

7-17-2012

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Recommended Citation

Jiang, Yuzhou (2012) "The Shift from State Partnerships to Technological Solutions: Comparing Two Generations of Chinese NGOs," *Colgate Academic Review*: Vol. 6, Article 13.

Available at: <http://commons.colgate.edu/car/vol6/iss1/13>

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The Shift from State Partnerships to Technological Solutions: Comparing Two Generations of Chinese NGOs

By Yuzhou Jiang, Class of 2012

Prior to the 1980s, the nongovernmental sector (Salamon and Anheier 1997) essentially did not exist in the People's Republic of China. Even as late as 1996, scholars reported that China had almost no NGOs working in the areas of social welfare, development, or environmental protection (Howell 1996). However, in the last two decades, the PRC has witnessed an explosion of NGOs. Although there are no reliable numbers available, it is probable that tens of thousands of Chinese NGOs now exist, with poverty alleviation, educational equality, the environment, and healthcare as the most popular areas of focus (Ma 2006; Spires 2007). Despite the relatively brief history of Chinese NGOs, recently there have been signs of the beginnings of an institutional transformation in the sector. The first generation of Chinese NGOs (started in the 1980s, 1990s, in the early part of the century) were mostly found and led by people who are middle-aged or older and who had previously worked in the Chinese party-state bureaucracy and had little to no experience of NGOs. In contrast, in the last several years, more and more NGOs have been founded by very young people (in their teens and twenties) from China's newly enriched middle-class, including recent graduates, college students, and even high school students. Although this new trend

predates May, 2008, the devastating earthquake in Sichuan province led to a precipitous increase in second-generation NGO activity.

This article uses an organizational approach to compare and contrast first- and second-generation Chinese NGOs. According to resource dependency and institutionalist theories, organizations need to secure an adequate flow of resources (Friedland and Alford 1991; Hsu 2006) and to establish legitimacy in order to survive. Their strategies for achieving these goals will be shaped by the institutional experiences of the social actors involved (Clemens 1997; DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Kogut and Zander 1992). When we examine the first generation of Chinese NGOs, we find that their strategies let them to create entangling alliances with party-state agencies and actors. However, the new second-generation NGO founders and members had much less institutional experience with the state and instead turned to strategies based on new Internet-based technologies, including social networking, blogs, and Skype. As a result, some of these new organizations are significantly disconnected from physical place, joining people from many cities and nations in a virtual location.

This article draws upon participant-observation and interview research conducted from 2004-2009 at 26 NGOs working in China. (A complete list of organizations and characteristics is available in the Appendix.) Please note that the definition of a "Chinese NGO" is debatable. All of the organizations in our sample conduct their work in the People's Republic of China, but four of them are Chinese branches of established Western NGOs (WWF, Roots&Shoots, Aide et Action, and AIESEC). One organization, Hua-Dan, was established by a Caucasian woman, a British citizen who grew up in Hong Kong. A number of the second-generation NGOs are led and staffed by Chinese (and even non-Chinese) students studying abroad. In this paper, we will focus on five organizations. Three of these we categorize as first-generation NGOs; CYDF/Project Hope improves educational access in impoverished rural areas, Golden Key serves blind and visually impaired peasant children, and Global Environmental Institute/GEI develops market savvy environmental solutions. We also examine two second-generation NGOs. The first is called AND¹ and plans to aid women and children in remote rural areas. The second is an organization that is still so new that it does not have an official name yet. Its goal is to create an Internet-based system to match up volunteers with NGOs. Because it is modeling its site on the CommonApp (Education) used to apply for US

¹ AND actually combines two organizations: Alphabetum, an organization for females, and Numeralis, a club for males. It has two presidents, one for each side. In practice, AND appears to function as a single organization.

colleges, we will refer to this latter organization as "NGO CommonApp".

The Rise of Chinese NGOs

The rise in indigenous Chinese NGOs has drawn considerable scholarly attention in part because China has very little tradition of these types of organizations (Hsu 2008). Prior to the 1949 communist revolution, social welfare tended to fall primarily under the purview of kinship-based organizations or state intervention (Smith 1998). In times of natural disasters, analogous to the 2008 earthquake, when normal institutions of social welfare would be overwhelmed, the government was expected to provide aid to affected populations. In these endeavors, local elites were often asked (with very degrees of pressure) to help the state in its welfare efforts (Shue 1998). For example, during famines, wealthy elites would set up gruel kitchens in response to requests from local officials (Smith 1998). Yet with few exceptions charitable efforts to serve non-kin were temporary activities responding to atypical, rather than long-term institutionalized organizations like contemporary NGOs.

There were brief periods when civic organizations flourished (Brook 1997; Rankin 1993; Smith 1987), but non-kin-based autonomous organizations were never a dominant feature of Chinese society before 1949, and they disappeared almost completely from the 1950's until the 1980's. Under Mao Zedong, organizations which had been independent prior to the revolution, including political, social and religious groups, were either absorbed into the government or disbanded. No new

autonomous organizations were permitted to form during this time period.

In lieu of private social groups, the government and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) established organizations that were to serve various segments of society, such as the Women's Federation and the Youth League. Most analysts do not classify these organizations as NGOs, but instead give them the oxymoronic label of "government-organized NGO", or GONGO. Fortunately for Chinese citizens, the Maoist regime saw social welfare services as central to its political legitimacy. In the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, the party-state was highly successful in providing primary education and basic healthcare to an impressively large portion of its citizens, especially given China's poverty at the time (Whyte and Parish 1984).

The market reforms, which began in 1979, undermined the socialist welfare system from several different directions. Decollectivization in the countryside and the rise of private businesses in urban areas meant that a growing portion of the population no longer accessed social welfare benefits through collectives and party-state work units, but instead formed a potential customer base for market-based goods and services. In the 1980s and 90s, China's economy grew enormously, but unevenly, as the eastern and southern coasts boomed but the rest of the country was left behind. These inequities touched off enormous waves of migration as tens of millions of rural residents traveled to the cities. These changes shifted the burden of social welfare from the central government to the local government, local communities,

and individual households (Adams and Hannum 2005; Davis 1989; Tsang 2001). (Ma 2006) The market reforms also made it possible for independent associations and organizations to emerge. Between 1978 and 1989, the government regulations for social organizations were relatively lax (Ma 2006:62). Students and intellectuals took advantage of these circumstances to form numerous associations. This flourishing of associational life contributed to the 1989 student protests centered at Beijing's Tiananmen Square. After the student movement was violently suppressed, the Chinese party-state clamped down on citizen autonomy, implementing a series of new regulations for social organizations like NGOs, placing them under the authority of the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MOCA). The post-Tiananmen backlash drove most nascent NGOs out of existence and drove the remainder underground. Surveying the Chinese NGO scene in the early 1990s, Jude Howell reported the existence of GONGOs, popular membership organizations (calligraphy clubs, literary societies), and illegal dissident groups, but almost nothing in the field of development and social welfare (Howell 1996).

Regulations covering NGOs were confirmed and codified in 1996, and slightly revised in 2004. Currently, all NGOs are required to register with MOCA or one of its local bureaus. Since 1998, in order to register, an NGO must have a "supervisory agency," a government institution or GONGO in the same field as the NGO (Ma 2006). According to government policy, supervisory agents exercise day-to-day

oversight over the NGO. In Chinese NGO slang, they are referred to as “mothers-in-law.” NGOs with more than three Communist Party members are required to establish a party cell (Spires 2007). Compliance with these regulations is highly uneven.

Although the 1989 student protests and the ensuing backlash against social organizations dealt a severe setback to China's nascent NGO sector, the Chinese party-state continued to withdraw from its previously dominant role in social welfare services (and often neglected to step up its efforts in response to changing social conditions). More and more foreign and indigenous NGOs emerged to fill the gap. One decade into the 21st century, NGOs play significant roles in educational reform, poverty alleviation, and environmental protection in the PRC. But even in 2008, none of our rural interviewees were familiar with the term “NGO”, and the concept was not very well known even in cities. All of the NGO beneficiaries we interviewed in rural areas assumed that the organizations were state or party agencies. One employee at CYDF/Project Hope – probably the most famous NGO in China – ruefully admitted that neither her husband nor her close friends really understood what NGOs were. The very term “nongovernmental organization” (fei zhengfu zhuzhi) is awkward in Chinese because it could be easily translated as “anti-governmental organization.”

Yet despite these liabilities, more and more Chinese NGOs are being established. By 2008-9, NGOs had gained significant popularity among

certain segments of the population, especially the urban educated elite. Professors at Beijing's top universities reported that their students often discuss the possibilities of finding jobs in the NGO sector. Even before graduation, students would volunteer at NGOs. In just the first few weeks following the devastating May, 2008 Wenchuan earthquake, officials estimated that nearly 150,000 volunteers poured into the region, most of whom were Chinese citizens (Wang 2008). Some came with established organizations, but most were individuals willing to join or start projects on the fly. The earthquake and its aftermath have inspired many people in China to found their own NGOs.

Organizations and Resource Dependence

According to organizational theories, an organization's primary task will always be to secure a constant supply of necessary resources for the firm to survive (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). These include material/financial resources, but also the support of various social actors: investors/donors, partners, employees, clients, and people who have power at other organizations (including state agencies) which affect the focal organization. Our interviewees at Chinese NGOs spent most of their workdays on resources issues: managing fund-raising campaigns, giving presentations to potential donors, writing grant applications, attracting and deploying volunteers, and dealing with the perennial problem of high staff turnover.

Chinese NGOs face particular challenges in terms of securing

resources. NGOs are a new kind of organization in China, and the newer and more innovative an organization is, the greater the challenge it faces in establishing legitimacy and securing the flow of resources (Galaskiewicz and Bielefeld 1998; Hagar, Galaskiewicz, and Larson 2004; Hannan 1988; Stinchombe 1965). Although both first- and second-generation Chinese NGOs do seek private donations, their leaders complained that extracting these kinds of funds in the PRC is an uphill battle because the Chinese do not have a cultural tradition of donating to charities like Westerners do. Xu Yongguang, the founder of CYDF/Project Hope, quoted 2002 statistics to me – in the US, giving averaged \$460/per person, in China about 12 cents (.92 yuan) per person. Despite China's recent economic boom, it still is a poor country with a per capita income only a fraction of that in industrialized Western nations. Moreover, it lacks the institutionalized supports that exist in societies with a more established tradition of nonprofits and charities. Because China's wealth is so new, there are no wealthy old families motivated by noblesse oblige to support charitable causes. Until recently, indigenous foundations and granting agencies did not exist.

This is not to say that Chinese people lack a tradition of giving generously to those in need. In the pre-modern era, escaping with generally channeled through kinship organizations {Dennerline, 1986 #5}. In both imperial China and under Mao Zedong's socialist regime, the people were sometimes asked to help in times of great need such as natural disasters by donating money,

materials, or labor to the state's endeavors. However, there is very little precedent for donating money to a nonstate organization run by strangers to benefit other strangers, especially if there is no crisis at hand. As new and relatively unusual organizations, Chinese NGOs find it difficult to establish the necessary legitimacy to prove their trustworthiness to potential donors (Hsu 2008). There is some evidence that this is changing in China. In the first eight days following the May 12, 2008 earthquake, Chinese citizens donated over \$500 million to state and nonstate agencies (Yardley and Barboza 2008). But for most Chinese NGOs in the last three decades, private donations were not a particularly reliable source of adequate funding.

The problems NGOs face in terms of attracting funding also affect their ability to obtain the skills and labor they need in terms of personnel. If Chinese people question whether NGOs are sufficiently trustworthy to deserve their donations, they are even less likely to believe that they are sufficiently trustworthy to be the source of their livelihoods. In very recent years, it has become rather trendy for upper-middle-class young people to volunteer at Chinese NGOs. Yet most of these young people, even those who found at NGOs themselves, admitted to us that they expected their forays into philanthropy to be temporary, and that they would eventually get a "real" job. According to interviewees, there were some people who plan to build their careers in the nonprofit sector, but most of these were hoping to eventually work for a high-profile international NGO and therefore

saw their time at Chinese NGOs as short-term stints for the sake of resume building. As a result, the Chinese NGOs we studied suffered from a chronic problem of high staff turnover.

Another problem facing Chinese NGOs is that their leaders and participants often have little to no experience with running NGOs. Because Chinese NGOs are such a new phenomenon, and because they were so rare until the last decade, very few Chinese people have experience working in an NGO. In fact, very few of our interviewees even had much experience working with NGOs prior to their current position. Many of the founders of first-generation Chinese NGOs start at their organizations before there were any other NGOs around. The founders of second-generation Chinese NGOs are so young that most of them lack work experience anywhere. For many of our interviewees, the only thing they knew about NGOs before they started their own organization was information they heard a conference or learned from a magazine article. Furthermore, because Chinese NGOs are such a recent phenomenon, there were very few role models to follow in founding and running this type of organization.

Given these daunting obstacles, what strategies do Chinese NGO leaders deploy to obtain the resources they need for their organizations to survive? Of course, many NGOs do not survive. But some do, and their strategies become institutional models for future organizations.

First Generation Chinese NGO's: Strategies of State Partnership

Institutional Background: Experience in the State Sector

In constructing their strategies to secure resources, organizational actors will tend to replicate their own institutional experiences and the strategies commonly used by other organizations in their field (Clemens 1997; DiMaggio and Powell 1991). Different organizations facing ostensibly the same circumstances still choose different strategies (Boies and Prechel 2002). People become socialized in the practices of the organizations for which they work. Even after they leave the organization to work for or start up a new firm (such as an NGO), they carry a repertoire of skills, experiences, and expectations from the former organization with them. Also, if the new organization asks its people to move too far outside their repertoires of competency, it is more likely to fail (Haveman 1992). As a result, new organizations will tend to adopt (and adapt) the institutional practices with which their members are familiar.

The first generation of Chinese NGOs were founded between 1985 and the early years of this decade by people currently in their 40's or older. These people generally had a great deal of institutional experience working with and through party-state agencies, but almost no experience working with non-state sources, such as private donors, foreign charities, or foundations. The earliest non-state Chinese NGOs in my sample were founded in 1985 (Golden Key and Amity Foundation), and most

Chinese NGOs are less than a decade old. As a result, almost none of the founders of first generation Chinese NGOs we interviewed had experience working in (or even with) an NGO before starting their own organization. Many of these leaders admitted to me that they did not even know what an NGO was when they founded their organizations.

Instead, their experience was in the state bureaucracy. Most of the founders of the first wave of Chinese NGOs had been former state or Communist Party cadres. After all, from the 1950s to the 1980s, all the mid-and upper-level positions in the Chinese occupational hierarchy involved working in the state bureaucracy, so any person above a certain age with a decent amount of education and ambition would have worked for the party-state. CYDF/Project Hope's Xu Yongguang was a cadre in the Communist Youth League, Golden Key's Peter Xu was an architect in a state enterprise before he lost his vision, and GEI's Jin Jiaman was a scientist in a state research institute. Most of them also came from humble backgrounds, such as peasant families, and experienced upward mobility through education and careers in the state bureaucracy. They could rely on little social or economic capital from their families to help them out. (Peter Xu of Golden Key, whose father was a well-connected professor, is the exception to this trend.)

As people who had worked successfully for the party-state in a socialist, redistributive economy, these founders (and many of their employees) possessed highly developed repertoires of competency in negotiating government

bureaucracy, building alliances with state agencies, and extracting state resources. These skills and techniques came so naturally to them that they often expressed bewilderment or even amusement at the bumbling behavior of foreign organizations. Jin Jiaman described a project where GEI partnered with a local government agency in Yunnan Province to set up an eco-tourism site, only to find that an American-based environmental NGO had already been working on a similar project for two years, but without consulting the government. The obvious result, she pointed out, was that the government ignored all of the Western NGO's work. "If there are two versions of the project," she explained, "the government is always going use its own version." In this case, the state's version was the one it collaborated with GEI to design. If the Western NGO had just collaborated with the government from the beginning, it could have prompted the state to invest in eco-tourism much sooner. But instead, "they used 400,000 [yuan] to do this, and it was a waste."

In contrast, the founders and employees of first generation Chinese NGOs have little institutional experience dealing with foreign funding sources, such as Western foundations and charities. When organizations tapped foreign money, it was usually only through a very narrow range of sources which they learned about through personal connections. For example, the founders of Golden Key are Christians and have built relationships with the expatriate Christian community in Beijing. One expatriate church donates funds and sends volunteers to the NGO,

and has also introduced it to several European charitable foundations that have a mission to serve blind and visually impaired people. All of Golden Key's foreign funding has come through these personal relationships.

The State as the Best Source of Resources

First-generation Chinese NGO leaders, drawing upon their institutional experiences, constructed strategies which depended on alliances with party-state actors and agencies. They then rationalize the strategies by insisting that these were the only rational actions for NGOs to take in the PRC. Although none of the Chinese NGOs I studied relied primarily on state sources for direct funding, all of their leaders insisted that cultivating good relationships with state agencies was the key strategy for securing organizational resources because of the state's capacity to permit or constrain access to even non-state resources. They pointed out that the PRC is a "strong government nation"; despite the retreat of the state and the rise of the market in the post-Mao era, the Chinese state still maintained greater control than most other governments. For example, government regulations put strong constraints on Chinese NGOs in terms of what they were allowed to do to solicit private donations. However, these constraints could be loosened or waived for organizations with strong connections to influential government agencies. CYDF/ Project Hope, the organization that works in rural education, has such a close and entangling relationship with the Chinese Communist Youth League that scholars

debate whether it should be classified as a GONGO or a "real" NGO (Hsu 2008; Ma 2006:101-2; Sun 2000; Frolic 1997:60). Since its inception in 1989, it has been allowed to conduct highly visible -- and highly successful -- fundraising campaigns using state-controlled media.

These first-generation NGO leaders also pointed out that the Chinese state controls NGO access to beneficiaries: to rural schools, disabled children, AIDS patients, environmentally vulnerable localities, and so on. In order to attract donations, grants, employees, and volunteers, NGOs must convince others of the organization's "institutional account": an argument that the organization provides desirable, novel services, using methods which are innovative, reliable, and legitimate (DiMaggio 1988). The state has the power to undercut institutional accounts by preventing NGOs from providing effective services. An interview with Peter Xu, the head of Golden Key, an NGO that helps poor blind and visually impaired children have access to schooling, reveals the role of state agencies as gatekeepers to beneficiaries:

If the government said no, then there would be problems. At the present time, our relationship with the government is generally good. We can do what we want in a province as long as we get permission from the provincial Department of Education. We've been given permission to do whatever we want in Inner Mongolia, and that isn't easy to get! We get the best treatment, although they don't give us one cent.

They've never said no to us, and this is very difficult to achieve in China.

Although they all relied at least partially on non-state funding, first-generation NGO leaders focused on the limitations of these sources. Private donations were welcome, but most Chinese people were not willing to donate. Foreign sources of money, such as Western NGOs and foundations, were appealing to Chinese NGOs because they were perceived to be incredibly wealthy. But most first-generation Chinese NGO leaders complained that they did not know how to gain access to this money. In fact, the head of the Heilongjiang provincial branch of Project Hope asked me to give a workshop to his employees on how to access and apply for Western grants, since no one in his organization had any idea how to do it. Those who did obtain foreign funding expressed their own frustrations. Jin Jiaman, the head of GEI (Global Environmental Institute) complained, "All these international NGOs have their own goals... but the methods and goals are not suitable for the development of Chinese society." Projects which did not fit Western preconceptions were difficult to fund, even if they offered innovative and locally appropriate solutions.

As a result, my Chinese interviewees from first-generation Chinese NGOs were convinced that it was impossible to scale up their impact past a certain point without working through state agencies. When NGOs partner with state agencies, they can gain permission to try out their strategies on a relatively small scale. If enough small scale projects are shown to be successful,

the state agency can then adopt the NGO's methods and implement them on a much larger scale. In essence, this allows the NGO to use state resources to serve their constituents. Jin Jiaman of GEI explained:

If you really want to publicize and promote something and implement it all over China, you have to push the government to formulate and enact new laws, regulations and policies to implement your idea. So from my two year's experience, I feel that what Chinese NGO can do is come up with a new concept or a new idea, and you want to apply that locally. You can first make a demonstration. You do it on a small scale. When you have enough experience and get it to work well, you tell the government, and make the government something to copy and paste. So when at last the government is doing this copying and promotion, their effect is great, especially in China because here the government has tremendous power.

The Role of the State in Social Welfare

Ideologically, our interviewees from first-generation Chinese NGOs rationalized their state alliances by insisting that social welfare should primarily be the responsibility of the state, not the private sector or the NGO sector. Peter Xu of Golden Key stated,

“Our work is to promote the cause of the government ... it's the government's responsibility, not mine to provide nine years of compulsory education [to these children].” At CYDF/Project Hope's Beijing offices, an administrator named Wang also agreed that it was the state which should be providing social welfare to all of China's children: “We are doing now what should be done well by the government.”

According to first-generation NGO leader, the role of NGOs is to help the state to fill its social welfare obligations to its citizens. In the words of Wang, at CYDF's Beijing office:

That's why the Project Hope came into being. It helps to fill in the gaps that the government neglects. So many kids don't get education and we are so in need of schools. Project Hope answers the call. In future, we'll continue to play the role of a helping hand to the government. The government focuses on big issues. We'll help with those things the government can't really do or sometimes neglects.

Even though the founders and employees of Chinese NGOs generally believed that social welfare was primarily the responsibility of the state, they still insisted that the state needed NGO help to fill its responsibilities. Part of the reason was the sheer scope and scale of social problems in China. But a bigger problem was a ponderous and conservative nature of the Chinese state bureaucracy. Both Xu Yongguan (CYDF/Project Hope) and Jin Jiaman

(GEI) explained that they left their party-state positions to start their NGOs because they were convinced that they would never be able implement their innovative ideas within the party-state bureaucracy. Jin had worked for a national research academy in the area of environmental science, but she explained:

... there are various regulations and there are position ranks and levels and all of these will control what you want to do. So actually, if you have some ideas and you want to implement, it is almost impossible. It's very hard, and it's even harder than it is for us now as an NGO to push the government to do something. Because you, you have an idea here and you can do it. But [there] you cannot decide these things at all.

The top-down, hierarchical nature of state bureaucracies not only prevented officials from carrying out innovative ideas, but it also taught them to be risk-averse. Jin Jiaman pointed out that at least 50% of the ideas GEI tried had failed. As the head of an NGO, she found that a completely reasonable rate given her desire to find truly innovative and effective solutions. But such a rate of failure would be completely unacceptable for a state agency.

Indeed, many of the founders of first-generation Chinese NGOs were inspired to start their organizations because they worked in party-state agencies that were supposed to be addressing social problems, but were in

actuality limited in their ability to make a difference. CYDF/Project Hope's Xu Yongguang discovered that poor rural children were dropping out of school because of excessive fees and dilapidated infrastructure when he was a cadre in the Communist Youth League sent on fact-finding missions into impoverished areas. Jin Jiaman was a research scientist in a state institute for environmental problems. Their experience in party-state both made them aware of social issues that inspired their passionate concern, but it also revealed the limitations of working in the party-state. Starting an NGO but savvily deploying their knowledge of (and connections with) party-state agencies and state actors was their way to gain flexibility and autonomy are while still deploying state resources.

Second-Generation Chinese NGOs: Technology, Networking, and Globalization

In the last several years, and especially since the Wenchuan earthquake, there has been a substantial rise in new NGOs in China. Despite the increasing popularity of NGOs in the PRC, these second-generation NGOs face many of the same problems as their predecessors. As organizations, these NGOs still need to secure a flow of resources, including funding, personnel, materials and infrastructure, and clients. As new and unknown organizations in a relatively new and unknown sector, they face the problem of establishing legitimacy, name recognition, and trustworthiness. Despite China's increasing wealth, they still need to deal with a relatively poor populace that is

mostly unfamiliar with the practice of charitable giving. Like the founders of first-generation Chinese NGOs, these new leaders have minimal experience working in the NGO sector.

Despite the similarity of their problems, however, the strategies developed by second-generation NGO leaders are very different than those used by those are the first generation. Unlike first-generation Chinese NGO founders, the second-generation leaders rarely talk about the state as a source of resources. Instead, they see it as a source of interference. Wang Xuan, the former head of YinuanZhonghua (China Shelter), an organization for helping orphans, complained that the government prevented his organization from implementing a project funded by Google Philanthropy.

[Paraphrase] I knew a bunch of people in [an earthquake relief NGO called HopeChina] when earthquake happened. It was established by several doctors, teachers and grassroots volunteers in response to the great earthquake. Initially government didn't support it at all and HopeChina had to survive by itself. But as it grew bigger, government felt its influence and wanted to take it over or simply controlled it. It is true that government could inject significant amount of money and resources for this organization, but the organization became semi-government, semi-grassroots, which really frustrated the

participants. I heard that all the founders of HopeChina left [the organization]. Is that still a non-government organization? I doubt it...

Therefore, even though I can start a grassroots NGO, I'm pretty sure that it will eventually be controlled by the government. None of the Chinese non-governmental organizations can escape this fate. I really felt upset at the stories I learned in Sichuan Province, and under such circumstances, I would rather go back to college and try to become a doctor in the future. I will not get involved in non-profits any more before I graduate. [Paraphrase]

Neither AND nor NGO CommonApp is officially registered in China yet, and in interviews their members complained that the PRC is NGO regulations were overly constricting. Both are toying with the idea of registering in the United States instead.

Instead of utilizing state-based resources, second-generation NGOs build strategies that rely on new Internet-based technologies. Given that they faced the same institutional obstacles as first-generation Chinese NGOs, why do they come up with such different strategies?

Institutional Background: family privilege and school organizations

Second-generation NGO leaders have very different repertoires of institutional experiences to draw upon compared to their first generation counterparts. Many second-generation Chinese NGOs are being founded by very young people in their teens and 20s, ranging from high school students to recent college graduates. Whereas first-generation Chinese NGO leaders tend to come from humble backgrounds and experience mobility in adulthood through careers in the state bureaucracy, second-generation leaders often come from families of privilege. Their parents were the ones who moved out of the peasantry or the urban lower classes and into China's new urban middle class either through starting their own businesses or as white-collar professionals. For example, Chen Wang, the co-President of NGO CommonApp, explained that both of his parents used to be peasants. But, unlike their siblings, they were able to go to college (his father eventually earning a Masters' Degree), and now his father manages a factory while his mother is an accountant at a university. The parents of Xueqing Zhao, an officer at AND, were once peasant farmers, but moved up into the middle class after they started a successful dumpling restaurant. The president of the male side of AND, Albus Yu, has a similar story. When he was a young child, his parents opened up printing factory and became rich.

Because their parents were only allowed to have one child, they never even had to share their families' growing wealth with siblings. As a result, many second-generation NGO founders grew up with a degree of wealth and

opportunity previously unknown in the PRC. Chen Wang of NGO CommonAPP is now a sophomore at UC Berkeley, AND's Xueqing Zhao is a freshman at Mount Holyoke, and Albus Yu is at USC. Because of their youth and their family wealth, most second-generation Chinese NGO leaders have no work experience anywhere. This means that they did not only lack institutional experience with NGOs, but also with state organizations. Whereas first-generation NGO leaders escaped their relative poverty and low status by learning how to extract resources from party-state sources, most second-generation NGO leaders have never had a reason to gain these kinds of skills. Indeed, many of them still have never experienced providing for themselves.

Without work experience, second-generation Chinese NGO leaders gained their leadership skills from running school clubs and student organizations. Such organizations are a relatively new phenomenon in the PRC, where until recently extracurricular activities were limited and schools exerted strong control over student organizations. (In the 1989 Tiananmen Protest, one of the initial reasons why college students marched to Tiananmen Square was to demand the right to organize autonomous student organizations.) A number of second-generation Chinese NGO founders come from China's top high school and colleges, and they are known for their leadership roles as students.

For example, Chen Wang of NGO CommonAPP is a graduate of Guangdong Zhixin High School, one of China's most nationally renowned

secondary schools. At Zhixin, Wang was the President of the Student Union for two years. In his interview, he emphasized the fact that the Zhixin High School Student Union is totally independent from the school administration:

There are 11 departments in the Student Union. We emphasize democratic ideology in internal management. Therefore, even the school administrators have no authority to interfere with the Student Union. Most importantly, we are financially independent from the school administration. We raise funds for the Student Union programs, and we are completely responsible for the financing... I am pretty sure it is one of the most mature, professional student unions in a Chinese high school.

By working through the Student Union's Volunteering Department, Chen learned the importance of helping the needy, as well as gaining vital experience in coordinating projects with several NGOs. He also discovered certain weaknesses in the NGOs; he believed that they were not using Internet technology as effectively as they should. Realizing that this was a problem he could address, he was inspired to start NGO CommonApp. He explained, "I think my experience in the Student Union prepared me for [NGO CommonApp], both intellectually and experientially."

And they could even turn to their parents for funds for their nascent NGOs. Because many of their parents achieved upward mobility through entrepreneurship, a number of them are willing to support the entrepreneurial efforts of their offspring, at least to some degree.

Family Money and Technological Solutions

Given their institutional backgrounds, it is not surprising that second-generation NGO leaders rarely turn to the Chinese party-state for resources. However, their nascent organizations still need to secure those resources. What strategies do they use instead?

First, second-generation Chinese NGOs are much more likely than first-generation Chinese NGOs to draw upon the personal wealth (or, more accurately, the parental wealth) of their founders and staff members. For example, Albus Yu's parents donated 5000 yuan (about \$700) to AND in February, 2009. In addition to direct donations, second-generation Chinese NGO members draw upon family money or connections to obtain or access resources. Staff members are expected to pay their own way in terms of transportation, and to have easy access to the latest computer and cell phone technology and access to high-speed Internet connections. The organizations do not provide equipment to reimburse costs; it is assumed that staff members have access to these resources through their families.

One of AND's programs was to conduct free Study Abroad Information Sessions in July and August, 2009, for

Chinese students interested in going overseas. The Information Session were essentially a marketing ploy; their real goal was to raise money for a project helping rural school children in Yunnan and to spread the word about Chinese NGOs. People were invited to seven different locations across the PRC and one in Taiwan to hear a slate of Chinese students studying at prestigious American universities (Yale, Harvard, UVA, Dartmouth, Smith, UNC, and so on) addressing them virtually over the Internet. All of the speakers volunteered to participate for free, and they used their own computer technology and Internet connections (or facilities available at their universities) at no cost of AND. The project also required AND to have access to sizeable conference rooms in each city that were equipped for Internet videoconferencing. By utilizing family connections, they were able to get access to appropriately-equipped conference rooms in schools, universities and companies for free.

However, the family funds can only get second-generation Chinese NGO so far. What makes it possible for them to operate is that their members utilize the Internet technologies available to them in savvy and innovative ways. Of course first-generation Chinese NGO leaders also utilize technological solutions, and their offices all have computers and their organizations have websites. But the second-generation grew up on the Internet and are highly adept at negotiating the Web 2.0 technologies: social networking sites, blogging, Skype, and so on. They use these technologies to drastically reduce the costs of communication and

transportation, making it possible to access talents and resources worldwide spending very little money. By using Skype and Internet videoconferencing technology, AND was able to bring in high-status speakers from the other side of the world for their Study Abroad Information Session/fundraiser without incurring any costs for airline flights, hotels, restaurants.

These technologies make it possible for these organizations to be disconnected from any specific physical locale. Members can remain involved even when they are scattered all over the world. AND's 35 members in the PRC, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the United States, Britain, Australia and Canada. Similar, NGO CommonApp involves 38 students located at UC Berkeley and multiple Chinese universities. Meetings are held virtually using low cost Internet-based telephone and online chat services, such as Skype, MSN Messenger, and QQ (a Chinese service). In the words of Albus Yu:

Since everyone lives in different areas, our communication is solely based on the Internet. It looks good that we have our own forums; we have weekly meetings on MSN and Skype. We make phone calls. We send emails. We implement programs via long-distance communication.

Second-generation Chinese NGOs also use social networking sites such as Facebook and RenRen (the Chinese site very similar to Facebook) for disseminating information and recruiting members. According to interviewees, one

of the benefits of recruiting through social networking sites is that it was easy to verify information about candidates through their profiles. For example, Ayaka Minamoto used Facebook to post a recruiting ad for Alphabetum (the female club that makes up half of AND). Here are excerpts from the post:

Alphabetum Needs YOU
Girls CAN and WILL change the
WORLD!

Who Are We
Alphabetum is a non-profit organization formed by three girls, Ayaka Minamoto, Coco Rao and Daisy Wang, in 2008. We are here to raise funds, create awareness, and advocate with the United Nations and Chinese government on humanitarian concerns....

If you are:

1. A girl
2. A student (high school and above)
3. Willing to help others and not going to quit at midway
4. Optimistic, initiative, ambitious and proactive
5. Good at working with someone you don't like, and willing to listen to others' suggestions

! PLEASE JOIN US , and SHARE YOUR LOVE!

When Chen Wang of NGO CommonApp encountered local NGOs as a high school student, he felt that they were not taking sufficient advantage of Internet technologies to scale up their organizations. Along with several

friends, he decided the best way to serve Chinese NGOs would be to help them recruit qualified members in a more rationalized manner. As students who had experienced the CommonApp (Education) when applying for schools in the United States, this seems like a reasonable model to use for Chinese NGOs. CommonApp (Education) creates a uniform application form for college students to file in online. This common application includes basic personal information, prior extracurricular experience, academic credential, personal statement and recommendations. However, each university/college can create a supplementary form for particular selective criteria, either supplementary essay or survey questions. In the same way, they envision that NGO Common will have a common application covering basic personal information, prior extracurricular experience, academic credential, personal statement and recommendations as well. Applicants will be expected to give evidence of their academic prowess and leadership skills, state their commitment to philanthropy, and explain sense of social responsibility. Each distinctive NGO can also generate a supplementary application form for better understanding of the applicants.

According to the members of NGO CommonApp, the technology platform of CommonApp (Education) is "static and simple" -- based on easy-to-use Web 2.0 technology. Therefore, even a undergraduate team would be able to replicate this platform within a relatively short amount of time. Every NGO CommonApp user will have a particular ID account and a particular user

homepage. On their page, they will be able to perform a menu of functions, such as reviewing past activity, uploading pictures/videos, and updating status and messages. Their hope is that this system will make it easier and more appealing for Chinese college students to apply for nonprofit opportunities, and for NGOs to select applicants that fit their needs. If successful, they will help Chinese NGOs reduce their need for resources for recruiting and hiring.

Second-generation NGOs not only use technology to replace aspects of the organization, but in some cases to replace the organization altogether. An online group of Chinese backpackers set up the "1kg Project" -- backpackers heading toward impoverished areas would add 1 kg of supplies to give to the local residents, such as books, school supplies, food, or books. The website allows backpackers to find out which communities are seeking what kind of supplies. After visiting the communities and dropping off their 1kg of supplies, the same backpackers can update the communities' needs list on the website. The NGO is managed by volunteers, but in many ways runs itself. No office or employees are needed (Zhang 2007).

The Implications of Changing NGO Strategies in China

It is not yet clear what the implications will be, if any, of the institutional shift in strategies with the rise of second-generation Chinese NGOs. NGOs in China are still a relatively new phenomenon, and most of the ones that are of any significant size at all still follow the first-generational model. Second-generation Chinese NGOs are, by

definition, new and relatively untried. It is unclear whether or not their strategies will prove successful enough for the organizations to survive more than briefly. Even in our sample, we found evidence of the challenges that second-generation Chinese NGOs face. AND planned to conduct a medical relief project at a village in Sichuan in the summer of 2009, sending one doctor and two nurses along with supplies. As Xueqing Zhang explained,

We failed to implement this rural area project because we didn't get any financial resource from the outside. We picked a poor village in Sichuan Province and decided to do this. Our President Ayaka Minamoto also tried to seek financial support from a Boston church. However, that church thought the village we picked was not so poor, so they decided not to support our project financially.

In other words, the only project AND has successfully implemented so far is one which required no funds from outside the group members themselves: the Study Abroad Information Sessions.

Second-generation NGO members also complained about the liabilities of long-distance communication, especially in terms of building a community spirit and maintaining discipline. AND's Albus Yu noted:

We have problems with some coordination, and we do not know how to supervise other teammates. Some members may only be passionate for a short time, but they don't persevere in their work. E-

mail is not powerful enough to really gather everyone together... we thought we would just bring people together who at the same motivation and ambition, and then brainstorm ideas. However, it's just too common to encounter insufficient responsibility and a lack of contribution from people. These last six months have helped us figure out who is really in and who's not. Some group members will soon be fired.

Indeed, some of the most successful new Chinese NGOs exhibit first-generation strategies of state partnership, even though they have second-generation characteristics in terms of their members. For example, Shanghai JUCCE (Joint US-China Cooperation on Clean Energy) was founded in 2007 by a recent MIT graduate, Peggy Liu. It now has a very nice office building, runs many programs, and lists hundreds of partners and special advisers. It is also known for operating as a hub between government agencies and officials, businesses, and NGOs.

On the other hand, second-generation technology-based strategies are not limited to the young. Zhang Junfeng is in his 50's and runs in Beijing North Canal Water keeper. Every Saturday, for the last three years, he hosts full day walk along a river for a couple dozen participants, most of whom apparently find out about the program through word-of-mouth. Ostensibly, the purpose of the walk is to gather data for records about the environment, but

Zhang uses the opportunity to teach people extensive environmental knowledge. At the end of the walk, participants are invited to upload videos, photos, and journal descriptions of the trip onto a public blog online. Zhang has no staff or organization per se, but instead relies on Internet technology and information sharing to protect these specific ecosystems and to increase general environmental awareness.

The institutional field of Chinese NGOs is still emerging and unstable. The institutional models are not yet set. As Chinese NGOs continue to evolve over time, we will be able to see which institutional models eventually become established, and which strategies become the norm.

Appendix: List of Organizations

1. Organization: 1 KG (多背一公斤)

Description: a non-profit organization, founded in 2004, for both traveling and aid-education. Backpackers access a site to find out what communities along their hikes need, and pack 1kg of those supplies in their packs.

2. Organization: 512 Disaster Relief Center 512民间救助中心

Description: a non-profit, grassroots organization founded by 40 Chinese grassroots NGOs in May 2008, in response to the Great Sichuan Earthquake. It is a joint effort in Chinese non-profit world, serving as an

information center for post-quake relief projects.

3. Organization: AiBai 爱白

Description: A non-profit grassroots organization founded in 1999, dedicated to homosexual awareness in China.

4. Organization: Aide et Action, Chengdu Office 助学行动, 成都办公室

Description: a global non-profit organization based in France. Chengdu Office was founded in 2003, focused on aid-education in Sichuan area. It is implementing post-quake aid-education programs in disaster-hit areas.

5. Organization: AIESEC Fudan University

Description: largest youth non-profit organization for career and intern opportunities, founded at Fudan University in 2003

6. Organization: AiSiChuangXin 爱思创新

Description: a non-profit grassroots organization in Beijing founded in 2007, devoted to community development and participatory governance. It serves as a financial management agency for CCPG, a NGO network in China committed to developing communities

7. Organization: Amity Foundation

Description: The Amity Foundation, an independent Chinese voluntary organization, was created in 1985 on the initiative of Chinese Christians to promote education, social services, health, and rural development from China's coastal provinces in the east to the minority areas of the west.

8. Organization: AND

Description: a non-profit organization initiated by a diversified group of Chinese high school and undergraduate students in Oct, 2008. It is dedicated to aid-education, infrastructure, medical care and study abroad .

9. Organization: Beijing Earth Village 北京地球村

Description: a non-profit, grassroots organization founded in 1996, dedicated to environmental education with 15 full-time employees and hundreds of registered volunteers

10. Organization: Beijing North Canal Waterkeeper

Description: run an individual who joined Waterkeeper in 2007, a global water-protection non-profit organization. He is responsible to raise awareness of river protection in Beijing areas. Part-time job.

11. Organization: CAI (China Arts Initiative)

Description: Founded in 2006 by a woman of Chinese descent who grew up in the US, this organization provides arts programming for migrant schools in the Beijing area.

12. Organization: Chengdu Urban River Association (CURA) 成都市河流研究协会

Description: CURA is a non-profit, grassroots NGO founded in 2003, dedicated to improving river quality of Chengdu area as a research center. Over 100 professors are registered as official member of CURA

13. Organization: CYDF (China Youth Development Foundation)/Project Hope

Description: Founded in 1989, CYDF has many programs, but the most famous is Project Hope, which serves rural children by helping them stay in school through sponsorship programs. Project Hope also builds, renovates, and repairs dilapidated rural school facilities.

14. Organization: Golden Key

Description: Founded in 1985 by a man who is visually impaired himself, this organization helps blind and visually impaired children in rural areas stay in school and gain self-supporting skills.

15. Organization: Global Environmental Institute 全球环境研究所

Description: a non-profit grassroots organization founded in 2004, dedicated to environmental research and energy conservation. Provide market-based models for solving environmental problems. Maintain constant curriculum for Chinese mayors.

16. Organization: Hua-Dan

Description: Founded by a White British woman who grew up in Hong Kong, this organization serves migrant children in the Beijing area through drama-based programs.

17. Organization: Huizeren (To Benefit People)

Description: a non-profit grassroots organization in Beijing, founded in 2003, dedicated to volunteer capacity building in other organizations

18. Organization: iCET (The Innovation Center for Energy and Transportation)

Description: Founded in 2004, this organization's core mission is to mitigate climate change through the promotion of clean, low carbon and energy efficient policies and technologies in China.

19. Organization: JUCCCE (Joint US-China Cooperation on Clean Energy), Shanghai Office

Full Name: Joint US-China Cooperation on Clean Energy

Description: a non-profit organization focused on clean energy in China, founded in 2007

20. Organization: LiangShuMing Village Construction Center 梁漱溟乡村建设中心

Description: A non-profit grassroots organization founded in 2006, dedicated to village construction/productivity and human rights

21. Organization: NGO CommonApp (Not Yet Named...)

Description: a non-profit organization initiated by a diversified group of Chinese college students. It is dedicated to starting up an online platform Web 2.0 for both volunteer match (CommonApp) and non-profit social network service. Marketing Team is based in Mainland China, and Technology Team is based in University of California, Berkeley.

22. Organization: Roots and Shoots, Shanghai Office

Description: one of the largest worldwide non-profit organizations for environmental protection; Shanghai Office was founded in 2000, officially registered under Shanghai City Government. At least 12 full-time employees and several interns.

23. Organization: Wave5 Foundation, Ltd 伍涛基金会

Description: It is a post-quake NGO founded in 2009 and based in Hong Kong. It is implementing programs in Sichuan Province, ranging from mental health to economic development via social enterprise model

24. Organization: WWF, Changsha Office

Description: one of the largest global non-profit organizations for animal and ecology conservation. Changsha Office was founded 1999, focused on Dongting Lake and Boyang Lake conservation project. 6 full-time employees

25. Organization: Yale Outreach Trip to Sichuan

Description: Yale University 2009 Spring Break Trip to Sichuan Province for post-quake aid-education, organized by three Yale Chinese students

26. Organization: Yinuanzhonghua (Shelter China)

Description: currently defunct, this organization set up to take care of the psychological and material needs of orphans.

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