Government of Zhumadian City, Zhang Yunsheng	
67	Applications for re-trials	Procedure	裁定, 再审, 执行, 原审, 申请人, 申诉, 问题	decide, retry, enforce, original trial, petitioner, petition, question	No
68	Pensions/Gvt subsidies	Benefits, Labor and Compensation	领取, 发放, 补贴, 单位, 享受, 金额, 财政	receive, grant, subsidy, work unit, enjoy, amount, fiscal	No
69	Administrative reconsideration (scope and procedures)	Procedure	复议, 决定书, 申请人, 机关, 第二, 郑州市人民政府, 条例	reconsideration, decision letter, petitioner, government body, second, People's Government of Zhengzhou City, clause	No
70	Business registration	Permits and Registration (non-land)	公司, 企业, 营业执照, 登记, 经营, 工商, 注销	company, enterprise, operating license, register, operate, industry and commerce, cancel	Yes
71	Illegal land occupation	Land	土地, 集体, 用地, 涉案, 建设, 村民, 耕地	land, collective, land used, case-related, construct, villager, arable land	No
72	Land/housing contracts	Land	协议, 签订, 合同, 转让, 协议书, 约定, 双方	agreement, sign, contract, transfer, agreement letter, agree, both parties	Yes
73	Termination of repetitive land use rights cases	Land	民事, 判决书, 生效, 确认, 民初, 无效, 裁定书	civil, judgment, effective, validate, civil first instance, invalid, decision	Yes
74	Government seizures	Fines/punishment	扣押, 强制, 车辆, 物品, 措施, 运输, 人员	detention, forcibly, car, goods, measures, transport, personnel	No
75	Takings and relocation compensation	Land	补偿, 安置, 征地, 补偿费, 标准, 工程, 补助费	compensate, resettle, expropriate, compensation, standard, project, subsidy	No
76	Traffic fines and workplace injury (mixed)	Fines/punishment; Benefits, Labor and Compensation	交通事故, 事故, 发生, 责任, 下班, 认定书, 驾驶	traffic accident, accident, take place, liability, after work, investigation report, drive	No
77	Land-use rights (agricultural uses)	Land	村民, 城关, 镇政府, 树木, 村委会, 责任田, 延津	villager, area outside city, township government, trees, village committee, contracted farmland, Yanjin	Yes
78	Forestry rights	Land	第三人, 林木, 承包, 林权证,	third person, lumber, contract, forestry right permit, guard Li, issue,	No

			李保卫, 颁发, 民事	civil	
79	OGI and written requests to government	Procedure; Land	收到, 邮寄, 郑州, 产业, 告知, 签收, 邮件	receive, mailing, Zhengzhou, industry, notify, receipt, mail	No
80	Conversion of collective land	Land	土地, 移民, 批复, 五龙镇人民政府, 林州市人民政府, 补偿, 水库	land, relocatee, official reply, People's Government of Wulong Township, People's Government of Linzhou City, compensation, reservoir	Yes
81	Open Government Information (land)	Land; procedure	信息, 答复, 政府, 回复, 告知, 条例, 内容	information, answer, government, reply, notify, regulation, content	No
82	Fees and fines (land)	Land; fines/punishment	同意, 费用, 同年, 票据, 收据, 交纳, 退还	consent, fee, same year, ticket, receipt, pay, return	No

Online Appendix B

In this Appendix, we show that the proportion of total cases online are not significantly related to either the GDP per capita of the locality or the population of the locality. This finding does not support the resource hypothesis that localities with more money or people would be better equipped to put cases online. Because intermediate and basic courts have significantly different rates of transparency, we divide the analysis into two sections – first to see if there GDP per capita and population is related to transparency in intermediate courts (Table 3), and then in basic courts (Table 4).

Table 3: Relationship between GDP per capita (in thousands), population (in ten thousands), and transparency in Intermediate Courts

	<i>Dependent variable: Proportion of Cases Online</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Population (ten thousands)	0.0001 (0.0003)		0.0003 (0.0003)
GDP per capita (thousands)		- 0.004 (0.002)	- 0.005 (0.002)
Constant	0.565*** (0.053)	0.751*** (0.104).	0.742*** (0.106)
Observations	18	18	18
R ²	0.004	0.160	0.195
Adjusted R ²	- 0.059	0.108	0.088
Residual Std. Error	0.132 (df = 16)	0.122 (df = 16)	0.123 (df = 15)
F Statistic	0.057 (df = 1; 16)	3.056 (df = 1; 16)	1.820 (df = 2; 15)

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01

Table 4: Relationship between GDP per capita (in thousands), population (in ten thousands), and transparency in Basic Courts

	<i>Dependent variable: Proportion of Cases Online</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Population (ten thousands)	0.0005 (0.0003)		0.0004 (0.0003)
GDP per capita (thousands)		- 0.001 (0.0004)	-0.0004 (0.0004)
Constant	0.367*** (0.020)	0.421*** (0.019)	0.390*** (0.031)
Observations	159	159	159
R ²	0.017	0.013	0.022
Adjusted R ²	0.010	0.007	0.010
Residual Std. Error	0.110 (df = 157)	0.110 (df = 157)	0.110 (df = 156)
F Statistic	2.640 (df = 1; 157)	2.053 (df = 1; 157)	1.786 (df = 2; 156)

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01

Online Appendix C: Coding Rules for Definition of a Third-Party Dispute

In this appendix, we detail a three-part test that coders used to determine whether each of five hundred randomly sampled cases reflect a dispute between two (or more) private parties, as opposed to between a private party and the government.

Definition - a three-part test: A third-party dispute means (i) a dispute between plaintiff and a third party, (ii) where the challenged government action is not the original source of the plaintiff's grievance or complaint, AND (iii) plaintiff brings the action against the government (contemporaneously or as an alternative) to resolve the dispute with the third party.

Break down of the elements:

(i) Dispute: our definition of dispute is broad. Examples that begin as private disputes but are often transformed into administrative litigation include land disputes between neighbors, and house or marriage registrations. Other disputes can also fit into this broad category, including medical malpractice, traffic accident liabilities, public interest litigation against counterfeits, and corporate matters.

(ii) Government action not being the source of the plaintiff's grievance or complaint. We distinguish two scenarios. The first scenario is that plaintiff had a bitter relationship with a third party (for example, due to disputed land ownership) regardless of the challenged government action, and he/she challenged the government action that gave the third-party entitlements (e.g. land use permit, house registration). We view such cases as third-party disputes because the plaintiff is using administrative litigation strategically to resolve a dispute that is originally civil and private in nature. The second scenario arises where a government action with wide scope (for example, a demolition or government taking) takes rights from the plaintiff, and there happens to be a third party benefiting from the government action. We do not classify such cases as third-party cases because the third-party beneficiary's involvement in this case could be incidental, and the plaintiff's real complaint is against the government action. Two questions can be asked to help decide a close case: Did plaintiff and third party know each other and interact with each other prior to the dispute? Is plaintiff's real complaint with the government or the third party? When the "facts" section does not have enough information to let us decide which scenario it is, we code it as "unclear."

(iii) The plaintiff brings the administrative lawsuit in order to resolve the private dispute. We use this part of the test to filter out cases involving third parties that might not otherwise be excluded by the first two parts of our test. For example, challenges to police administrative penalties are not third-party cases, even in cases in which the penalty follows a fight between plaintiff and a third party. This is because challenging the penalty does not help resolve the dispute with the third party.

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