

# From social service delivery to policy advocacy Chinese CSO influencing the institutional infrastructure through social development work

by Andreas Fulda

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## 1. Civil society as a transnational project

It is being widely recognized that in many transitional countries non-governmental organizations (NGO) play an important role as social service providers or public policy advocates. How do Chinese non-governmental aim to improve the institutional infrastructure and capacity to alleviate social problems and to improve general public well-being? The development of a nascent civil society in the People's Republic of China (PRC) throughout the mid-1990s has attracted a great deal of attention by western and Chinese researchers. A common theme in academic discussions is the question of applicability of civil society theory in the Chinese context and whether or not Chinese civil society organizations (CSO) can be likened to western-type non-governmental organizations (NGO).<sup>2</sup> A main point of contention are officially registered CSO (shetuan), often labeled in the western discourse as government-organized non-government organizations (GONGO).<sup>3</sup> Such organizations are being supervised by a mother organization (popo) and have to register with the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MoCA).

From a CSO practitioners perspective the author argues that such discourses actually overemphasize the dichotomy between theory and practice and that they are of little relevance to civil society

politics in the PRC. Long term Chinese NGO activist Meng Weina rightfully asserted during a Unirule conference on "The Role of Private Think Tanks" in Beijing in August 2005 that "one of the characteristics of China's reform process can not be ignored, being that practice has influenced the development of theory. This differs from western countries, where usually a set of laws, a system theory has first being set up, followed by practice." <sup>4</sup> Meng Weina's viewpoint reveals an evolutionary understanding of civil society development, which is fairly common among Chinese CSO practitioners. CSO activists, regardless of whether their organizations are officially registered or not have greatly varying expectations regarding the nature of a good society and also hold on to differing interpretations of civil society. While some people subscribe to a narrow, political definition of civil society, seen as "a particular set of institutionalized relationships between state and society based on the principles of citizenship, civil rights, representation, and the rule of law",<sup>5</sup> others feel more inclined to support a broad, sociological definition of civil society, which can be understood as "an intermediate associational realm situated between the state on the one side and the basic building blocks of society on the other (individuals, families and firms) populated by social organizations which are separate, and enjoy some degree of autonomy from the state and are formed voluntarily by members of society to protect or extend their interests or values."<sup>6</sup> Political philosophies and attitudes of CSO practitioners can and do change over time. Ideational and material preferences can not be easily disentangled. CSO activists have to decide how to position themselves in a given authoritarian polity. They face two major strategic choices: to work within the system and accept various legal-administrative limitations or to work outside the system and endanger their organizational survival and personal well-being. This simple but essential point is often being overlooked in overly academic discussions about China's civil

<sup>1</sup> Lester M. Salmon, S. Wojciech Sokolowski, and Associates, *Global Civil Society. Dimensions of the Nonprofits Sector, Social Development. Organizations working towards improving the institutional infrastructure and capacity to alleviate social problems and to improve general public well-being* (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2004), p. 323-324.

<sup>2</sup> Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce, *Civil Society and Development. A Critical Exploration* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder 2001) and Zhang Ye, *China's Emerging Civil Society*, June 2003. Available on the Internet: [www.brookings.edu/fp/cnaps/papers/ye2003.htm](http://www.brookings.edu/fp/cnaps/papers/ye2003.htm) (download 25 February 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Fengshi Wu, *New Partners or Old Brothers? GONGOs in Transnational Environmental Advocacy in China*, China Environment Series, Issue 5, 2002. Available on the Internet: <http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/tuj01/tuj01c.pdf> (download 25 February 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Comment made by Mrs Meng Weina at the Unirule Seminar in Beijing on the "Role of Private Think Tanks", 27 August 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Sida, *Emerging Civil Society in China*, May 2004 (by Kristina Gough), p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



society development.

To ascribe clear-cut dichotomies and definitions to Chinese individuals and their associations is all the more problematic if one recognizes that civil society development in China matters first and foremost as a transnational political project. Fairly diverse stakeholder groups such as foreign policy experts, international development planners, reform-oriented Chinese cadres, NGO activists and ordinary citizens all alike take part in an intercultural deliberation, where new forms of civil society engagement are constantly being discussed, practiced and refined. Most participants in this transnational project agree that Chinese CSO play an important role in providing avenues for self-help or social service delivery. Increasing numbers of CSO take the form of a non-profit non-enterprise unit (*minban feiqiye*), registered with the Industry and Commerce department. They thereby evade direct state control and make up an increasing share of the Chinese civil society sector. Given the increasingly pluralistic understanding of civil society development in the PRC it shall be explored how Chinese CSO can actually contribute to political development in the PRC, e.g. through policy advocacy. Factors such as imperfect legal-administrative framework conditions, changing dynamics between external and internal actors, varying CSO strategies in place and time as well as emerging CSO activity fields such as the promotion of grassroots democracy make this an intriguing question which merits greater attention, both by academics and CSO practitioners alike. The discussion can provide some preliminary clues how external actors can adjust their development agenda to meet changing domestic needs.

## 2. Chinese CSO under attention

The year 2005 was widely being regarded as a challenge to civil society development in the PRC.<sup>7</sup> In the wake of various color revolutions in formally autocratic eastern European countries the Chinese party-state took strong counter-measures to prevent similar events to unfold in the PRC. As a consequence, throughout the year 2005 Chinese CSO experienced greater state attention than ever. CSO activists all over the country received visits by officials and were questioned as regards to the purpose of their activities. Agent provocateurs tried to label Chinese environmental activists as working against the advancement of human nature. At the same time new government-organized

non-governmental organizations (GONGO) were being set-up, trying to incorporate the mushrooming sector of CSO into the fold of a highly corporatist party-state. Disincentives were supposed to turn CSO from engaging in social development and policy advocacy work. The informal *san bu neng ti* policy set up boundaries for legitimate contestation. Such party-state reactions have often been interpreted as an obstacle to civil society development. Long time CSO observers on the other hand have argued that it actually constitutes a sign of a maturing CSO scene, which is finally being taken seriously by the Chinese party-state.<sup>8</sup>

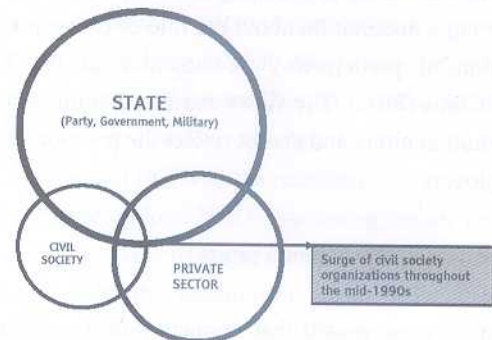


Figure 1: Uneven development of an overlapping state, private and civil society sector

Some foreign observers seem to have speculated that progressive Chinese government officials among the fourth leadership generation would welcome the growth of a lively CSO scene as a contribution to an incremental democratization of China's polity. Yet in the views of many traditional cadres such an approach would have amounted to a gender transformation against their will. Not surprisingly the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) tried to keep control over an increasingly directionless transition process.<sup>9</sup> While it could be argued that the above developments may have resulted in a slowing growth pace of China's civil society, it actually failed to stifle the CSO scene. High profile events such as the China Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP), organized by the China Association for NGO Cooperation (CANGO) and seven INGO in September 2005 attracted more than 200 participants from all over China.<sup>10</sup> It was a good indicator how Chinese CSO stood up to the challenge by publicly emphasizing their constructive role in China's development process. Furthermore it helped to consolidate a small but increasingly self-aware civil society sector.

(To be Continued)

<sup>7</sup> Total Freedom, China guarding against "color revolutions", Available on the Internet: <http://www.towardfreedom.com/home/content/view/679/78/> (download 20 February 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Nick Young, Address at a New Year Banquet of the China Development Brief in Beijing, January 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Arthur Waldron, China's directionless transition, The Jamestown Foundation China Brief, Volume 4, Issue 4 (February 20, 2004). Available on the Internet: [http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php volume\\_id=395&issue\\_id=2912&article\\_id=23548](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php volume_id=395&issue_id=2912&article_id=23548) (download on 25 February 2006).

<sup>10</sup> CANGO, More News. 2005. Available on the Internet: <http://www.cango.org/News/2005/2005%20News.htm> (download on 25 February 2006).



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### 3. CSO inclusion in state development initiatives

Besides a strained but basically stable relationship between the party-state and the CSO scene, China's ongoing internationalization process in the wake of the WTO accession has also affected the relationship between external and internal actors. Amidst incremental changes in state-society relations in China a new donor-recipient landscape has gradually taken shape. External actors such as bi- and multilateral donor and implementing agencies are increasingly aware that during times of major socio-political change technical blue-print solutions are no longer in order. Instead many development planners are realizing that just like in other countries in transition development should be understood as an evolutionary social process which includes diverse stakeholder groups that extend beyond the state and private sector.

Faced with the option of either phasing out, commercializing their services or enhancing the impact of their traditional development work, many donor and implementing agencies have been opting for the latter option. On the 15 October 2004, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) took a lead and supported the China Association for NGO Cooperation (CANGO) to jointly hold an International Symposium on the issue of "Mainstreaming Public Participation in International Cooperation with the People's Republic of China (PRC)" together with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH and the German Center for International Migration and Development (CIM). Various international donor, implementing organizations and foundations contributed their organizational self-understanding towards the issue of participatory development and discussed the subject matters with their Chinese partners, including representatives from the state, private and civil society sector. The event was indicative of a

greater emphasis among bi- and multilateral organizations to mainstream inclusive and pro-poor oriented development work.

Other major donor and implementing organisations soon followed suit. The World Bank initiated the China Development Marketplace in December 2005, issuing a call for project proposal on "Supporting innovations for scaling-up services that reach the poor", with Chinese CSO being eligible for funding. Likewise, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) started a series of NGO dialogue forums at its Beijing branch and began a cooperation with the State Council's Leading Group on Poverty Alleviation (LGPA) in December 2005. For the first time in the young history of China's civil society development, registered social organizations (shetuan) were given the opportunity to apply for state-funded poverty alleviation projects. The latter two events reveal a greater willingness both among multilateral organizations as well as Chinese state agencies to include non-state actors in international development projects. It also indicates that on the national level there is an increasing acceptance among Chinese decision-makers of international norms and due process as regards to participatory development. It underlines the general desire among enlightened cadres to accept regulated public participation as a means to solve pressing social problems in China.

From a Chinese CSO perspective new venues for increased interaction with the party-state have been created. Yet the likelihood that unregistered CSO will be equally given access to government funding remains rather small. Also CSO activists have questioned whether CSO-government cooperation amounts to partnerships for development or for corruption. Despite material incentives to collaborate with the government many Chinese reformers remain deeply sceptical about the sincerity of the government to allow greater CSO participation in the development process. Such



criticism notwithstanding, CSO inclusion in state development projects has the potential to contribute to enhanced transparency and downward accountability in state development initiatives.

#### 4. Between accomodation and advocacy

While bi- and multilateral donor and implementing organizations have been trying to increase efficiency and effectiveness in aid delivery, International NGO (INGO) and foreign foundations have gone a step further and turned to the issue of policy advocacy. At various NGO seminars in 2005 numerous advisors have championed policy advocacy as "any attempt to influence the decisions of any institutional elite on behalf a collective interest." In this context development is being understood as a transformative process, "by which people take an active and influential hand in shaping decisions that effect their lives". Emphasis is being given to right-based approaches. Citizens and their associations are to be empowered, while CSO should engage the Chinese government on policy issues.

New visions and missions of INGO and foundations alike are likely to alter the course of civil society development in the years to come. The paradigmatic shift from social service delivery to policy advocacy has various repercussions for civil society work. Chinese CSO gradually learn that it matters when and how to get involved in the policy cycle of agenda setting, elaboration of public policy alternatives, decision on public policies as well as public policy implementation. In the process of public participation Chinese CSO have to make decisions how to mobilize resources and when and how to act jointly or independently. Such approaches clearly require greater sophistication in steering through the pitfalls of polity with imperfect legal-administrative institutions. Critical questions for Chinese CSO are through which means they can get access to government decision-makers, mobilize the public, reflect public opinion, construct problems and solutions, use the judicial system to either challenge or enforce public policies or use the international arena to challenge domestic political processes.

While accumulated foreign experiences can be instructive how to influence the government, advocacy work in China is

likely to play out in different ways from western practice. This is due to the multifaceted nature of the Chinese reform process. Reform measures are being carried out in a grey area of legal contestation. A Chinese expression asserts that what is not being done in accordance with the law may not ultimately be against the law or even illegal (*bu hefa bu shi weifa, bu shi feifa*). Nevertheless, transgressions also carry risks. Given the trial and error nature of the Chinese reform process individual and organizational actors can never be sure if and when they are crossing a red line. Under such circumstances many CSO activists opt for evolutionary CSO strategies, giving emphasis to different strategic approaches in space and time.

On the outset of their activities they usually start by trying to avoid contact with the party-state and only gradually start engaging party-state officials by coopting reformist government rhetoric. Making good use of an internationally accepted partnership discourse, CSO then collaborate with government initiatives which they consider worthy of their support, while reserving their right to be critical. Whether they are still able to advocate for particular interests depends on the given situation, which may differ according to local circumstances. Through the process of CSO-government interaction many CSO activists often become aware of the systemic and institutional bottlenecks facing China's polity. They then may get involved in public policy processes and start supervising the government.

Publications such as the book "Who is supervising the supervisors?" by Yu Hui, co-worker at the Unirule Institute are indicative for how far this thinking has become part of mainstream discourse. It is noteworthy though that it is much more common to discuss ways of supervising the government rather than acting upon those recommendations. This clearly has something to do with feared state repression for overtly critical CSO activities. Yet it also reflects the understanding among many CSO activists that it may be more important to have the power to do something, rather than power over someone. This insight actually allows greater appreciation for the choice of differing CSO strategies. Each strategic choice inhibits varying internal strengths and weaknesses of CSO and are related to perceived external opportunities and threats.

(to be continued)



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### 5. A changing CSO landscape

So far the discussion has mainly focused on external conditions, such as the regulatory environment as well as ideational and material incentives by bi- and multilateral organizations, INGO and foreign foundations for CSO development. Yet in order to fully comprehend the difficulty of assessing CSO contributions to political development, a typical organizational life-cycle of a Chinese CSO can be quite instructive:

**Self-help CSO:** Chinese CSO usually start by engaging in self-help activities. This shows that there is an increasing willingness among Chinese citizens to tackle issues of collective concern. At the same time self-help CSO in their initial stage often lack contact with the Chinese government, thereby failing to solicit government support for their philanthropic activities, e.g. by lobbying for tax breaks for donations etc. In their organizational maturation process they are likely to realize that there is an external demand for the CSO to develop into a social service provider. Yet the isolation of self-help CSO from both government and funding bodies can hamper their organizational sustainability and may limit their output capabilities.

**Social service delivery CSO:** More mature Chinese CSO have time and again proved to be capable of engaging in service delivery for vulnerable social groups through targeted interventions, e.g. in the context of bi- and multilateral development initiatives. On the downside, social service CSO face the problem that they can be instrumentalized either by a donor organization to achieve pre-set programmatic goals or by the government, which externalizes the cost of much needed global interventions, e.g. health and education services to the poor. In the process of

social service delivery Chinese CSO nevertheless learn about systemic bottlenecks and have the possibility to turn to policy advocacy.

**Policy advocacy CSO:** Experienced and professional CSO have started engaging in policy advocacy. They are willing to contribute their ideas and recommendations in the policy process. Yet they usually face the challenge that they are often not accepted as legitimate stakeholders. This in turn creates pressures to accept a pre-set government agenda. At the same time policy advocacy CSO may feel that they have to cater to INGO and foreign foundations, further limiting their organizational autonomy. Given that CSO can be most effective in the process of agenda setting rather than during the stage of public policy implementation this phenomenon clearly limits advocacy options and makes them vulnerable to heteronomy. Furthermore, while Chinese CSO may have the potential to influence the development of China's legal-administrative institutional infrastructure in the process of policy advocacy, CSO activists are also at personal risk when upsetting bureaucratic or private actors in the process. Especially at the local level corrupt factions and cliques are unlikely to appreciate greater transparency in the policy process.

The internal differentiation of the CSO scene underscores how civil society development contributes to associational pluralism. Yet the organizational evolution of a Chinese CSO may not be as straightforward as outlined above. Instead CSO activists are aware of the growing pains and organizational challenges when maturing from one stage to another. It depends on the self-perception of roles and functions of Chinese CSO by CSO protagonists themselves how they will position themselves vis-a-vis other stakeholder groups. While it would be unrealistic to expect that a



majority of Chinese CSO will take up advocacy work in the near future, it is equally far-fetched to assume, that only a minority of them will. Instead, an increased blending of CSO types is likely to occur, making the CSO scene more plural and dynamic as ever.

#### 6. Chinese CSO and grassroots democracy capacity building

The increasing maturation of Chinese CSO is evident when reviewing recent developments in the Beijing-based CSO scene. On behalf of the German Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS) and with support of the Center for International Migration and Development (CIM) the China Association for NGO Cooperation (CANGO) organized a first two-day Sino-German NGO Dialogue Forum on the issue of "Development of Grassroot Democracy through Public Participation" on 19.-20. December 2005 in Beijing. Amidst a year of controversy about the role of civil society in transition countries the seminar turned out to be a good platform for information exchange and mutual learning.

In a panel on the mobilization challenge of German and Chinese CSO it became evident that second generation Chinese CSO have been making great progress towards the goal of agenda setting and advocacy work: Regardless of whether they work in the fields of rural migrants, the disadvantaged, legal aid provision or social development Chinese CSO increasingly share the following communalities: systemic bottlenecks in the given activity area are being openly and critically discussed among CSO activists, different CSO team up to foster mutual support networks and CSO reformers are unafraid to get involved in public policy issues. Chinese CSO such as Shining Stone Community Action (SSCA), the Citizen Education Institute (CEI), and the Open Constitution Initiative (OCI) can be seen as an avantgarde of a second wave of humanistic, community-based CSO that are unafraid to discuss the strained state-society relationship. They are strategic and reformist and engage in policy advocacy. Another feature of the above mentioned organizations is their communitarian approach. Differing from the first wave of Chinese environmental activists, these "communitarians, as social environmentalists, do not seek to bring society back to a state

of nature but to advance it, toward a good society."

While Chinese CSO protagonists may have differing expectations towards the nature of a good society, the shift of attention from environmental to socio-political issues holds the promise of more in-depth discussions about the need for reformed legal-administrative institutions. Talking about administrative reform (xingzheng gaige) rather than touching on political reform per se CSO activists are increasingly apt to grasp opportunities for reformed and more equal government-citizen relations. Great value is being attached to pilot initiatives that contribute to governance innovation (zhidu chuangxin). Reform initiatives such as the deliberative polling (minzhu kentanhui) in Wenling City, Zhejiang Province are being praised as possible new venues for public participation in community affairs. Other new forms of big group interventions such as the Internationally tried-and-tested Future Search Conference (FSC) approach are to be introduced in China in 2006 with the help of aforementioned CSO.

The Chinese government's willingness to engage in urban community building opens windows of opportunity for Chinese CSO to influence urban governance processes. The central leadership has been calling for a strengthening of the ruling party's administrative capabilities while advocating neighborhood democracy. These seemingly conflicting goals are being summarized in recent calls on building a "harmonious society" (hexie shehui) - a slogan that gives local citizens unprecedented opportunities to claim their citizen rights and increase their self-governing capabilities through local associations. The present urban government structure, however, actually impedes self-government on various levels. This is due to the fact that institutions that have a mandate for self-government such as the community resident committee (CRC) and to a lesser extend the community office (CO) are mostly upward rather than downward accountable.

Figure 2: Challenges to self-government in the urban context  
Western critics have furthermore pointed out that the basic building block of traditional urban China, the unit (danwei) is increasingly being transformed into gated communities,



rather than merging with an open und plural society. Such trends cast doubts about the degree of disentanglement between state and society and reveal much continuity as regards to the former corporatist governance model.

While there have been significant changes in the process of state modernization, the current party-state appears to be dragged along the path of societal development, rather than taking an active stance itself. Chinese CSO play an important role in this process, given that they can and do contribute constructive suggestions for system innovation. Yet despite ongoing efforts to institutionalize the Chinese polity, traditional steering mechanisms such as mass line campaigns are still being utilized. Instead of engaging in bold reforms that would change state-society relations significantly, the party-state has emphasized piecemeal administrative reform. On the local level, the administration is only gradually moving from an impetus to control the masses (guanzhi) to a management approach (guanli). With

increasing sophistication and experience in steering processes, local cadres are often tempted to instrumentalize social organizations to achieve top-down policy goals (zhili). This means that a traditional autocratic, top-down government steering approach is only gradually being opened to include horizontal linkages and gives only fairly limited space to bottom-up initiatives. While the party-state no longer acts alone, current actor coalitions on the local level often lead to collusion with business elites that curry political favors with economic rewards. Having much less to offer, registered and unregistered Chinese CSO alike are being forced to play by the biased rules of the game and try to exercise as much influence on the government as possible without jeopardizing their organizational autonomy. Still they have the potential to influence governance patterns to become more inclusive, making political institutions more accountable to citizens.

(To be continued)

## **A letter to all "Green Commuters" in Beijing**

The China-Africa Co-operation Forum Summit will be held in Beijing from November 1st to 6th. Every person living in Beijing is presented with an opportunity to help the city demonstrate its hospitality, friendship, better traffic and cleaner environment.

Thus, we hereby call for all companies and institutes in Beijing to participate in the "Be a green commuter, Prepare for the Olympics" campaign. ([www.bjee.org.cn](http://www.bjee.org.cn))

On June 1st, approximately 40 companies and institutes in Beijing joined the "Green Commuter" campaign and made a pledge to help improve the traffic and environment situation. Since then, many companies have been providing subsidies to employees for taking public transportation, encouraging carpooling, and pioneering walking by senior managers. They have been making a quiet but significant contribution to the community.

"Green commuters" campaign has been communicated and propagated among companies in Beijing and many of them have recognized that this is something applicable with some additional effort, and many people would benefit from one person's little sacrifice.

Now the city needs your support and expects your action! November 1st to 6th is the just the beginning and we hope we could work together to achieve the following:

- encouraging employees to utilize public transportation, such as metro, light rail, and buses;
- suggesting riding bicycles or walking under qualified air condition;
- advising to carpool or take shuttles;
- encouraging to reduce the frequency of using private cars;
- encouraging employees to share taxis;
- promoting more civilized and environment-friendly driving style, and be a polite passenger;
- providing encouragement to those employees who have already become green commuters;
- encouraging employees to take actions to improve their environmental foot-print in Beijing.

China Association for NGO Cooperation  
Environmental Defense  
October 30th, 2006



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### 7. Which way forward?

Coming back to the initial discussion about the dangers of epitomizing Chinese CSO and its protagonists in mono-causal ways, the author argues that outside actors that are willing to engage the growing Chinese civil society should heed the following advice of Julia Bentley, former coordinator of the Civil Society Program (CSP) of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and manager of the NGO capacity building program of Winrock International, an American non-profit organization. She reminds that "International donors need to examine critically the extent to which their support is using CSOs as a vehicle to try to achieve their own aims, however lofty, without regard for the healthy development of the CSO itself."<sup>1</sup> When reviewing their own priorities, external actors such as bi- and multilateral donor and

implementing agencies as well as INGO and foreign foundations should try harder to strive for greater common ground with their Chinese partners in the state, private and civil society sector.

Good governance can best be promoted through a normative synthesis of western and eastern philosophies and approaches. Emphasis could be given to liberal political ideas and concepts, while recognizing the need to

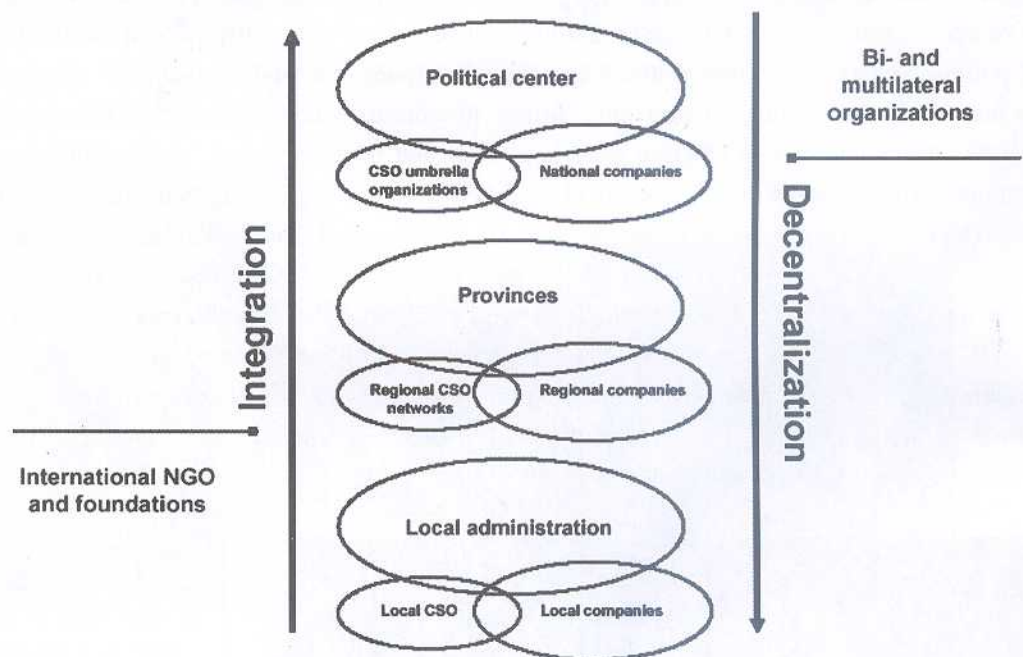


Figure 3: Possible division of labor among external actors

<sup>1</sup>Julia Greenwood Bentley, The Role of International Support for Civil Society Organizations in China, Harvard Asia Quarterly, Winter 2003, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Liberal-democratic and communitarian approaches can actually be blended in joint project implementation. One example can be seen in a recent CANGO Field Research Project on Advocacy and Legal Aid for

Migrants In Urban Governance Processes. The research was conducted in an open-ended fashion. The research team included both Chinese and foreign researchers and NGO practitioners. They were mainly interested in two aspects: 1. What is being done by the Chinese local state to provide government services to rural migrants (e.g. legal aid provision to rural migrants in times where their legitimate rights are being infringed



※New Senior International Advisor of CANGO Ms. Dagmar Woehlert -

On December 06, 2006 I left Germany for Beijing to start my new job as Senior International Advisor for the China Association for NGO Cooperation. I am the third expert with CANGO sent by the German program for international experts of the Center for International Migration



accommodate soft communitarian traditions such as an emphasis on social stability and economic prosperity. On the other hand, authoritarian impulses such as non-inclusive top-down steering mechanisms should be firmly rejected since they are unlikely to yield meaningful outputs, impact and outcomes.<sup>2</sup> The challenge is how to win the hearts and minds of Chinese counterparts on the national, provincial and local level.

Bi- and multilateral donor and implementing organizations could advise Chinese state agencies to open up and decentralize their planning processes in order to include non-state actors such as citizens and their associations in the political process. INGO and foreign foundations on the other hand could step up their efforts to build capacities both on the side of state organizations as well as Chinese CSO in their respective communities for stakeholder integration and deliberation.<sup>3</sup> This will require more technical and financial contributions for development initiatives with direct or indirect CSO involvement. Such a two-pronged approach would most likely create an enabling environment for inclusive and participatory development in the PRC, combining top-down government reform measures with bottom-up civil society initiatives. (Finished)

upon)? 2. What are the capabilities of urban communities or independent civil society organizations to self-organize and to protect their interests vis-a-vis other stakeholder groups? The mixed project research team applied principles and approaches relating to participatory and representative democracy, emphasizing social justice, inclusion and equity in the former and political representation and the rule of law in the latter case. Community was no longer understood as merely being a basic governing unit of a nation-state but as a sociological concept. The question of political representation in local self-government was being frequently discussed. Human rights were either being understood as something that is being claimed by citizens through participation in the political process or as a basic right that is to be protected by the state through constitutional means.

<sup>3</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, Thinking strategically about democracy assistance. A handbook on democracy, human rights and good governance assistance in Finnish development co-operation (Helsinki, 2001), p. 40.

- CIM.

It is not my first time in China, however, it might become the longest so far.

In the 80s I studied Chinese and English languages and linguistics at Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany. During that time I stayed one year at the First Foreign Language Institute in Beijing, the Foreign Language University nowadays.

In the 90s I came to China - Beijing and Shanghai - for an internship with a German enterprise in the framework of my training in marketing and foreign trade.

Right after I had another experience abroad, spending two years in the US, in Washington D.C. I worked there as a German language and culture instructor at the Foreign Service Institute of the State Department.

In 1997 I started to work with Heinrich Boell Foundation, a foundation affiliated with the German party Alliance 90/The Greens, engaging in sociopolitical education and activities in Germany and abroad. I was responsible for projects in East Asia and South East Asia. With the increase of work on and in China I was in charge of the project work in China developing a concept of the foundation's activities in this country that reached from environmental and women's issues, city planning and development to political dialogue as well as capacity building and promotion of NGOs.

After the years with Herinrich Boell Foundation I consider it a new challenge to do advisory work for CANGO. My focus will be project work and training development in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility, however, I will deal with environmental issues, NGO training, research and evaluation work as well.

Having received a nice warm welcome by the whole staff, I am looking forward to being part of CANGO for the next years.



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