

Seeing Like a State and a Timely Read on Government Capital in Chinese VC

Recommended Reading from Tech Founders

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A small but strong set today: Sarah Guo resurfaced James C. Scott’s *Seeing Like a State* for its legibility-versus-mētis frame, and Bill Gurley pointed readers to a detailed article on the expanding role of government funds in Chinese venture capital. Together they pair a durable conceptual lens with a timely market-structure read.

Most compelling recommendation

Seeing Like a State — James C. Scott

Sarah Guo’s recommendation stands out because it came with a specific lens for reading it. She shared a free PDF after noting Scott had passed, and the surrounding thread centered on legibility and *mētis* as the key ideas to extract from the book [1, 2].

- **Content type:** Book [1]
- **Author/creator:** James C. Scott [1]
- **Link/URL:** files.libcom.org/files/Seeing%20Like%20a%20State%20-%20James%20C.%20Scott.pdf [1]
- **Who recommended it:** Sarah Guo [1]
- **Key takeaway:** The thread frames the book around a core tension: legibility as a central problem in statecraft, with *mētis* as the counterweight of local expertise [2]
- **Why it matters:** Guo’s post explicitly suggests the framework still travels well to present-day debates, calling it “interesting in 2026 too” [2]

“legibility is a central problem in statecraft... mētis is the counter concept, the value of local expertise” [2]

Another useful pick

A Look at the Government's Increasing Role — Crossing River

Bill Gurley shared this as a timely read on government funds in Chinese venture capital, emphasizing that the picture is more detailed and complex than many readers may realize [3].

- **Content type:** Article / Substack post [4]
- **Author/creator:** Crossing River [4]
- **Link/URL:** crossingriver.substack.com/p/a-look-at-the-governments-increasing [4]
- **Who recommended it:** Bill Gurley [3]
- **Key takeaway:** Gurley highlighted it as a deep look at how government funds operate in China, including municipal funds, while the linked post says those funds have become a huge part of VC dollars deployed into startups [3, 4]
- **Why it matters:** He framed it as especially relevant while people discuss whether the US government should invest in or own stakes in large LLM companies [3]

Why these are worth saving

This was a small but high-signal set. Guo pointed readers to a durable framework about legibility and local knowledge, while Gurley pointed readers to a current analysis of how government capital shapes startup funding in China [2, 4, 3].

Sources

1. X post by @saranormous
2. X post by @saranormous
3. X post by @bgurley
4. X post by @CTR_China