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Civil society under authoritarian rule: disasters, social capital, and their consequences in Chinese state-society relations

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CIVIL SOCIETY UNDER AUTHORITARIAN RULE:

DISASTERS, SOCIAL CAPITAL, AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

IN CHINESE STATE-SOCIETY RELATIONS

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I dedicate this dissertation to all the people whose lives have been affected by natural disasters, and to those who risk their lives to rescue survivors and rebuild communities after those disasters.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation addresses the question "how disasters change state-society relations under authoritarian rule?" Specifically, I investigate how space and social capital were created after major earthquakes and the relationships between local governments and civil society organizations (CSOs). Based on four years of interviews conducted with government officials and CSO leaders and two rounds of surveys in 126 villages in rural Sichuan province, utilizing experiments, focus groups, and interviews, I argue that social capital and space for CSOs were created after major earthquakes. Adding to the literature of consultative authoritarianism and graduated control, I demonstrate that within the newly created space, local governments use a *deliberate differentiation* strategy towards different CSOs. Such differentiation is more driven by the state's interest to extract productivity and outsource responsibility for public goods provision by regime-supporting CSOs, and less dictated by the state's need to acquire information from regime-challenging CSOs with collective action potential. Such approach contributes to the authoritarian resilience in China. Despite the interference from the state from above, the newly created space also faces challenges from the private sphere with individual citizens being skeptical of the CSO

sector due to limited interactions, mismatch of criteria, institutional constraints, and lack of civility. I then draw from the qualitative data and construct a dynamic framework of state-society relations under an authoritarian state after disasters by starting from co-operational, complementary, competitive, and confrontational relations, and end up in either co-optation or confrontation in the long run. Finally, I trace the development of the newly drafted charity law and the foreign NGO law. I argue that the state-organized legalization process would first allow the state to use the "zone of indifference" to get to know the new developments in the public sphere. Then, through a process of toleration, participation, initiation, replication, and bifurcation, the state manages to extract productivity from, and outsource responsibility to, the regime-supporting players, and drive out the regime challenging ones. The laws, made through this process, is also vulnerable to state intervention at any time, and therefore, prevents China from having a meaningful civil society.

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1. Chapter One: Introduction

Background

The state-society relationship in authoritarian countries has become a part of an important debate. The question of whether a nascent civil society can emerge without formalized democratic institutions is contested. Optimists consider the progress made by countries like China and many other authoritarian countries remarkable. Even though the state is still, to some extent, repressing civil society, civil society has overcome fear and is pushing against constraints and opening up spaces (Simon 2013; Azhar 2014; Casey 2016). The pessimists, on the other hand, point out that the fundamentals have not changed and there are limits and constraints that the society has to face (Gallagher 2004; Fewsmith 2013; Nathan 2015). For scholars specifically studying China, theories of sino-exceptionalism, graduated control, and consultative authoritarian have been proposed to distinguish the Chinese model from western liberal democracies (Ma 2002; Kang and Han 2008; Deng and Jing 2011; Teets 2014).

However, the key question of how the state and civil society organizations (CSOs) would behave differently under different constraints remains unanswered because autocrats keep independent societal forces in check with legal, financial, structural, and personnel-based controls (Gallagher 2004). In this context, major earthquakes have provided China scholars rare and remarkable opportunities to observe how civil society is affected and therefore to draw conclusions about shifts in state-society relations (Roney 2011; Teets 2014).

At 2:28 pm on May 12, 2008, an 8.0 magnitude earthquake struck the Wenchuan region of Sichuan province. The quake caused damage in 10 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities, including Sichuan (the epicenter), Gansu, Shaanxi, Chongqing, Yunnan, Henan, Hubei, Guizhou, Hunan, Shanxi and 417 counties. An estimated 4.5 million people were affected in some way, including 69,229 mortalities and 17,923 missing persons. Over 15 million residents had to be relocated in what was one of the most destructive earthquakes in China's recorded history (Deng 2009).

Earthquakes of such magnitude posed serious challenges to the capacity of local governments. CSOs, in the meantime, were able to provide services and support while the local governments were incapacitated. 40 days after the earthquake, the Xinhua news agency reported that over a million volunteers have already poured into the region and mobilized their resources to support the quake relief effort (Jin and Wang 2008). Some of the volunteers turned into organizers and many CSOs, whether formally registered or not, were created as a result.

Soon after the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, scholars began studying the phenomenon of space opening up and CSOs forming and multiplying. 2008 has been referred to as the 'NGO year zero' or the 'year of civil society.' (Shieh and Deng 2011) Scholars highlight the importance of disasters in creating a 'window of opportunity' and leading to civil society formation. Some scholars point out the lack of capacity by the Chinese government and how social organizations were able to meet public demands instead, thereby flourishing (Shieh and Deng 2011). Others argue that while the earthquake strengthened civil society

in China, there remains mistrust between the government and social organizations (Teets 2009).

Four years after the earthquake in 2012, I visited the quake-stricken region in Sichuan province and interviewed the leaders of CSOs, many of which were created as a result of the Wenchuan earthquake. I was fascinated by their narratives of their organizations' developmental history, their interactions with local and higher-level governments, and their interactions with the citizenry. I found this a great opportunity to study and investigate how civil society might come about and develop in authoritarian countries like China, and how individual citizens, CSOs, and the state would interact with each other in a dynamic process.

Research questions and key arguments

How do states manage nascent civil societies? How do disasters change state-society relations under authoritarian rule? Do major disasters, such as earthquakes, create the space and social capital and thus lay the foundation for the creation of a civil society in an authoritarian country like China? How do local authorities respond to the newly created CSOs? How do individual citizens respond to CSOs? Moreover, after all, why would an authoritarian country care about CSOs? These are key questions I ask in this dissertation.

There have long being discussions about the emergence of a civil society or the creation of a space between the state and private sphere as well as the accumulation of social capital in China. Especially in the "reform and opening" era, with particular attention

to the spring of 1989 for example, scholars observed a "sudden, massive spread of civil society," "nascent civil society," "emergent civil society." (Ostergaard 1989; Sullivan 1990; Nathan 1997) Chinese CSOs have been developing at a rapid pace in the past three decades.

Particularly, since the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake, CSOs and voluntary associational activities have exploded. According to the a report by the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs, by the end of 2015, there are a total of 662,000 social organisations (社会组织), among which 329,000 are social groups (社会团体), 329,000 are people-run non-enterprise (民办非企业)[1], and 4,784 are foundations (基金会), with all these numbers increasing steadily over the past decade.

[1] The 2016 Charity Law replaced this term with 社会服务机构 or social service agencies. See, 中华人民共和国慈善法 (Charity Law of the People's Republic of China), The National People's Congress of China < http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/dbdhhy/12_4/2016-03/21/content_1985714.htm> A translation of the law can be found at < http://chinalawtranslate.com/2016charitylaw/?lang=en>, accessed 3 February 2017.

Figure 1.1: Growth of social organizations in China [2]

These official numbers represent a general trend, but do not include a significant number of unregistered, yet still operating, CSOs in China today. About 39% of grassroots NGOs could be not registered as non-profit social organizations (Shieh and Brown-Inz 2013). Therefore, the actual number of CSOs operating in China could very likely be underestimated here. So how could China have so many CSOs but still may not have a civil society? With such rapid development of the CSO sector, how meaningful are these numbers in interpreting the development of state-society relations and the power dynamics between the government and CSOs?

It is important to note that the growth of the civil society sector has not been linear. There is a cyclical trend of opening and repression as well. While planning for the 2008

[2] Source: Ministry of Civil Affairs Social Service Development Report (Data collected from the 2008–2015 reports)

Olympic Games, for example, the Chinese state tightened control of the sector. Even with the boom of the sector after the Wenchuan earthquake, CSO leaders reported that there was a crackdown on the sector in 2009 and 2010.[3] So what influence did the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake have, if there is any, over the development of civil society in China? How did the consequential evolution of the CSO sector reveal the state-society relations in an authoritarian regime?

As early as 2005, the Chinese government started to contemplate on a holistic set of charity laws that would govern the charitable activities. The progress was very slow and remained as internal discussions until 2014 when the National People's Congress' internal judicial committee took up the task (Wang 2015). Whether or not this accelerated development is related to the 2014 Lushan earthquake is difficult to determine, but it is clear that the state saw the need to manage the nascent civil society as voluntary associational activities start to grow rapidly after the major earthquakes. How does the state change the formal and informal institutions to adapt to the changes in the society? Are making of the several new laws that govern the CSO sector meaningful or are they merely stipulations for the rulers to use at convenience while having plenty of flexibility?

These questions lead to the key arguments I make based on my research. In this dissertation, I argue that social capital and space for CSOs were created after major earthquakes. I demonstrate that within this space, the local governments use a deliberate

[3] Interview 12SJ34. While most interviewees requested not to reveal their true identities in any publications, I have used a coding system to best capture the background of the interviewees. Rules of coding are with the author and can be provided on request.

differentiation strategy towards regime-supporting and regime-challenging CSOs. Such differentiation is more driven by the state's interest to extract productivity and outsource responsibility for public goods provision by regime-supporting CSOs, and less dictated by the state's need to acquire information from regime-challenging CSOs with collective action potential. Despite the interference from the state from above, the newly created space also faces challenges from the private sphere with individual citizens being skeptical of the CSO sector due to limited interactions, mismatch of criteria, institutional constraints, and lack of civility. I then draw from the qualitative data and construct a dynamic framework of state-society relations under an authoritarian state after disasters by starting from co-operational, complementary, competitive, and confrontational relations, and eventually end up in either co-optation or confrontation in the long run. Finally, I depict the state-organized legalization process of the CSO sector as the state follows the experimentation logic to allow a "zone of ignorance" to exist first, while creating laws to materialize the support from the regime-supporting CSOs and dissipate the challenge from regime-challenging CSOs, so that resources in the society are utilized for enhancing governance and prevented from destabilizing the authority.

Civil society and social capital

In this dissertation, I define civil society as the intermediary sphere between the state and the private sphere populated by voluntary associations that empowers individuals to build networks based on trust and reciprocity. Civil society is normally seen, from a

sociological perspective, as an arena that exists between the sphere of individuals' private lives and the state (Watson 2008). There are, however, many different approaches describing what might be in such a space. It can be Adam Smith's free market (Smith 1776), it can be Karl Marx' political societies (Bobbio, Banting, and Simeon 1988), it can be Habermas' *öffentlichkeit* for exchanging views and knowledge (Habermas 1989), and it can also be Alexis De Tocqueville's voluntary associations (Tocqueville 2003). There are also scholars who often discuss the concept of social capital when describing civil societies. For example, Robert Putnam discusses the norms, trust, and networks in the Italian society that can improve the efficiency of a society by facilitating coordinated actions as a form of social capital or being a part of its civil society (Putnam 1994).

The concept of "civil society" is not only complex and expansive but also evolved and varied its meaning throughout history. While the literature on civil society spans over multiple disciplines, scholars tend to use the dualistic state-society depiction today to stratify the essence of civil society. However, as the concept of "civil society" evolved, it was not always a duality.

The term of "civil society" can be traced back to the Greek philosopher Aristotle as a political community (*koinōia politikē*) (Schmidt 1986). It is a community of free and equal citizens in ruling and being ruled at the same time, therefore no distinction between state and society originally. The 15th century Florentine humanist Leonardo Bruni translated the term as "*societas civilis,"* and it was therefore understood as "civil society" — although the state itself is the political society as Aristotle depicted it (Schmidt 1986). We can think about it as more of a society with civility, including shared norms and conduct

of behaviors (Pye 1999).

Dualism occurred during feudal Europe as the Ständestaat balanced powers of the monarch with the corporate state (Cohen and Arato 1997). This duality, however, is not the more modern conception of "the state versus the society." It is, rather, a variation of the Aristotelian conception that treated the monarchs as outside of the conventional *koinōia politikē.*

It was not until the 18th century that the dualism was first depicted as the state versus the society. Hegel mentions civil society being a space that intervenes between the state and the family, or the private sphere (Habermas 1974). Habermas also discusses a public sphere for the exchange of views and knowledge and provided paths about how the public sphere could win an institutionalized influence over the government (Habermas 1974). Civil society monitors and limits the state authority due to the fear of state despotism (Keane 1998). This duality, however, is only made more confrontational in the later democratization literature, so that sees civil society having the ambition to replace the state, particularly when depicting the democratic movements in former communist countries, and their struggle against the authoritarian party-states (Cohen and Arato 1997).

Civil society's conceptualization also varies and has its own roots in particular geographic regions. Lucian Pye, Robert Weller, and a few other scholars have pointed out that in East Asia and particularly China, sometimes thinking in terms of civility (Weller 1999) and social capital (Pye 1999) can be crucial to the understanding of civil society. Civility here is not just gentility and virtue, but more regarding the general norms and

practices of individual behaviors and personal interactions. Social capital here is association based on trust and how much one can be enabled from a network of resources. Both civility and social capital are foundations of civil society, and they indicate the quality of the civil society. What this paper found is that in rural China, we may have a nascent civil society without much civility and social capital. While the historical conceptualizations of civil society from ancient Greece's *koinonia politike or societas civilis* to mid-18 century concept of "fear of despotism" to the modern day competing variations should not be ignored, in the dissertation, I will mainly focus on the ideas of "public sphere" and "social capital" for operationalizing the variables of civil society in China.

Many people have discussed whether there is a "civil society" in China. If we look at the concept of civil society as a certain "space," the public sphere, then we either have it or we do not. Even at a minimal level, one would be able to see that there is no such civil society in China as the state is still penetrating into the society and controlling most of its activities. If we look at the concept of civil society as "social capital," (Woolock 1998) on the other hand, then the possibility of accumulation of such capital and "emergence" of the civil society is possible. Robert Weller also suggests that the concept of "civil society" might vary between space and time and we should not ignore the cultural context and the temporal conditions of the specific country of interest (Weller 1999).

Using Fewsmith's description, the state constantly makes attempts to blur the line between the state and individuals, and intrude the space in between, which is the civil society (Fewsmith 2013). One example is the shutting down of the "comment" function of

Weibo (or micro-blog) in China. Weibo has become a very important space for Chinese individuals to go out and be concerned about public issues. There are associations of people sharing similar interests, and there are discussions, debates and even criticisms of the government. The government, seeing such development, would interfere and arbitrarily shut the "comment" function off for a few days occasionally, seemingly as a warning to both the individuals and the "space."

While the question of whether China has a civil society is already multifaceted, how civil society could be potentially organized also draws different frameworks. There are two major frameworks in conceptualizing civil society in China: the civil society framework and the state-corporatist framework.

The civil society framework, tracing from Alexis De Tocqueville's Democracy in America, describes civil associations' relationship with democratization and how a robust autonomous civil society can check and monitor the state power (Tocqueville 2003). Proponents of this framework draw evidence from Chinese history (Wakeman 1993), as well as the rise of political liberalism in China in the early 1980s, with the 1989 Tiananmen student movement, in particular, to claim that there was once a nascent form of civil society in China, that we see the resurgence of today (Gold 1990).

The second framework of analysis is the state-corporatist framework. In this school of thought, the authoritarian state does not easily give up space. In fact, the state finds it effective to control society through "peak associations." The state recognizes one and only one organization in each sector and creates an unequal relationship with them so that

control can be channeled through this vertical, unequal relationship (Unger and Chan 1995).

The civil society framework underestimates the state's involvement and its dominant role in associational lives in authoritarian countries like China, yet the corporatist description also fails to capture the unique phenomenon of the plural and occasionally autonomous nature of many existing civil society organizations in China.

The emergence of civil society and the accumulation of social capital is certainly a positive development in China. However, as discussed above, we are not clear whether the government will keep interfering from top down with such developments and control such a space to the extent that it only helps the survival of the regime, or allow a gradual freeing up of the space, both of which seems to be unfeasible for China's civil society.

A few scholars have discussed the possibility of looking at the local level rather than the elite level for civil society building in China (Fewsmith 2013) and concluded that even at the local level, it is difficult to have meaningful reforms because there are no incentives for the creation of meaningful constrains on actors — particularly stakeholders. Therefore, the literature points to limited space between the private sphere and the state in China. Institutions operate in such a space struggle for their legal recognition, autonomy, scope of influence, and their overall survival.

There have recently been studies on how the states differentiate policies towards different parts of the civil society, and encourage good behaviors and suppresses bad behaviors. Policy differentiation under the consultative authoritarian (Teets 2014) and graduated controls (or differentiated controls) models (Kang and Han 2008) have been

suggested to exist in China. However, few studies have explored systematically whether such differentiation exist and what the underlying logic is. Such gap in the literature is worth exploring and can help us better understand how authoritarian states manage nascent civil societies.

The consequence of natural disasters

While natural disasters such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, hurricanes, epidemics, floods happen more frequent nowadays than in the past, the study of the consequences of such disasters have also emerged. Scholars are particularly interested in how different settings and different features of the parties involved can lead to different consequences. The literature, however, sees disasters mainly as a risk rather than an opportunity.

Natural disaster has been seen as a risk leading to potential violent civil conflicts (Philip 2008). By using the country-year as the unit of analysis and by looking at 187 political units from 1950–2000, Philip Nel argues that the destruction and upheaval disasters such as the earthquake cause can upset the collective action resources and therefore made the large-scale organized resistance difficult, particularly in the short term. Dawn Brancati uses a dataset of 185 countries from 1975 and 2002 and finds the likelihood of intrastate conflict would also increase when earthquakes strike, and the higher the magnitude, the greater chance for conflict. The mechanism is that actual scarcities that arise in the wake of earthquakes incited conflicts (Brancati 2007).

There are also scholars who recognizes the positive aspects of disasters and argues disasters would lead to cooperation, peace, and/or development. Ilan Kelman and Theo Koukis use the disaster diplomacy framework to examine multiple cases and concluded that at least in the short run, disasters would influence the peace process provided that a non-disaster-related basis already existed for the reconciliation (Kelman 2011). Ahmet O. Evin use the Greek-Turkey case to demonstrate how the Izmit-Golcuk earthquake helped facilitating the Rapprochement between the two countries (Evin 2004). Douglas Dacy and Howard Kunreuther assert that the rapid inflow of capital for rebuilding purposes will benefit the community economically (Dacy and Kunreuther 1969).

Most literature on earthquake and social capital describes how the abundance of social capital would better prepare community in dealing with disasters and help the recovery process. Daniel Aldrich's study of disasters in Japan, India and US demonstrates that high pre-existing levels of social capital would lead to stronger resilience and better recovery (Aldric 2012). Social capital helps coordinate resources and facilitate the reconstruction collectively and therefore would lead to better recovery (Alesch, Arendt, and Holly 2009). Alpaslan Özerdem and Tim Jacoby, with their extensive case studies on Japan, Turkey and India recognized that the local populations, when bonded in networks, are not just victims but also resources in dealing with disasters and civil society organizations can contribute to the disaster relief efforts and can help better manage disaster recoveries (Özerdem and Jacoby 2006).

It is clear that social capital has some intrinsic relationship with disaster and plays an important role in disaster recovery, but not much research has been done on how social

capital came about, particularly how disaster may have an effect on the creation and accumulation in social capital. On the other hand, the media tend to claim and report on the solidarity and bonding of communities after disasters, yet without systematic data and clear mechanism to back those claims. Among the limited studies, Rebecca Solnit in her book *A Paradise Built in Hell* studied five major disasters and described that after major disasters, survivors would reach out and work together to confront the challenges they face and therefore increase social capital in the community (Solnit 2009). However, there are also scholars who have concluded that major disasters would damage the social fabric in local communities, as people leave the community and having lost people in their networks (Peacock, Morrow, and Gladwin 1997). Scholars have also documented different consequences between disasters in democracies and non-democracies. For example, while the Kobe earthquake in Japan lead to a more independent civil society, especially neighborhood associations (Shaw and Goda 2004), there is more antagonism between the state and society during a crisis in semi-authoritarian countries like Russia (Richter and Hatch 2013). There are also scholars who make different claims based on studying short-term and long-term effects. It seems that immediately after a disaster, cooperative behavior would increase (Allesi 1975) while such social fabric created by disasters are short-lived and will not have long-lasting impacts over the long run (Tatsuki 2014).

With such mixed and often opposing claims, scholars such as Daniel Aldrich simply adopted the assumption that "any changes to pre-disaster social capital are limited in time and effect and post-disaster social networks are likely to mirror pre-disaster conditions" as the premises for his study of social capital and disaster recovery (Aldric 2012). However,

being able to clarify the actual relationship between disaster and social capital accumulation and depict the mechanism of how disasters may influence the variation in social capital and, as a consequence, lead to the evolution of civil society development can be crucial in helping us understand the better the connections between different forces and actors in play.

Overview of the dissertation

The empirical context of this study involves three major groups of subjects: government officials, CSO leaders, and individual citizens in rural communities. To give us a foundation for this inquiry, the dissertation opens with a bird's eye view of the disaster and civil society literature, particularly how China might be a good case in studying how authoritarian states manage nascent civil society, because the rise of CSOs after the recent major earthquakes.

Chapter 2 utilizes the natural experiment with an original survey that I designed to compare the stocks of social capital between northern Sichuan province, where major earthquakes struck, and southern Sichuan province, as a control region not affected by major earthquakes between 2008 and 2014, to investigate whether social capital and space for CSOs were created after major earthquakes. 43 counties and 126 villages were visited during the summer of 2014. Two months after the first round of data collection, one major earthquake struck the Ludian region, and 12 of the villages in the original control region were affected by the earthquake. A second round of data was then collected to construct a

difference-in-difference design to capture the variation of social capital before and after the earthquake both in the villages affected and not affected by the Ludian earthquake. I demonstrate that social capital and space for CSOs were indeed created after major disasters, at least in the short run. However, whether such social capital and space could be the fabrics of a nascent civil society in China in the long run is still questionable.

Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 investigate what happens within the newly created space. The empirical data came from four years of interviews conducted with 63 government officials and CSO leaders and two rounds of surveys in 126 villages in rural Sichuan province, utilizing two natural experiments, one experiment, focus groups, interviews, and participant observation at CSOs.

Chapter 3 uses a field experiment by sending inquiry emails to 114 county governors in Sichuan province. While emails from the control group inquire about how to set up a social organization in one's locality, the email from the treatment group indicates the type of social organization being politically sensitive. From the significant difference from response rate, response time, and response quality between the two groups, I demonstrate in a systematic way that deliberate differentiation of different types of CSOs does exist. However, contrary to the censorship literature that argue such differentiation is mainly due to the state's fear of collective action from the sensitive ones (King, Pan, and Roberts 2013 & 2014), the graduated control approach, which anticipates more scrutiny for state-challenging CSOs (Kang and Han 2012), or being a consultative authoritarian, which sees the flow of information between the state and society as the main motive for the state and encourage good behaviors and suppress bad behaviors (Harding 1987; Nathan

2003; He and Thogersen 2010; Teets 2014; Wallace 2015), this chapter demonstrates that policy differentiation towards CSOs is intentional and is driven more by the state's interest to extract productivity and outsource responsibility for public goods provision from the "good " CSOs, and less driven by the state's need to acquire information from the "bad" CSOs, including those politically sensitive advocacy groups that make rights claims and have collective action potential. Under a decentralized system, grassroots county-level officials have the freedom and willpower to allow various social organizations to exist, particularly those that provide public goods and contribute to the stability of the regime. CSOs are encouraged and enabled by the local officials to share the workload and take the blame if necessary. Such a deliberate differentiation strategy enhances the governance and legitimacy of the authoritarian regime.

While the intention of a state to manage and differentiate CSOs operating in the newly created space indicates that the state continues to blur the line between itself and the society, even with a different logic, chapter 4 reveals that the citizen-CSO relationship are very different from that of western liberal democracies. Despite the interference from the state from above, the newly created space also faces challenges from the private sphere with individual citizens being skeptical of the CSO sector due to limited interactions, mismatch of criteria, institutional constraints, and lack of civility.

As a result of the intervention from above and skepticism from the grassroots, CSOs adjusted their behaviors and the government, in turn, also reacted to those adjustments. Chapter 5 maps the state's preferences and policy distinctions through its varied responses to CSOs during and after the quake recovery period. Specifically, whether the state is more

effective in delivering services in a given area and whether the goals of the civil society organization align with those of state are two key determinants of the state-CSO relationship in that area. This chapter, therefore, proposes a comprehensive typology with four basic types of state-CSO relations in China: complementary, cooperative, competitive and confrontational. These categories are not static, as the government and CSOs adjust their policies and behaviors as they interact. These learning experiences, triggered by the earthquakes, create a dynamic process of evolving state-society relations in China today.

The political scientist Tang Tsou first used the concept "zone of indifference" to describe the public spaces opened up in China in the 1980s, in which intellectual networks, study groups, literary salons and even semi-autonomous journals and newspapers were tolerated to conduct activities as long as they do not fully enter the political arena. In this "zone of indifference," there was some degree of freedom, but such freedom is not protected by laws and institutions. The state could intervene any time in this zone where they have temporarily retreated from (Tsou 1986). Here in this dissertation, while the CSOs are evolving, the state is continuing with its legalization of the CSO sector in a similar "zone of indifference". Chapter 6 traces the development and investigates the contents of several newly drafted laws, and compare the 2016 charity law[4] and the draft 2016 social group registration rules[5] that accompany it with the 2016 foreign NGO law. This chapter

[4]中华人民共和国慈善法 (Charity Law of the People's Republic of China).
[5]社会团体登记管理条例 (Social groups' registration rules), the draft document could be downloaded from the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs Website < http://images3.mca.gov.cn/www/file/201608/1470022929339.doc>, accessed on 3 February, 2017. The announcement can be found at < http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/zwgk/tzl/201608/20160800001364.shtml >

reveals how an authoritarian country such as China manages sudden new developments within the society, such as the explosion of CSOs after the earthquakes, and legalizes the rules regarding the new phenomenon. An initial "zone of indifference" was created so that seemingly regime-supporting activities, even with illegal status, were tolerated. The state would use this period to get to know better of the phenomenon while occasionally exercise its power to make sure the "zone of indifference" is still under control. Once the adaptive state manages to understand the key players and benefit & cost different types of players could generate, it will start to enforce existing laws or create new laws to enforce to extract productivity from and outsource responsibility to the regime-supporting players, and drive out the regime challenging ones. The regime-supporting players may also create symbiotic relationships with the state and facilitate the shaping of good behaviors of more players, "from point to surface." Similar strategies had been utilized since the beginning of the reform and opening era towards different players and economic models. The policy experimentation within the society, rather than the economy, is documented in this chapter. Such legalization process is very different from the "rule of law" approach which stipulates legislations first before enactment. What we see the Chinese government do within the society is experimenting with CSOs, mostly illegal, with managed risk and opportunities, and then legalize based on the state's preferences.

Findings from this dissertation add to the literature of disaster politics, authoritarian resilience, and Chinese politics in several ways. First, the as-if random natural experiment initiated by the earthquake provides evidence that social capital changes before and after a major earthquake, challenging the typical assumption in the literature that assumes the

post-disaster social capital level would mirror before disaster conditions. Second, my findings add to the graduated control and consultative authoritarian literature and use an experimental design to prove deliberate policy differentiation exists in China. However, I challenge the conventional wisdom that an authoritarian state would always pay more attention to regime-challenging CSOs fearing collective action and propose an alternative logic for differentiation that local governments are more interested in extracting productivity and outsourcing responsibility. Third, my findings provide a comparative perspective to the dualistic state-society literature and demonstrate that a skeptical society towards the CSOs could be a major challenge to the development of civil society under authoritarian rule. Fourth, my findings provide a dynamic framework that explains why it is possible to have social capital and space for CSOs created under an authoritarian state but still no meaningful paths to an actual independent civil society and democratization. This also contributes to the debate of whether the outcome of disasters regarding to civil society is regime type based and why it is possible to observe both an opening of the space and cracking down of the space by the same state at different stages with different types of CSOs. Moreover, I capture the state-organized legalization process of how an authoritarian state manages newly created phenomenon within the society and how it utilizes such opportunities to enhance its governance while preventing a meaningful civil society from being developed.

2. Chapter Two: Disaster and the Creation of Social Capital

Introduction

Researchers from Tocqueville to Putnam have made strong claims about the role social capital plays in improving the quality of governance and governance outcomes (Tocqueville 1835; Putnam 1993). However, the case for social capital remains weak because it is often difficult to disentangle causes and effects as well as to neutralize potential confounders. Skeptics may point out that "good things generally go together," in which case, whatever factors causing social capital creation may also be causing other desirable outcomes. The methodological problem stems from the fact that social capital is not manipulable — even in principle — and we do not have a clear sense of the prior factors at work. Why are some societies stronger in trust and extra-familial ties than others? How does social capital come about?

This chapter utilizes a rare opportunity to tackle the above problems with quantitative and qualitative approaches by using natural experiments in combination with in-depth interviews. Original data was collected before and after a major earthquake (the 2014 Ludian earthquake in China), treated as an exogenous shock, to construct a difference-in-difference design. The larger region of Sichuan province in China was also looked at with a treatment region (stricken by earthquake) and a control region (no major earthquake), by comparing the level of social capital accumulation after two major earthquakes (the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake and 2013 Lushan earthquake). Data was collected in 43 counties in Sichuan province in China with three different targeted groups,

consisting of over 1200 surveys with individual villagers, and 63 in-depth interviews with civil society organization (CSO) leaders and government officials in charge of civil affairs.

Having observed the significant increase in the level of social capital after earthquakes, which causes sudden unmet demand for public goods, this chapter demonstrates that sudden unmet demand for public goods triggered by the earthquake have stimulated the accumulation of social capital in local communities through individual community members' rising associational voluntarism for self-help, increased community activities organized by civil society organizations in which norms of reciprocity were simultaneously created, under a less repressive state during special times.

The literature of both the key dependent variable (social capital) and independent variable (sudden unmet demand of public goods provision triggered by earthquakes) will be overviewed first. Then, the hypotheses, data operationalization, and research designs will be presented. The analysis of the difference-in-difference study of the 2014 Lushan earthquake will be presented first and then the post-treatment analysis of the natural experiment of the entire Sichuan region, following the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake and 2013 Lushan earthquake, will be presented as robustness check. Both analyses will reflect the fundamental connection between the sudden unmet demand for public goods caused by earthquake and the accumulation of social capital. Then, this paper will draw on the qualitative data, particularly interview notes with local government officials, civil society organization leaders, and individual villagers, to demonstrate the intrinsic causal mechanism why and how sudden unmet demand for public goods would lead to the accumulation of social capital under the authoritarian rule.

The Origin of Social Capital

Social capital is seen as an important resource to community and societies as an alternative to the more common forms of capitals such as physical and human capital. The dense network woven by the associational behavior of individuals can provide support as well as transmit valuable information. From Alexis de Tocqueville's associational behavior in voluntary associations (Tocqueville 1835) to Coleman's depiction of social capital being imbedded and facilitating the forming of social structures, and therefore creates human capital (Coleman 1988), to Baker and Schiff discussing such structure can both facilitate interest (Baker 1990) as well as effecting relations (Schiff 1992), there is abundant research in social capital with diverse approaches and conceptualizations.

Since Robert Putnam's "Making Democracy Work", drawing the connection between social capital accumulation and democratic practices and institutions (Putnam 1993), the term has been popularized in political science and social sciences in general. There is now extensive literature on the positive effects of social capital, ranging from development (Evans 1997), regime change and democratization (Diamond 1996, Paley 2001, Gibson 2001), to better governance and public goods provision (Levi 2003, Miguel et al. 2004, Tsai 2002), and have both domestic and international consequences under globalization. There are also studies that analyze the possible negative effects of social capital such as Sheri Berman's finding of social capital facilitating the generation of a fertile ground for empowering Nazism and leading to the collapse of the Weimar Republic (Berman 1997). Mark Granovetter also demonstrates that higher social capital (stronger ties) may have a weaker effect than lower social capital (weaker ties) at transmitting

information (Granovetter 1973). It is undeniable that what the existing literature has focused on is important, but probably the most relevant and, to large extend, ignored question is how social capital is created, and what factors would lead to the variation, particularly the increase, of social capital. For example, Putnam mainly attributes the differences in social capital to events in the 12th century and points out the virtuous (vicious) cycles that social capital would propel its own accumulation (destruction) without explaining where social capital comes from.

As one can tell, the literature on the effect of social capital is quite abundant, but the literature on the origin of social capital is very limited. Drawing from Elinor Ostrom's approach of addressing collective action problem (Ostrom 1990), Francis Fukuyama describes the economists' approach that social capital comes spontaneously after iterated "prisoner's dilemma" games (Fukuyama 1999). When the games are played over and over again, reciprocity will be created, and cooperation will be rewarded. During a multiple party game, the bargaining process is rather decentralized and social capital will be created among the parties after iterated games. This process, if true, does not tell us at what moment or under what condition would the Nash equilibrium suddenly shift from non-cooperative behaviors to cooperative behaviors by different parties. Fukuyama, on a different note, points out that social capital is more often created by hierarchical orders than the decentralized rational choice behaviors, whether through religious mandates or traditional practices (Fukuyama 1999). With this mechanism, social capital is created by habit rather than reason. Of course, one can always make the functionalist assertion to rationalize such habits with the assumption that social capital brings benefits (an assumption with which

Sheri Berman and many others may disagree (Berman 1997)).

Here I point out the limited number of individual studies that look at the sources and mechanisms of social capital. They all have a general problem of endogeneity. Marc Hooghe and Dietlind Stolle investigate the attitudinal components of social capital and see how and why such civic attitudes develop (Hooghe and Stolle 2003). More specifically, they outlined two basic existing approaches: a society-centered approach which focuses on social interaction and an institution-centered approach which emphasize on the role of institutions in creating social capital. Durkheim, Portes and a handful of scholars argue that social integration, group rituals (Durkheim 1893) or internalized norms of reciprocity are the sources of social capital (Portes 1998). Karl Marx also refers class consciousness as the source and regard social capital as "capital of directly associated individuals" (Marx 1894). Developing on such ideas, Debra Minkoff argues that national social movements organizations play a critical role in the production of social capital by providing the infrastructure for collective action (Minkoff 2001). However, the endogeneity problem is obvious because we do not know whether the social movements would actually lead to the creation of social capital or it is the existence of social capital that creates the condition for social movements. Arguing along the lines of the institution-centered approach, Brehm and Rahn point out that multiple institutions (such as family, church organizations, community and voluntary associations, and cultural patterns) would nurture the habits and values that give rise to social capital (Brehm and Rahn 1997). The endogeneity problem remains as members joining such institutions probably had something to do with pre-existing conditions favoring or even stimulating social capital creation. Furthermore, the

existing studies only have post-treatment data and therefore the claims made about the variation in social capital after the treatment — the source — is weakened. There are attempts to depict how social capital would be increased, for example through public goods provision (securing property rights for example so that people would go out and associate) (Gambetta 1993), education (where social rules and norms would be transmitted), membership at religious organizations, and less state intrusion of collective activity (Fukuyama 1999). Such claims can be intuitive but reveals a common problem in this literature by mixing the definition of terms and causes of terms. For example, membership sometimes is used as a key measurement of social capital, yet, also used as a potential source for social capital accumulation.

In this chapter, I intend to draw both from this existing literature and, at the same time, to fill the gaps and address the concerns mentioned above. I define social capital as the norms of reciprocity, trust, and network in which individuals partake as well as such resources possessed by the community collectively, which is reflected among individual members of that community.

This chapter will first establish that there are meaningful effects of sudden unmet demand for public goods in creating social capital by comparing the variations of social capital in the quake-stricken region and non-quake stricken region. With the 2014 Ludian earthquake, variation of social capital before and after the earthquake will also be presented. Then, through in-depth interviews with local government officials, CSO leaders and villagers, I will present three key drivers of social capital accumulation during and after earthquakes at three different levels. At the individual level, social capital is created in local

communities because community members' rising associational voluntarism for self-help. At difficult times, individuals realize the importance of acting collectively to better help their own communities and families recover. Inside the public sphere, the civil society organizations not only create norms of reciprocity during their organized community events but are also able to train individual organizers in local communities to propel the accumulation of social capital through more organized activities. At the state level, the incapacitated local state at first becomes less repressive immediately after the earthquakes because it lacks the resources to maintain societal control but will then realize the benefit of having less pressure over certain CSOs for the public goods and services they provide would potentially generate more stability with much less financial burden on the local state. Therefore, certain types of the initial social capital created by the sudden unmet demand for public goods after earthquakes would be able to be sustained over the long run.

The Sudden Unmet Demand for Public Goods

Immediately after the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake, which was accompanied by multiple aftershocks that would be considered as major earthquakes by themselves considering their magnitude, many local governments were overwhelmed by these of the most destructive earthquakes in the history of the People's Republic of China, and there was a sudden unmet demand for basic public goods provision.[6] Food, water, tent, and sanitary facilities were suddenly in high demand while the supply was not there

[6] An overwhelming majority of interviewees mentioned this point

immediately since the normal provider under this authoritarian setting, the local government, was incapacitated.

As this was happening, both the media and the scholarly community reported the rise of voluntarism and formation of civil society organizations (formal or informal). For instance, volunteers, civil society organizations, private enterprises gradually arrived, then actively participated, and collaborated in quake relief efforts in addition to the existing disaster response mechanism set in place by the government and military. Scholars, particularly those who study civil society and social organizations in China, have claimed 2008 to be "NGO year zero" or the "year of civil society" (Shieh and Deng 2011). The development of those events provides a rare opportunity to study the origin of social capital. Particularly, if we know there is the potential change of the stocks of social capital, do the regions struck by the earthquake severely, which incurred sudden unmet demand for public goods, have more extensive changes than the regions not struck by the quake? If so, is it simply just a "Sichuan phenomenon" or "perfect timing" of social capital accumulation under other factors such as globalization, or is there an underlying logic that made specific communities and individuals struck severely by the earthquake create new stocks of social capitals? These questions will be addressed.

To measure the intensity of the earthquake, this paper distinguishes between counties in Sichuan province that were strongly affected (where the intensity of the Wenchuan earthquake was greater than 4.0 on the Modified Mercalli Intensity Scale, or MMI) and counties lying far away from the epicenters that were minimally affected. (Unless otherwise noted, MMI data is from the US Geological Survey.) According to

USGS:

"*The Modified Mercalli Intensity value assigned to a specific site after an earthquake has a more meaningful measure of severity to the nonscientist than the magnitude because intensity refers to the effects actually experienced at that place.*"[7]

The abbreviated description of the levels of MMI provided by the USGS describes that at Intensity III, "[m]any people do not recognize it as an earthquake." Only at level IV when shaking intensifies from "weak" to "light" would real damages start to occur: "Dishes, windows, doors disturbed; walls make cracking sound. Sensation like heavy truck striking building."[8] Therefore, we decided to use MMI 4.0 as the cut-off point. The intervention is thus dichotomized into a binary variable.[9]

Although during a severe disaster, different regions would have different sizes of unmet demand for public goods. What's theoretically relevant here is that this condition of sudden unmet demand of public goods would be created (a binary variable of 0 or 1) whether the size of the demand is small or large.

It is important to point out that "sudden" change is important in this mechanism. Only under sudden change, would the local community have the expectation for

[7] USGS, "The Modified Mercalli Intensity Scale", http://earthquake.usgs.gov/learn/topics/mercalli.php
[8] USGS, "The Modified Mercalli Intensity Scale: Abbreviated description of the levels of Modified Mercalli Intensity", http://earthquake.usgs.gov/learn/topics/mercalli.php
[9] Earthquake Intensity data is not available consistently when under MMI 4.0 thus making it difficult to construct a continuous variable. Thus, the compromise is treating all MMI below 4.0 as one category. Also, the actual effect of the earthquake might be slightly different from the MMI indicator, making a binary variable a safer option to indicate whether there is meaningful earthquake or not, even some information is lost during this recoding.

improvement, and only under sudden change, would individuals feel the urgency and necessity to rebound. If we were talking about a failed state that would not be able to deliver public goods during normal times and unmet demand for public goods exists on a regular base, the mechanism described above may not work. The "suddenness" generated by earthquake is also unexpected, which makes the independent variable exogenous to many of the pre-existing factors identified in the literature and would create a more rigorous research design.

It is also important to note that some minimal level of individual freedom and vertical accountability need to be present in a soft authoritarian regime. If the state insists to hold tight control of the society and does not care about its people, then, there will be no room for individual association and the operation of civil society organizations even during special times. The choice of China, from a comparative perspective, is that even under an authoritarian rule, as long as there is some level of individual freedom and vertical accountability, this mechanism of sudden unmet demand creating social capital would be able to materialize.

There is a growing literature on disaster and social capital, but most describe how the abundance of social capital would better prepare communities in dealing with disasters and help the recovery process. Daniel Aldrich's study of disasters in Japan, India, and US demonstrates that pre-existing high levels of social capital would lead to stronger resilience and better recovery (Aldrich 2012). Social capital helps coordinate resources and facilitate the reconstruction collectively and therefore would lead to better recovery (Alesch et al. 2009). Alpaslan Özerdem and Tim Jacoby, with their extensive

case studies on Japan, Turkey and India recognized that the local populations, when bonded in networks, are not just victims but also resources in dealing with disasters and civil society organizations can contribute to the disaster relief efforts and can help better manage disaster recoveries (Özerdem and Jacoby 2006).

It is clear that social capital is related to disasters in some way and plays an important role in disaster recovery, but not much research has been done on how social capital came about, particularly how disaster may have an effect on the creation and accumulation of social capital. On the other hand, the media tend to claim and report on the solidarity and bonding of communities after disasters, yet without systematic data and clear mechanism to back those claims. Among the limited studies, Rebecca Solnit in her book *A Paradise Built in Hell* examines five major disasters and describes that after major disasters, survivors would reach out and work together to confront the challenges they face and therefore increase social capital in the community (Solnit 2009). However, there are also scholars who have concluded that major disasters would damage the social fabric in local communities, as people would leave their communities and having weakened networks (Peacock et al. 2007). Furthermore, there are also scholars who make different claims based on studying short-term and long-term effects. It seems that immediately after a disaster, cooperative behavior would increase (De Allesi 1975) while such social fabric created by disasters are short-lived and will not have long-lasting impacts over the long run (Tatsuki 2010).

With such mixed and often opposing claims, scholars such as Daniel Aldrich simply adopted the assumption that “any changes to pre-disaster social capital are limited in time

and effect, and post-disaster social networks are likely to mirror pre-disaster conditions" as the premises for his study of social capital and disaster recovery (Aldrich 2012). Therefore, this study also helps to untangle the endogeneity problem and contribute not only to the social capital literature but also the disaster recovery literature.

Hypotheses

This paper intends to explore the source and origin of social capital creation and, in particular, examine the possible effects of sudden unmet demand for public goods (operationalized as severe earthquakes) in creating social capital. As mentioned in the literature review above, existing scholarly work is quite vague in the temporal dimension of social capital creation/accumulation. If social capital is the outcome of an iterated prisoner dilemma's game, then at what point would the participating parties switch from non-cooperative behavior to cooperative ones? Just because it is convenient, we should not simply assume that the time of switching is stochastic. Here, I hypothesize that:

H1: Unexpected sudden unmet demand for public goods would lead to natural creation/accumulation of social capital

It is also important to investigate the actual mechanism and, after hypothesizing on "when" social capital would be created or "what" might lead to social capital creation,

discuss “how” social capital is created. This process involves three key actors: the local individuals/local community, the civil society organizations, and the local government. Such a mechanism involves the following three hypotheses:

H2: With the condition of sudden unmet demand for public goods, the incapacitated authoritarian government would involuntarily vacuum the space in public sphere for other capable parties (such as civil society organizations) to deliver necessary public goods and then gradually be willing to retain some of that space knowing certain CSOs will be complementary to themselves.

H3: Civil society organizations, enjoying the newly created space, will take the advantage to organize more collective activities with the consequence of transmitting and re-enforcing the norms of reciprocity in local communities

H4: Sudden unmet demand for public goods leading to the rise of voluntarism among the individuals will increase associational behaviors and trust within local communities

Therefore, the government would create the space for social capital accumulation with the condition of sudden unmet demand of public goods provision while the individual villagers and CSO projects would use that space (intentionally and unintentionally) to

increase associational behaviors, trust, and norms of reciprocity, in other words, create social capital.

With the debate laid out by Fukuyama whether social capital creation is a "decentralized process" in terms of bargaining and interacting between multiple parties or a "hierarchical process" in which religion or cultural practices would mandate its creation (or the stocks of social capital to increase), this paper argues that such factors can simultaneously contribute towards the creation of social capital. The society-centered approach and institution-centered approach are not mutually exclusive and can accelerate to evolve at the same time with the natural disaster as a trigger.

Data and Research Design

This paper relies on a new, original dataset I collected and focuses on 43 counties in Sichuan province, China. The dataset draws from three different levels of respondents — government officials, CSO leaders, and local residents — to provide a more holistic picture of the issue. Over 1200 residents were surveyed in 43 counties in 2014 and 2015 in total. In-depth interviews were conducted with over 50 CSOs leaders and 13 selected representative government officials. Quantitative analysis was conducted through natural experiment and difference-in-difference on survey responses from the residents while the in-depth interviews help further explore and clarify the mechanism qualitatively.

The moments of forming and maturing of a space between the public and private sphere is critical in understanding state-society relations and the power relations between

institutions and individuals (Fewsmith 2013). Yet, studies of such moments are rarely done, not just because they usually involve a variety of factors and a process that requires extensive longitudinal observation, but also because they are seldom accessible to researchers since data collection may be difficult in states that do not yet have a functioning civil society, such as China.

This paper takes the rare opportunity with the timing and resources available by observing and communicating with local grassroots CSOs since the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake in China. Being able to visit the same region every year between 2012 and 2015, particularly before and after the Lushan (Sichuan) and Ludian (Yunnan) earthquakes in 2013 and 2014, has allowed me to maintain a continuous observation of the development of different quake-stricken regions.[10] Furthermore, with a new leadership in China since early 2013, scholars of China have mixed anticipations and predictions about major policy changes regarding CSOs and the public sphere. To be able to collect data at this particular moment and document the details as closely as possible can be crucial to the understanding of earthquake, social capital, and state-society relations.

Using earthquakes as exogenous shocks provide a unique and rare moment for social scientists to create a lab-like research design since the location and timing of the epicenter is unexpected and random. The original research design took the post-treatment observational data approach with the intention to compare individuals and communities from the earthquake region (treatment) and those in regions that are far away from

[10] Beijing Normal University, Southwest Finance University, and Sichuan University's research teams have provided tremendous support for this research.

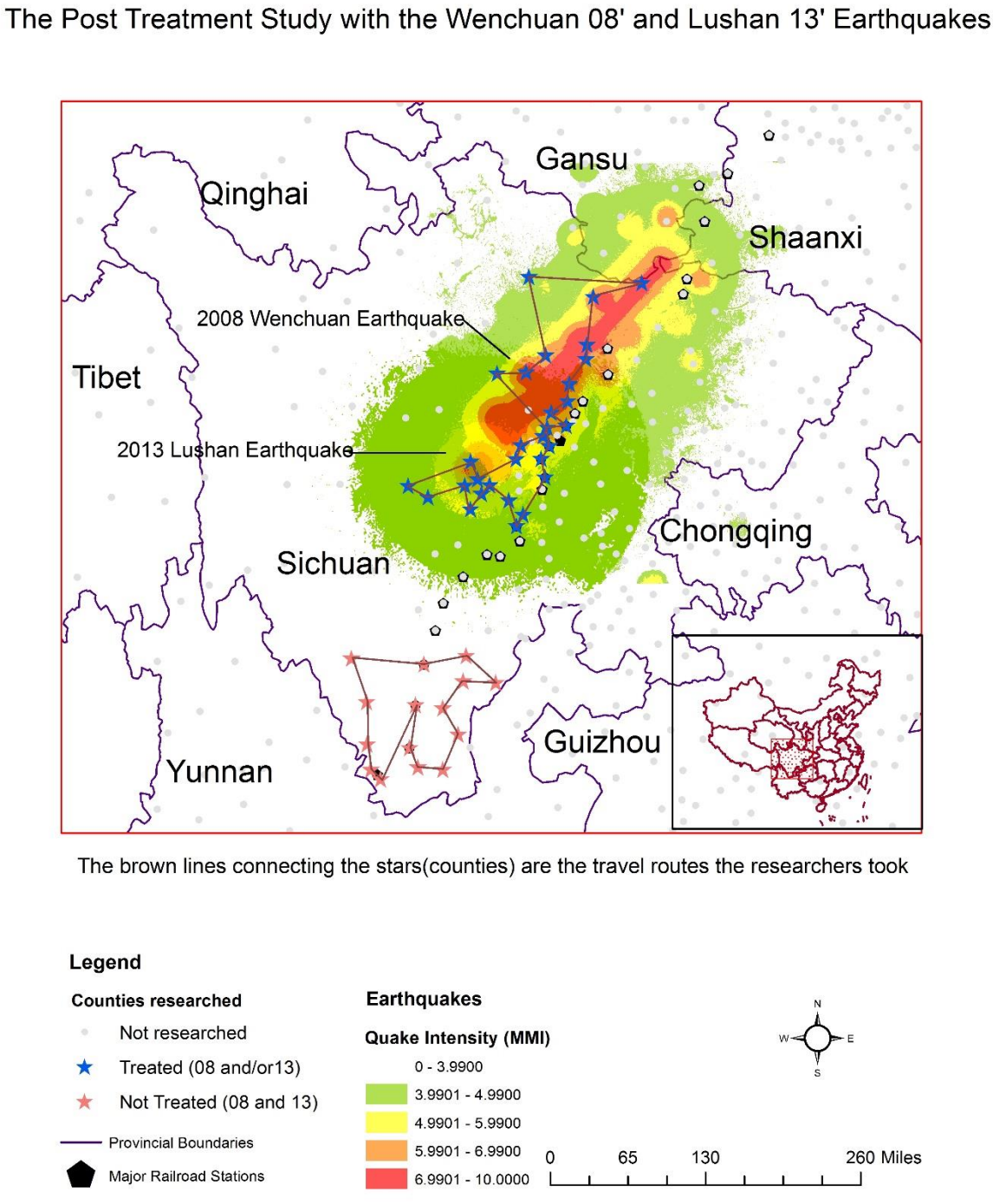
earthquakes (control). It should be pointed out that the disadvantage of missing the pre-treatment data cannot be fully compensated by research design. Yet, it is very difficult to have both pre- and post-treatment data when the treatment is an earthquake, since one cannot predict where and when earthquakes would happen. Coincidentally, two months after the first round of the data was collected, several counties in the originally designated control region (the counties in the southernmost part of Sichuan province) was hit by a magnitude 6.1 earthquake (epicenter in Ludian, Yunnan but effected multiple counties in Southern Sichuan). To take advantage of this natural treatment, I conducted another round of survey four months after the earthquake to capture the variation before and after the earthquake, therefore, utilizing the difference-in-difference design. In this section, research design will be explained in the chronological order to better reflect the evolution of the difference-in-difference design. In the subsequent results and analysis section, the outcome from the difference-in-difference will be presented as the main findings first. Then the results from the original observational natural experiment will be presented as a robustness check.

The original design covers 43 counties — most of the counties accessible and being west of the Chengdu-Kunming railroad as well as the entire ethnic Yi region — from Sichuan province to mimic the remote rural population in China. The difference between these rural counties, in terms of economic development, social structure, modernization level, is smaller than when urban counties and cities are also included.[11] The major reason

[11] There are also about four counties that we passed by and conducted surveys but did not include the data in this particular sample because those county level administrative regions are urban districts of major cities.

to use the Chengdu-Kunming railroad as a cut-off line is because on the east side of the railroad, counties face the contamination from the development of the Metropolitan city of Chongqing. To take into account of different levels of access to transportation, within the region mentioned above, counties were randomly selected within the block of counties that are less than 50 kilometers away from the nearest railroad station and within the block of counties that are more than 50 kilometers away (117km the farthest) both in the control and treatment region.

Figure 2.1： The region covered in the post treatment study



Those counties were divided into two experimental groups geographically. The control group is the region near the southernmost part of Sichuan province where, when the data was collected, there were no major earthquakes previously in the region. The treatment group is in the region where the Wenchuan earthquake (2008) and Lushan earthquake (2013) hit. The epicenters of the two earthquakes are quite close to each other, about 150 miles apart and therefore the relative intensity of the earthquake would be similar between individuals during the two earthquakes. It is important to point out that this research design does not take into account population movement between and after the earthquakes. However, from the people we have interviewed, most people who emigrated after the earthquake went to the east coast to make money in order to bring that money back home for reconstruction of their houses. Individuals tend not to leave for too long, usually for a year or so. By the time this systematic survey was conducted, people who have previously left had overwhelmingly returned to their original homes as they expressed they have made enough money to rebuild the homes destroyed, and they would rather come home than being a migrant worker somewhere else. Therefore, it is relatively accurate to claim that the population this research surveys and interviews mirrors itself before the two major earthquakes and by the time the data was collected.

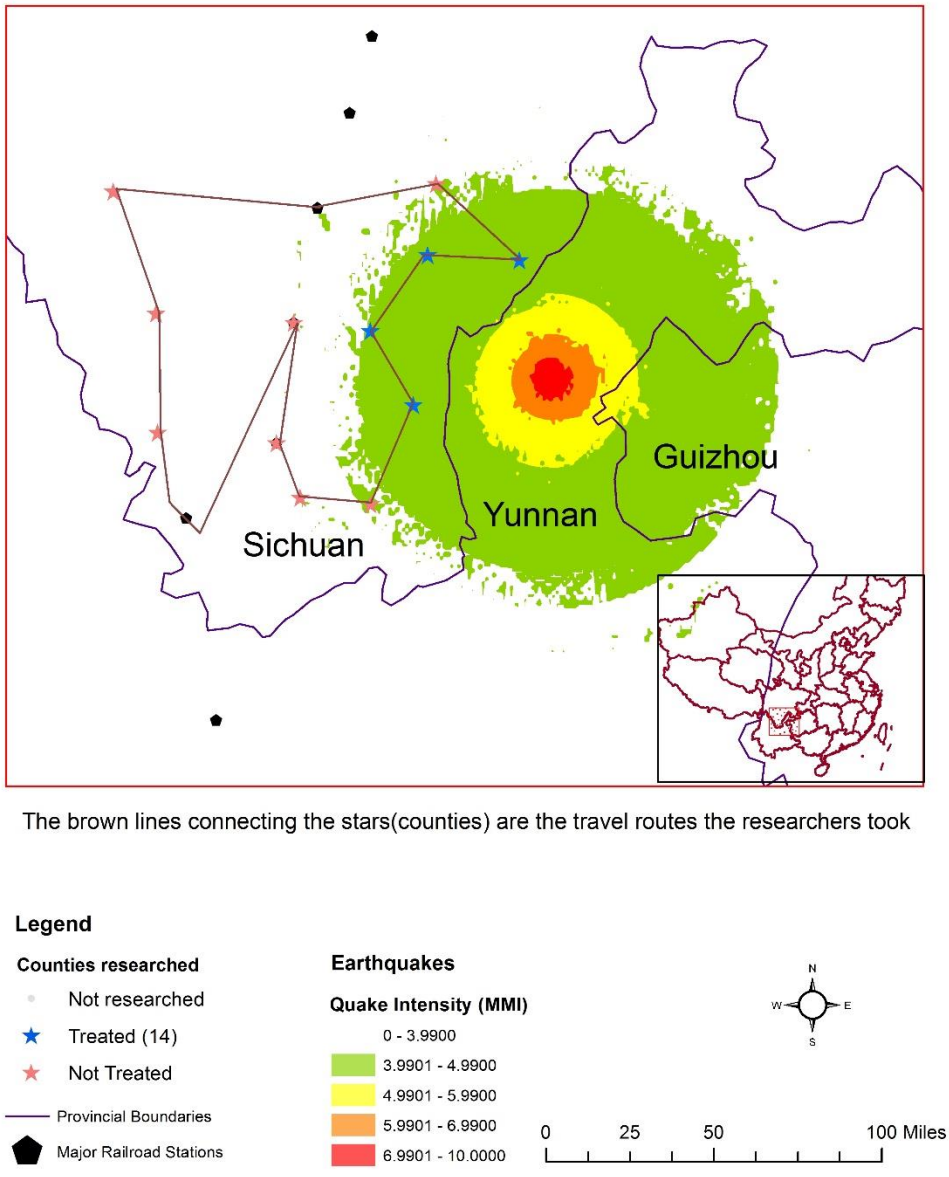
For each of the 43 counties, three villages were selected randomly. The research team would travel on the major highway (in such remote regions, it is most often provincial level highway or lower). After randomly selecting three not so close entries to three villages, the team will first exit the highway and drive a few miles and then take another random turn and interview five individuals randomly selected in each of those villages. Therefore

about 15 people were randomly selected from each county and answered the questions in the survey.

The first round of the data was collected from May to June in 2014. In August of the same year, Ludian in northern Yunnan province bordering southern Sichuan was hit by a magnitude 6.1 earthquake. 12 out of the 36 villages originally in the control region were severely affected by the earthquake. Therefore, another round of surveys and interviews were conducted from December 2014 to January 2015 to capture the post-treatment condition of both the control and treatment areas in the original design.

Not all of the previous designated control regions were affected by the Ludian earthquake, and therefore, those villages not affected by the Ludian earthquake would serve as the new control group and those affected by the earthquake would be in the treatment group in this difference-in-difference design. This second approach therefore only utilizes data from the previous designated control region to exclude the potential contamination from regions previously affected by other earthquakes near Wenchuan and Lushan.

Figure 2.2：The region covered in the difference-in-difference study



Another advantage captured by this design is that the people included are mainly ethnic Yi who probably are the least developed people in China and not only represent a rural population (without contamination from urbanization and other factors for development) but also did not move around due to the earthquake. Individuals remained at their villages mostly before and after the Ludian earthquake.

Since I was not able to always revisit the same individuals in each village during the second round (although the same households were almost entirely revisited), analyzing at the village level would provide a more consistent observation of the same unit of analysis. The multiple people's aggregated data from each village would construct the village statistic for each observation.

There are 36 villages in total, each sampled twice, once before the Ludian earthquake and once after. Among the 36 villages in the sample, 12 were affected by the Ludian earthquake, and the other 24 were used as the control. Although scholars like Bourdieu argues that social capital is a societal and collective phenomenon and therefore should not be studied individually (Newton 2001), there are others who also see such studies not be located at any one level of analysis (Bankston and Zhou 2002). Therefore, for robustness check purpose, this paper will also present the results of how social capital have varied on the individual level although it will not be treated as panel data since I did not strictly resample the same individuals before and after the treatment in each village.

Operationalization

The dependent variable "social capital" is operationalized as trust individuals have regarding the local community, the frequency they interact and get together with others and membership of organizations. This is to best, and most practically, capture Putnam's definition of social capital: trust, network, and norms of reciprocity (Putnam 1993). Although there were about 50 questions asked in the survey, the following are of theoretical interest to construct the index for the dependent variable social capital:

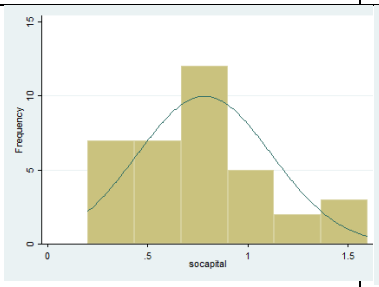
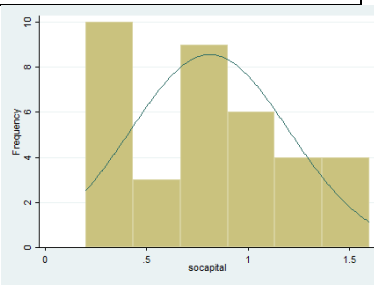
1. Please name three people you trust the most. Are they your 1) Closest friends 2) Family members 3) People whom I share the same interest 4) Colleagues 5) Members of the same organization and have none of the above relations 6) I trust no one, I only trust myself 7) Other
2. Do you often get together with others? Yes or No
3. Are you a member of any organizations? (For example, senior clubs, co-operatives, volunteer associations, charities, social organizations, clubs, etc.) Yes or No

Question one is re-coded as a binary variable. Options 1, 2 and 6 are coded as 0; other options — meaning the respondent trusts someone outside of their immediate circle of friends and family — are coded 1 (Fei 2006).[12] An ordinal index variable, which has the

[12] Sociologists on China such as Fei Xiaotong have long argued that typical social fabric is within the family in rural China.

values of 0, 1, 2, and 3 (the sum of the three binary variables equally weighted), is therefore created by combining the above set of questions. The above three questions measure trust, networks, and potential norms of reciprocity, drawing from Putnam's depiction of what social capital is.

Table 2.1: Distribution of the dependent variable "social capital" in both analyses

	Social capital level	Entire Sichuan analysis	Ludian region analysis (pre-earthquake)	Ludian region analysis (post-earthquake)
Social capital at each level	0	189		
	1	303		
	2	89		
	3	15		
Mean		0.8826	0.7833	0.8111
Std. Dev.		0.7445	0.3358	0.3912
Observa-tions		596	36	36

The key independent variable of interest is sudden unmet demand for public goods which is created by the earthquake. For both designs, regions that have received MMI 4.0 and above during the earthquakes, will be coded as 1 and the control region that was not affected by the earthquakes were coded 0.

Key control variables would first include variables that would not have post-treatment effects. Since the literature has suggested that economic development, income and other factors that points to the development level may be altered by the earthquake or

may be a representation of the condition before the earthquake happened, the second model will only include age, gender, and education level of the individuals.[13]

The third model would add socio-economic variables. Lily Tsai in her book *Accountability without Democracy* draws evidences from rural China and argues that temple/religious organizations and clan/lineage systems are crucial in providing social support and delivering public goods in rural China, even when there is no democratic accountability (Tsai 2007). Therefore, questions about whether there is a temple/religious organization or a family clan in the local village were asked and the two binary variables were also included in the model, along with monthly income for robustness checks.

The Ludian Earthquake and difference-in-difference Analysis

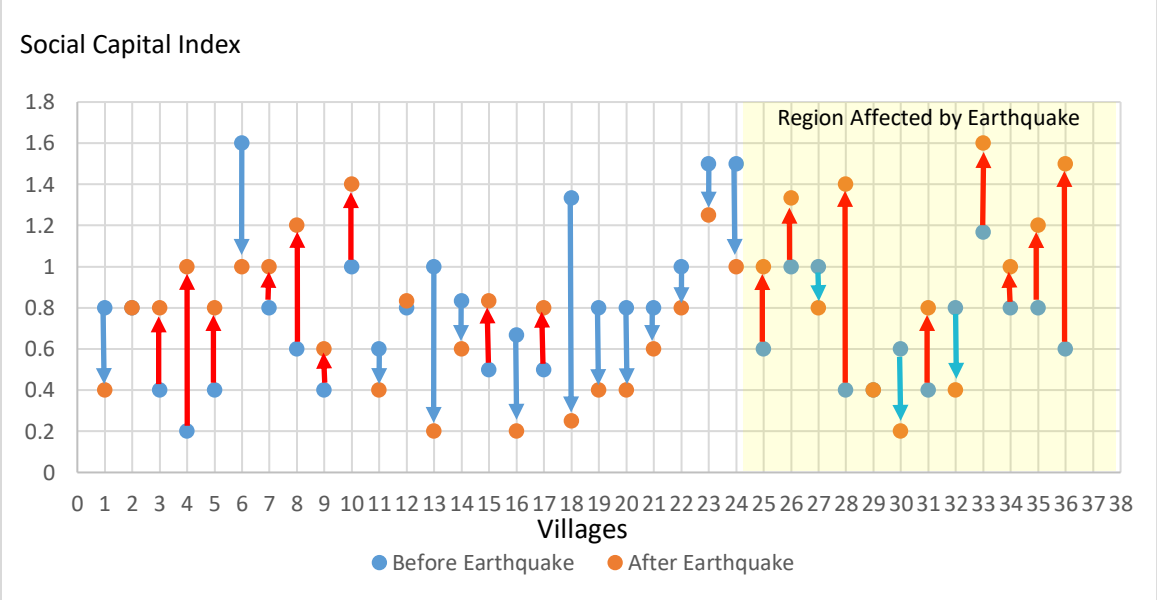
Descriptive Data and Balance

The difference-in-difference design utilizes the opportunity that data was collected both before and after the Ludian earthquake in Yunnan province, which affected the southernmost part of Sichuan province. This was a modified design since I would not have expected the earthquake coming when constructing the first design. Therefore, we did not collect personal identifiers (names, specific street address, phone numbers, etc.) during the first round. The follow-up, post-treatment visit tried the best to visit the same people, but

[13] Male is coded as 1 and female 0 in the gender variable; the education variable is an ordinal variable that counts years of education since the first year of elementary school. In the Chinese system, finishing elementary school will be 6, middle school 9, high school 12, college 16, and so forth.

the team was only able to guarantee the same village and same corner of the same street. Individuals may not have been the same. Therefore, to have a difference-in-difference design, sacrifices have to be made to aggregate data to the village level, and all variables will thus be the mean of the individual data from that particular village. A non-panel, individual level, analysis will be presented later for robustness check purpose.

Figure 2.3: Ludian Earthquake and Social Capital Change in Villages



Among the 12 villages affected by the earthquake (when interviewees reported damage of any kind from the earthquake in the village), eight of them increased in the social capital index (66.7%), one remained the same, and the other three had moderate decrease in social capital. Among the 24 villages not affected by the Ludian earthquake (also not affected by previous earthquakes), nine increased in social capital (37.5%), one remained the same, and 14 decreased. It is important to point out that more villages in the control region declined in social capital between June 2014 and January 2015. One should

not assume that the social capital index in local communities would be constant throughout time, even in short time periods. The macro environment could exacerbate a culture of mistrust and the micro environment could create incentives for migration, both, among many other factors, could lead to the change of social capital.

As a typical natural experiment, the random assignment of the treatment, earthquake, was not under my control. Since the sample size is not extremely large (given that the data has been aggregated at the village level), it is worth checking the assignment outcome to see whether the procedure, *ex-post*, had produced treatment groups that is correlated with the characteristics of the villages in a systematic way. The following table reports the result of a logistic regression of the treatment status of each village being randomized into the treatment group on six different pre-treatment variables (so that the earthquake would not be able to influence, or have not yet influenced the values). Age is the average age of each village; gender is the average gender (0 being female and 1 being male); education is the average years of school since 1st year of elementary school; family size is the number of individuals within each household; religious index is the awareness of any religious organizations in the village; clan index is the awareness of any clans in the village.

Table 2.2: Balance of Treatment Assignment

Pre-treatment conditions	Logit Regression of the treatment on the following background indicators	Mean in control group	Mean in treatment group	Mean differences
Age	-0.0392	43.9896	43.1472	-0.8424
	(-0.64)			
Gender	0.730	0.5	0.5889	0.0889
	(0.36)			
Education	-0.483	6.5667	4.8333	-1.7334
	(-1.79)			
Family size	-0.0231	6.4965	6.7153	0.2188
	(-0.23)			
Religious index	-4.575	0.3542	0.1917	-0.1625
	(-1.39)			
Clan index	2.214	0.2858	0.3722	0.0864
	(0.98)			
Constant	4.046			
	(1.20)			
Observations	36	24	12	

t statistics in parentheses
* p<.10, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

As expected, the result indicates that the village characters were not predictors of the treatment assigned. Years of education, even though not significant at the p=<0.05 level, could potentially be a predictor. In the analysis that covers the entire Sichuan region, we would see that education would potentially be a positive factor for social capital accumulation. Therefore, with a negative sign here (i.e. the control region might have slightly higher levels of education than the treatment region), the potential imbalance may not seriously weaken the argument. The treated region has a slightly lower education level while education level is positively related to social capital in the larger dataset.

Results

The regression model for difference-in-difference (DD) estimator usually takes the following form: Y = B + T + X + T*X (Gerring 2012). The corresponding estimator for this study, therefore, is:

$$SC = B + date + ludian + treatment^{14}$$

Where SC is the dependent variable, the social capital index, B is a series of control variables, date is a time dummy (date=0 for the pre-test, date=1 for the post-test), Ludian is the earthquake (ludian=0 for the control region, ludian=1 for the treatment region exposed to the Ludian earthquake), and the product of date*ludian is the DD (treatment), the quantity of interest. The observations are clustered at the county level since some county features may influence the outcome. The regression results presented below indicates that the Ludian earthquake did indeed generate a larger positive shift of social capital in the earthquake region than the change of social capital in the control region.

[14] The treatment is the interaction term: date*ludian

Table 2.3: Earthquake and Social Capital at Village Level

	(1) socapital	(2) socapital	(3) socapital	(4) socapital
treatment	0.342**	0.358**	0.379**	0.397**
	(2.95)	(2.65)	(2.42)	(2.64)
ludian	-0.104	-0.111	-0.130	-0.134
	(-0.93)	(-0.88)	(-0.87)	(-0.96)
date	-0.0861	-0.0865	-0.102	-0.188
	(-0.88)	(-0.86)	(-0.87)	(-1.21)
age		0.00192	0.00135	0.00161
		(0.34)	(0.22)	(0.34)
education		0.00277	0.00623	0.00784
		(0.15)	(0.37)	(0.50)
gender		0.144	0.160	0.0865
		(0.63)	(0.72)	(0.36)
monthly income			-0.0000293	-0.0000101
			(-0.52)	(-0.18)
religious index				-0.0400
				(-0.12)
clan index				0.295
				(1.07)
Constant	0.818***	0.643	0.694	0.599
	(10.47)	(1.61)	(1.54)	(1.61)
Observations	72	72	72	72

t statistics in parentheses
* p<.10, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

The result is consistent with different control variables. Model (1) is the basic DD estimator without any control variables; model (2) introduces the basic individual background controls including age, education, and gender; model (3) added the socio-

economic control namely monthly income; model (4) introduces two variables that are core of Lily Tsai's argument regarding how the presence of religious or lineage systems at the local level would help deliver public goods in non-democratic China. It is worth noting that the estimates are remarkably consistent across different specifications, which is consistent with the assumption that the treatment is as-if random.

The social capital index is originally a 0–3 ordinal variable. When taking the average of that index at the village level, the range is from 0.2–1.6. Therefore, an increase of 0.342–0.397 on this index for a village on average when being exposed to earthquake is both significant in magnitude and in statistical sense. It is also important to point out that the presence of religious organizations and clans in villages did not have much effect on the stocks of social capital.

The Wenchuan and Lushan Earthquakes

Descriptive Data and Balance

The original research design targets the aftermath of the 2008 Wenchuan and 2013 Lushan earthquakes, overlapping almost the same region. When selecting regions, two important factors were considered. First, the counties should have similar backgrounds before the earthquake in terms of demography, development level, and government capacities. Second, the treatment region should be exposed to the earthquakes and the control region should have no earthquake effect. The detailed selection process was discussed above in the research design section. By utilizing the data available from the

Chinese Yearbooks, I demonstrate that the control region and the treatment region are not significantly different on key indicators in 2007 before the earthquakes happened.

Table 2.4: Background Comparison at the County Level (2007)

Category	Variable	Units	Control Region	Treatment Region	Difference	t-test p-value
Population	Total Population	in 10,000, mean	25.65385	30.07586	4.42201	0.5265
	Agriculture population percentage	%	81.5	72.27586	-9.22414	0.1237
Financial	GDP per capita	in Chinese RMB	12828.75	15607.83	2779.08	0.2707
	Local gov. revenue	in 10,000 RMB	17293.92	32815.69	15521.77	0.2955
	Local gov. expenditure	in 10,000 RMB	45687.46	60267.52	14580.06	0.342
Public goods provision	Hospitals per 10,000 people	#	1.45508	1.407238	-0.047842	0.8834
	Primary schools per 10,000 people	#	4.148126	3.292701	-0.855425	0.3983

Comparing the counties in the control region and the treatment region, the population mean, percentage of population who are agricultural, GDP per capita, local government revenue and expenditure, hospital and schools per 10,000 are not significantly different from each other. By looking at the data I collected, particularly the pre-treatment variables (that earthquakes would not influence the outcome of those variables with the concern that the data was only collected after treatment), the age difference is significant

through a t-test. A logistic regression with treatment assignment (the earthquake) as the dependent variable also reveals that gender and education may not be balanced potentially. Therefore, this article will present both the analysis of the original data and the data that were matched with coarsened exacted matching (CEM) (Stefano et al. 2012) to improve the validity of assumptions and reduce selection bias.

Table 2.5: Balance of Self-collected Data on Pre-treatment Variables

	Unit	Control Region	Treatment Region	Difference	t-test p-value
Age	Year, mean	43.40566	49.62814	6.22248	0***
Gender	Male (1), Female (0)	0.5377358	0.4785894	-0.0591464	0.16
Education	Year since 1st grade	6.457547	6.596977	0.13943	0.71

One of many advantages of using matching is that inferences from better-balanced data sets will be less model dependent (Ho et al. 2007). The most commonly used matching is propensity score matching (PSM) in the equal percent bias reducing (EPBR) class. Iacus et al. point out that the EPBR approach has a few data restrictions and therefore the Monotonic Imbalance Bounding (MIB) should be considered to drop the restrictive assumptions about the data and focus on the actual in-sample balance rather than the expected balance (Stefano et al. 2011). CEM in the MIB class coarsens each variable by recoding so that substantively indistinguishable values are grouped and assigned the same numerical value. For example, in this research, the difference between individuals receiving 3 years of education and 4 years is probably different from those who received 6

and 7 since "7" indicates a qualitative jump from elementary school to middle school. Therefore, coarsening those who attended but did not finish elementary school in the matching process would improve the quality of matching. After matching the coarsened pre-treatment covariates, CEM creates the treatment variable by randomly assigning one or more of the units within each stratum to receive treatment and leave the others to be assigned as control units. The coarsened data are then discarded, and the original values of the matched data are retained (Stefano et al. 2012). The advantage of CEM over PSM in this particular research is that matching is over the entire empirical distribution rather than focusing on getting the means of the distributions closer. At the meantime, the error due to the omitted variable bias is smaller (Zhang 2010) while the matching of the matched variable does not reduce the balance of other variables.

Coarsened exact matching tests causal inference with fewer assumptions, and are less model dependent than both typical regression models and conventional propensity score matching, with a pre-processed dataset. The matching summary is as below. The L1 statistic measure includes imbalance with respect to the full joint distribution which is 0.3059.[15] The L1 value is not valuable on its own but can serve as a reference point or the baseline reference for the unmatched data. In the first column is the L1 measured for each variable separately and the following columns are difference in means and empirical quartiles of the distribution of the two groups for each variable.

[15] Perfect global balance (up to coarsening) is indicated by L1 = 0, and larger values indicate larger imbalance between the groups, with a maximum of L1 = 1.

Table 2.6: Univariate balance after CEM

	L1	mean	min	25%	50%	75%	max
Age	0.07358	0.55858	1	0	0	2	-12
Gender	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Education	0.04905	0.0685	0	0	0	0	2

Multivariate L1 distance: 0.30592857

Results:

Since the dependent variable social capital is an ordinal variable composed with three binary variables: trust, get-together, and membership of organizations, the ordinal logistic regression model is used. The following results include three different unmatched models, each followed with an adjusted model with county-level clustered standard errors[16] since there might be shared features not controlled by the process.

[16] The standard errors are allowed for intragroup correlation (villages within the same county), relaxing the usual requirement that observations be independent. Here, my assumption is that observations are independent across groups (counties) but not necessarily within groups.

Table 2.7：Earthquake and Social Capital Accumulation (un-matched)

	Benchmark Model	BM clustered at county	BM with demographic controls	Clustered at county	BM with socioeconomic controls	Clustered at county
Social Capital						
quakelevelbi	0.369**	0.369**	0.394**	0.394***	0.347**	0.347**
	(2.25)	(2.28)	(2.29)	(2.63)	(1.97)	(2.23)
age			0.00753	0.00753	0.00787	0.00787
			(1.22)	(1.29)	(1.25)	(1.36)
gender			0.783***	0.783***	0.780***	0.780***
			(4.68)	(4.42)	(4.58)	(4.27)
education			0.115***	0.115***	0.108***	0.108***
			(5.29)	(5.82)	(4.66)	(4.88)
near_dist					0.00000208	0.00000208
					(0.96)	(0.96)
monthly income					0.00000921	0.00000921
					(0.27)	(0.29)
religious					0.311*	0.311*
					(1.79)	(1.81)
cut1						
Constant	-0.532***	-0.532***	0.913**	0.913***	1.061***	1.061***
	(-3.92)	(-4.45)	(2.43)	(2.72)	(2.61)	(2.74)
cut2						
Constant	1.803***	1.803***	3.457***	3.457***	3.612***	3.612***
	(11.55)	(12.84)	(8.54)	(9.06)	(8.27)	(8.39)
cut3						
Constant	3.909***	3.909***	5.608***	5.608***	5.831***	5.831***
	(13.69)	(15.31)	(11.79)	(12.18)	(11.45)	(11.70)
Observations	596	596	594	594	586	586

t statistics in parentheses
Source: Taiyi Sun
* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

The Benchmark model uses the social capital index as the dependent variable and the earthquake binary variable ("quakelevelbi") as the key independent variable of interest. Note that since the social capital index is an ordinal variable with four different values,

there are three cutoff points' constant values also shown at the bottom of each model. The second group of models introduce the demographic control variables including age, gender, and education level. The third group of models added socioeconomic controls such as distance to the nearest railway station, monthly income, and the existence of religious groups in the community.

The independent variable "quakelevelbi" in all the models are significantly and positively related to the level of social capital. The coefficients in all the models — whether clustered at the county level or not — inform us that for a one unit increase in earthquake (i.e., going from 0 to 1, and therefore from no earthquake to earthquake), we expect a 0.347–0.394 increase in the log odds of being in a higher level of social capital index, given all of the other variables in the model are held constant.

Gender and education are also significantly related to social capital. For being male, we expect a 0.78 increase in the log odds of being in a higher level of social capital index. One year increase in education would also be expected to increase the log odds of social capital index to be in a higher level of 0.108–0.115 unit. Lily Tsai's research suggests that temple/religious organizations may strengthen the social ties and provide public goods in local communities in China. From the last two models, we see that having religious organizations in the local community is at the border of being significant and when clustered at the county level, the significance is even weaker, controlling age, gender, education level, distance to nearest railroad station, monthly income, and the effects of earthquake. It is not surprising that being male or educated would lead to more social capital. Yet, being affected by the earthquakes (or the experience of public goods demand

suddenly not being met in local communities) is a much better predictor of social capital accumulation than the presence of religious organizations in the local community in Sichuan.

The matched models show similar results. The background variables being matched through coarsened exact matching are age, gender, and education level particularly because of the threat to balance between the control and treated region on age. With matching, the magnitude and significance of the positive relationship between earthquake and social capital accumulation increased. Therefore, among the pairs sharing similar demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds, the results are robust and consistent to the un-matched models.

Table 2.8: Earthquake and Social Capital (CEM)

	Benchmark Model	BM clustered at county	BM with demographic controls	Clustered at county	BM with socioeconomic controls	Clustered at county
socapital						
quakelevelbi	0.626***	0.626***	0.669***	0.669***	0.638***	0.638***
	(3.59)	(3.07)	(3.75)	(3.16)	(3.45)	(2.97)
age			0.0115	0.0115	0.0113	0.0113
			(1.56)	(1.09)	(1.52)	(1.12)
gender			1.015***	1.015***	1.024***	1.024***
			(5.68)	(4.57)	(5.63)	(4.55)
edu			0.106***	0.106***	0.102***	0.102***
			(3.99)	(3.27)	(3.74)	(3.17)
near_dist					0.00000192	0.00000192
					(0.79)	(0.72)
monthincome					-0.0000180	-0.0000180
					(-0.43)	(-0.36)
religious					0.380**	0.380*
					(2.06)	(1.84)
cut1						
Constant	-0.248*	-0.248	1.393***	1.393**	1.537***	1.537**
	(-1.75)	(-1.38)	(2.86)	(2.26)	(2.98)	(2.51)
cut2						
Constant	2.012***	2.012***	3.857***	3.857***	4.013***	4.013***
	(11.79)	(11.53)	(7.46)	(5.89)	(7.34)	(6.15)
cut3						
Constant	3.908***	3.908***	5.816***	5.816***	6.032***	6.032***
	(13.77)	(8.78)	(10.18)	(9.39)	(9.99)	(9.06)
Observations	531	531	531	531	523	523

t statistics in parentheses
Source: Taiyi Sun
* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Analysis and Discussion

If sudden unmet demand for public goods triggered by earthquake directly leads to the social capital accumulation of local communities, as well as changing the quality of social capital in existing communities, what is the actual mechanism? What happens next

to the social capital? Are the effects short-lived like some scholars argue or could there be long lasting impacts? How may such social capital turn into fabrics for civil society? What roles do citizens, CSOs, and the government play in this process? The qualitative data collected in this research would help explain the above questions. The argument is that earthquakes do generate social capital and such capital is generated and maintained by the bonding and trust created through increased interactions between individuals, CSOs, and local governments. Those effects can last a long time if the local government (including policy instruments) and certain individuals do not actively interfere and disrupt the social capital that were created. Under the soft-authoritarian regime in China, it is observed that the "regime-embracing" type of social capital has remained even 7 years after the Wenchuan earthquake while the "regime-challenging" type of social capital would be short lived since government, CSOs and individuals all went through a learning process during and immediately after the earthquakes and made adjustments accordingly to better survive.

The Mechanism of Social Capital Accumulation

During the in-depth interviews with government officials, civil society organization leaders and local villagers, several processes contributed towards the accumulation of social capital with the sudden unmet demand of public goods triggered by earthquake.

Villagers in the local communities mentioned on numerous occasions that even though they were in the earthquake zone and they were affected by the earthquakes, they still donated money to others. "There are people who need the money more than we do,"

said a local villager whose house collapsed and had to live with her distant family for a while right after the earthquake. Earthquakes stimulated collective action during the recovery period as certain jobs require more than one family's labor to complete. "People who live nearby whom I did not know before came to help," said a few interviewees, "we became friends later on and played Mahjong often."

The regions hit by earthquake but not as severely also has the phenomenon of exporting volunteers. The volunteers we interviewed in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, mainly come from large cities. It is not common for people in the rural area to cross village lines and help others to rebuild. Yet, this phenomenon is particularly interesting in quake regions that those villages suffering no damage or minor damage from the earthquake would organize to help people in neighboring communities in need. This organization process is usually led by the squad leader (the squad is an informal administrative level below the village level), and sometimes by the party secretary of the village. One villager said, "My father is a [communist] party member. When village leaders started helping others and saving lives, my father felt obligated to join and no longer cared about their personal interests. When facing big disasters, we see a tremendous amount of charitable actions."

Overall, we see that people react collectively to rebuild their communities. Through such process, social capital was created. Money borrowing behavior appeared particularly for the purpose of rebuilding which in turn created reciprocity; the help from a stranger or being a recipient of donations and support created trust; participating the collective action and getting to know people they did not know before to rebuild communities together

created new networks.

Civil society organizations also facilitated the accumulation of social capital during the earthquakes. These types of processes were mostly not native-grown but stimulated by the out-of-the-village factors. CSOs, charities with donations, volunteers and organizers poured into the quake regions right after the earthquakes — Wenchuan and Lushan earthquakes being more notable. There were already civil society organizations in the city of Chengdu before the earthquake hit and the epicenters were not very far from where they were. There were also individuals coming directly from Hong Kong and Taiwan or even foreign countries to participate in the quake relief effort. The social capital building mainly happens with two approaches: 1). CSOs directly connecting local people together by organizing quake-relief and entertainment activities, and 2). CSOs facilitated the capacity building of local individuals and turned them into organizers themselves.

The first type is very common immediately after the earthquake. CSOs set up shelter centers constructing big tents in multiple locations and provided basic goods to community members after the earthquakes. There were specialized CSOs that organized activities for different targeted groups. For example, there were many mothers who lost their only child (due to the one child policy in China) during the earthquake, and one CSO would frequently get the mothers together and organize psychotherapy treatment sessions. There were many people who lost their source of income during the earthquake as farmland they used to work from were no longer arable. There are a few CSOs that would organize training sessions for the local villagers to develop a new set of skills — for example raising rabbits and sell them as commodities. Such activities that originally intended to either equip

individuals with skills or help them recover from the shadow of the earthquakes simultaneously facilitated the connection and trust between individuals and wove the social fabric of local communities. It was often reported that new friendships were made and maintained during and after such activities.

The second type is less often but more sustainable. A particular individual I have followed since 2009 is a typical case. L[17] worked as a restaurant owner since 2003. Even before the earthquake, he was quite innovative by letting customers decide the price of each meal they had themselves. Right after the earthquake, he decided that he had to do something to help and started providing free meals for local residents as well as volunteers. He also organized a volunteer team of his own to help pick up trash and unload goods donated by others. After the immediate response period passed, he did not want to dissolve his team but lacked funding. At the meantime, he got to know some of the CSO leaders in Chengdu and participated in several training programs. He was also introduced to local communist party youth league leaders who put him into training programs under the Red Cross China local chapter. Through those training programs, he learned the skills of organizing, fundraising and got familiarized with how to interact with the local government, providing the best outcomes possible yet still operating within the domain of local regulations and government expectations. When I revisited him a fourth time in 2015, he was training a new generation of local organizers and volunteers and providing basic public goods to people in need — seniors without children or handicapped people. He is no longer

[17] Here, I am using a pseudonym to protect the interviewee's identity

running the restaurant but is now a full-time CSO leader.

Another example is NI who originally intended to take two weeks off as a volunteer to help the quake relief effort. After being a volunteer, he was touched by what people were able to achieve helping others in the community and therefore joined the Non-profit incubator's training program. Soon, he quit his original job and became a full-time organizer turning families in quake regions as "cultural motels" that receive "charitable tourists" who have the intention to experience local culture and donate money to local community developments. He also has started training programs for raising animals in multiple communities after the Lushan earthquake and has turned several others in multiple communities as organizers. I have visited several of those "cultural motels" where the families are not only receiving guests, raising some kind of animal (rabbits, bees, pigs, etc.) but are also getting their neighbors to do the same. Such a process has facilitated further social capital accumulation in those local communities.

The local government also played an important role in keeping the space open for social capital to accumulate. Several county-level civil affairs officials have told me that they are actively promoting social organizations to form, particularly those that deliver public goods, stimulate economic output, and provide entertainment options for community members because such activities share the burden of local governments. During one interview, an official said: "We used to distrust them, but after the earthquake, we realized that they are not really anti-government. We are thinking about all kinds of ways to support individuals to form their own social organizations. We admire regions like Shanghai where people not only enjoy policy support but also have abundant society

resources to sustain the non-profit efforts. Here in our locality, we have to try very hard to persuade people that running a CSO is less risky and more rewarding than they would expect." He continues by saying that there are three pre-requisites that have to be met for someone to start a social organization: time, money, and motivation. The local government is trying to use policy instruments to motivate those who have time and money and organize their own organizations.

Such behavior is very rare in the non-quake stricken region as local government officials did not know much about social organizations. Even officials in the civil affairs department lack knowledge about the status of local social organizations since their main focus is delivering public goods themselves. The officials from the quake region, on the other hand, have interacted with CSOs intensely during the immediate recovery period and experienced how helpful these organizations can be to their own jobs. The myths about non-government organizations being anti-government is no longer true to them and they want to take advantage of those societal forces to help themselves govern. Therefore, not only did they not shut down CSOs, they are using policy tools and providing resources (in the form of purchasing services) to help individuals who want to start their own organizations or organize villagers collectively to provide public goods.

The Party's role is also worth noting. On numerous occasions, villagers mentioned party members have helped them tremendously during and after the earthquake, and the local party committee have introduced them to the right person and provided adequate resources for them to get over the most difficult periods. The individuals kept in touch with those party members who helped them. Local party committees have also organized senior

associations, brass orchestras, dance teams, Mahjong and poker clubs and other entertainment outlets so that such associational networks would provide support to people, particularly those who have lost family members during the earthquake.

The villages in the quake region that lost social capital were also investigated. It turns out that the abnormal outcome was mainly caused by government policy rather than earthquakes themselves. Local villagers told us that the local government, realizing the land is no longer arable, and facing the pressure from international environmental movements and central government's "conversion of degraded land into forest and grassland" (退耕还林) policy, have prohibited them from farming on their land. Government gave them a large sum of money, but they would not be able to live sustainably in the villages anymore. Therefore, many of the people took the money and went to the coastal provinces to start their businesses. In these scenarios, social capital was originally created, but the government policies were destructive to the newly created social capital.

Overall, it is clear that several processes were simultaneously happening after the earthquakes: individual villagers increased their associational behaviors due to self-help and compassion for others; CSOs and organizers built capacity of individuals and turned many into organizers themselves while increased interactions between local individuals through their training and recovery programs; local governments are more familiarized with the work social organizations do see the benefit and reward of such associational behaviors, and therefore are creating spaces and incubating associations to shoulder their burden by having them providing safety net and delivering public goods.

The longevity of the Social Capital Created

New social capital is created and accumulates during and after the earthquakes that triggered the sudden unmet demand of public goods. In Sichuan province, China, the role government and society play help sustain the accumulation. Seven years after the Wenchuan earthquake and two years after the Lushan earthquake, the accumulated social capital is still in play due to the learning and adaptation of the individuals, CSOs, and the local government.

In an authoritarian country like China, it is naïve to believe that the state has retreated from the space for civil society and social capital accumulation. The state remains very much in control. Yet, by putting the pieces together, it is clear that the earthquake has triggered the local government to have the will to try and provide space for certain activities while still being in control.

It is quite common, reported after both the Wenchuan and Lushan earthquake that the local government told CSO leaders not to send their team into their jurisdiction. CSO leaders, however, seeing that the government was no longer capable of delivering public goods — particularly the emergency rescue packages, went in despite the orders from the local government. This happened more often during the 2013 earthquake as one CSO leader reported that "we have an excuse because this was the village we have helped since the last earthquake and the local government knows the kind of people we are, they are not going to react too negatively." The 2008 earthquake has created an opportunity for the CSOs and local governments to closely interact with each other. To the government, CSOs

are not as troublesome as they initially expected as many of them were making lives much easier for the local government officials by delivering services that cost the government much less and maintaining stability at the same time. CSOs, fully aware that they have gained the trust from the government, dare to disobey the orders from the officials and help the rescuing process. However, about a month after the earthquake, multiple CSOs reported that the government told them to transfer their functions over so as the government has fully recovered. The local government should be the entity distributing the "free benefits" to the local citizen as that creates goodwill. Government can take back that space anytime they want and therefore such a space is not given up to the civil society organizations but merely "lent" to them.

However, the government has also learned from 2008 to 2013 by institutionalizing certain mechanisms to better utilize the positive effects such accumulated social capital could bring. Newly created CSOs need office space, funding, human resource and some legitimacy. After the Lushan earthquake, a "Mass-organizations Service Center" was created by the city level communist youth league in Ya'an (Lushan county is within Ya'an city's jurisdiction) to do exactly the above things. Government officials explained this much-nuanced design: "we do not want to create a government department to do such things because it will look too official that the government would be seen as endorsing all of the organizations being incubated. It also cannot be a party-led department because the party does not have such functions. On the other hand, we do want to help the organizations with real resources and connections to the government. Therefore, the perfect solution is to have the communist youth league be the leader to facilitate and bridge the relationship

between the government and the social organizations. Those organizations are doing great work here in Ya'an." The provincial officials have also expressed interest to copy the Ya'an model elsewhere in Sichuan. It is clear that the government is actively maintaining the social capital created as they see such resources beneficial for their governance. At the end of the day, the government is still calling the shots.

CSOs also have adapted after the earthquakes so that they can be more sustainable themselves and can continue to sustain the social capital they have created. During the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake, organizations and volunteers act autonomously and sometimes work were done repetitively. During the 2013 Lushan earthquake, the first thing happened after the earthquake was that the CSO leaders got together and agreed on roles and responsibilities. They mostly got to know each other (or joined this field) during the Wenchuan earthquake and have since kept in touch. Those local individuals who participated in the rescue effort during the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake immediately found their teams as they also kept in touch. Many programs started after the 2008 earthquake were still operation when the 2013 earthquake happened. When I visited the region again in 2015, many programs were indeed still operating 2 years after the Lushan earthquake, continue to create social capital in local communities.

Individuals also went through learning and adaptation. There were villagers who complained to us that since the earthquake, their neighboring villages have all started dance teams, but she could not participate in her village. When I asked why, she said the practicing room is too far from where she lives, and she wishes that there is a second dance team close to where she is. It is typical that before the earthquakes, local villagers have not

heard about such forms of entertainment and organizations that would bring economic returns such as local cooperatives. The earthquake brought in recovery funds and human resources to many villages, and suddenly those who did not receive the resources started to copy with their available resources at hand by starting their own dance teams and cooperatives. Therefore, external stimulated social capital accumulation also has triggered the native grown social capital.

Conclusion

This chapter fills the gap in the literature of disaster and social capital by using natural experiments and difference-in-difference analysis alongside in-depth interviews to demonstrate the condition, moment, and mechanism of social capital accumulation. It is clear that in Sichuan China, there is strong internal validity that sudden unmet demand of public goods provision triggered by earthquakes have stimulated the creation and accumulation of social capital through community self-support and the support of regional civil society organizations under temporary government power vacuum. Even with very limited space given, the individuals and civil society organizations were still able to sustain and further accumulate such social capital several years after the earthquakes. Civil society organizations not only organized collective activities which made association between individuals possible but also transmitted the norms of reciprocity. The government, through interacting with local individuals and civil society organizations during the earthquake, are willing to give many people and organizations a chance to occupy the public sphere, and

to continue to provide services and deliver public goods, at the same time sustaining the social capital that was created.

It is often the impression that authoritarian regimes, unlike liberal democracies, would squeeze the space for associational behaviors in the public sphere. Yet, even in an authoritarian country like China, this paper has found that social capital generated during and after the earthquake can be sustained as the local governments realized that it is in their interests to do so. Such mechanism, given the right conditions, therefore, may be generalizable. There could be implications for similar opportunities to be found in other authoritarian countries during different types of sudden unexpected disasters (even man-made, such as war). How well the phenomenon and mechanism described above would fit is worth further investigation. Sudden unmet demand of public goods does generate social capital and what happens to that social capital depends on the environment shaped by the government, CSOs and the individuals interacting in the public sphere.

3. Chapter Three: Deliberate Differentiation for Outsourcing Responsibilities

Introduction:

Every year during China's Dragon Boat festival, local governments distribute *zongzi* (sticky rice dumplings) to members of their communities. This cheery tradition, long under government management, is not free of challenges. Although *zongzi* are not expensive, there are often public complaints about uneven or unfair distribution. As a result, some local governments have outsourced the task of distribution to China's growing local CSOs. Perhaps unsurprisingly, complaints in these localities have decreased. In an interview, one local official explained the logic behind his decision to outsource:

"It is a good idea to outsource responsibilities for low risk but potentially controversial tasks to community organizations. If there are any problems, they will take the blame; if there are no problems at all, they will take care of the cost and we might get the credit. Why wouldn't we be glad to have more of them?" [18]

Thinking about *zongzi*—besides making us hungry—should raise important questions about evolving state-society relations in China. Why are different CSOs treated differently? How can a collaborative relationship form between the authoritarian state and CSOs? If differentiation of CSOs exists, then what factors or motivations explain it?

The CCP's well-known 'reform and opening' policy, and the parallel abandonment of Maoist totalitarianism, opened the way for nascent civil society to emerge in the 1980s

[18] Interview 15SGO16

(Tsou 1986; Ostergaard 1989; Sullivan 1990; Nathan 1997). Chinese CSOs have been developing rapidly over the past three decades. Particularly, following the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake and the subsequent Lushan and Ludian earthquakes, CSOs and related associational activities have exploded.[19] Optimistic scholars see such developments as tremendously promising (Simon 2013). According to a report by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, as of 2015, there are a total of 662,000 social organizations (社会组织)—a more than threefold increase since the data became available in 2001.[20] Among those social organizations, 329,000 are social groups (社会团体), 329,000 are people-run non-enterprise (民办非企业),[21] and 4,784 are foundations (基金会).[22] The government has loosened its control over the CSO sector and formally recognized the important role CSOs and other societal forces play in its five-year plans.[23] None of this detracts from the reality of state repression that bans some CSOs and controls others through laws, mandatory affiliations, personnel, and funding (Gallagher 2004). Lacking formal institutions and mechanisms that can protect CSO rights, China is still far from having a functioning civil society (Fewsmith 2013).

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[19] According to the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs' report, as of 2013, there are now a total of 547, 000 social organizations (社会组织).

[20] 2008 Social Service Development Statistical annual report, Chinese National Bureau of Statistics, <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/sj/tjgb/200906/200906000317629.shtml>

[21] The 2016 Charity Law replaced this term with 社会服务机构 or social service agencies. See, 中华人民共和国慈善法 (Charity Law of the People's Republic of China), The National People's Congress of China < http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/dbdhhy/12_4/2016-03/21/content_1985714.htm> A translation of the law can be found at < http://chinalawtranslate.com/2016charitylaw/?lang=en>, accessed 3 February 2017.

[22] 2015 Social Service Development Statistical annual report, Chinese National Bureau of Statistics, < http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/sj/tjgb/201607/20160700001136.shtml>

[23] The Notice of the State Council on Printing and Distributing the "Twelfth Five-year plan" of the National Public Service System, The State Council < http://www.sda.gov.cn/WS01/CL0100/75210_20.html>

Several models mix optimism and pessimism on the country's civil society development. Jessica Teets, for instance, sees policy differentiation under the diversification of civil society (Teets 2014). Another model that has gained currency among China-watchers and beyond is consultative authoritarianism (He and Thogersen 2010). And Kang and Han's 2008 piece argues for state-civil society relations determined by graduated controls (which the Party applies to different CSOs). Bruce Dickson differentiates the targets of such graduated controls into the "critical realm" (organically evolved and regime-threatening) and the "non-critical realm" (non-regime threatening) (Dickson 2003).

These models provide several hypotheses for why state-civil society relations are so varied. The diversification of civil society and consultative authoritarianism approaches argue that the differentiation is for the state to obtain information, advice, and support from key sectors of the population. Meanwhile, the graduated controls approach sees the CCP dividing CSOs into those that might turn antagonistic and problematic and those that can safely be allowed in order to enhance public goods provision. Relatedly, the state's fear of a CSO's collective action potential may be the key determinant (King, Pan and Roberts 2013, 2014). Despite this literature, few studies have explored whether such differentiation exists systematically, and if so which factors or motivations actually drive the state's deliberate differentiation. Some factors may be more important than other, and some may be irrelevant. In short, we see an opportunity to test falsifiable claims about the sources of variation in China's state-society relations.

Drawing evidence from an online field experiment and 63 in-depth interviews with government officials and leaders of social organizations in Sichuan province, this chapter demonstrates first that policy differentiation towards CSOs exists and second that at the local level it aims primarily to increase productivity and outsource responsibility for public goods provision. While higher levels of government and more urban localities may be focused on collecting information from CSOs or disciplining potential regime opponents, local governments concentrate more on getting the most out of 'good' CSOs than repressing 'bad' ones. Under a decentralized system, grassroots county-level officials have the freedom and motivation to allow various social organizations to exist—particularly those that provide public goods and contribute to the stability of the regime. Local officials encourage and facilitate CSOs sharing the workload and are happy to let them face public criticism if necessary. Furthermore, self-organized grassroots CSOs are not seen as sources of spontaneous collective action, different from what Xueguang Zhou suggested otherwise (Zhou 1993), but as new sources of bureaucratic support. In sum, the variation in treatment of CSOs is real and determined in different ways than existing theories have suggested.

At the level of theory, this research contributes to the literatures on authoritarian responsiveness and authoritarian resilience; responsiveness is a key marker of the local state's treatment of a CSO, and regime resilience may be an outcome of how shrewdly it manages civil society. There is a growing body of literature that aims to explains authoritarian responsiveness, whether in terms of fearing collective action (Perry 2002; O'Brien and Li 2006; Lorentzen 2013; King, Pan and Roberts 2013, 2014; Chen, Pan and

Xu 2016), gaining support from loyal insiders (Magaloni and Wallace 2008),[24] pleasing higher-ups for better job prospects (Zhao 2002; Edin 2003; Lv and Landry 2014), collecting information (Nathan 2003; He and Thogersen 2010; Lorentzen 2013, Dimitrov 2014; Wallace 2015), or setting up mere window-dressing channels to increase public satisfaction (Truex 2014).[25] However, the cases selected by these existing studies may not be systematic, and the more systematic analyses, including experiments, tend to be at the national level and assume that policy implementation is quite centralized. Most field experiments on related topics, though pre-tested, also did not originate treatment conditions from what actual individuals in similar scenarios would do (i.e. the sender or the receiver of the information). In this experiment, the language from pre-experiment interviews were used directly to construct the treatment condition.

This research finds that the government is less responsive to politically sensitive CSOs, with slower and lower quality responses to their requests for information, and is more responsive to those regime-supporting CSOs that could increase the bureaucracy's productivity and shoulder the burden and responsibility of the local state. The government's past interactions with leaders of such organizations also matter in this relationship. Sometimes, after interacting with a questionable CSO, government officials decide they would rather keep it close (perhaps by providing it office space at incubation centers) than risk setting it loose without supervision. Also, this research confirms that such

[24] Similar logic can be found in democratic countries (Butler and Broockman 2011; Broockman 2013)
[25] Yue Ding (Harvard) revealed during her fieldwork in Hangzhou, China, that the local environmental agency's main goal is not to tackle the problem but to *appear* to be tackling the problem. Talk given at the Harvard-MIT-BU Chinese Politics Research Workshop, October 2015.

relations are not static as both the government and civil society organizations interact with each other and adjust their policies and behaviors accordingly (Sun 2017). These learning experiences create a dynamic, interactive process for both the state and the society.

With respect to authoritarian resilience, the contribution here is to suggest that an autocratic regime might deliberately adopt some democratic institutions not because they are forced to by a contentious society or international actors, nor as baby steps toward more thoroughgoing political reform, but rather as tools used to improve governance in the service of perpetuating rule by the current ruling elites. This article also makes a quantitative contribution to the vigorous debate among China scholars about the nature of Chinese citizen rights consciousness (Perry 2009; O'Brien 2013; Fu 2016) by focusing specifically on the unacceptability of rights claims. The distinction demonstrated here is that organization is okay, but rights-claiming is not — although how rights-claiming is framed still matters (Mertha 2009)

Research Design and Hypotheses

To confirm whether such policy differentiation exists and to explore the motivations for it, I conducted in-depth interviews and an experiment. The experiment assessed local governments' relationships with CSOs via email inquiries (Hartford 2005). Rival hypotheses were tested to demonstrate whether information collection and collective action prevention or increasing productivity and outsourcing responsibility were the main motivations. The treatment condition of the experiment came directly from preliminary interviews with CSO leaders in Sichuan when they were registering their CSOs to make it

more realistic. Then, follow-up interviews were conducted to investigate the underlying logic of the experimental results.

Interviews

Interviews are a key data source in this study. Seventeen government officials and 46 CSO leaders were interviewed in total from 2012–2016. The officials interviewed were in charge of civil affairs or CSOs at various levels, including village, township, county, municipality, and the provincial level. The interviews discussed the state of CSOs, state-society relations, the past and future of the CSO sector, and policy towards new grassroots CSOs. CSO leaders were interviewed through referral by local scholars and academic institutions. Several of those leaders were interviewed multiple times from 2012–2016. The interviews before the experiment informed the design of the experiment, while the interviews conducted after the experiment further explored the underlying logic of the results from the experiment. The overwhelming majority of the CSOs were not officially registered during the preliminary interviews and either had sought or were seeking registration.

Preliminary interviews revealed that organizations working with vulnerable groups (such as mothers who lost their only child) and rights claim groups (such as workers owed significant backpay) are politically sensitive,[26] and the government does not like their existence because they have the potential to organize collective action, challenge the state's

[26] Interview 14SGO01

legitimacy, and disturb the stability of the regime.[27] Those organizations are perceived as anti-government and tend to receive no support (if not hostile treatment) during registration within their jurisdictions. This was a consistent finding across level of government, though some officials have slightly different framing for the differentiation, calling one group of CSOs the "rights claim and advocacy group" and the other the "service provision only group."[28]

Less sensitive, yet still eliciting caution, are religious organizations and international organizations. "Religious organizations are ideology driven and provide an alternative to our socialist ideology," said several officials.[29] Even when dealing with religious organizations, officials suggested that local and more peaceful religions (here mainly referring to Buddhism and Daoism) should be promoted more and foreign religions with anti-state potential (such as Christianity and Islam) should be promoted less.[30] Christian and Islamic groups are seen to have more current foreign connections and therefore more anti-state potential both on the ideological front and security front.[31] Such differentiation based on political sensitivity informed the experimental design.

The experiment

Methodologically, this research resembles audit studies, which also measure discrimination directly with experimental fieldwork (Yinger 1986; Neumark et al. 1996;

[27] Interviews 14SGO14, 14SGO01, 14SGO03
[28] Interview 16GGO18
[29] Interviews 14SGO03, 14SGO04, 15SGO13
[30] Interview 16GGO18
[31] Interviews 14SGO01, 14SGO02, 14SGO03, 14SGO05, 14SGO17

Bertrand and Mullainathan 2003; Arai and Thoursie 2007; Correll, Benard, and In-Paik 2007; McClendon 2015). Here in this study, to assess the political logic of how different CSOs are treated, I sent emails to county governors to inquire about new CSO registration. This strategy was chosen because it is realistic and convenient. In 2007, the State Council announced the "Open Government Information Ordinance" (OGI), which required governments at the county level and higher to increase transparency, leading many local governments to established official websites.[32] Most counties have a "county governor's inbox," so that people can voice their complaints. By emailing county governors, we can conduct a randomized experiment aimed at revealing the underlying logic (Rosenbaum 2010) of the policy behaviors of the Chinese authoritarian state.

The internet in China is already an important platform for public debate, problem articulation, and new kinds of protests (Yang 2003). The government isn't promoting the internet to build participatory democracy, but it does see a useful tool to facilitate development, set policy agendas, supervise its bureaucracy, and increase public legitimacy (Zhao 2002).

The CCP wants the internet as a controlled yet legitimate channel for communication between China's government and its people. There are many reasons for this, including the rising cost of stability maintenance (Chen 2013) and the need to acquire reliable information about the populace without face-to-face confrontation (Luehrmann 2003). The cadre responsibility system motivates local officials to collect accurate

[32] See "Open Government Information Ordinance" (中华人民共和国国务院令第 492 号：中华人民共和国政府信息公开条例): http://www.gov.cn/zwgk/2007-04/24/content_592937.htm

information in the form of public feedback to improve their job prospects (Edin 2003; Lv and Landry 2014). Therefore, the county governor's inbox takes not just complaints but also policy suggestions. A recent study found that officials are similarly receptive to citizens' suggestions given through traditional channels and over the internet, provided that there is no perception of hostile intent (Meng, Pan, and Yang 2014).

During the randomization process, each of the 114 county governor's inboxes had a 50% chance of being assigned to the treatment group. In order to include a strong enough and less ambiguous treatment in the experiment, I adopted what the interviews suggested and used "organizations that work with vulnerable groups and citizen rights" as the phrase included in the treatment email. The control group receives an email inquiring about the process of potentially starting a social organization within the county's jurisdiction and asks the county governor to point me to the right resources. The treatment adds a sentence describing the sender's interest in rights protection (维护权益) for vulnerable groups (弱势群体) and citizen rights (公民权益). All of these words are meant to be politically sensitive and indicate a misalignment of the government's and the CSO's interests and goals (see Appendix).

CSO leaders have reported that officials tend to be more responsive and supportive when they are speaking the same "language."[33] Preliminary interviews suggest that most CSOs (whether officially registered or not) have some connections with local governments, and such connections can be personal (shared experiences or strong ties) or institutional. CSOs actively learn about government documents and "key phrases" when interacting with

[33] Interview 12SN40

the government. Therefore, the first few sentences of the emails capture sender awareness of ongoing political developments and familiarity with newly issued government documents. This tactic makes officials more likely to take the email seriously and gives a better approximation of what a CSO leader looking to register their organization would say. The treatment conveys political sensitivity in a context-appropriate way so that it will show political sensitivity while not appear to be something too provocative that make the officials question if such requests could actually come from their localities.[34]

The assignment of treatment was done before the emails were sent, so it is assumed that the variation in the response time, rate, and content can be attributed directly to the treatment rather than other potential confounders related to the experiment. Since in China officials of the same bureaucratic rank generally avoid speaking to each other for fear of being accused of conspiring[35] and no major official meetings were ongoing during the period of the study, one can also safely assume that there is minimal interference between the control and the treatment groups. The task is designed to be minimally burdensome for the officials (or his/her office) as it increases their workload very little. Such a minor request also ensures future researchers' ability to utilize similar approaches will not be infringed.[36]

[34] This may be less clear in English. The original Chinese is provided in the appendix.
[35] Interview 14SGO03
[36] Similar existing work such as Chen, Pan and Xu's study introduce a potential threat (of collective action or tattling to superiors). Such a threat burdens officials as some may actually need to take action before replying, such as trying to solve the problem in order to provide satisfactory responses. It also introduces noise to the "non-response" category since there may originally be an intention to respond but since the action taken would not meet the demand anyway, the official could have decided not to bother.

Doing the experiment at the county level allows us to see policy variation more clearly and have sufficient observations. Preliminary interviews with local officials revealed that civil affair-related policies are mainly decided at or above the county level. Below the county level, officials are primarily involved in implementing policies. Policies sometimes vary at the township level, but the differences are mostly in implementation.

Sichuan province was chosen as the site for the experiment and the interviews because the massive 2008 earthquake has triggered CSO development in the region, potentially increasing incentives for government responsiveness to CSOs. Since "not replying" in this experiment is treated as "one type of response" rather than missing data, the assumption is more valid in a region where the local government is generally expected to respond to emails of this kind. Therefore a "non-reply" is more a deviation from the expectation. Previous studies of authoritarian responsiveness in China suggest the national response rate is around 30–40% (Chen, Pan, and Xu 2016) with the baseline group response rate being around 30%. Various treatments, such as the threat of collective action or reporting to superiors can increase the response rate. The response rate in the control group from Sichuan province in this study is 60%, a figure much higher than that from existing studies. This is probably because I developed the treatment condition directly from interviews with NGO leaders. Government responses may be in the form of direct policy outcome, actual action, or information provided (Chen, Pan, and Xu 2016). As a standard practice in this literature for ethical and practical reasons, this study only requested information for the benefit of the sender.

There are 165 county-level administrative regions in Sichuan province. Seventeen of their website inboxes require a personal identification number to send an email (which therefore the government can trace to the specific sender). Another 26 have pages where the email function did not work properly, or the link did not exist. There are eight websites that selectively post responses from past emails, but the emails had not been updated within the past six months. In this study, for obvious reasons, I chose to leave out those websites that require a personal identification number.[37] I also took out the non-updated websites and the ones without functional email inboxes. Within the remaining 114 counties, it is reasonable to assume that, *ceteris paribus*, we could expect similar potential responses from them. The above exclusion process may affect the study's external validity since those governments that require an ID to send an email or do not have a properly functioning email mechanism may be different in their bureaucratic capacity or local conditions.

Since the sample size is not extremely large, it is worth checking the assignment outcome to see whether the procedure, *ex-post*, produced treatment groups correlated with country characteristics. Table 1 reports the results of a logistic regression of the treatment status of each county being randomized into treatment group on eight different county characteristics, including area, the number of families, the number of townships, the number of communities, the population in 10,000, work population, agricultural population, and the number of firms.[38] These geographic, demographic, and socioeconomic covariates

[37] The lower response rate from Chen, Pan and Xu's study can also be attributed to the difference in this procedure as they randomized the ID numbers, and phone numbers. Both ID numbers and phone numbers contains direct information about the person's locality and if the local officials are immediately aware that the sender is not from his own jurisdiction, then it is easy to directly disregard.
[38] The variables used here were provided by Chinese government officials who conducts geological survey and the data were specified before any of the data used in this research were collected

were also included in various models during analysis when assessing the duration of response and quality of response since geographic, demographic, and socioeconomic indicators may reflect governance capacity, request frequency, and other confounders that should be controlled.

As expected, the result indicates that the county characteristics were not predictors of the treatments assigned, individually and jointly. The standardized differences for stratified comparisons would show the similarly balanced assignment of treatment while having fewer assumptions.[39] For the 114 counties, 55 were assigned to the control group, and 59 were assigned to the treatment group. The emails were sent during the weekend of August 17th, 2014.

[39] To have less parametric assumptions, I tested again by using the "xbalance" command in "RItools" package designed by Jake Bowers, Mark Federickson, and Ben Hanen. The model p-value is 0.97 and each covariate's p-value is much larger than the 0.05 level, therefore indicating the assignment of the treatments are balanced.

Table 3.1: Logistic Regression of the Treatment Assignment

Treatment	
Area	-4.61e-11
	(-0.54)
Families	0.00000469
	(0.54)
Towns	0.0134
	(0.67)
Communities	-0.000874
	(-0.23)
Population in 10,000	0.000000147
	(0.36)
Worker population	-0.0000230
	(-0.69)
Agriculture population	-0.00000379
	(-0.58)
firms	0.00973
	(0.61)
Constant	0.227
	(0.44)
N	114

t statistics in parentheses
* p<.10, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Hypotheses

China today is an excellent setting to conduct research that sheds light on state-civil society relations in an authoritarian context. The existing literature is either overly positive about the development of civil society in China or overly negative about the CCP's continuing ability to penetrate and dominate. In fact, the CCP manages CSOs with both a

"zone of indifference" (Tsou 1986) and a "zone of encouragement." There is significant discrimination among CSOs with different backgrounds, with some CSOs being granted a great deal more freedom.

H1: The government will be more likely to respond to and assist CSOs that provide services and are less politically sensitive (i.e. those that have goals closely aligned with theirs), and less responsive to CSOs that they see as potentially challenging or have goals not aligned with theirs.

Political sensitivity and goal alignment are simplified and operationalized in the treatment email in a sentence indicating the sensitive nature of the organization. The treatment phrase was written based on concepts raised in preliminary interviews and the words in Chinese are exactly how government officials discussed them.

In the initial interviews, government officials said they tended to avoid more sensitive organizations, and that related requests are not their priority and are unlikely to receive meaningful responses. When they do respond to politically sensitive organizations, the quality of response will be lower because it will be more for the purpose of gathering information from the sender and less about actually providing support. Quality in this study was operationalized by counting the number of words in the response and coding other, more qualitative aspects of it. To see if this claim is supported by systematic evidence, I hypothesize that:

H2: More politically sensitive organizations with goals unaligned with the government will have to wait longer for replies, and the quality of response will be lower than for other organizations.

The government-CSO relationship, although influenced by goal alignment, is a dynamic one, as relevant factors can vary over time. Both the government and CSOs learn and adjust behaviors to protect their interests. Relatively independent CSOs do exist in authoritarian China if their goals are already aligned with the government's, they are helpful to a local government because of their effectiveness in public good provision, and/or the CSO's leader has an uncommonly good personal relationship with government leaders. Local governments can be creative in using innovative strategies to maintain a symbiotic and productive relationship with such CSOs. Thus, this study will also investigate how local governments' attitudes and actions toward CSOs as well as CSO's adjustments and adaptations towards government policies would be affected by the state-society interactions.

The local state may be acting on a variety of different priorities in its relations with the CSO sector, leading to varied behavior. Of course, if the state could encourage regime-supporting groups, discourage regime-challenging groups, collect information, *and* assert more control all at once, then that would be ideal. In this research design, I intentionally forced the local government to choose between goals and therefore reveal its priorities. If information collection and prevention of collective action by regime-challenging groups is a priority, then the government will be more responsive to the regime-challenging groups. On the other hand, if the government is more interested in providing services and

outsourcing responsibilities to regime-supporting organizations, then the government will be more responsive to the regime-supporting groups. If responses to both groups are similar, then all of the goals mentioned above could be equally important or the local state could have such abundant resources that it doesn't need to prioritize. However, as long as there is some differentiation between the two groups in response rate, time, and quality, then we can come to some useful conclusions.

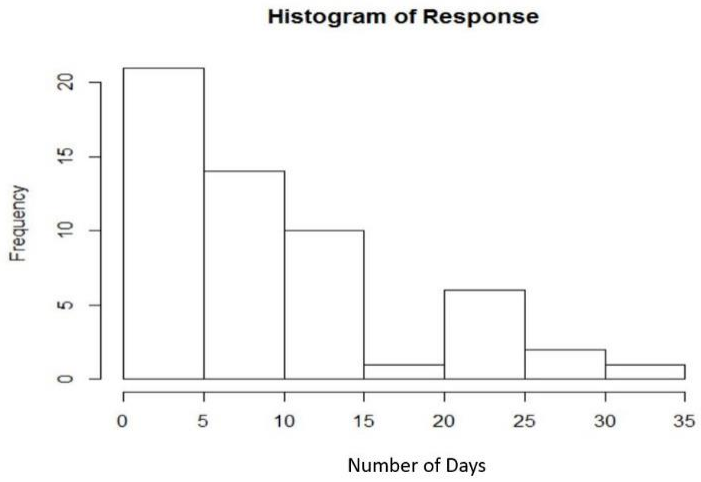
Results and Analysis

As Table 2 shows, among the 55 counties in the control group, 33 responded and 22 did not. Among the 59 counties in the treatment group, 22 responded and 37 did not. The total response rate by officials is not very different from similar designs utilized by other scholars (Distelhorst and Hou 2013). Of the 55 total responses received, the majority were received during the first ten days. As we can see from the table below (response by the number of days), the number of responses also diminishes as time goes on:

Table 3.2: Response table by treatment assignment

	Replied			
Condition	No	Yes	Total	Replied
Control	22	33	55	60%
Treatment	37	22	59	37%
Total	59	55	114	

Figure 3.1: Response frequency by the number of days it took



We can test the hypothesis that "emails including the political sensitivity message (treatment) will have different response rate than the emails without it (H1)." The estimated treatment effect, difference in means, is -0.23 while the p-value for the t-test result is 0.0151 and therefore the null hypothesis can be rejected. The reply rate from the control group and the treatment group are statistically different and political sensitivity has led to lower response rate from the county governors.[40] The effect can also be estimated through permutations. With statistical packages developed by Bowers at el., and with 100,000 permutations, a confidence interval was constructed with the upper bound of -0.05 and lower bound of -0.40 for the effect.[41] This means that when the treatment was included, the

[40] To test whether the t-test is adequate here (with the assumptions of a normal t-distribution), permutation of 1,000,000 times were conducted to construct replicated confidence intervals. The coverage rate is about 0.945, indicating that the t-test is performing properly and we can rely on the central limit theorem here.

[41] Ben Hansen and Jake Bowers, RItools package in R. Here setting p-value at 0.025 for this test. Note that the confidence interval for the model of effect also does not cover "0", meaning there is a significant negative treatment effect.

probability of getting a response from the government officials will be reduced by 5–40 percentage points.

Table 3.3: Experimental results by different dependent variables

Experimental Results				
Dependent Variables	Replied	Reply Speed	Reply Quality (ordinal)	Reply Quality (word count)
Treatment Effect	-0.23**	-0.725**	-0.850**	-0.807**
t statistic	-2.468	-2.04	-2.36	-2.22
* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01				

The duration of the reply time also varied among the responses. Similarly, it took the treatment group longer to respond than the control group. Here the response duration variable is an ordinal variable based on reply time. "No response" technically means it took an infinite number of days for a response, but on a continuous scale, disproportionate influence will be created from these observations. Therefore, an ordinal variable was created to turn the number of days into seven ordered categories. Grouping by week also reflects the typical work cycles as the expectation of response during the weekend can be different from that during the weekdays. The variable therefore is coded from 0 to 6. Respond within 1 day is coded 6; 2~7 days is coded as 5; 8~14 days is coded as 4; 15~21 days is coded as 3; 22~28 days is coded as 2; 29 and above is coded as 1; No response is coded as 0. Since the latest response was received on the 35th day, each category covers one week. A smaller number indicates longer response time.

The response speed models suggest that the negative treatment effect when sensitive CSO requests were made exist in all models (see Appendix). Therefore, politically sensitive CSOs have to wait longer for a reply even when they do receive one.

When a reply is received, there are several different kinds. The quality of the responses should also be incorporated into the study as some responses are less meaningful than others. It is important to note that non-response in this study has meaning and should not be treated as "data missing." Simply responding by asking/gathering more info of the sender has less quality (and different intention potentially) than detailed answers. Referring the question to another person also has less quality than directly answering the question. Therefore, the response quality variable is coded with the following instructions.

Table 3.4: Instructions for coding response quality

Value	Type of response
0	Non-response
1	"We are sorry that you did not provide sufficient information and therefore will not be able to help you."
2	"We have received your email/request and are looking into the matter. We will reply as soon as we can." (No further response.)
3	A very brief response with instructions to look for another particular person for additional help
4	A very brief response with a list of questions to answer.
5	A brief response, including a phone number or a particular location (e.g., the bureau of civil affairs' service window), inviting me to speak directly or face-to-face.
6	A very detailed response with procedures and relevant regulations about starting the social organization
7	A response that provides everything above and is personalized to focus on the particular questions in the email so that they could better help me

Such coding is ordinal because each higher number satisfies the conditions of the previous number and has some improvement. The basic ordinal logistic regression indicates that the treatment email is negatively and significantly affecting the quality of the response. In other words, there are responses received from both the control and treatment groups, but the quality of response differs between the two groups. All but one detailed

personalized response was from the control group. An inter-coder reliability check was done by a research assistant who was not aware of the details of the research with Cohen's Kappa inter-coder agreement of 99.24%.

The appendix presents estimates of the treatment effects controlling for other covariates, such as county area, population size, worker population, agricultural population, and the number of townships, families, communities, and firms. The treatment effect of lowering response quality is significant across models. This result indicates that when sensitive CSOs' requests receive replies, they tend to be less meaningful. The population size of the county is positively correlated with responsiveness. This point may require further investigation as the size of the population may be directly related to the size of the staff and therefore influencing the capacity to govern.

A simple word count was also used as a more direct way of approximating quality of response. Since "no response" has meaning in this study, the word count was turned into an ordinal variable in which no response was coded as "0" and each category covering a range of 500 words (i.e. 1–500 would be coded as 1; 501–1000 would be coded as 2, etc.). The result is consistent that the quality of response is lower when more sensitive CSOs make requests. As in the coded model, the word count model indicates the negative treatment effect (see appendix).

The effects, if the experiment can reveal any, may be underestimated because the government does have incentives to keep some of politically sensitive organizations around, because the option of being able to crush those organizations when they want would not

only set an example to others but also be seen as a routine exercise of their authority by the officials. One government official, describing hostile actions against religious organizations such as taking down crosses on top of churches (in Zhejiang Province), said that the government's actions are sometimes purely for the purpose of testing the effectiveness of its policy commands. Taking crosses down off churches doesn't help the government in any particular way. Officials may similarly use CSOs they do not like to test their authority and power.[42] The literature also suggests that authoritarian governments tend to want to collect information about their bureaucracies, as well as about potential threats (Lorentzen 2013, Dimitrov 2014). Therefore, even a small treatment effect is worth examining because it is likely to be underestimated, which works for the hypothesis of this research.

These experimental results differ from, and are complementary to, a recent national study in China, albeit with different treatments, by Chen et. al. (Chen, Pan and Xu 2016). The key difference is that Chen's study introduced an "immediate" threat, while the threat this research may pose to the government is in the long run (social organizations might form and in the future organize collective action). This contrast provides potential evidences, which may need further exploration in future researches, for a temporal dimension in authoritarian response to political threats (whether it is collective action, bureaucratic competitiveness, insufficient loyal support or lack of information). The response rate will be lower when the potential threat is not imminent.

[42] Interview 15SGO13

In addition, it has been assumed that authoritarian responsiveness attenuates or eliminates potential threats in the existing literature. The treatment condition in this research is unique because responsiveness by the government might enlarge the threat, for assisting the regime-challenging CSOs. It also can tease out whether officials are more interested in avoiding political sensitivity and potential collective action or more interested in collecting information. If they are more interested in collecting information, then the response rate should be higher in the treatment group; if they are more concerned about the potential of causing collective action, then the response rate should be lower in the treatment group. The results accord with King et. al.'s finding that the Chinese government is more concerned with actions that would lead to potential collective action (King, Pan and Roberts 2013) even at the expense of losing information.

A dynamic process of deliberate differentiation

This study originally emerged out of exploratory interviews conducted with government officials in Sichuan province from 2012–2014. Immediately after a few local government officials' interviews, a pattern appears to be obvious. Officials were quite candid about their intentional differentiation towards different types of CSOs. However, their reasoning contradicts those made in the existing literature, in particularly the "collective action" and "information collection" arguments. One local level official in charge of civil affairs mentioned that they are not worried about sensitive organizations for there are plenty of constraints to prevent their existence. What they need is the help from

"good" organizations.

"We treat different social organizations differently. However, we are confident that the existing institutions are sophisticated enough to deter those 'troublemakers,' which are quite rare in rural areas like where we are — you would find many of them in Beijing or Guangdong but not here. What we want is to motivate people who have time, money, and the will to initiate their organizations to provide public services complementing to the government. The government is not good at everything, and we are tired of being the judge and the athlete at the same time. We would be happy to only play the role of the judge and let social organizations use their expertise to contribute to the society. The problem is that we do not have enough of those social entrepreneurs." [43]

After the online field experiment, post-experiment interviews were conducted to further investigate the logic and mechanism of the differentiation in responsiveness. This section utilizes post-experiment interview data to reveal the causal mechanisms of the deliberate differentiation. Policy differentiation is driven more by the state's interest in increasing productivity and outsourcing responsibility for public goods provision from the "good," regime-supporting CSOs and less by the state's need to acquire information from CSOs, including those politically sensitive advocacy groups that have collective action potentials. Otherwise, the response rate towards the treatment group would not have been lower.

While having varied policy responses towards different kinds of CSOs is often mentioned during interviews, the motivation is different from what the existing literature

[43] Interview 14SGO14, also 14SGO03, 15SGO09 and 15SGO11

have suggested. Most officials are quite confident that politically sensitive groups would not have soil to grow in their localities. Their policy focus, therefore, is not intentionally eliminating regime-challenging groups, but cultivating potential partners among regime-supporting groups and extracting productivity while outsourcing responsibility from those partners to help with local governance. In other words, the number one concern for many officials was not the fear of lack of information and the control of politically sensitive groups, but the lack of sufficient support from service-provision groups that could ease the burden of the local governance.[44]

Such policy differentiation was not always the case; before 2008, there were limited CSOs operating in China, more commonly referred to as NGOs by officials. The translation in Chinese — 非政府组织 — would often make government officials misunderstand them as "anti-government organizations." Local governments often had an antagonistic attitude towards the CSO sector as a whole.[45] There was not much differentiation then, and all of the organizations faced similar control, manipulation, and penetration from the government. To reduce the interference from local governments, CSOs would often register as private companies or keep a low profile by not registering at all.

Since the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake (and the subsequent 2013 Lushan earthquake and 2014 Ludian earthquake), local governments got the chance to witness closely the work done by CSOs during quake relief efforts; some CSOs had done an impressive job providing social stability and local governance. Many local governments have since

[44] Interview 14SGO03
[45] Interview 14SGO03, also 15SGO12

realized how valuable those "good" social organizations can be, especially if CSOs do not take resources (money, time, staff, etc.) away from the government. One municipality-level government official said:

"Many of our local government officials saw, for the first time, that some CSOs could actually help them maintain stability, and share their burden in public goods and service delivery. Some of those organizations came with money that would help their local economic development as well. We know that the tax and fee reform has taken away quite a bit financial resources from our local governments, so that was a great opportunity for many local officials to try out a different approach with certain CSOs."[46]

The distribution of *zongzi* story in the introduction is an example of local governments partnering with CSOs to supplement its own bureaucracy and resources while at the same time outsourcing complaints and responsibilities. It was, thus, both a cost-effective and risk-reducing move.

Why wouldn't local governments admit to being worried about regime-challenging CSOs and, consequentially, actively and heavily monitoring them? Officials interviewed typically pointed to existing institutional constraints. Before the 2016 charity law, domestic organizations needed to have a "sponsor organization," either a government department or government organized non-government organization (GONGO), to get registered.[47] Such

[46] Interview 14SGO14

[47] There are several provinces in China that have loosened the policy and in 2011, the minister of Civil Affairs LI Liguo also announced that nationally, four types of organizations no longer need to have a "sponsor organization": industry associations, science and technology organizations, charities and entities providing community social services. Yet, most CSOs still need a "sponsor organization" to operate in China today.

"sponsor organizations" usually could threaten not to approve the annual budget to shut down the operations of the CSO, should the CSO cross any lines. In 2013, a group of environmental activists (I among them), organized a project for young social entrepreneurs to visit the Alxa League in Mongolia, where desertification and pollution was becoming a severe problem. Each member would initiate their sustainability projects there. We partnered with the SEE Foundation, a national leader of environmental protection in China sponsored by Alxa's science and technology bureau. The president of the SEE Foundation was immediately invited "to have tea" with the head of the science and technology bureau and was informed that if our group of social entrepreneurs showed up in Alxa that year, the SEE foundation's budget for next year will not be approved. We were forced to cancel the project. Similar strategies are not unusual between "sponsor organizations" and CSOs.

Even after the 2016 charity law changed the situation, one local government official told me that they still have plenty of ways to discipline CSOs that are potentially regime challenging. For example, while some CSOs no longer have "sponsor organizations" after 2017, they will still need to submit annual reports. A local government might keep an "abnormal list" to specify individual organizations with bad records. The new "Draft Regulations for the Registration of Social Associations" accompanying the new charity law further shows that the Chinese government intends to provide the necessary space but also retain constraints for "good" social associations to operate in.[48]

Another powerful constraint on CSOs is financial support. The 2016 charity law

[48] Interview 16GGO18

still did not grant public fundraising rights to social service organizations or CSOs in general. This means that CSOs mainly get money from foundations (usually government affiliated) or through governments' purchase of services.[49] Because the new foreign NGO law has cut off foreign support for local CSOs, the government has even stronger control over CSO funding.

Besides legal status and funding, the government also has control over personnel. People I interviewed (whether regime-supporting or potentially regime-challenging) say they intentionally put on a cooperative face when interacting with the government. Such behavior change was evident from the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake to the 2013 Lushan earthquake. Many of the CSO leaders had since formed the habit of reporting to local governments and putting themselves on the record first (备案) before starting their operations.[50] For example, scholars have documented positive changes happening in environmental protests across China, capturing how the anti-PX campaign might be changing the landscape of state-society relations in China (Wu and Steindhart 2016). However, almost all environmental groups mentioned during interviews that they have made the conscious decision to pick their fights and no longer want to be involved in anti-PX campaigns since the government is sensitive to those specific protests.[51] Such adaptation is consistent with Hildebrandt's argument that CSO emergence in China may not weaken the state but could effectively strengthen it (Hildebrandt 2013). CSO leaders

[49] Interview 16GN42
[50] Interview 13SN39
[51] Interviews 12SI38, 13SN25, 13SB35, 13SN41

reported such practices to be beneficial because they made local governments less suspicious of what CSOs were doing.

But governments are less trusting when they are less able to verify what CSOs are doing. International organizations, for example, receive funding from outside of China and are less under governmental control. The government is particularly worried about organizations supported by pro-democracy groups with the intention of initiating another "color revolution" and toppling the current regime in China.

The Chinese government is currently crafting new regulations and constraints to uncover where CSO funding comes from, who is operating what projects, and what the actual objectives might be. The new "Foreign NGO Management Law" [52] is one example. Within the legal domain, we see a differentiation between domestic and foreign CSOs. Control over domestic organizations seems to be loosening while control over foreign NGOs tightening (Teets 2015). That being said, there are exceptions to these trends and the situation is a dynamic one; the government and CSOs interact with each other and adjust their policies and behaviors accordingly.

Differentiating CSOs is a dynamic process, proceeding in three overlapping stages: an ambiguous first meeting, initial differentiation, and the decision to outsource responsibility or not. In stage one, the government is first exposed to a new CSO. When the government is unsure of an organization, officials like to keep it close by, perhaps by

[52]中华人民共和国境外非政府组织境内活动管理法 （Law of the management of foreign NGOs in the PRC）, usually referred to as "the foreign NGO law." < http://news.xinhuanet.com/legal/2016-04/29/c_1118765888.htm>

providing them with office space at incubation centers.[53] Several cities in China have piloted social service organization incubation centers that nurture and assist newly organized grassroots organizations, providing resources that they desperately need but also making sure they get to know them. The incubation centers can be organized by the government, the party, or by other government trusted entities.

Right after the 2013 Lushan earthquake, the city of Ya'an (which covers Lushan County) kicked off a "mass organization center" (MOC, or 群团中心), modeled on one in Mianzhu during the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake. Officials introduced the MOC as a very clever design to comply with higher-level policies while leaving flexibilities for local governments to better interact with promising CSOs. This is a Communist Youth League-led effort. One official said the following during an interview:

"We do not want it to be government driven because that will make it too official. Too many liabilities could also arise should there be any problems. We also do not want it to be a Communist Party-led effort since it might make the party-government relationship awkward on this issue. Therefore, we let the Communist Youth League take the lead, giving it legitimacy, yet avoiding the risks mentioned above."[54]

This MOC is designed to facilitate CSO start-ups in the region to better serve its people. They provide office spaces and some basic supplies.[55]

[53] Interviews 14SGO03, 13SN40
[54] Interview 15SGO12
[55] Similar centers have now been set up in other cities (interview 15SGO17), and the government has a plan to promote similar arrangements all across Sichuan province.

Establishing incubation centers is not only for the purpose of helping grassroots CSOs to yield benefits more quickly. The government sometimes does not see any obvious benefits of collaborating but invites a CSO into the incubation center anyway.[56] A city level government official mentioned that they are aware of many "unregistered" or "illegal" grassroots CSOs operating within their jurisdictions. When unsure, their policy is to keep them close by and try to build a good relationship first.[57]

Once they know more about a CSO, the government starts to differentiate based on the logic and actions described above. However, differentiation does not necessarily mean repressing all regime-challenging organizations. A leader of one rights claiming group mentioned that he is very clear about the type of reaction he will face, based on the number of people he organizes to hold a meeting or protest. As long as the number of people is less than 200, the government will not care too much. This indicates that even with anti-government collective actions, participation needs to be big enough before the government takes action.[58]

CSOs can also utilize stage one and stage two to create a good relationship with local governments and adjust their operations so that they seem regime-supporting rather than regime-challenging. Natural disasters, like Sichuan's major earthquakes, can be catalytic for increasing trust and building relationships between CSOs and local governments.

[56] Interview 13SN40
[57] Interview 14SGO17
[58] Interview 12HO01

The gradual adaptation of CSOs to state preferences is also apparent when comparing interviews from 2011 and 2016. In 2008, CSOs were not as organized and would send people directly to the quake-stricken region to provide services, instead of first coordinating with other CSOs or with the government. After the government regained control of the localities after the immediate aftermath of the disasters, some CSOs faced severe scrutiny and interference while others started to build trust and a working relationship with the local government. By 2013, many CSOs had adjusted their working procedures and would voluntarily register with local governments to report about their intended activities before entering their jurisdictions. This comforted many government officials and trust started to accumulate between them.[59] The CSOs also reported that by voluntarily becoming subordinate (or at least appearing to be subordinate), they enjoyed a much larger space to conduct their projects, and fewer suspicions and confrontations arose.

Voluntary subordination makes CSOs adjust their projects and the way they conduct their projects. Several religious organizations I interviewed emphasized that during the quake relief period, they entered the quake-stricken region by abandoning or downplaying the religious aspects of their organizations.[60] For example, a Christian organization involved in relief focused on helping the local people, not spreading the gospel. They were aware that the government would react negatively if they had a religious mission during the quake relief operations. Adjusting to better align one's goals with the government's line and eliminating dis-aligned projects might help a CSO survive in an

[59] Interviews 12SJ34, 12SN39, 13SN39, 14SGO03
[60] Interview 09SF11

authoritarian regime like China's, but it unfortunately makes CSOs less diverse.

Local governments also realize that maintaining a bureaucracy is very costly. Since the tax and fees reform, local governments' sources of income have been reduced tremendously. For tasks such as quake relief, it may not be realistic to keep a government-run team. For other tasks, such as mental health assistance, the government lacks expertise. Therefore, it is better to let the CSOs take care of such tasks, and the government can even provide money to support those CSOs.[61]

The differentiation of CSOs may not solely depend on the issue area the CSO is operating in, because CSO leaders' personal backgrounds and past government-CSO interactions can matter a lot. Do organizations that conduct boundary-spanning work (such as promoting democracy) always face repression from the government? It depends on whether CSO leaders have personal ties that can build trust with the local government. For example, one CSO is led by a married couple, and the husband is a retired military officer. He has comrades who have retired from the military and are now occupying important government positions. Therefore, when his organization faces challenges, he can always find a way to resolve it. During the interview with counterparts in the government, officials mentioned that organizations run by former government officials or retired military officers are more trustworthy and easier to work with than other organizations. Of course, the organization itself is very well managed and can often be more effective than the local government. The previous positive experiences between the CSO and the local government

[61] Interview 15SGO03

have contributed much to their constructive and trusting relationship. The authoritarian government sees democratic activities facilitated by the CSO (such as community deliberation, freely elected autonomous governance groups, etc.) as positively contributing to the stability of local communities and therefore it is allowed, even if the activity is creating an alternative source of power and decision-making mechanisms. It is worth pointing out that only the CSO leader's personal expertise and reputation have been legitimized, not the CSO's role in society in the eyes of the local government. This phenomenon also explains why several email responses, during the county governor email experiment, requested to know more about the individual making the request and the details of the operation being referenced, as they want more information before making decisions.

That same couple-led CSO has now introduced "self-governing community structures" (院落自治) and implemented them. Community members were trained with "Robert's Rules of Order" to decide resource allocation, budgets and plans for their local communities. They have recently decided to renovate the community bicycle garage to make the roof of the garage a community garden with a table tennis area. The local government is aware of such democratic activities and is quite supportive of it. The organization now trains government officials routinely on facilitation and deliberation skills. This CSO is now passing on expertise to government officials gaining more trust from their future counterparts along the way.[62]

[62] Interviews 15SN40, 15SGO16

Conclusion

In this chapter, I used an online field experiment to establish that the authoritarian Chinese state allows some CSOs to exist (under a zone of indifference) and varies its treatment of CSOs systematically depending on whether they share common policy goals. This study adds to the graduated control and consultative authoritarian approaches by revealing that local governments differentiate among CSOs less to collect information and assert control of the regime-challenging groups and more to exploit productivity and outsource responsibility to those regime-supporting groups. This clarifies the rank of the multiple motivations claimed by the existing literature by demonstrating which are most important.

The qualitative data also captures the dynamic process of the deliberate differentiation by demonstrating three overlapping stages of the adaptive relationship: ambiguous treatment, initial differentiation, and outsourcing responsibility to some. When unsure, the government would rather keep an organization close by to observe and understand their real objectives, hoping to turn some into useful partners. That's why it sends them to incubation centers and provides them with resources. With organizations that the government clearly has goal misalignment with, the government also starts by leaving them in the zone of indifference. But when those CSOs reach some critical point or begin to cause trouble, the government sees that as an opportunity to exercise its authority and power by cracking down. When the government does have an excellent relationship with an organization, it seems to be due more to the CSO leader's individual history and ties to the government than any governmental desire to permanently support

the organization itself. The CSOs left operating in the end are those that share the burden of the local state and (at least appear to) subordinate themselves to the local governments. There are, however, some compromise positions, such as the semi-institutionalization of certain useful organizations with the Communist Youth League as a liaison. Further research and observation are needed to see whether this trend is temporary or might lead to the eventual institutionalization of the CSO sector in China.

4. Chapter Four: The Skeptical Society in Rural Sichuan

Introduction

It is often the conception that civil society's major challenge in an authoritarian country like China would be from the state. The state's interference in the public sphere would inhibit the development of autonomous, independent civil society organizations (CSOs) as well as the accumulation of social capital within the society. Scholars have noted how the state would constantly make attempts to blur the line of the public sphere (Fewsmith 2013). However, based on the research in rural Sichuan with data collected from 43 counties, this chapter argues that the challenge from the bottom up with the skeptical individuals blurring the line between the private and the public sphere is just as important as the challenge from the state from above. Key factors that lead to the lack of trust toward civil society organizations include limited individual CSO interactions, mismatch of criteria of the state and CSOs, institutional constraints, and lack of civility within the rural communities. The foundation of a nascent civil society in rural China is not in existence while the state, particularly at the local level, is ready to give more, though still very limited, space to certain CSOs.

The missing link in the literature

While the literature on civil society is extensive and spans multiple disciplines, scholars tend to use the state-society duality to stratify the essence of civil society. However, as the concept of "civil society" evolved, it was not always a duality, as mentioned in

chapter one, and this research also finds that the duality model is not sufficient in capturing a Chinese civil society in rural areas.

Since the "reform and opening" (改革开放) era, with particular attention to the spring of 1989 for example, scholars observed a "sudden, massive spread of civil society" (Ostergaard 1989), a "nascent civil society" (Nathan 1997), or an "emergent civil society" (Sullivan 1990). The optimistic scholars see such development be "nothing short of remarkable" (Simon 2013). Scholars who are pessimistic about the future aspects of civil society in China look at mainly how the state is tightening its control over the society (Gallagher 2004).

The state-society framework is essential but not always sufficiently useful in depicting and tackling the fundamental problems we have with the nascent civil society (if there is one) in China — and potentially in some other societies, too. It focuses too much on the state as a challenge to the development of civil society — not providing enough space, interfering and controlling the activities in the public sphere — but not enough weight on the society and the activities that go on in the public sphere and the private sphere.

Besides the state that is blurring the line of the public sphere, this research finds that the skeptical private sphere is also blurring the line from below. Individuals, families/households in rural areas are very suspicious about associational behaviors (formal or informal) that are non-government organized. Individuals trust the government and the state authority more than civil society and rely on the government for help and service provision even for those who have negative opinions towards the local government.

Therefore, even if the state allows sufficient space to exist and does not control or interfere with activities within that space, the society is not ready to occupy it. The fundamental elements of the civil society from the bottom up are not there in rural China.

Lucian Pye, Robert Weller, and a few other scholars have pointed out that in East Asia and particularly China, sometimes thinking in terms of civility (Weller 1999) and social capital can be crucial to the understanding of civil society (Pye 1999). Civility here is not just gentility and virtue, but more regarding the general norms and practices of individual behaviors and personal interactions. Social capital here is association based on trust, and how much one can be enabled from a network of resources. Both civility and social capital are foundations of civil society, and they indicate the quality of the civil society. What this research found is that in rural China, we may have a nascent civil society without much civility and social capital.

The data

This research consists of over 1200 surveys in 43 counties in Sichuan Province, 67 in-depth interviews with local government officials and CSO leaders, and case studies from communities that CSOs operated. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were utilized. Sichuan Province is in the less developed western region of China. The level of rural development in Sichuan is far behind the provinces on the east coast.

The surveys cover almost all of the counties west of the Chengdu-Kunming railroad (which is the less developed region even by Sichuan's standards) including the counties in

the Liangshan ethnic Yi region (which is the least developed region in Sichuan). The choice made here intends to represent the regions that lack development and urban influence. To select areas that are similar in background characteristics, urban counties and areas to the east of the railway line, which intermingle with the sprawling metropolitan area of Chongqing, were excluded. Data were collected from 2014–2015.

The interviews of government officials and CSO leaders are conducted from 2012–2016. Some of those interviewees are in urban areas (such as Chengdu) and have their jurisdictions or targeted service areas both in urban areas and in rural ones. Government officials interviewed range from provincial, city, county, and local level. CSO leaders interviewed work in sectors such as poverty reduction, health, education, environmental protection, agriculture, public policy, inequality, technology, disaster relief, culture and community development, human care (senior, child, handicapped, etc.) and others.

This research intends to provide a holistic picture of the views from the individuals in the private sphere, the individuals occupying the state, as well as those who are operating within the public sphere. This research also draws comparisons with data collected from the world value survey, the Edelman trust barometer, and the Asian Barometer survey.

The term CSO is broadly used in this research, encompassing organizations that are not for profit, voluntary, charitable, social, people-run, non-enterprise, philanthropic, associational, for the public interest, or within the public sphere/third realm. Some are registered while many are unregistered. “Unregistered” does not necessarily mean they can monitor and limit state authority at will. To the contrary, they face more legal and financial

vulnerabilities. CSOs are typically mission driven rather than profit driven. Given China's complex legal and political environment, individual organizations registered as private companies but are mission driven and aim at goals such as public welfare also share many similarities with our subjects of interests. To avoid complications and to ensure the safety of both the interviewer and interviewees, during interviews, "social organizations" is used as an approximation of CSOs. Although the study is conducted in China, particularly in Sichuan province, the logic of the relationship may apply to other countries, including developed, non-authoritarian countries.

The puzzle: trust and confidence in government and CSOs

Before presenting the data this research collected from rural Sichuan province, it is important to situate it within the global and national context. The world value survey asks the public's confidence in the government, charitable and humanitarian organizations. The public's confidence in "NGOs" was collected during the fifth wave from 2005–2009, but since the sample was small, I am going to use the confidence in charitable and humanitarian organizations as a proxy for confidence in CSOs (or civil society organizations). After all, the rural Chinese people tend to associate CSO and NGOs directly to common weal and charitable organizations (公益慈善组织). Both the fifth wave and sixth wave of the World Value Survey indicate that the public confidence is higher in charitable and humanitarian organizations than the government globally (See chart 1 and chart 2).[63]

[63] World Value Survey http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp, last accessed on 2015-04-06

Figure 4.1: Percentage of respondents' confidence in institutions, fifth wave WVS

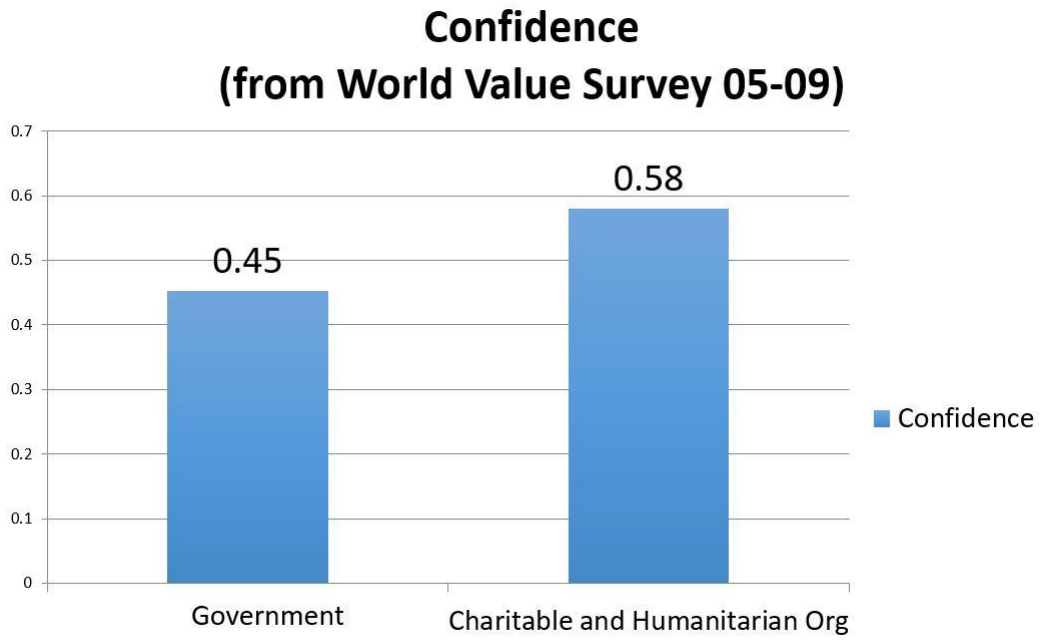
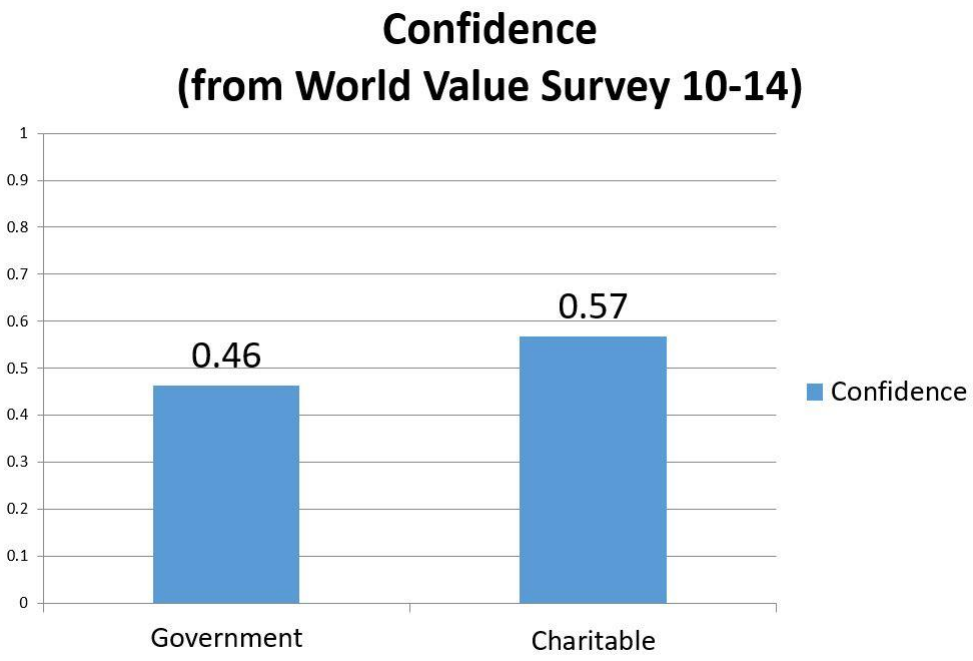


Figure 4.2: Percentage of respondents' confidence in institutions, sixth wave WVS



Putting these data into global historical context, as a report produced by the Brookings Institution indicates, public confidence in charities remains at contemporary lows (Light 2008). The result from the Edelman's trust barometer is similar, as they provided yearly data for the past eight years. Globally, public trust in NGOs has been consistently more than trust in the government[64], even when the trust in NGOs and charitable organizations remains at its historical low.

It is important to point out that the sample in both the World Value Survey and the Edelman trust barometer is very different from the sample targeted for this research. The Edelman Trust Barometer targets the urban, elite population. Interviewees are all college-educated and within the top 25% of household income per age group in each country. The world value survey may be more representative of the country's population, but since interviews in remote areas are conducted through phone calls, those without phones will be excluded from the sample. In this research's sample from Sichuan, every 1 out of 6 people does not have access to the phone. Both the World Value Survey and the Edelman Trust Barometer indicate that globally, and particularly in the urban elite population, trust and confidence in NGOs/charities are higher than that of the government.

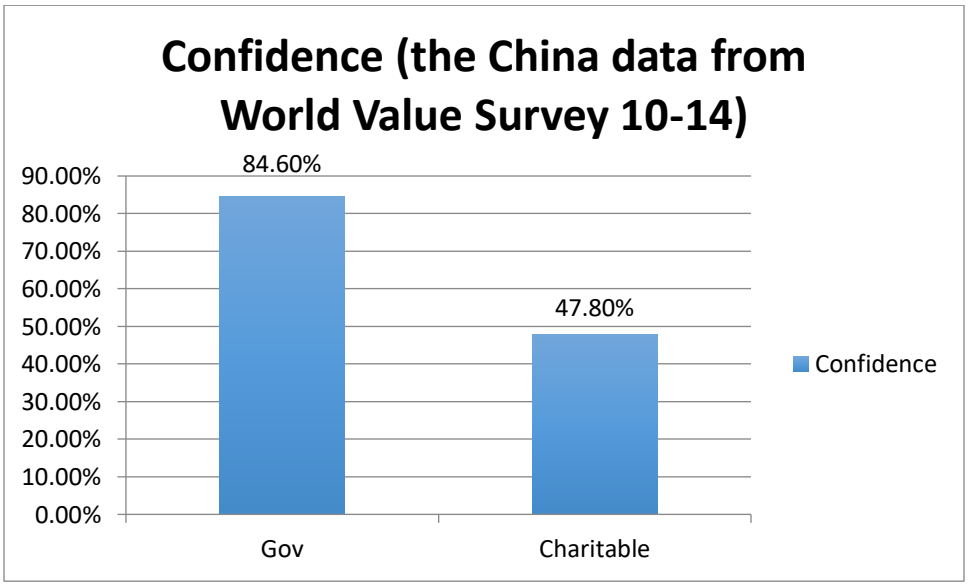
The World Value Survey's country data on China is already very different from that of the global data, with the confidence in the government already above the confidence in charities (see chart 3). The Asian Barometer Survey which surveys a group of Asian countries reveals that the trust in local government is almost as low as the trust in NGOs,

[64] Edelman Trust Barometer http://www.edelman.com/insights/intellectual-property/2015-edelman-trust-barometer/ last accessed on 2015-04-06

although the trust in the central government is still much higher. For the years that have data on China, the trust in NGOs is still much lower than trust in government, central or local.[65]

This sample from rural Sichuan indicates that interviewees surveyed have higher confidence in the central government than in the local government, which is consistent with surveys done by other China scholars. Therefore, if the view of the central government over charities is a Chinese phenomenon, we need to explain why it is so. Furthermore, it is beneficial to have the rural-only data so that the noise from the urban population (which acts and thinks very differently from the rural population) can be excluded.

Figure 4.3: Percentage of respondents' confidence in institutions in China, sixth wave WVS



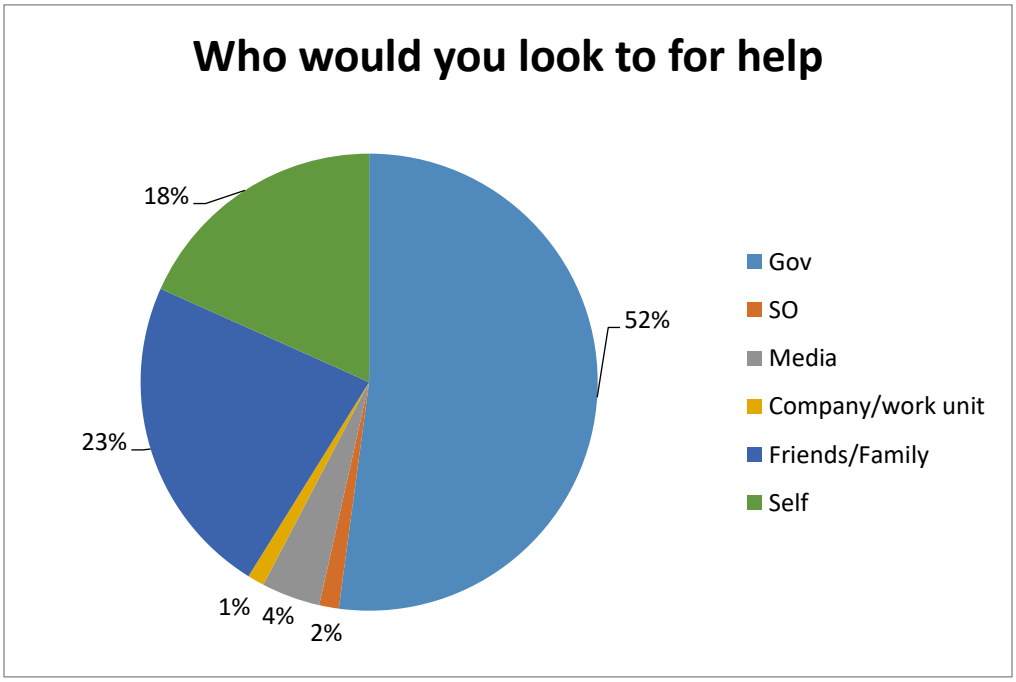
[65] Data requested from the Asian Barometer Survey are from 2003–2007, China was surveyed in 2003 and 2006

There are two questions (among over 50) in the survey that is particularly of interest and relevant to this research:

1. Who would you look to for help when in need or when treated unfairly? 1) Local government 2). Non-profit, social organization, charities 3). Media 4). Your company/work unit 5) Friends or family 6) self 7) other
2. Whom would you prefer to provide you services: 1). Local government 2) social organizations

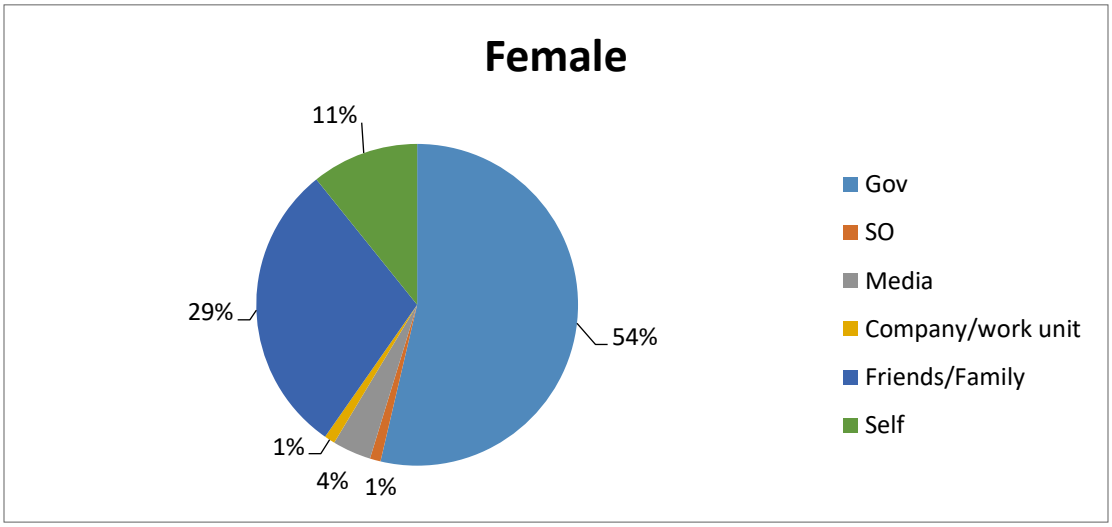
When we asked about whom to look for when in need, the majority (52%) picked the local government. Self-help (18%) and help from friends/family (23%) makes up a total of 41%. Only 2% picked social organizations, and 4% chose the media (see graph 3). This result indicates that, overwhelmingly, individuals either look for help within the private sphere or look up to the state directly. Only a small portion of the population would seek help from the "public sphere."

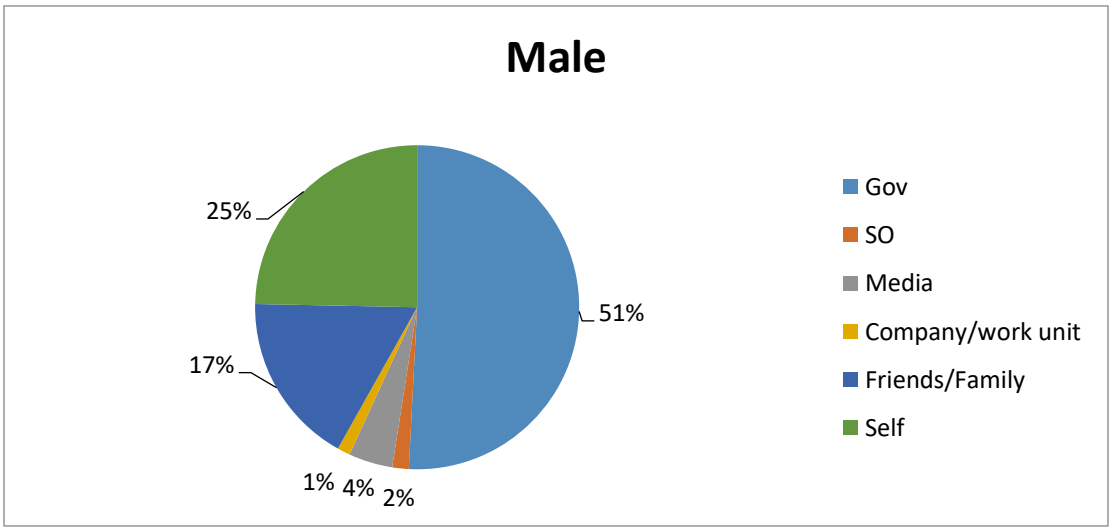
Figure 4.4: Who would you look to for help?



This result is not very different when we separate the answers from male and female respondents (see graph 4). The percentage of people who would seek help from the government is 54% among females and 51% among males. Those who would ask for help from the private sphere makes up about 40%, but females tend to rely more on family and friends while males tend to rely more on themselves. The proportion seeking help from the public sphere is about the same between men and women.

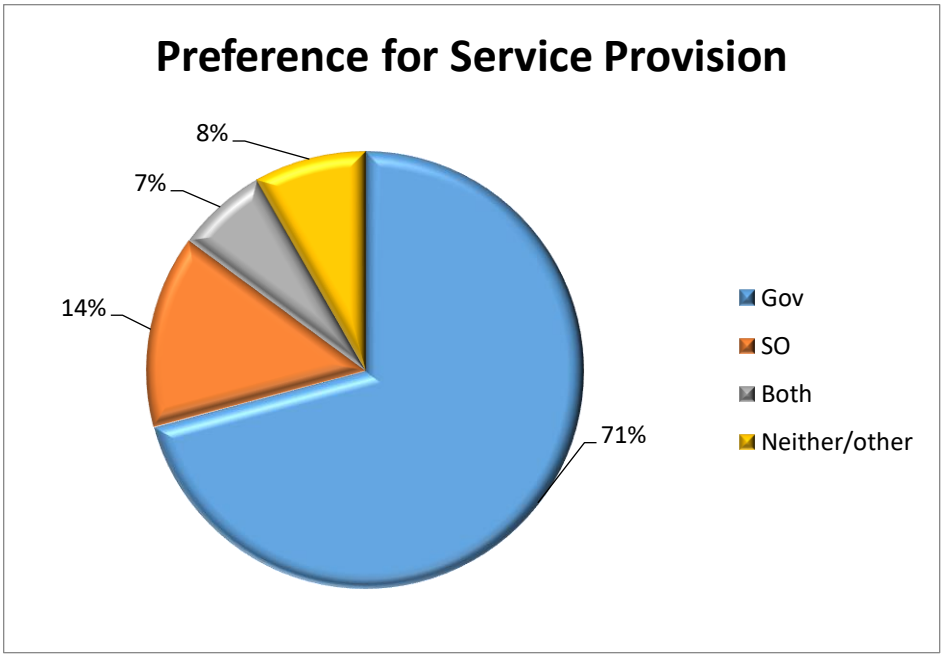
Figure 4.5: Who would you look to for help? (Men vs. women)





When we took a further step by asking the second question, in which they will have to choose between the local government and social organization for service provision, the choice was overwhelmingly in favor of the government (see graph 4). This 5:1 ratio for the local government for service provision remains the same when breakdown by gender.

Figure 4.6: Whose service would you prefer to get, the local government or social organization?

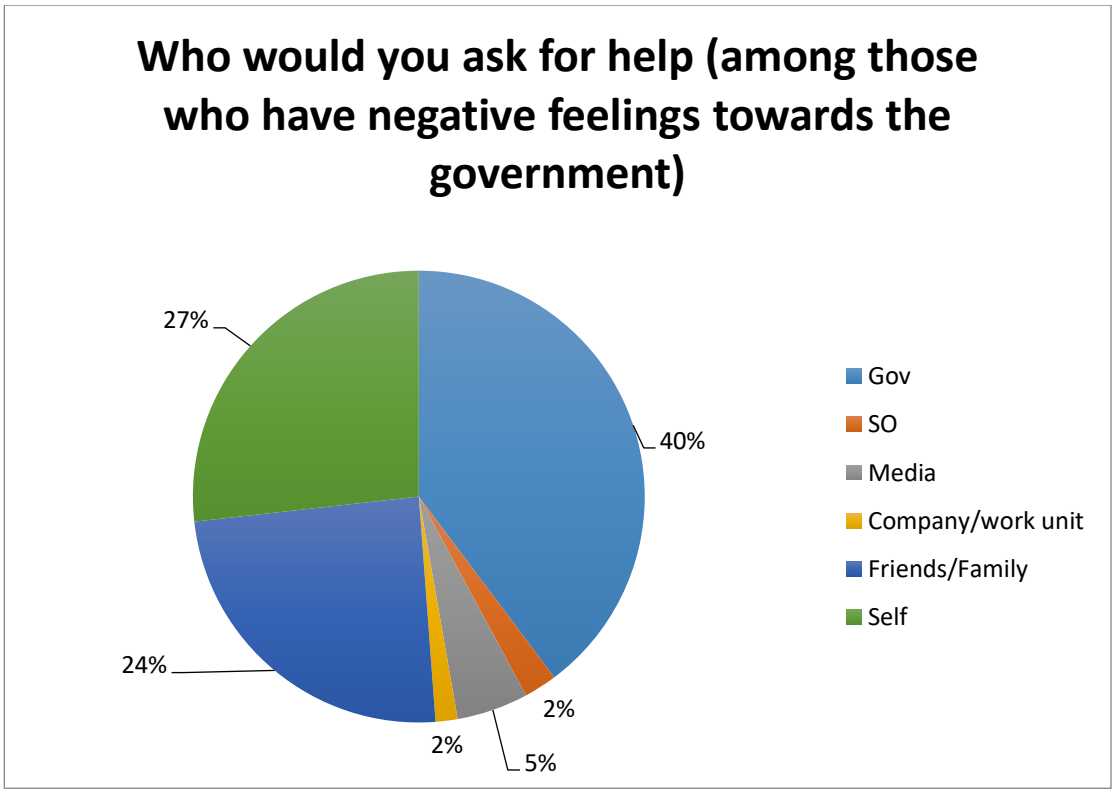


It is natural to be concerned with the data initially, as the preference of service provided by the local government over social organization might represent the preference of the government itself. Therefore, the responses from those who have a negative feeling towards the government were also investigated.

In the survey, I asked a question about the interviewees' rating of the local government/party committee (whichever is in power), on a 1–5 scale: 5 being very satisfied and 1 being very dissatisfied. By looking at the people who have a negative feeling towards the local government (those who answered below 3), one may sense that the logic here is unconventional.

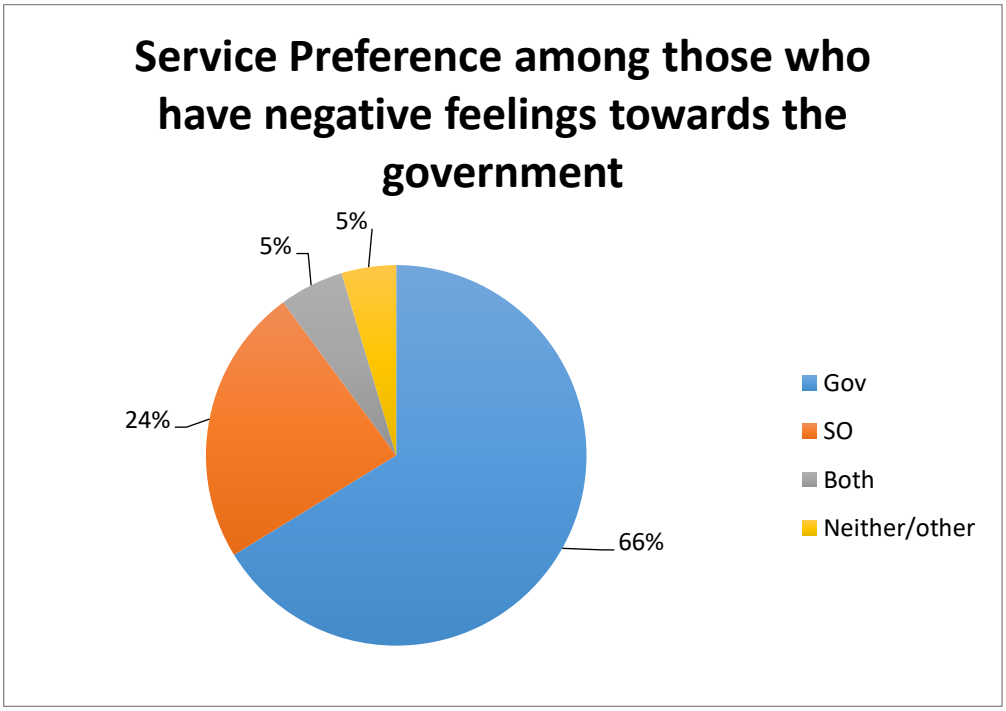
When asked the first question about the choice of getting help, those who have negative feelings towards the government still picked the government 40% of the time (reduced from 52%). The choices of getting help from family/friends or self-help increased from 41% to 51%. Therefore, the proportion that is made up either by the state and the private sphere is about the same. Only, those who did not like the government would want to solve the problems themselves or among their closest circles, rather than seeking help from social organizations or the media.

Figure 4.7: whom would you look to for help? (Among those who have negative feelings towards the government)



When the same respondents' answers are collected for the second question (having to choose service provision between the government and social organization, among those who have negative feelings towards the government), still 66% picked the government while 24% picked the social organization. This result indicates that even they did not like the local government they still prefer the local government to social organizations (see graph 6). The literature has suggested more of the state-society duality (sometimes state vs. everything that's not the state). It is important to point out that here, from this data collected from rural Sichuan, we not only have the state blurring the line of the public sphere from the above but also have the private sphere blurring the line from the bottom. Why are the answers in China (particularly rural China) very different from the global data? Why did the people prefer the government to social organizations, even among those who do not like the government? The in-depth interviews of some of the villagers, government officials and social organization leaders can provide some insights.

Figure 4.8: Whose service would you prefer to get, the local government or social organization? (Among those who have negative feelings towards the government)



Discussions and analysis

There are four main reasons to explain the puzzle while preferences of the government and its service are higher than that of the social organizations:

1. Limited interactions between individuals and social organizations (formal or informal)

2. Mismatch of criteria of government and social organizations

3. The constraint placed on the social organizations by the state significantly limited the social organizations

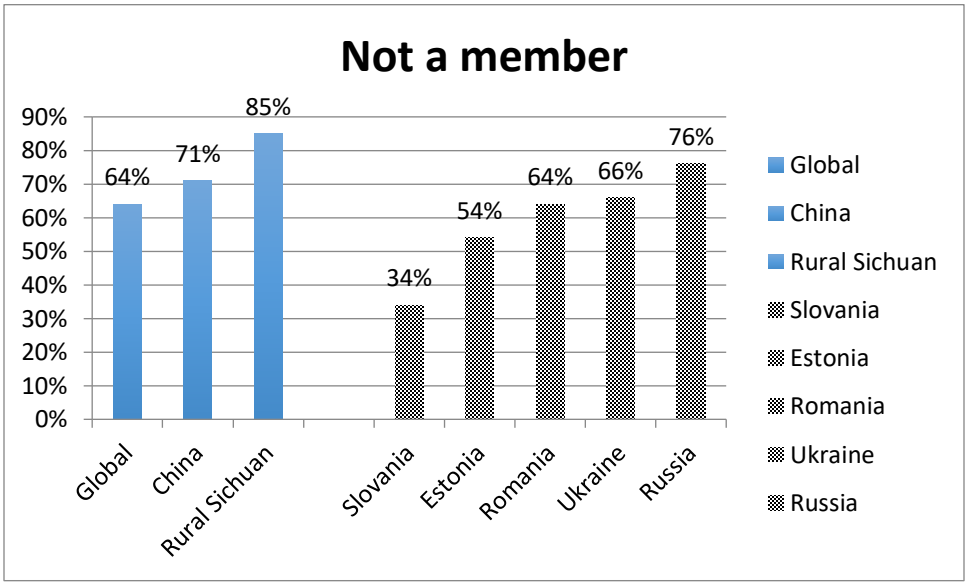
4. Lack of civility (norms of behaviors and personal interaction) within the rural community

Limited interactions between individuals and social organizations

Being a member of a social organization (formal or informal) is not common in rural Sichuan. The global and China data provided by the World Value Survey, which look at the percentage of people who are not a member of any social organizations, indicates that 64% of people are not members of any organizations globally[66] and 71% for China (2300 surveys). The rural Sichuan data this research collected indicates that among the 1219 respondents, 1034 are not members of any organizations, about 85%. If we look at the same statistic from the post-communist countries, civil society in post-communist countries is distinctively weak (Howard 2003), we can also see that China's "non-member" rate is also higher than Slovenia, Estonia, Romania, Ukraine and slightly lower than Russia.

[66] By turning V25 – V35 into dummy variables (1 = not a member, and 0 = everything else), and then multiply all the variables and combine them into one variable indicating "not a member", I was able to get the number of people who are not members of any of the following organizations: arts/education, church/religious, consumer, environmental, charity/humanitarian, labor union, political party, professional groups, self-help groups, sport groups, and other groups. The data is from the world value survey, 6th wave.

Figure 4.9: Not a member of any organization, WVS sixth wave comparing with the rural Sichuan data

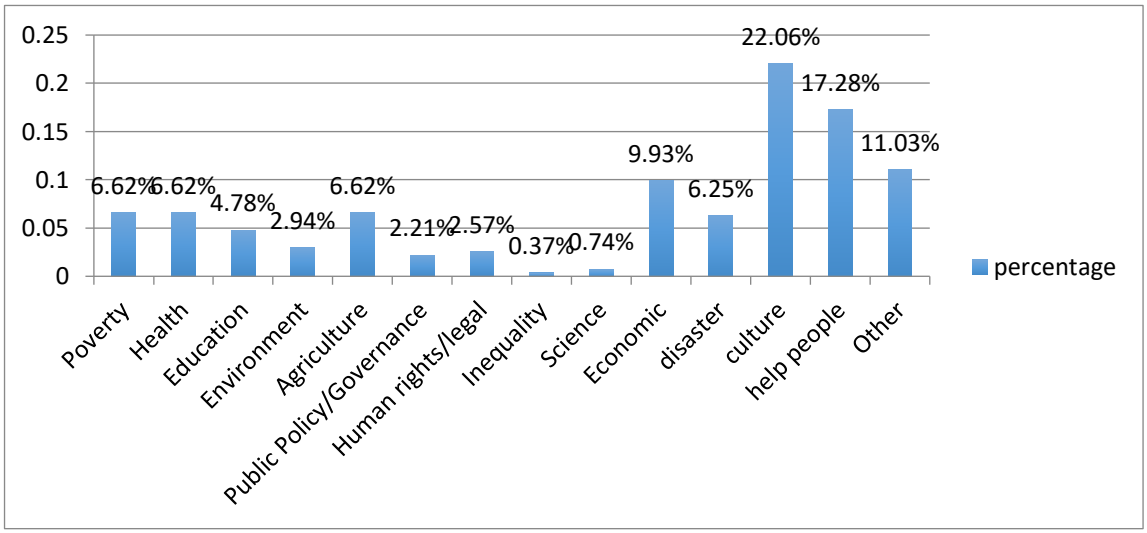


When there is a lack of interaction between individuals and social organizations, it creates misunderstanding between them. When I sat down with a few villagers for in-depth interviews in rural Sichuan, these are several impressions about what social organizations are and what they do.

The first kind thinks that they are businesses hoping to cheat the society. “Social organizations commonly do multi-level marketing (传销). We are honest people, do not get ourselves involved…” said by one interviewee. The second kind believes that social organizations are just puppets set up by the government. There is no autonomy, and therefore, they are doing what the government does not want to do themselves — usually dirty business. One interviewee mentioned that the government forces him to join a social organization, and they have to pay membership fees. Therefore, he did not like social

organizations at all. Most people fall into the third category in which they participate in a culture or community development organization. Often, they respond by saying that the reason they participate is mainly to "kill time." "I want nothing to do with the other people in the organization, I care less about the mission or projects…" said by one interviewee. There are also those who see the activities organized by these social organizations being an important part of their life, especially when the organization will bring economic benefits to the household. One interviewee mentioned to me: "I so much would like to join a community dance group, but the government would not organize it. It could have made my life so much better." When asked why she did not organize a few neighbors together to form a dance group, she replied, "it is the government's business."

Figure 4.10: Types of organizations people are members of



There are also very few people who are actively organizing social organization's activities. Individuals who are members of social organizations tend to have a preference of social organizations to the government for service provisions. This result stays the same when we control for gender, education level, age, monthly income, the existence of local religious groups and clans (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1： Logistic regression on service provision preferences

	(1) soservice	(2) soservice	(3) soservice	(4) soservice
soservice				
Member of organization	0.586***	0.643***	0.602***	0.677***
	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
age		-0.0173***	-0.0165***	-0.0157***
		(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.009)
education		-0.000852	-0.000892	-0.000877
		(0.623)	(0.640)	(0.655)
gender		0.0339	0.0327	0.0661
		(0.828)	(0.839)	(0.709)
monthly income			0.0000332	0.0000227
			(0.325)	(0.549)
religious				-0.0339
				(0.854)
religious				0.299*
				(0.069)
Constant	-1.411***	-0.673***	-0.760***	-0.899***
	(0.000)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.003)
Observations	1049	1046	1033	850

t statistics in parentheses
* p<.10, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

There are other reasons to explain why individuals in rural Sichuan prefer the government to social organizations and when in need, would look more often towards the government and the private sphere, rather than social organizations.

The mismatch of criteria and expectations

Criteria are standards on which a judgment or decision may be based. It is usually culture relevant and not value neutral. Public policy is not only related to the efficiency of delivering public goods and providing public welfare for the greater good, values and philosophies are also reflected during policy making and those who get impacted by those policies. The social organizations (especially international NGOs) tend to place efficiency, effectiveness, and justice at the core of their practices while local government, catering towards the rural China's reality, would put more emphasis on fairness, equality and political acceptability. The mismatch of criteria practiced by the local government and social organizations contributed significantly towards the negative feelings towards the latter.

It is a common practice, as social organization leaders would mention during interviews, that they want to get the largest social benefit out of every dollar spent. For example, when they are providing assistance in a local community, they tend to have a targeted population — whether those who are most in need, or those who has the most potential to improve, or those who can make the best use of the resources given to them.

This applies in particular to international NGOs working in China, who follow international standards of practice.

What appeared to the local villagers, however, is that those organizations are being unfair. “Why did my neighbor got 9000 yuan and I only got 3000? These social organizations are corrupt, and there must be nepotism in those assistance programs.” “I am not relative or friends with those people, that is why I did not receive as much.” Many interviewees said similar things. What they see is that the money is probably from the central government and designated for the village as a whole. Therefore, each family should be able to benefit from that. Social organizations are there to disrupt the order and take money away from those who do not receive as much as others (or not receiving anything at all).

The government, however, is perceived to be fairer than social organizations. When there are public goods that need to be distributed, government tends to distribute them equally. Social organizations, for better purpose or worse, tend to have targeted receivers so that every dollar could be most effectively spent and, therefore, often cause perceptions of being unfair to those who did not get their support.

Local government officials, who have interacted with its population for a long time and often are selected from the locality because they have a good reputation or resources, would do it very differently. During conversations I had with village level leaders, almost all of them mentioned that it is important to be “fair” to the local people. They sometimes will have to take away legitimate benefits away from their relatives so that there is no rumor

among the population about nepotism. Of course, it is not appropriate to take what they say at the face value. The responses of the villagers indicated similar observations: “Local government officials may be corrupt, but they at least gave us something. Social organizations sometimes do not give us anything, and they claim they are helping us.”

It is a common phenomenon in rural Sichuan that people are sensitive about their relative wealth comparing with their neighbors and not so much about their absolute welfare gain. What government officials have repeatedly concluded during the interview is that people do not worry about being poor but worry much about being treated unfairly (不患贫，患不均). The government, therefore, following this logic, has aimed at promoting relative equality to the villagers and caters to the villagers by presenting themselves as being fair. The social organizations, on the other hand, are seen as unfair, corrupt and ineffective by many, even though they were trying their best to achieve efficiency and effectiveness.

Rural villagers also tend to use a “child-parent” metaphor to depict their relationship with the government. “The government is supposed to take care of us,” said many. Even though some mentioned that sometimes there are corruptions by the local officials, and other times the local government is not as reliable as they can be, they are still the best, and probably the only, option. Some villagers also mentioned: “When we have difficulties or face challenges, the government is supposed to take care of us just like parents caring for their children. Social organizations are not necessary.” Social organizations, in their view, are more for the marginal, non-essential works. They will organize entertainment activities such as dance parties or outings, but they are not expected

to do anything when the matter is important, crucial or urgent. The villagers also replied several times “the good social organizations are probably organized by the government.”

The mismatch of criteria could also lead to mistrust. It is not rare that social organizations are seen to have hidden agendas. “Many of them receive high wages, yet they claim they are doing charity.” The rural public thinks that charity work should be entirely voluntary, and the staff should not use part of the donated money as their wage. Once they realize that the staff of social organizations is getting wages, sometimes much higher than their income, they question the motives of those social organizations. There are rumors among certain villagers that social organizations are here for their money, and so they keep as much distance away from those organizations as possible without knowing exactly the kind of work they do.

The distrust of social organizations can also be traced back to the mindset many of the villagers have. What social organizations do, according to them, is supposed to be “Charity” (慈善). The connotation of “contributing without expecting reward and volunteering/donating time and resources” is especially strong in Chinese. While we see some initial professionalization of the NGO sector, we are also witnessing enhanced misunderstanding about the nature of the work these organizations do. Some interviewees mentioned, “if they think they are doing charity work, they should not get wages/salaries. People with conscience donated the money, and they [the social organizations] put the money into their own pockets.” The local population perceives any overhead costs or operational costs as “corruption.” If an organizer working for a social organization is there for a long term, he/she probably has a contract with the organization and receives wages to

sustain their basic needs. With the pressure from the public, they are already making much less money than their peers who have gone to other sectors, and yet, still face the mistrust from those they serve. The civic education is much needed to make more people understand the nature of the work social organizations do in rural China.

Institutionalized disadvantage of the public sphere activities

The private sphere's suspicion and skepticism towards the public sphere are not simply caused by lack of membership of (or interactions with) social organizations, or philosophical, cultural biases towards the activities in the public sphere. There are many rules of the game that are crucial in making the private sphere not trusting activities in the public sphere.

Social organizations lack legitimacy. It is not only a challenge for those unregistered social organizations. To many people, the government is the only legitimate institution to rule the local administrative domain. Any activity that is "non-government" is perceived as "not legitimate."

Social organizations normally operate in China as *minfei* or "people-run Non-enterprise organizations" (民办非企业). There serious constraints the institutions pose on the organizations that challenge their legitimacy and survivability.

According to the 1998 "Provisional Regulations for the Registration Administration of People-Run non-Enterprise Units", *minfei* are not allowed to be

"national," have branches. They cannot publicly fundraise, borrow money, get dividends and do not enjoy tax breaks. If there is already an organization working on the same issue or even in the same domain, no such repeated organization is allowed: "only one organization for any issue is allowed to register."[67] This means that such social organizations not only do not have favorable policies to enjoy, but they are also worse off than commercially registered companies. They enjoy much less freedom yet still pay taxes like private enterprises. Before the 2016 charity law was passed, the *minfei* will also have to register under the supervision of their "affiliated authority" (主管单位), and get their budget and plans approved by the affiliated authority annually. This clause has many teeth. The affiliated authority can use such "annual approval" as a threat to influence day-to-day operations and decision making of the social organization. A leader of a social organization once mentioned in an interview that "we have to listen to their orders and cater towards their preferences because they [the authority] have implied that if we do not comply, there is no way we will get approved for next year." Since the 2016 charity law was passed, even though not all CSOs are required to find the "affiliated authority," they are still required to submit an annual report to the relevant government branch or government affiliated organization. The leverage government has through approving the annual report is similar to the budgetary approval before 2016. Therefore, social organizations are literally under government control and are not necessarily Non-governmental organizations in China.

[67] "Provisional Regulations for the Registration Administration of People-Run non-Enterprise Units," Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 1998, 10–25. < http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/zwgk/fvfg/mjzzgl/200709/20070900001726.shtml >

The initial breakthrough was in 2004 when the "Administration Rules for Foundations of 2004" replaced the 1988 version to allow individuals to use their property and money and register "non-public fundraising foundations."[68] It also made it possible for individuals to register their foundations directly under the ministry of civil affairs, instead of having to seek an "affiliated authority." Still, most of the constraints towards social organizations remained.

In 2011, the minister of civil affairs LI Liguo said during the national civil affairs working meeting that the certain social organizations' "affiliated authority" units should turn their role into "operational guidance" units, and in the meantime encourage certain types of social organizations to be registered directly without having to find an "affiliated authority" to sponsor them. The four specific types that would qualify are industry associations, science & technology organization charities, and entities providing community social services (民政部 2011).

Such limited progress became less predictable after 2012 than before when the new generation of top leaders took office. The implications of the new 2016 charity law are still unknown while many social organizations and civil activities organized by individuals were cracked down, such as the women rights activists organizing women rights activities during the meeting times of the National People's Congress and Chinese People Political Consultative Committee. Many social organizations are forced to operate without getting

[68] "Administration Rules for Foundations of 2004", Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2004, 3–8. < http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/zwgk/fvfg/mjzzgl/200707/20070700001357.shtml >

an official status (to avoid the tight control or not having the resources to get registered). Therefore, with a large body of "unregistered" social organizations, individual citizens tend to think of them as "illegal" and "illegitimate" particularly if they had no positive experiences.

There are many, including scholars and government officials, who interpret the intention of the new charity law, as well as the draft regulations for social associations accompanying it[69], as stipulating the responsibility of local government to provide legitimacy and support for charitable organizations, and releasing authority to non-governmental actors (Zheng 2016). However, before it is officially implemented and tested, the rural citizens would maintain the impression that many social organizations are illegitimate.

Institutional disadvantages also lead to the lack of resources. The government has many channels to acquire, accumulate and distribute resources. The legal and institutional constraints CSOs face made them on the receiving end of those resources rather than the supporting side. Since they are not allowed to raise money publicly or have the autonomy to conduct their own business, there are very limited resources that they have at their expenses and villagers do not think those are adequate in solving the critical challenges they face.

One obvious disadvantage regarding institution making is that CSOs do not have

[69] Released on Aug.1st 2016 by the Ministry of Civil Affairs of China < http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/zwgk/tzl/201608/20160800001364.shtml >

the rule-making capacity. China is a decentralized system. Many rules and norms are decided at the local level, mostly by the local government or the leader of the local government. Rules are also quite flexible. Policy, therefore, is often an important instrument that the local government can utilize to achieve certain goals. Some interviewees see this function of the government crucial in dealing with the problems they are facing. They sense the helplessness of CSOs particularly in an environment where rules are fluid. CSOs themselves have to try to adapt to the changing rules and policies constantly and so cannot be very effective or reliable.

Furthermore, within such a macro environment, CSOs lack certainty. A typical response from interviewees is that the government has been here for a long time and will always be here. CSOs did not form or arrive until recently, and they may leave or dissolve. The uncertainty makes them not reliable at all. “If I am about to get into a project or participate a program that they offer, I will first have to ensure that they are not going to leave me before I get the benefits and working with a CSO is like buying a risky stock that may not have good returns.”

A private sphere lacking civility and shrinks the public sphere

Much literature on civil society has focused on the state-society relations, depicting the state and society as a duality, in which the public sphere would check and monitor the state while the state would have the intention to blur the line of the public sphere from the top. What this research has found is that despite the existing pressure from above, the

private sphere is also blurring the line of the public sphere from the bottom. The individuals, families, and households would rather directly interact with the government than having a public sphere (which look suspicious to many) to buffer between the state and the private sphere.

The government has promoted the notion of patriarchs and still treats its citizens as children. The citizens have also tacitly permitted this relationship, and sometimes embrace it. Many villagers expect the government to take care of them and provide assistance whenever possible. They see themselves as child-citizen (子民). This epistemic approach led to the lack of tolerance of CSOs from the citizens. Who would want someone else to get in the way of parents and children and pretend that they will take care of the children instead? The impressions the CSOs have given to the local villagers are such that strangers are pretending to be their "parents."

It is important to note that the state-society paradigm is useful in understanding the survival of civil societies. The examination of the interactions between the state and the society can help researchers understand how autonomous and robust the civil society is. However, in authoritarian countries with a nascent (or some may say non-existing) civil society, the more important question is to look at the foundation and the quality of the civil society first.

Lucian Pye argues that civility, social capital, and civil society be three powerful concepts for explaining Asia. Societies have their rules of civility that ensure social order and shapes norms for behavior and interactions of individuals. Social capital looks at the

density and intensity of interactions and collective actions within communities, and civil society looks at various autonomous groups operating within the public sphere (Pye 1999). Robert Weller also points out that it is necessary to look at civility in understanding the civil society of Mainland China and Taiwan (Weller 1999). Civility and social capital identifies the quality of civil society and are fundamental building blocks of the civil society. Without those, the state-society duality is meaningless because one is unsure about what exactly is in that "society."

The usual depiction of an authoritarian state constantly blurring the line of the public sphere from the above also has variations in rural Sichuan. The local government officials, during the interviews, repeatedly mentioned that they want to see CSOs grow to share the burden for public goods delivery. There are types of CSOs that they remain suspicious of, especially religious organizations, international organizations, and any other organizations that organize protests against the government. Yes, there are a significant amount of CSOs that they not only welcome but also are putting resources in to incubate. "It will be better to know those organizations and establish a good relationship than keeping them away and hidden," said one government official. The strategy of forming incubation centers for CSOs in various places in Sichuan is also evidence to back that claim. Two government officials also mentioned their concerns: "There are three things that are pre-requisites for voluntary CSOs to form: money, time, and motivation. Within my jurisdictions, I do not see this happening. Therefore, even though we have given space for such CSOs, they are not coming about." Another local government official mentioned that they are tired of being the referee and the player at the same time and want to let the CSOs

be the player, “it will make our lives so much easier.” Therefore, we see that the local government at least tolerates some CSOs and even provides resources to help them come about while the private sphere remains skeptical of CSOs in general.

There are incidences in which the villagers had good impressions of local CSOs. In general, such CSOs are either operating out from the village Party committee’s office (the local government provides the office space and basic stationaries for the organization), or the organization is head by (or affiliated with) a local government official. Therefore, the trust of CSOs is channeled through the local government rather than directly towards the CSOs. Such dynamics reinforces the observations from this research that villagers’ impression of the government being the only legitimate entity within the local jurisdiction and as long as an organization is “non-governmental,” it is not to be trusted.

This research’s finding in rural Sichuan, China, testifies that the society has very diverse and inconsistent norms for behaviors and interactions. The lack of civility has led to the suspicion of civil society activities within the public sphere and distrust of CSOs. The blurring of the line of public sphere from the bottom by the private sphere is a fundamental challenge to the nascent civil society in rural China, and such challenge should not be ignored when analyzing nascent civil societies in authoritarian countries.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an alternative to the state-society dualism approach to civil society and demonstrated that the skepticism from individual citizens to CSOs is just as critical of a threat to the civil society as the state is. Public trust to CSOs in China is consistently lower than that of local and central government in comparison with the global average from multiple independent surveys. Interviews revealed that limited interactions, mismatch of criteria, institutional constraints, and lack of civility are driving factors to this outcome. Individual citizens see no chance to change the rules of the game unless the state is behind the initiative, and that perception makes the competition within society inevitable and the bargaining between society and state premature. Thus, understanding such nuanced distinction between civil society in democracies and authoritarian countries where a nascent civil society is still emerging could be crucial to identifying challenges and the further development of the public sphere. Great transformations of local communities through civic education might be a prerequisite for creating a nascent civil society in rural China.

5. Chapter Five: Earthquakes and the typologies of state-society relations in China[70]

Introduction

The state-society relation in authoritarian countries has become a part of an important debate. The question of whether a nascent civil society could emerge without formalized democratic institutions is contested. Optimists consider the progress made by countries like China and many other authoritarian countries remarkable. Even though the state is still, to some extent, repressing civil society, civil society has overcome fear and is pushing against constraints and opening up spaces (Simon 2013; Azhar 2014; Casey 2016). The pessimists, on the other hand, point out that the fundamentals have not changed in countries like China, and there are limits and constraints that the society has to face (Gallagher 2004; Fewsmith 2013; Nathan 2015). For scholars specifically studying China, theories of sino-exceptionalism, graduated control, and consultative authoritarianism have been proposed to distinguish the Chinese model from western liberal democracies (Ma 2002; Kang and Han 2008; Deng and Jing 2011; Teets 2014).

However, the key question of how the state and civil society organizations (CSOs) would behave differently under different constraints and their logic of operation remains unanswered due to the high pressure over the society imposed by the authoritarian government through means such as laws, structural affiliations, personnel, and financial measures (Gallagher 2004). However, studies that look at major earthquakes and their

[70] This chapter has been published in *China Information*. See Sun, Taiyi. 2017. "Earthquakes and the typologies of state-society relations in China," *China Information*, November.

effects on civil societies in China have utilized the unique opportunity to observe the change in state-society relations (Roney 2011; Teets 2014). Earthquakes are disastrous events that negatively impact citizens and communities, but for scholars who study state-society relations under authoritarian countries, they also provide rare opportunities. During the special times when the local government is incapacitated and in need of help from the society, scholars are capable of observing the different parties, especially the government, operating at the margin of their constraints, and thus assess their underlying logics and intentions (Özerdem and Jacoby 2006; Schencking 2006; Alesch et al 2009; Aldrich 2012).

The previous two chapters have captured the state-society relations and individual-society relations. This chapter intends to build on these previous chapters and make an attempt to systematically capture the typologies of the dynamic state-society relations. This study also builds on the above literature by drawing evidence from a few case studies and 61 in-depth interviews with government officials and leaders of civil society organizations in Sichuan province, China, and captures the rare variations of different types of local government-CSO relations from the time of Wenchuan earthquake and Lushan earthquake to post-quake periods. This chapter argues that whether the state is more effective in delivering service in a specific area and whether the goal of the civil society organization aligns with the state play a major role in deciding the nature of the state-CSO relations. Those typologies of relations are not static as both the government and civil society organizations interact with each other and adjust their policies and behaviors accordingly. Such learning experiences, triggered by the earthquakes, create a dynamic process of evolving state-society relations in China today.

Although the study is mainly done in China, and particularly in Sichuan province, the logic of the relationship may potentially apply to other countries, even including some developed, non-authoritarian countries. The choice of the term "CSO" is partially a matter of convenience as it is intuitively a well-recognized concept that is used in this sector. This chapter, therefore, recognizes that there are China-specific cases that may not be best described using this term and this article only tries to use it to capture the overall pattern and logic of government-CSO relations.

Different typologies of government-CSO relationships in the literature

Various scholars have categorized different typologies of the relations between civil society organizations and the government. When looking at it from the perspective of informal institutions' relationship with formal institutions, Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky's typology focused on two dimensions: whether the formal institution is effective and whether the informal institution's goal converged with the formal institution. Therefore, the four different categories are complementary, substitutive, accommodating and competing (Helmke and Levitsky 2004).

Jennifer Coston directly divides CSO-government power relations into eight different categories: repression, rivalry, competition, contracting, third party, cooperation, complementary, and collaboration (Coston 1998). It is likely that in authoritarian regimes, the government-CSO relationship is more on the repression side of her spectrum, although not all the time. Adil Najam, extracting from Coston's model, categorizes CSO-

government relations into two dimensions: whether the strategies (means) ally with the governments and whether the goals (ends) ally with the government's. The four types are cooperation, co-optation, complementarity and confrontation (Najam 2000).

Government-CSO relationship can be country specific. Contractual relations exists regardless of regime type. The Johns Hopkins SAIS non-profit project suggests that government purchasing service is a norm worldwide.[71] However, such relationships can have a variety of appearances. Canada has a more partnering relationship with its civil society organizations, and civil society organizations were empowered by the government and are given space and resources to accumulate expertise (Richmond and Shields 2005). India, although it still provides a safe space for civil society organizations, creates financial hurdles by requiring civil society organizations to keep a budget surplus for the final six months of the year (Fisher 1997). Julie Fisher categorizes different relations in the various countries into four types: harassment, ignorance, co-optation and cooperate/learn (Fisher 1997). Such a relationship may not be solely due to regime types as in democracies like South Korea, there could still be risks for civil society organizations to be co-opted and lose complete autonomy (Kim 2009). It is worth noting that other players and different incidents would also affect this relationship. Jennifer Brinkerhoff argues that in India and Pakistan, the donors play an important role in forming a government-CSO partnership (Brinkerhoff 2003). Civil society organizations will also adapt to changes in the outer environment. For example, the integration of Europe also influenced many civil society

[71] "Comparative Non-Profit Sector Project", Johns Hopkins University Center For Civil Society Studies, http://ccss.jhu.edu/research-projects/comparative-nonprofit-sector-project/, accessed on 3 February, 2017.

organizations decisions to move up to the intra-governmental level to operate in Europe (Bouget and Prouteau 2002).

Coston and a few other scholars either focus on the government's side (regime type, repressive or not) (Najam 2000) or the CSO's side (Clark 1991), but she lacks an interactive framework that can demonstrate the interest and institutional evolution of the both sides. Najam made an attempt to categorize relations based on strategic institutional interests (Najam 2000). However, some of the categorisations do not fit very well in the authoritarian context. Najam's model can work very well in a society in which civil society organizations are already well developed, and civil society is already in shape. However, in authoritarian countries like China, it is possible that either the government or the civil society organizations or both do not have preferred strategies or do not have any strategies dealing with an issue. Institutions are walking on uncharted territories in that they might have the ends in mind but do not have the means to get there.

Although the typologies may work very well in the countries captured in the existing literature, they are not adequate to illustrate the government-CSO relations in authoritarian countries like China, here a combination of several of the factors should be considered. China's government-CSO relationship is country specific, but to a large extent, as this chapter argues, is also CSO-specific. Different types of civil society organizations would have different categories of relationship with the government within the same country. Without normalization of their legal status, many civil society organizations in China are not sustainable yet still survive based on intermittent projects. The "reform and opening" policy (改革开放) has led to four decades of continued economic growth in

China but has also created new social problems. The government has not dealt with many of the social issues non-existent under the closed totalitarian regime in the past. As the Chinese government, including those at the local level, starts to open up space, it is trying to adjust and seek an appropriate way to work with civil society organizations. Thus, a dynamic model, rather than a static one, may be better at capturing the pattern of development of such relations in China, particularly the adaptation and adjustment made both by the civil society organization and the government.

Evidence

During the interviews, the state of civil society organizations (and the specific CSO when relevant), state-society relations, the past, and future of the CSO sector, policy towards new grassroots civil society organizations were discussed. After the some of the initial interviews, it was apparent that the effectiveness of the local government and whether the goals of the CSO align with that of the government's play important roles in these specific state-CSO relationships. Therefore, the interviews also paid particular attention to these two variables.

Both government effectiveness and goal alignment were determined using a combination of interview and relevant government official's self-categorization. Preliminary interviews revealed that organizations working with vulnerable groups (such as mothers who lost their only child) and rights claim groups (such as workers who have

not been paid for a while) are politically sensitive,[72] and therefore have goals misaligned with the government. Such depiction is not far off from what the existing literature has captured about the state being very cautious towards civil society organizations that have collective action potential and with the regime challenging nature (Perry 2002; O'Brien and Li 2006; Lorentzen 2013; King et al 2013). Religious civil society organizations, which provide alternative sources of ideology, and international civil society organizations, which provide alternative sources of funding would also be perceived as having misaligned goals in the eyes of the government (see chapter three).[73]

Government effectiveness was mainly coded based on the description of the civil society organization interviewed in their specific domain of work during the quake response period. It is important to note that some local governments may still be seen as "effective" even when it is in the earthquake region since some can continue to provide service. If the local government consistently expressed that they would not be able to handle the large amount of requests due to the earthquake then it is viewed as becoming temporarily ineffective. If it is still operating as usual and day-to-day businesses are still handled mostly, then it is seen as still been effective. The earthquakes have only made some local governments ineffective.

Through these interviews, it is evident that independent [74] civil society organizations do exist in authoritarian China, at least during the short run immediately after

[72] Interview 14SGO01
[73] Interviews 14SGO03, 14SGO04, 15SGO13
[74] In this dissertation, being independent means being able to self-govern and not solely relying on one external source of funding. Such independence would erode if the government starts to get involved in

the major earthquakes. The government-CSO relationship, although influenced by goal alignment and government effectiveness, is a dynamic one because those factors can vary in time. Both the government and civil society organizations appear to have to learn and adjusting behaviors, and they both make conscious decisions to shift the relationship into different types. To capture the logic of this dynamic framework, systematic categorisation is needed. It goes without saying that other factors also have shown their influence in affecting state-society relationships such as the civil society organization leaders' background/history and local resources. However, in this chapter, some of those factors are treated as antecedents that would lead to outcomes of goal alignment and government effectiveness. Further analysis may be required to tease out the even more nuanced causal chains.

A Conceptual Framework for China: CSO-government relations

This section will illustrate the theoretical framework of government-CSO relations while addressing the underlying logic of the choices made by governments and civil society organizations after the major earthquakes to adjust and adopt. Then, cases from each typology will be briefly discussed for illustrative purposes.

As mentioned in the literature review, scholars have used different dimensions to categorize CSO-government relations. Although all of their models are static, they are

decision making in CSOs or the CSOs start to rely mainly on government service purchase as source of funding.

useful starting points that this study could refer to. Borrowing from its core ideas, the starting point of the model here (extremely simplified for illustrative purposes only) is a two by two table. The relationships are decided by whether the government is effective in providing the particular service and whether the goals of the civil society organization are aligned with the government. The combination of the two variables would lead to four different types of relationships: competition, complementarity, confrontation, and cooperation.

Table 5.1: Simple illustration of the starting point of the conceptual framework (short term)

	Effective Government	Ineffective government
Convergent goals	Competition	Complementarity
Divergent goals	Confrontation	Cooperation

In the short run, suppose that the government is effective in an issue area or regarding a project and that the civil society organization's goal aligns with government's, then the relationship would tend to be competitive in the sense that both parties are effective in the issue area, and they would compete for a similar set of resources. Six civil society organizations would fall into this category within the sample. Civil society organizations in this category would report government officials being unhappy about civil society organization taking the spotlight or taking control of certain key resources. In the long run, this relationship would gradually turn into co-optation or even result in the dissolving of

the civil society organization.

When the civil society organization's goal diverges from government's, then the relationship is confrontational in the sense that they are both effective in an issue area, and the government tries not to let the CSO operate. One example could be the field of ideology. Providing spiritual food for the individual citizens is something both the local government and religious organizations could do well, while the ideas they want to promote are entirely different. This would lead to direct confrontations unless the government is not aware of the existence of such activities within their jurisdictions yet. Such cases are tough for researchers to encounter since it will risk the underground operations to be exposed and then face harsh treatment from the state. There are only two cases in our sample that fall into this category, but there are probably many more similar cases that prefer not to be exposed. Once such activities are above ground, in the long run, it will almost always lead to the destruction of the civil society organization. Although the government is quite conscious about when to take out the civil society organization, sometimes, it would keep certain organizations in this category longer than usual so that when it needs to test the effectiveness of its authority, it will use the organization as a target.[75]

The more complicated relationships exist when the government is not effective, or there lack existing services provided in the domain. Now suppose the government is ineffective in an issue area or regarding a project when the civil society organization's goal converges with the government's, then the relationship is complementary in the sense that

[75] Interview 15SGO13

the government would rely on the civil society organizations to solve the problem or provide the necessary service with their expertise. This is quite common, and the majority of the civil society organizations interviewed (and therefore have survived so far) belong to this category, 40 out of the 61 cases. What happens, in the long run, depends on whether the government feels the threat. If the government feels that there is no threat from an organization and if the organization provides some unique resource to the locality, it is possible that the complementary relationship remains (12 cases); If the organization is just providing basic services that the government is not effective at providing, then co-operation might happen (24 cases). The government will collaborate with the civil society organization through service purchasing and usually allow some degree of freedom and independence. If the government feels a threat, then the relationship would be confrontational simply because of a perception that individual citizens will no longer give credits to the local government and the civil society organizations are there to take the government's place and power (4 cases).

When the civil society organization's goal diverges from the government's and the government is not effective, then the initial relationship is usually temporarily cooperative because the government does not have the capacity to counter the effort made by civil society organizations through service provision. This relationship might only be possible for a very short period after the earthquake when the local government is incapacitated, and service is delivered by some of the organizations that it refers to as politically sensitive. Gradually, the government will seek to use legitimized forces to confront and eliminate such civil society organizations even when facing the danger of losing credibility, thus

leading to a confrontational relationship (eight cases). However, the civil society organizations were acutely aware of such potential outcome, and some would adjust their actions and behaviors so they could survive. Some would abandon their mission entirely by only providing the services the government would like them to provide. Such re-alignment of goals happened in several civil society organizations, especially multiple religious organizations, which abandoned their religious mission so as to provide quake relief service without the government eliminating them (five cases). For those organizations moving from a temporary cooperative relationship to a more stable complementary relationship, it is almost impossible for them to get back to work that reflect their initial missions once those missions are abandoned. As a result, they would stick with doing something that was not part of their original missions.

Table 5.2: Illustration of the Evolution of State-Society Relations from the sample

Government	Goals	Initial type	Frequency in the sample	Evolved type	Frequency	Notes and descriptions
Effective	Aligned	Competition	6	Co-optation	6	Government took over or make the CSO a branch of the gov.
Not effective	Aligned	Complementarity	40	Complementarity	12	CSO has independent financial, logistical, human resources
				Cooperation	24	Gov. purchase service from CSO; CSO leaders has personal ties with gov.; CSO strategic subordination
				Confrontation	4	Foreign personnel involved; gov. feels threatened or out of control
Effective	Not Aligned	Confrontation	2	Destruction	2	INGO, rights claim groups
Not effective	Not Aligned	Cooperation	13	Complementarity	5	Abandon original core missions, avoid sensitive projects
				Confrontation	8	rights claim groups, collective action potentials

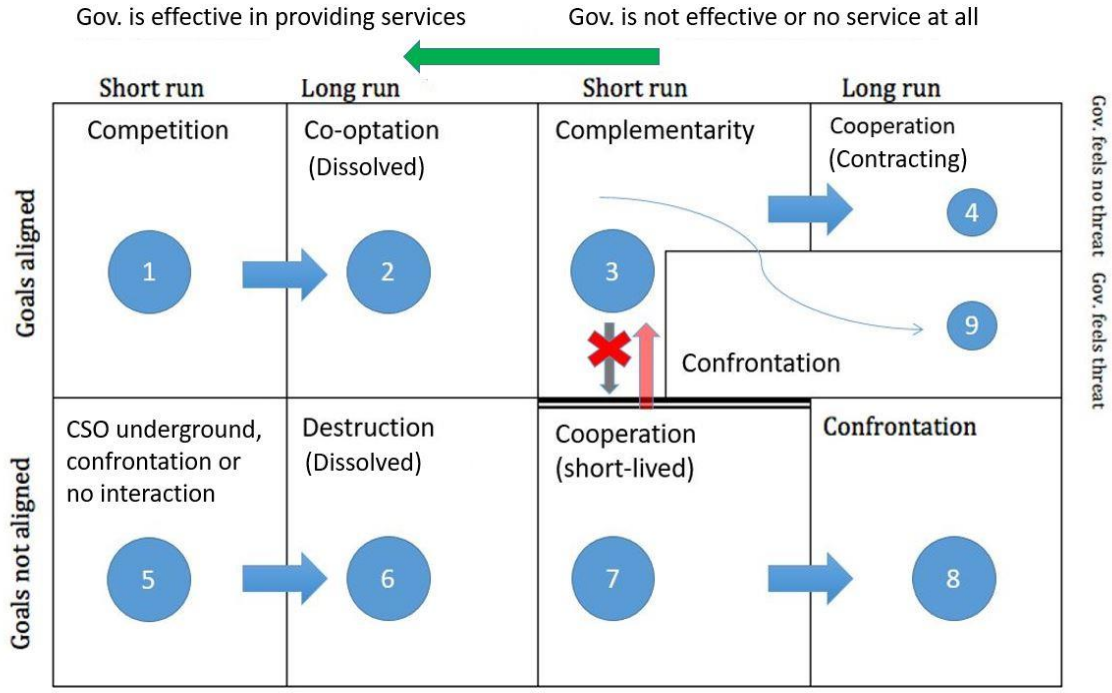
It is important to point out that here in this categorization, this chapter assumes the

civil society organization is effective[76] because if it is not, it might not exist at all and even if it exists, the government would not have much interaction with such civil society organizations. If the government sees no use of the civil society organization, then there is no potential threat. These civil society organizations would also be limited because of their incapacity to initiate actions that would lead to long-term relationships.

The interviews were conducted after the Wenchuan earthquake, and both before and after the Lushan earthquake. By compiling and organizing the stories told by the interviewees, particularly the civil society organization leaders, this research was able to depict a more holistic dynamic model to capture the evolving CSO-government relations with the above starting point. Here is a brief description of this model with cases to illustrate each scenario. As requested by certain interviewees, both to protect them and to allow future researchers to conduct similar work, some organizations' names will not be revealed.

[76] Here in this dissertation, being effective means being able to produce results through operating projects.

Figure 5.1: The Dynamic Conceptual Framework of State-CSO Relations in China



Note: numbers here indicate specific relationships in this dynamic framework to which the following discussions will refer.

Goals aligned and government effective: we can take over

In this domain, I encountered several cases that transitioned from a competitive relationship to a more co-optative relationship in the long run (here, eight years after the earthquake). One interviewee who is the head of a civil society organization reported that their partnering organization established a relationship with the government during the immediate response period, but they knew they were in competition. That organization contributed a huge number of volunteers to help the effort of quake relief. The particular

region in which they operated was not hit severely and so the government did not lose its functionality entirely in human resource management. Therefore, the goals were aligned, and the government was still effective in providing its service, although, with the existence of that civil society organization, the government felt the civil society organization might potentially do a better job, at least in the eyes of the people. After the earthquake, the civil society organization maintained a relationship with the government and one year after the earthquake, the government incorporated the civil society organization into its administrative systems so that the salary, pension and other benefits of the members of the civil society organization are now coming from the government. Of course, for the members of that civil society organization, it was a great success since they no longer had to worry about funding and maintaining external relationships with the government. For many other civil society organizations that observed this development, it was seen as a betrayal.[77] This is a typical example of moving from competition in the short run to co-optation in the long run.

Co-optation can appear in different forms. Another organization that was very effective in facilitating first-aid goods delivery during the quake encountered a different type of co-optation. Like many civil society organizations in China, it was not officially registered and still needing to find a supervisory government division to sponsor them in order to give them eligibility (such registration was difficult for a long time except for four specific categories: industry associations, science and technology organizations, charities and entities providing community social services) (Li 2013). Such a sponsorship would

[77] Interview 12SJ34

also mean giving up of financial and administrative autonomy. Since the sponsor needs to approve the budget and other plans for the organization annually, the threat of "not going to approve you" can be effective interference to challenge the autonomy of the organization. In one particular case, the sponsor was bluntly assertive and utilized the tool of potentially "not approving budget" constantly for actions they do not approve.[78] For the same reason, many choose not to register officially.

When civil society organizations are not registered, the government sometimes is unsure of their intentions, but the government is aware of the many unregistered civil society organizations in their jurisdictions. Local governments do not want to ban them entirely. In particular, based on their interactions with some of the organizations during the earthquakes and other disasters, they have had positive impressions of some organizations and enjoyed the "free service" the organizations provide that they had to provide themselves otherwise. Therefore, in the short run, the government allows the existence of such organizations but keeps an eye on them. Organizations in this situation usually transitioned from doing quake relief work to community development projects after the earthquake and helped alleviated poverty in many communities. About four years after the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake, one day, the leader of one organization received a phone call from the local head of civil affairs asking them to get registered. The local head of civil affairs said the government would provide resources to support their work. The local government happened to be initiating an incubation center for those "unregistered" or

[78] Interview 13SN41

"nascent" CSOs. And the government promised to provide free office space with the potential to purchase services from them.[79] As one local official told me "if we have decided not to kick them out, it will be better to have them directly work with and work for us so that we know what they are doing." Many civil society organizations also welcomed this proposal by the government since funding for them is difficult to get.[80]

Civil society organizations in China (unless you are a government initiated public foundation) would not be able to raise money publicly. Even though the 2016 new charity law provided some new channels of fundraising, it is still heavily scrutinized and difficult. Therefore, civil society organizations either rely on private support or have an operation that generates revenue. Otherwise, they have to depend on the government. There are exceptions to that generalized depiction as, informally, many civil society organizations would secretly raise money and ask those eligible foundations to receive the money for them. Then the foundation can purchase service from the civil society organization to transfer the money to the original organization. Those foundations will at least charge 5% of the money for this process. Financial sources also quickly dried up several months after the Wenchuan earthquake. During the 2012 round of interviews, most of the civil society organizations I interviewed complained that they are facing tough financial situations, and if nothing changes, they will be forced to shut down their operations.

Facing legal, financial and operational challenges, many civil society organizations were compelled to transition from a competitive relationship with the government to be co-

[79] Interview 12SJ34
[80] Interview 15SJ17

opted by it. The degree of the co-optation varies, ranging from operating under the government umbrella as a semi-independent organization to dissolving entirely so that the individuals would become government employees.

Goals not aligned and government effective: we do not need you

Civil society organizations in this situation are most difficult to get access to. Since their goals do not align with the government, even when they are providing services to the local people, the government does not tolerate them. The underground civil society organizations, particularly family/underground churches would belong to this category. However, since they tend not to have interactions with the government (if they do, they will probably be forced to shut down), I will not discuss them extensively here.

One typical example that belongs to this category is an environmental organization. After the earthquake, it entered a village with the mission to build an "eco-village." The local government first thought that it would bring resources and so allowed it to operate. Then the government realized that the civil society organization was competing for resources such as labor and money. The local government also did not care much for the environmental mission particularly because they had a coal mine project planned to generate some additional income and suddenly realized that the civil society organization was not only opposed to it but was organizing an effective opposition to stop the mine from being built. The tension gradually became more conflictual as both sides tried to mobilize support while competing for the same resources, including intangible resources like

ideological support from the public, or tangible resources like financial and human resources. Several months later, the government said "enough is enough" and kicked the organization out from its jurisdictions and banned it from its operations. The transition from confrontation to destruction is typical in this category. Unlike civil society organizations in liberal democracies, in China, civil society organizations will not be allowed to monitor and check the government, let alone challenge it.[81]

Goals aligned and government not effective: we can buy you

The more dynamic relations exist when the government is not effective in certain areas, and such relations are frequently not fixed. Most civil society organizations that reacted to the earthquakes and provided services in regions where the government was temporarily but totally incapacitated would belong to this category. After the 2013 Lushan earthquake, some of those organizations have already created a collaborative mechanism for first aid. The head of one civil society organization was designated by this collective group of civil society organizations to gather more information about the quake-stricken region first before they would organize quake relief efforts together. When that person was on the way to his destination passing a village, the villagers all came to him complaining about how incapable and corrupt the local government was. He then started to mediate between the local government and the villagers. This village ended up being the civil society organization's targeted village. The local government realized that when the civil

[81] Interview 12SI38

society organization is between the government and the people, it can serve as a cushion to absorb some tensions. There is an old saying in China, "people are not worried as much about poverty as unfairness." This is particularly the case in rural China. When the government distributes goods to the villagers, if there is any unfairness, the government would be seen as corrupt and practicing favoritism. With the arrival of civil society organizations, the local government has found a solution. If goods were to be distributed, it would ask the civil society organizations to do it on behalf of the government so that if there is unfairness, it will not be the government's fault. Such civil society organizations help to fill the vacuum the local government created immediately after the earthquake and can continue to provide the services the government is not good at or does not want to do itself. This is a typical complementary relationship.

Another example is an organization that started eco-tourism among some of the very poor villages. The civil society organization helped to turn villagers' homes into motels so that tourists who want to experience the rural lifestyle can come and stay with the families. This has brought a new source of revenue to the local government, and the government does not have enough resource to facilitate the projects itself. The government, therefore, started to co-operate with the civil society organizations in additional domains seeing the potential benefits the civil society organizations can bring.[82]

Scenario number four in figure 3 is ideal for many civil society organizations because they enjoy some support (at least no confrontation) from the government but

[82] Interview 13SB35

remain autonomous. The government would occasionally purchase services from the civil society organizations and the civil society organizations sometimes do need the resources from the government to achieve their goals better. This co-operation is sometimes referred to as a symbiotic relationship.

"I You She" is an organization that moved into areas where government is not so effective and seeks cooperation. Originally, they were just a group of people making films to promote the donation of blood in Sichuan as the leader works at the donation center. During the earthquake, they were very helpful supporting the disaster relief effort and so gained the trust of the government. They then initiated a few community development projects in which the government did not intervene at all. The government even asked them to do more once they have shown their capabilities and expertise. "I You She" therefore was asked by the government to conduct and replicate their work in various communities in Chengdu. The government knew that "I You She" does a better job than the bureaucracy, so it purchased service continuously from the organization. In 2016, "I You She" was organizing democratic activities at community level using Roberts' Rule of Order (a handbook that is a guide for conducting meetings and making decisions collectively) and providing workshops to local government officials about how to effectively govern.

During several interviews with government officials, the interviewee used metaphors to describe the people-CSO-government relationship:

"[The] government is tired of being the player and referee at the same time and the people are not stupid. After witnessing how helpful and effective certain social organizations can be, we want to let them be the players so that the government can focus

on being the referee."[83]

It is also worth noting that most of the organizations I interviewed have at least one important staff member who is either an ex-military or ex-government official. It is rare to have a current official leading a civil society organization since the government is making an effort to separate itself from civil society organizations both due to a mandate from the higher level officials as well as to reduce the conflict of interest.[84] Those retired military officers and officials are well connected within the government and have the trust in the local government and therefore, it is very common for the government to leave such civil society organizations alone and remain in a co-operative relationship.

Not all complementary relationships end up transitioning to the cooperative, symbiotic relations. Sometimes, such relationship would also end up in a confrontation state. The macro environment would facilitate a different outcome. For example, about two years after the Wenchuan earthquake, many interviewees recalled that there was a government crackdown of those "unregistered" civil society organizations, many of them have previously been in a complimentary relationship with the government. There were just too many civil society organizations for the government to deal with (of course, some have alternative motivations other than helping the local people and provide service) and so in the process of regulating and institutionalizing the status of civil society organizations, many were pushed out, especially those civil society organizations having potential foreign connections.

[83] Interview 14SGO03
[84] Interview 15SGO09

Goals not aligned and government not effective: we may need you but not that much

This is a very special scenario because it is common that the organizations supposedly operating under this domain, in the short run, would shift to a different domain. For example, several religious organizations I interviewed emphasized that during the quake relief period, they entered the quake-stricken region mainly abandoning the religious nature of their organizations.[85] If it were a Christian organization, it would not spread the gospel but only try to help the local people with quake recovery. They were acutely aware of how the government would react if they have a religious mission during the quake relief operations. Therefore, even though their goals did not align with the government, to begin with, the civil society organizations would initiate a re-alignment process that would abandon the functions that do not align with the government and keep the part of their operation that does align for their survival. From figure 3's illustration above, it is a shift from scenario seven to scenario three. When they want to re-enter scenario three to pick up their conflicting goals with the government, it is no longer possible. The institutional hurdles and the existing arrangements prevent them to move away from that equilibrium. This is why in the illustration, the line between scenario seven and scenario three is a one-way street. One can exit scenario seven but it is very difficult to re-enter. There were cases where suddenly an organization started to pass out Bible verses or spread the gospel, the government immediately banned their operation in the locality even when the government

[85] Interview 09SF11

still could not provide services adequately themselves.

Another environmental organization depicted a similar situation. There were protests going on against a chemical factory being built in the locality. The environmental organization was fully aware how destructive the factory could be to the local environment. However, they chose not to pick up this fight against the government knowing that if they did so, they would not even be able to operate the other environmental projects they have. It was a conscious decision to move away from scenario seven and not re-enter again.[86] Those civil society organizations that choose to re-enter would mostly disappear or have to provide a tremendous amount of resources (particularly money and expertise) that could help the government's ineffectiveness at the locality.

Heifer's case in China is particularly worth mentioning. Before the earthquake, the organization was only doing one kind of work: animal husbandry. Since the earthquake, the leaders of Heifer felt a vivid distinction that government had more trust in them. They played an active role when the government lacks capacity, and they have been working in a way so that their goal would align with the government. Now they have entered into various areas such as capacity building, women empowerment, environmental protection and so forth. They have also utilized the space created and attempted to maximize their productivity in areas where space is still limited. For example, civil society organizations (let alone being an international organization) would not be allowed in Xinjiang province, as it is politically sensitive. However, the city of Shanghai has a governmental relationship

[86] Interview 13SN25

with the Xinjiang government of which Shanghai funds and supports projects in Xinjiang. Heifer is very good at helping local farmers and the Shanghai government immediately thought about them when such work was needed. Therefore, even though Heifer might not be able to get into Xinjiang by itself, through Shanghai government's demand or ineffectiveness in a certain area, Heifer was able to enter Xinjiang and do what they are good at and hoping to do.[87]

A dynamic framework

It is important to point out that choices and changes are not only made by civil society organizations but also by governments. Local governments can learn and improve, especially recovering from the incapacitated state after major disasters such as earthquakes. The long arrow at the top pointing towards the left in figure 3 indicates that when the government starts to learn and improve, especially as the government gains adequate resources and/or sees the cost of taking over to be minimal, relationships tend to move towards scenarios where the government is more capable and effective. Therefore, the eventual equilibriums are more likely to remain at either co-optative or destructive relationships. Only when the civil society organizations have competitive advantages and are willing to share great amount of risks and responsibilities (as suggested in chapter three) would the government hesitate to co-opt or destruct them in the long run.

One interviewee mentioned that when they first arrived at a village after the

[87] Interview 12SI06

earthquake, the local government let it operate without any disruptions. However, after about a month, the local government suddenly announced that they should leave, and the government will take over. This surprised many volunteers on the ground as they had made plans that would at least last for several months. However, the local government realized that it had recovered sufficiently and so had moved from an ineffective state to an effective state.[88]

The most recent draft law on regulating foreign NGOs as well as the new charity law[89] both demonstrate that the government, although allowing many unregistered and/or un-sponsored organizations to operate for a long time, has now become capable of making rules and norms to regulate more tightly. Worth noting, under this framework, there is still quite a lot of flexibility for domestic civil society organizations.

Michael Foley and Bob Edwards distinguish two different types of "civil society." "Civil Society I," the neo-Tocquevillean approach, focuses on the importance of association for governance, which is the "habitat for the hearts," while "Civil Society II" emphasizes the importance of civil association as a counterweight to the state (Foley and Edwards 1998). These two forms are fundamentally different and lead to different outcomes. This can serve as a solid base that supports my argument regarding the case of China today, the opening up of the space has created some complementary, cooperative or

[88] Interview 13SB35

[89]中华人民共和国境外非政府组织境内活动管理法(The Overseas NGO Management Law of the People's Republic of China), Xinhua News, http://news.xinhuanet.com/legal/2016-04/29/c_1118765888.htm. See translation of the law at: http://chinadevelopmentbrief.cn/articles/cdb-english-translation-of-the-overseas-ngo-management-law-second-draft/, accessed on 3 February, 2017.

even symbiotic relationships, with the civil society organizations being autonomous sometimes, but it remains at the level of "habits of the hearts." The government has the capacity and willpower to differentiate and regulate the type of the work civil society organizations do and can respond with policies effectively to maintain the type of relationships it wants.

There is minimal evidence that the possibilities of relationships would stabilize at a competitive or confrontational relationship, which would be closer to the "civil society II" type Foley and Edwards describe. There are cases that civil society organizations are making attempts to breakthrough (such as the rights protection movement), but the results remain unsuccessful so far. Some social organizations do exist within these domains but are mainly underground and face risks of elimination.

Overall, the model boils down to the question of government effectiveness and goals alignment, while taking into account short run relationships and long-term outcomes. Relationships are not stable in this dynamic framework since factors, particularly the learning behaviors of civil society organizations (such as adaptation) and local governments (recovering from incapacity, adopting innovative policies and institutions), can shift the relationship into a different outcome. During disasters, organizations that have misaligned goals would try to abandon their original goal and provide services only, appearing to be having aligned goals with the government, hoping not to get into a confrontation. However, it is difficult to return to their normal goals once the disaster is over. Thus, they would be trapped in doing complimentary work that does not reflect their organizations' goals/missions. Most organizations are driven by their funding and had to

deprioritize the 'mission-driven' focus, and therefore would be vulnerable to be lured into the complimentary domain. The government is also actively learning and would shift their relations so that complimentary relationships would turn into co-optations (besides the rest of the relationships that are still moving towards co-operation in the long run when the government remains ineffective in certain domains).

The major factors analyzed in this study are not exhaustive. Central and provincial leadership's policy orientations, for example, would also matter. In an interview conducted in Guangdong province, one civil society organization leader reflected on the "good old days" under Wang Yang, when Wang was the governor of Guangdong. Wang was very supportive of civil society organizations and created the space and abundant resources for local civil society organizations, leading to more co-operative state-CSO relationships in general. However, when Wang left Guangdong, the next governor had very different policies and attitudes towards civil society organizations and life is no longer as good.[90] During the same period when Wang was governor of Guangdong, Bo Xilai was the mayor of Chongqing. Leadership styles of Wang and Bo are often contrasted as Bo was quite harsh towards civil society organization activities. Therefore, variation can exist even under the same macro environment or within the same administrative region due to leadership preferences. The framing of the issues, the exposure to international media (Mertha 2009), and the status of civil society organization leaders[91] could also play important roles.

[90] Interview 16GN42
[91] Interview 13SN39

Conclusion

This chapter utilized the timing of major earthquakes in China and revealed that various types of state-society relations do exist in an authoritarian country at special moments. Unlike the typical dualistic depiction of state versus society or the state represses society, based on government effectiveness and goal alignment, the relations can be grouped into four different types immediately after the earthquake: competition, complementarity, confrontation, and cooperation. However, such relations are not static, and they would evolve based on factors such as resource type, personal ties, government insecurity, civil society organization's flexibility, and government's willingness to learn and adapt. Such dynamic process would lead to five relatively more stable typologies: complementarity, confrontation, cooperation, co-optation, and destruction. In the long run, when government shift from being less effective to more effective, the eventual equilibrium would be co-optation or destruction. This also explains why without major disasters, what we usually observe in authoritarian countries is the more antagonistic state-society relations (towards destruction) or the lack of independence for civil society organizations (co-optation). Further research should be done to see if similar typologies and processes of evolution could be found under other conditions with different constraints. Whether such a model could be applied to other authoritarian countries is yet to be investigated.

6. Chapter Six: State-organized legalization through experimentation

Introduction

China's rise in the economic domain has been well documented. During the four decades of rapid and continuous growth since the late 1970s, policy experimentation was quite common. From Xiaogang village's secret pact by 18 villagers that kicked off the household responsibility system in Anhui province in 1978, to the adaptation of similar mechanisms in Sichuan province, which led to the eventual marketization and privatization of the larger economy, we saw how "bottom-up", organic social innovations could become a pilot program and turn into national policy to create broad and long-lasting impacts.

While China was liberalizing the market, the social and political sphere has been tightly controlled, particularly since 1989. The way China governs the society, especially associational behaviors, seems to be very different from how it governs the market. Even at the top of the Chinese leadership, senior officials who are economically liberal and politically conservative have been favored since Deng, although the degree of political control varies from leader to leader. Are there consistencies and logics in how both the market and the society are governed in China? How do policy innovation work in the society?

This chapter traces the development and investigates the contents of several newly drafted laws, and compares the 2016 charity law[92] (and the draft 2016 social group

[92]中华人民共和国慈善法 (Charity Law of the People's Republic of China).

registration rules[93] that accompany it) with the 2016 foreign NGO law,[94] and uses these case studies to reveal how an authoritarian country such as China can manage the risks and opportunities caused by sudden new developments within the society, such as the explosion of CSOs after the earthquakes, and formalize the rules regarding the new phenomenon. An initial "zone of indifference" was created so that seemingly regime-supporting activities, even with illegal status, were tolerated. The state would use this period to better understand the phenomenon while occasionally exercising its power to make sure the "zone of indifference" is still under control. Once the adaptive state manages to understand the key players and the benefits and costs different types of players could generate, it will start to enforce existing laws or create new laws to extract productivity from and outsource responsibility to the regime-supporting players, and drive out the regime challenging ones. The regime-supporting players may also create symbiotic relationships with the state and facilitate the shaping of good behaviors of more players, "from point to surface."

Similar strategies have been utilized since the beginning of the reform and opening era towards different players in the economic domain. The policy experimentation within the society, as opposed to the economy, would diverge with policy differentiation towards different players. While better economic performance is usually regime supporting for it brings the regime more legitimacy, better performance by CSOs may not necessarily be

[93]社会团体登记管理条例 (Social groups' registration rules), the draft document could be downloaded from the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs Website < http://images3.mca.gov.cn/www/file/201608/1470022929339.doc>, accessed on 3 February, 2017. The announcement can be found at < http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/zwgk/tzl/201608/20160800001364.shtml >

[94]中华人民共和国境外非政府组织境内活动管理法 （Law of the management of foreign NGOs in the PRC）< http://news.xinhuanet.com/legal/2016-04/29/c_1118765888.htm>

always seen as regime supporting. Therefore, the outcome would bifurcate in the societal realm. Such legalization process is very different from the "rule of law" approach, which stipulates legislations first before enactment. What we see the Chinese government do within the society is experimenting with CSOs — mostly illegal — with managed risk and opportunities, and then formulate law based on the state's preferences.

Policy Experimentation and Diffusion

Policy experimentation has been well documented by the scholarly community, often seen as evidence of the "Chinese exceptionalism." Central policy makers would recognize or encourage specific policy innovations at the local level to tackle challenges faced not just by the local community alone, then transmit the innovative methods, if proven to be effective, to other localities, and eventually lead to the formulation of national policies. The "point to surface" (*youdian daomian* 由点到面) policy experimentation processes have led to rapid economic growth and transformation but have so far restricted meaningful political reforms (Montinola, Qian, and Weingast 1996).

Some scholars, although disputed, have noted that the history of policy experimentation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) can be traced back to the early days of the CCP in the 1920s in situations where the Marxist-Leninist prescriptions would not offer details about how to lead a peasant revolution in rural China. Therefore, improvising and gaining experiences from successes became a strategy that was often used to defeat both the Japanese and the Nationalists (Heilmann 2011). The "experimentation

under hierarchy" approach continued and evolved after the PRC and particularly in the post-Mao era, as risky policies were tested at local level and then enacted nation-wide if proven to be successful.

There are several key unsolved questions about policy experimentation in China. First, there are disputes about the source of such experimentations. Gerard Roland gives credit to the township and village enterprises (TVE) for TVEs successfully developed within the non-state sector and became the main source of economic growth and transition (Roland 2000). Hongbin Cai and Daniel Treisman, on the other hand, assert that the appearance of experimentation is the outcome of factional competition at the top level. Top leaders belonging to different ideological factions would use local experiments to demonstrate the effectiveness of their chosen policies (Cai and Treisman 2006). The criticisms of the experimental zones during the reform and opening era by the conservatives, particularly the accusations of such experiments as capitalist practices, have also been documented (Yang 2002). While some see these experiments as genuine scientific methods to test the effectiveness of policies, others argue that sometimes it is manipulated as a political symbol to create performative legitimacy[95] (Ding 2016). Zeng Jinghan observes the Wenzhou financial reforms in 2012 as means to maintain socio-economic stability during the power succession at the 18th party congress, rather than producing meaningful policy efficiency (Zeng 2014).

[95] Performative legitimacy is slightly different from performance legitimacy. While performance legitimacy still aims at producing meaningful outcomes (such as higher GDP), performative legitimacy is simply aiming at putting on a believable show (such as pollution investigation without necessarily having to treat the pollution).

The process of policy experimentation is also disputed among scholars. Some scholars see it as a center-led first, and then followed by local implementation process (Heilmann 2011), others argue that the center not have pre-determined goals and targets before the experimentation, and utilizes selective-control and adjusts preferences throughout the experimentation (Liu 2010). There are also scholars like Wang Shaoguang who see the adaptation of innovative policy by both the decision makers and advocates as crucial to the experimentation process (Wang 2011).

Experimentation also involves promoting and enacting policies that are not yet stipulated by the legal system or, sometimes, even directly in conflict with the legal system. Therefore, experimentation in China is also associated with the discussion of the "benign violation of the constitution." (Hao 1996; Tong 1996) Heilmann points out that such process to implement policies before law making is in direct conflict with the "rule of law" concept many western countries have (Heilmann 2008).

While much of the policy experimentation literature talks about experimentation's role and significance in China's economic development, not much has been written on how similar processes would work outside of the economic domain, when the goal is not clearly growth and economic development. There are both coherent logics as well as unique aspects about how the Chinese state governs the society with experimentation. The rapid increase of civil associational behaviors and development of CSOs in the past two decades, especially after the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake also provides a good opportunity for us to study policy experimentation in the society. Such research may help us clarify the questions and disputes mentioned above in the literature.

Taking advantage of the exogenous shock of the earthquakes while using process tracing of the development of the two major new laws that governs the society, the 2016 charity law and the 2016 foreign NGO law, and case studies constructed with in-depth interviews with key players, I argue in this study that policy experimentation in the society is primarily a "bottom-up" process that are initiated by individual citizens, CSOs, and local governments. Such a process would happen in a legally gray area in what Tsou calls the "zone of indifference." Then mid or top level governments would intervene, once certain practices reach a scale, and use resources and mandates to provide guidance and boundaries so that the experimentation would gradually align with the goals of the government. The reactions towards activities with potentially regime-challenging (or misaligned goals) and regime-supporting (or aligned goals) can lead to bifurcation and deliberate differentiation during the state-organized legalization of such activities.

Divide and rule: experimenting with the Chinese society

This section will demonstrate the experimentation and state-organized legalization process by the Chinese government towards the CSO sector. I will use the making of the Charity Law as a case to demonstrate a process without heavy top-down intervention and distruption. Then, I will use the making of the foreign NGO Law as a case to demonstrate a process that was disrupted by the top-down intervention, as a comparison. By process tracing the developing of these two laws, I intend to point out both the logic of how the state-organized legalization would play out for perceived regime supporting activities as

well as how vulnerable the legalization process is if the activities are perceived regime challenging, especially when the central government intervenes.

I will first describe the initial conditions, including historical roots, of each of the two laws. Then I will capture how events would stimulate and propell the legalization to the next phase. After that, both laws would experience a bifurcation stage in which the state would initially tolerate the activities they are unfamiliar with, try to participate, take some initiates, promote and replicate practices that they see as beneficial. Some of the good practices would be further replicated why others, if potential risks and threats emerge to be eminent (at least perceived to be), might face crackdown by the administration. The outcome of the legalization would be different in terms of supportive or restrictive based on the bifurcation process.

The making of the Charity Law of PRC

Historical background

State stipulation of charitable activities can be traced back to ancient China. About 400 B.C., in "The Book of Rites," a Chinese classical work on royal regulations, details about where old people will receive their nourishment have already been spelled out:

"…Those of fifty years received their nourishment in the (school of the) districts; those of sixty, theirs in the (smaller school of the) state; and those of seventy, theirs in the college. This rule extended to the feudal states. An old man of eighty made his

acknowledgment for the ruler's message, by kneeling once and bringing his head twice to the ground. The blind did the same…"[96]

One can see that state-sponsored charitable activities already existed in China over 2000 years ago. Ancient texts meticulously record the state's responsibility as the preeminent humanitarian benefactor, and that aid-giving is the responsibility of the ruler, reducing "the people" to mere beneficiaries of imperial charity. These texts show how charitable activities serve as a tool to fortify the relationship between the ruler and the people. Such practices continued throughout Chinese history, such as public hospitals (*pujiu bingfang* 普救病坊) in Tang dynasty (618–907 AD), the Futian institution (*futian yuan* 福田院), a temple run, state funded, charity in Song dynasty (960–1279 AD), and many others since the Song dynasty.[97]

The Chinese people, in history, viewed the rulers as playing the role of "parents" (*fumuguan* 父母官) — at least that's the expectations from the elites — and so the informal institutions of the state taking care of everyone existed throughout the history. The development of state-sponsored charitable activities after the PRC follows a similar logic. The socialist vision of the revolutionaries is in itself creating a state that will meet the ends of the collective. In the post-Mao era, even with economic liberalization, such dynamics remained unchanged. From establishing the China Children and Teenagers' Fund in 1981

[96] The Book of Rites (礼记), about 400 B.C.

[97] Song Dynasty also has state-sponsored charities such as 居养院、安济坊、慈幼局、漏泽园. From Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) to Qing Dynasty (1644–1912), there are state-sponsored charities such as 普济堂、育婴堂、救生局、恻隐堂、积善堂.

to the creation of the China Charity Federation in 1994, charitable organizations either have traces of state intervention or are directly state sponsored.

Events stimulated the creation of the law

The first law related to CSOs in China was the 1989 "Provisional Regulations for the Administration of Foreign Chambers of Commerce in China" (*waiguoshanghui guanlizanxingguiding* 外国商会管理暂行规定, referred to as the "1989 Regulations of Foreign Chambers of Commerce" from now on).[98] In the same year, the "Regulation on Registration and Administration of Social Organizations" (*shehuituanti dengjiguanlitiaoli* 社会团体登记管理条例)[99] was announced. This regulation was replaced with an updated version nine years later in 1998.[100]

The 1998 flood in the Yangtze River led to an outpouring of societal donations. The cash and goods donated by the public was reported to be at least 7.2 billion RMB (about 1 billion USD),[101] not including donations from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau and foreign

[98]外国商会管理暂行规定（Provisional Regulations for the Administration of Foreign Chambers of Commerce in China）, 1989 < http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/gk/fg/shzzgl/201507/20150700847911.shtml >, last accessed on 24 June, 2017.
[99]社会团体登记管理条例（Regulation on Registration and Administration of Social Organizations）, 1989
[100]社会团体登记管理条例（Regulation on Registration and Administration of Social Organizations）, 1998 < http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/gk/fg/shzzgl/201507/20150700847907.shtml>, last accessed on 24 June, 2017.
[101] 98 洪水的损失及外来的捐款 （Damages and Donations from the 98 flood）, 2009, < http://news.xilu.com/2009/0909/news_112_14702.html>, last accessed on 25 June, 2017.

countries. Although this is not comparable to the 76.2 billion RMB worth of cash and goods received after the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake,[102] it was already a significant amount at that time. At that time, China had no regulations about how to manage these donations or keep the usage of the donations accountable. While the emergency response was mainly done by the government and military, individuals started to organize donations to help those in need. At the meantime, the making of both the 1998 "Interim Regulations on Registration Administration of Private Non-enterprise Units" (民办非企业单位登记管理暂行条例, hereafter referred to as the "1998 Regulations")[103] and the "Law of the People's Republic of China on Donations for Public Welfare" (*zhonghuarenmingongheguo gongyishiyejuanzengfa* 中华人民共和国公益事业捐赠法, hereafter referred to as the "donations law")[104] were sped up.

The 1998 regulations were seen as a milestone in the legal development of the CSO sector. The concept of "non-enterprise unit" in the regulation mainly refers to CSOs that are privately run by individual citizens. The rules state that they are not allowed to have ownership, no regional branch offices, no tax breaks, nor can they get loans from the banks. Such an incentive structure pushed many social entrepreneurs to register their CSOs as commercial companies, rather than "non-enterprise units," because commercial companies

[102] 汶川地震 8 年，600 亿捐款都花哪里去了(Eight years after the Wenchuan earthquake, where did the 60 billion donations go?), wenxuecity news, 2016, <http://www.wenxuecity.com/news/2016/05/12/5198847.html>, last accessed on 25 June, 2017.
[103]民办非企业单位登记管理暂行条例 (The Interim Regulations on Registration Administration of Private Non-enterprise Units), 1998< http://www.pkulaw.cn/fulltext_form.aspx?Db=chl&Gid=21052 >, last accessed on 24 June, 2017.
[104]中华人民共和国公益事业捐赠法 (Law of the People's Republic of China on Donations for Public Welfare) < http://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?lib=law&id=6238&CGid= >, last accessed on 24 June, 2017.

pay no more taxes and yet are less politically sensitive. While the state continued to be cautious and heavily involved in controlling activities in the society, the 1998 regulation did formally grant some space for CSOs. It recognizes CSOs' legal status and stipulates the detailed process of how to register and operate a CSO in China, therefore providing legitimacy to organizations that were previously operating in the shadow.

The 2004 "Regulation on Foundation Administration" (jijinhui guanlitiaoli 基金会管理条例, referred to as the "2004 Foundation Regulations" from now on)[105] was another major step forward. Before 2004, all CSOs were under a "dual management system." CSOs needed to find a Professional Supervisory Unit (PSU) as a sponsor, usually a government agency in a similar field, and then register with the Ministry of Civil Affairs. Thus, CSOs could only be "state-run" or "state-affiliated" before 2004. The "2004 Foundation Regulations" allow private individuals to organize private foundations. These foundations, given that they cannot raise funds publicly, can directly register at the Ministry of Civil Affairs without the PSU. This symbolic break-away from state-affiliation is a step toward more autonomy for some CSOs.

The 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake was an important moment for CSOs in China. Immediately after the earthquake, there was an explosion in numbers of new CSOs, mainly informal, non-registered community associations. Seeing this new development in the society, the Ministry of Civil Affairs started to research and prepare the drafting of a charity

[105]基金会条例(Regulation on Foundation Administration), 2004 < http://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?lib=law&id=3463&CGid= >, last accessed on 24 June, 2017.

law (Zheng 2016). However, since the state knows little about the prospects of the development of the CSO sector, the condition was not yet mature to make laws. Thus, the initiation of drafting the charity law was abandoned in 2009.

At the meantime, new developments started to appear at the local level. The previous chapters have already captured the sudden accumulation of social capital in terms of trust, networks, and norms of reciprocity within such networks. Other studies have found similar associational behaviors at the local level. Community members would help each other rebuild homes. Each family would specialize in one task and when one family is rebuilding, other families in the neighborhood would come to help. They will rotate so that all homes in the community could be rebuild (Li 2011). Such behavior is not confined within solidary communities. Many of my interviewees also mentioned that they had organized community members to form teams and help families in other villages.

At the meantime, the frictions between individuals and local governments remain. In one case, the local government determined that all buildings in its jurisdictions were unsafe and suggested that they should all be demolished. The people's liberation army would be happy to provide that service for free. Even though the demolition was not mandatory, the local officials suggested to the villagers that if the buildings are not taken down then, if the buildings need to be taken down later, the villagers will have to bear the cost. For those who agreed to have the buildings demolished, they expected that the government would provide subsidies to support the reconstruction. However, the policy suddenly changed, according to the villagers, so that the government would only provide

30,000 RMB but rebuilding a house would require at least 60,000 RMB (Wang, Tao and Han 2009). Such interactions made villagers lose trust in the local government.

Another case was mentioned during multiple interviews that I conducted. Right after the earthquake, the local governments were asked to submit damage reports to upper-level governments. Then the upper-level governments would distribute resources based on the levels of the damage. Since vertical accountability in China is towards higher levels of government, unlike in democracies where such accountability is towards the people, local officials do not want to put too much burden on their superiors. Leaving a bad impression with their superiors might hurt their job prospects. There was one village where the damage was about 100% (severe), but the party secretary only reported 50% damage. When nearby CSOs arrived, villagers were very angry but thought complaining to the CSOs would help get the news out. The villagers wanted the outside world to know that their damage was 100% so that they could be compensated accordingly.[106]

The first interesting turn of this event was that the local government was initially quite accommodating of the CSOs. First, the CSOs were here to help, especially delivering the goods and services that the local government lacked the resources to provide — if one routinely minimizes claims to upper-level government funding and support, resources would be restrained. Second, the CSOs played a fundamental role during crisis to facilitate and mediate the relations between the local government and the villagers. The villagers became less angry and rebellious after the arrival of the CSOs. Third, by publicizing the

[106] Interview 12SI38

shortage of supply in the community, the upper-level government ended up providing more resources and support to the village, which benefited the village. We could see that a very nascent symbiotic relationship started to form: the local government benefits from the existence of CSOs while the CSOs also increased their legitimacy by being allowed to operate within the jurisdiction.

However, only one month after the earthquake, the leader of the village suddenly decided to ask the CSOs to leave. He told the leaders of the CSOs that the government had recovered from the state of being incapacitated and was ready to take back full control. The CSOs did not want to be confrontational, so they left.

Such cases are not an abnormality after the earthquakes. The outcome, however, is not always the same. Some local governments would kick the CSOs out after recovering their capacity to manage day-to-day business, others would continue to allow CSOs to operate (even though most CSOs were still not registered technically illegal organizations). To the government officials, it is clear that the existence of these CSOs would have benefits and costs. Different local governments weigh the costs and benefits differently based on their personal leadership styles and local conditions, and therefore would lead to very different state-CSO relations.

Experiments and bifurcation stage I: tolerate

The Chinese government has five official administrative levels: national, provincial, municipality, county, and township. The village level (which is below the township level)

is semi-formal in the sense that cadre wages are paid out of local funds while the township (and higher) level cadres' wages are from state funds. Individual village cadres also do not need to pass the civil service exam (公务员资格考试) in order to take office. As a result, much of the operations is open to creativities and adjustments based on the local conditions. This is also why it was acceptable for competitive elections to happen at the village level while moving upward towards the township or county level faces tremendous hurdles. In some sense, there are quite a lot similarities between village governments and a government-run social organization. With the government mandate and the party secretary sent down from above, the village governments have government sponsors (township governments) above them, while maintaining some autonomy and flexibility at the local level. This is also why we saw many variations of relationship types between local governments and CSOs (described in chapter five). CSOs and local governments could share or compete for the same resources, they could also share or differ in their mission and goals. Based on the existing capacities of the local government, we also have variations of government effectiveness. Therefore, based on what we discussed in the previous chapter on the dynamic framework of state-CSO relations, we could find cases in almost every category when one or a few of these main variables differ.

When CSOs are dealing with county level and above governments, the power dynamic is much more clear-cut. The governments at these levels are much more dominant. They can wield their power over CSOs. On the other hand, they are also quite more confident in dealing with CSOs, thus willing to explore different options.

Most quake-stricken regions had volunteers and CSOs flooding in after the earthquake. These CSOs, whether self-organized or organized by other more mature, established CSOs, whether developed organically from within or been supported by outside resources, started to bond with local community members. Local governments saw both opportunities and risks with this new development within the society.[107] To any authoritarian regime, abrupt changes in the structure of the society, especially increased associational behaviors, may increase the risk of organized opposition. Furthermore, there were no adequate legal constraints to contain the actions and behaviors of those newly created CSOs. Yet, with the experiences of interactions between the state and these CSOs, the state would gain more knowledge about who these CSOs are and what their intentions are. The officials also saw how these CSOs could potentially do a good job in delivering public goods and services, and maybe even with a much lower (or free) cost. Therefore, instead of crushing all CSOs at once, the local governments look for ways to manage both the risks and opportunities and maximize the benefits. The local governments also noticed what was already happening with the CSOs.[108]

Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, was within the quake zone during the 2008 earthquake, although the infrastructure in Chengdu was not severely affected. Unlike in rural areas where formally established CSOs were quite rare back then, and most associational behaviors would be informal and based on lineage and temple, in major cities like Chengdu, CSOs were already there, registered or not. The 2008 Wenchuan earthquake

[107] Interview 12SJ34
[108] Interview 15SN40

had several major effects on these CSOs:

1. CSOs started to coordinate actions and specialize tasks using their competitive (or comparative) advantage after the earthquake
2. Volunteers, especially those formerly working for another CSO, became a key source to produce leaders of new CSOs
3. Local governments would notice the networking behaviors of the CSOs and would allow experimentations (sometimes illegal) while providing an enlarged space for CSOs. Such local experimentations of local governance is imitated by local governments from other localities once an experimentation proves to be successful
4. CSOs formerly not registered will be seeking legitimization, and the state would also try various ways to accommodate the rise of CSOs including putting together a new law to regulate the sector

The networking and coordination between different CSOs started immediately. There were two major platforms that were established for CSO coordination in Chengdu: the "Sichuan Joint Disaster Relief Office" （四川联合救灾办公室，hereafter referred to as "Joint Relief Office"） and the "512 NGO Services Center" （四川 512 民间救助服务中心, hereon referred to as "512 Center"）.[109] The former is mainly in charge of goods and service delivery while the latter is in charge of information verification and the planning of resource allocation. In other words, the latter is in charge of the thinking, and

[109] Interview 12SJ34

the former is in charge of execution. The leaders of the two platforms are also good friends.

Zhang Guoyuan was both a government official and the leader of a GONGO (government-run Non-governmental Organization) in the city of Panzhihua in southern Sichuan before the earthquake happened. He was nominated as the coordinator of local CSOs to start the Joint Relief Office right after the earthquake. He hesitated mainly because the potential pressure he could face from the government but eventually agreed to take the role.[110]

The Joint Relief Office was in charge of the delivery of essential goods and services to the quake-stricken region during the first week after the earthquake. Government vehicles are usually trucks that would not be able to enter the mountainous regions after the earthquake while the Joint Relief Office was able to organize a fleet of SUVs owned by CSOs and individual volunteers that were able to enter the quake-stricken regions. Therefore, the Joint Relief Office was a very good complement to the government and military. It was also a moment to utilize the specialties of different CSOs. Individual CSOs might not have the capacity to carry such complex tasks but once they are coordinated, certain organizations good at inventories are in charge of inventories, others are in charge of organizing volunteers, goods purchasing, and fundraising, respectively. The individual leaders and volunteers built strong trust and a tight network through this effort.[111]

In Sichuan, CSOs were not seen by the government and their peers as organizations

[110] Interview 09SJ33
[111] From here on, material regarding Zhang Guoyuan's case came from the following interviews: Interview 09SJ33, 09SN25, 12SJ34, 12SN39, 12SN40, 13SJ33, 13SN40, 13SN25, 13SN39, and 15SN40.

but “a leader plus a group of staff or volunteers.” People usually identify CSOs by their leaders’ name rather than the name of the organization. For example, the name “Joint Relief Office” is usually replaced with “Guoyuan’s team.” Such practices not only indicate that the organizational dynamics for CSOs (less about brand name, more about personal reputation) but also have significant consequences. Local governments tend to collaborate with those organizations led by leaders they trust more (whether it is past interactions or the individual’s background). Donors also tend to contribute resources more to organizations led by leaders they know better. Therefore, if an organization changes leadership, the organization usually needs to reconfigure its relationships with the local government and the donors. Organizational relationships are the extension of personal relationships.

The individual-based approach directly led Guoyuan into trouble. The major donors want to transfer funding directly to Guoyuan, indicating that they do not trust anyone else but Guoyuan. They also do not want to wire the money to Guoyuan’s GONGO since the bureaucracy would slow down the process and the money would not be used in time to save the people in the quake-stricken region. They want the money to follow Guoyuan because he is the one they trust. On the other hand, putting donations directly into individual’s private account violates the law. Even Guoyuan’s GONGO did not have the credentials to receive donations directly. Donations have to be wired to foundations having credentials first, then given to CSOs that are registered, and eventually used for projects. Guoyuan thought being a government official, he could take the responsibility later, and the punishment should not be that severe. He was later investigated by multiple

departments including being taken away for a month by people from the national security department. Yet, since they did not find any evidence of embezzlement of the money by Guoyuan — Guoyuan had spent all the money on individuals who needed the money in the quake-stricken region with good record keeping — no case was brought against him. What brought Guoyuan down was not the legal system, but a factional fight within the political system. There were conservatives and progressives within the Panzhihua government, and Guoyuan was one of those progressives. Given that Guoyuan had received donations directly and put the money into his personal bank account, the conservative faction attacked him vehemently, and he was forced to resign less than three weeks after the earthquake.

Since Guoyuan was under investigation and entangled with this factional fight, those CSOs who have already registered were quite reluctant to participate in the Joint Relief Office platform, fearing their license would be revoked. It was those organizations that have not registered that played the key role in this networking and coordinating endeavor. The Joint Relief Office lasted only about two weeks and was dissolved. Guoyuan argued that their only mission was emergency rescue and they only planned to exist for about 7–10 days to begin with. Some people have speculated that Guoyuan's investigation and factional fight might have something to do with the dissolution of the office.

Guoyuan mentioned during an interview later that he was touched by the volunteers' compassion and motivation even after the office had been dissolved. Since he already quit his job three weeks after the earthquake, he and his friend Zhang Wei initiated the NGO Disaster Preparedness Center, or NGODPC (NGO 备灾中心). NGODPC continued the

work of the Joint Relief Office in the city of Mianzhu (at the epicenter) in post-disaster reconstruction. Some of the volunteers previously working for Guoyuan also started their own CSOs after the dissolution of the Joint Relief Office. Currently, Guoyuan has registered NGODPC in the city of Dujiangyan and has branch offices in counties including Shifang and Mianzhu. Guoyuan was aware that if the 1998 "Regulation on Registration and Administration of Social Organizations" is strictly enforced, he might be under investigation again. So far, the local government is comfortable with its power, knowing that whenever they want to shut down NGODPC they can, it is experimenting with NGODPC by not enforcing the law.

The 512 Center led by Guo Hong, a social scientist from Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences, was the second major platform that was initiated because of the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake.[112] Hong believes that many people with small actions if coordinated, could create major impact. Hong is well respected in the CSO community in Sichuan. When she facilitated the initiation of the 512 Center, many existing CSOs joined. The 512 Center has several teams including information, volunteer, material supply, and finance. They played a supportive role to all CSOs during the quake relief period. The idea was mainly to keep a list of all volunteers, money, and goods so energy and time would not be wasted for duplicated work by different CSOs. If a CSO at the front line of rescue wants specific goods and resources, they would look up the information from the 512 Center's list, and then another CSO in charge of goods delivery would be dispatched to

[112] Material of the 512 Center case mainly come from Interview 12SJ34 unless otherwise noted

deliver the goods or resources. The 512 Center also facilitated meeting spaces, communication support, and logistical support. After the earthquake, the 512 Center continued to facilitate the betterment of resource allocation among CSOs for post-quake reconstruction and economic development. 37 CSOs have signed memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the 512 Center, and over 80 CSOs maintain longer collaboration and information sharing with the 512 Center.

The 512 Center realized that it would be a mismatch if it continued to operate as a post-disaster platform while the main work it does is less and less disaster-related but supporting CSOs in general. It also operated without formal registration, so it was, in fact, an illegal organization. The government was aware of that and allowed them to be temporarily affiliated with the Chengdu river research association for accounting and legal purposes, but that was not going to be a permanent solution. Therefore, the center registered under the Sichuan Department of Civil Affairs, using Sichuan Society Scientific Community Federation as its Professional Supervisory Unit (PSU), under the name of Shangming Gongyi (尚明公益) in March 2012.[113] They continue to focus on public welfare information sharing and service and play a key role in creating a network to connect CSOs in Sichuan.

Experiments and bifurcation stage II: governments participate

Besides the tolerance of the 512 Center and the Joint Relief Office, both of which

[113] See Shangming Gongyi's website, <http://www.512ngo.org.cn>, last accessed on 24 June, 2017.

played key roles immediately after the earthquake, other localities had social innovations that would coordinate not only the CSOs but also the government, businesses during the recovery period. On June 21st, 2008, 40 days after the Wenchuan earthquake, the government of Mianzhu was invited to participate in a forum organized by China Social Entrepreneur Foundation (友成企业家扶贫基金会) and McKinsey & Company to discuss post-disaster reconstruction in Mianzhu. A month later, the Mianzhu post-disaster social resources coordination platform (hereon referred to as the "Mianzhu platform") was created.

The Mianzhu platform utilizes resources from the government, businesses, and a private foundation to coordinate and support CSOs for post-disaster reconstruction. The platform has four main teams: project and emergency response, organization and public relations, integration and management, and development and outreach. Such a structure provides human capital, technological support, capacity building, volunteer training, and coordination to CSOs. The project and emergency response team plans sustainable development projects, evaluates projects during different phases, and formulates plans when emergency happens. The organization and public relations team conducts event planning (such as group dance or choir), media relations, and volunteer recruitment. The integration and management team conducts research on social demand, organizes data collected, monitors ongoing projects, and keeps records of meeting minutes and relevant documents. The development and outreach team focuses on capacity building, social innovation, social collaboration, and CSO support (Bian Wang Wang and Feng 2011).

The Mianzhu platform was seen as a great success. It optimized resource allocation, promoted the development of CSOs, increased the efficiency of the government, and of course, enhanced the positive image of the government. The government originally was only invited to join the forum to deliberate solutions for post-disaster reconstructions and ended up being one of the key participants in the Mianzhu platform. China had no rules or precedents of the government, business, foundations, and CSOs, in general, collaborating to achieve a goal together under such integrated mechanisms before the Mianhzu platform and it was an experiment that largely succeeded.

Experiments and bifurcation stage III: governments take initiatives

Lessons were learned from the Mianzhu platform experiment by other local governments, and adjustments were made in experiments that followed. On April 20, 2013, there was another major earthquake in Sichuan province in Lushan County, less than 100 miles south of Wenchuan. The CSOs immediately followed previous examples of the Joint Relief Office and the 512 center and formed a network of CSOs for emergency response. The city of Ya'an (where Lushan County is located) imitated the Mianzhu platform and initiated the "Ya'an Mass Organizations Social Service Center (hereon referred to as the "Ya'an Mass-Org Center")."

A few changes were made. Instead of making the local government directly involved (and therefore being responsible), the Communist Youth League was designated to coordinate government affairs. The leader at the Ya'an Mass-Org Center emphasized

during an interview that they did not want the leave the image that the government or the communist party are heavily involved, so they decided to let the Communist Youth League to take the lead. They also involved the many Mass Organizations that are mainly GONGOs, including the Federation of Trade Unions, Women's Federation, China's Disabled Persons' Federation, and so on. This made sure that the government is present and can be reached, yet also prevented (at least the image of) the heavy and direct involvement of the local government.[114]

The Ya'an Mass-Org Center set up a permanent office, and not only facilitated the post-disaster reconstruction efforts and coordinated the CSOs to provide goods and public services to villagers in the quake-stricken region, but also, after the disaster, provided office space and some funding for CSOs to continue their developmental work as some of the CSOs have expertise in farming and raising animals.

Experiments and bifurcation stage IV: promote successful models and further replication

The Ya'an Mass-Org Center, learning from the experiences from the Mianzhu platform, was a great success. Therefore, from 2013 to 2017, the Sichuan provincial government decided to set up such a center at the provincial level and let other county level government set up their own Mass-Org Centers. The provincial level Mass-Org center is now registered as a social organization called Xieli Gongyi (协力公益)[115] while at least 18

[114] Interview 14SGO02
[115] See Xieli Gongyi's website, <http://www.ixieli.org/>, last accessed on 24 June 2017.

city and county level Mass-Org Centers are up and running (Report 2015). In 2015, the central government organized a Mass Organizations Conference in Beijing, to promote the Sichuan experiences, so that other provinces could also set up Mass-Org Centers to coordinate work between the government, businesses, and CSOs (Zou 2015).

Experimentation with CSOs was not only going on in the quake-stricken region in Sichuan. Guangdong province also started to experiment with simpler and easier ways to get CSOs registered, disconnect industry and business associations from local governments, increase transparency of CSOs, and develop new types of CSOs that would be able to tackle new challenges in the society. Of course, the initiation of party structure within CSOs was also experimented and later adopted (Wang 2014). Other cities such as Ningbo, Shanghai, Tai'an, Tianjin, Shantou, and a dozen of provinces also had various experiments with CSOs (Wang 2009). Some experiments were replicated, such as the evolution from Mianzhu Center, to Ya'an Mass-Org Center, to Mass-Org Centers all over Sichuan, and eventually nationally; other experiments were only tested locally. This was a clear strategy of "from point to surface" just like what happened in the economic domain in the 1980–90s.

While the experiments were going on, the state utilizes this opportunity to adapt and learn, and eventually use innovative strategies to control and govern society. The earthquakes led to the sudden increase of CSO activities in the quake-stricken zone. The government, on the other hand, was incapacitated. So how could the government check and monitor the large number of CSOs within their jurisdictions? The Sichuan provincial government decided to recruit a few hundred social supervisors (社会监督员) about 10 days after the earthquake. They accepted applications from the public, selected 308 social

supervisors from over 2600 applicants (Wang 2009). If the government did not have the capacity to check on the society, it could co-op parts of the society and use it to monito other parts of the society. These social supervisors were hired for three months and monitored the whole process of good purchase, stocking, delivery, and distribution. They report directly to the provincial government and were well received by both citizens and local governments (Bian et al 2011).

The previous chapters have discussed the deliberate differentiation strategy by the government. Letting society check society and report suspicious activities to the provincial government also made CSOs less likely to organize regime-challenging activities. The bureaucracy's size is limited, but once the state has parts of the society working for the bureaucratic apparatus, it became more effective in deterring regime-challenging activities. Based on the study done by Bian, Wang, Wang, and Feng, even though the over 300 CSOs had various themes and emphases, almost all organizations limited their functions to disaster response and post-disaster reconstruction, regardless of the original mission of the organization (Mertha 2009). The government was also happy to facilitate the operations of these CSOs including providing office and activity spaces, help their communication with upper-level governments, help arrange volunteer and staff's room and board, provide consultation, provide transportation, provide financial support, etc.

It is worth noting that some of the CSOs built relationship and trust with the government due to the interactions they had during the quake relief periods. Some of these CSOs would be able to lobby effectively result in policy change. For example, Xuping Ren, a CSO leader who provides support to farmers about rabbit raising techniques and

resources, noticed that the design for rebuilding had turned farmer homes into apartment buildings or town houses. People in Sichuan like to raise some chicken, ducks, or pigs in their backyards. Such a backyard would also be a good place to store the farming tools. Therefore, Ren wrote a letter to the government to petition the government to leave at least 45–60 square meters of backyard for each household in the design. He also framed the issue as "protecting Sichuan's culture," a strategy proven to be quite effective in China (Zhu 2015). As a result, the new homes in Mianyang, Deyang, and Shifang all had backyards for about 65 square meters.

Legalization

While the experiments and state-CSO interactions were happening in the field, the central government was also starting to re-consider the drafting of the charity law. Previously, research and drafting was initiated by the Ministry of Civil Affairs in 2009, but the effort was paused due to lack of familiarity with the developments. In 2010, the interior judicial committee of the national people's congress (全国人大内务司法委员会) again made attempts to research the charity law, hoping to accompany it with the social assistance act (社会救助法), which was also being considered at the time. However, not much meaningful progress was made, and the making of the charity law was put on hold again. In 2012, the CCP's 18th party congress decided to make social development as a key component of national development. Social organizations, providing an opportunity for citizens to participate in public affairs, became a key domain for societal governance (Full

text 2013). The third plenum of the 18th party congress also announced the decision about deepening reform, specifically, to ask social organizations to set up various enterprises in villages, to motivate the vitality of social organizations, and to let social organizations provide public service, etc.[116]

Based on the experiences and development at the local level, especially the benefits the government saw with CSOs providing public goods and services cheaper, and often better,[117] than the local government or GONGOs, the state council announced the "Plan for the Institutional Restructuring of the State Council and Transformation of Functions Thereof" (国务院机构改革和职能转变方案),[118] which suggested to emphasize the development of four types of social organizations: industry and business associations, science and technology associations, public welfare and charitable associations, and urban & rural community service organizations. This indicates that there are specific public goods and services the government would want to extract from the productivities of certain CSOs, but not necessarily others.

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[116] For example, Wang Ming has a whole section discussing how the bureaucracy of Federation of the handicapped was not effective at all and used the money mainly on the bureaucratic activities themselves rather than helping the handicapped in need, while the CSO (Can You) with the same mission does a much better job and use money more cost effectively. See Wang Ming, *Oral History for NGOs in China*, *No.2*, Social Sciences Academic Press (China), 2013: 70–78

[117]国务院机构改革和职能转变方案 （Plan for the Institutional Restructuring of the State Council and Transformation of Functions Thereof）, 2013 < http://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?lib=law&id=13554&CGid= >, last accessed on 24 June, 2017.

[118]关于支持和规范社会组织承接政府购买服务的通知(Notice on the support and normalize the service purchasing from social organizations by the government), the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Ministry of Finance, 2014 < http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/zwgk/fvfg/mjzzgl/201412/20141200744371.shtml>, last accessed on 24 June, 2017.

The utilization of local CSO resources and productivities also start to appear in government agendas. For example, in 2014, the ministry of civil affairs and the ministry of finance jointly announced the "Notice on the support and normalize the service purchasing from social organizations by the government" (关于支持和规范社会组织承接政府购买服务的通知)[119] as well as the "Selections from the policy documents of government purchasing services" (政府购买服务政策文件选编), which was used to train 136 budgetary units of the central and local government civil affairs officers (Wang 2014). The government was clearly preparing to get certain regime-support CSOs to be more involved in local governance.

In November 2014, the state council released the instructions about "Promoting the healthy development of the charity industry," which was the first time the central government released a policy document specifically targeting the charity industry. As a result, the charity law drafting team was formed, an effort directly led by the interior judicial committee of the national people's congress. After about 20 months, the draft law was discussed in national people's Congress (NPC) for the first time on October 30th, 2015. The draft law was then immediately released to the public for additional input. Two months later, the revised draft law was discussed and released again to the public for the second time. During the NPC and CPPCC[120] meetings (两会 or two sessions) in March 2016, the

[119]政府购买服务政策文件选编(Selections from the policy documents of government purchasing services), China Financial and Economic Publishing House, 2014.
[120] Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference

draft law was discussed again and was passed on March 16th. President Xi Jinping immediately signed the law so that it could be put into effect on September 1st, 2016.

The law was seen as a positive step to provide guidance and support for individuals and CSOs to participate in charitable activities. For example, people and organization who do not have the qualification to raise money publicly (公开募捐) can now do it legally through collaborations with organizations that have those qualifications or use directional fundraising and target a specific group to raise money independently （定向募捐）. The new charity law also replaced the concept of "people-run non-enterprises" （民办非企业） with "social service groups" (社会服务机构) so that charitable organizations could be in the forms of foundations, social groups, and social service groups. However, charitable activities are not limited to charitable organizations. Individuals and organizations that are not charitable organizations are also now legal to organize charitable activities. Besides the narrow definition of charitable activities (such as poverty alleviation, disaster response, and senior or weak care), it also allowed activities that would fall under a bigger umbrella of social welfare (such as education, science and technology, culture, sports, and health.)

The control over charitable organizations have also been loosened to allow more flexibility and wiggle room. For example, organizations used to be required to get an annual inspection from their Professional Supervisory Units (PSU), which was an important mechanism for the government to control the CSOs since the threat of "not approving" is credible and could be used to shape actions of CSOs. In the new charity law, the annual inspection is replaced with annual report. Instead of being inspected by PSUs,

organizations are required to submit a report about their activities to "inform" the government rather than "request approval" from the government.

The people who were involved in drafting the law have expressed the core idea behind the provisions: the government should not take the lead role or be the only player in charitable activities but should step back and provide guidance and information. Individuals and organizations should be encouraged to organize charitable activities and provide public goods and welfare (Zheng 2016). It is clear that more doors were opened for domestic CSOs and individuals to organize activities in society, as long as the goal is to provide welfare to the society.

The making of the Foreign NGO Law

Events stimulated the creation of the law

The evolution and legalization of governance over foreign NGOs happened alongside the development of the charity law. The foreign NGO law and the charity law had the same starting point, the 1989 "Provisional Regulations for the Administration of Foreign Chambers of Commerce in China." Starting from there, the government used similar methods to approach, experiment, and legalize their activities, but the path and results could not have been more different.

The Chinese economic development could benefit from foreign NGOs, and the state realized that in the 1980s. Therefore, besides the Ministry of Civil Affairs, in 1987,

the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Finance requested approval from the state council to set up the China International Economic and Technical Exchange Center to facilitate support (mainly monetary) from foreign NGOs to economic development in the rural area. In about six years, over 100 foreign NGOs contributed over 50 million RMB to China through the center (Han 2013). In 1988, the Ford Foundation became the first foreign NGO to acquire formal status in China, after negotiating with the state council and eventually have the China Academy of Social Sciences as its PSU (Wheeler 2012). In most of the 1980s, foreign NGOs were seen as a friendly force that could be utilized for China's economic development.

Even though the 1989 Tiananmen incident alerted the government about the potential "alternative motives" of foreign NGOs, Deng's 1992 southern tour, which put China's priority back to economic liberalization, and the 1995 UN Women's conference in Beijing stimulated further development of foreign NGOs in China. In 2004, the language of "Foreign foundations" first appeared in the 2004 "Regulation on Foundation Administration." More and more foreign NGOs start to set up office and operate in China since then following the precedent set by the Ford Foundation. However, there was not a standard set of procedures or rules about the process as they were mostly done on a case-by-case basis.

Experiments and bifurcation stage I: tolerate

The 2008 Wenchuan earthquake, again, was a significant moment for foreign NGOs in China. Donations from foreign sources increased by 83% between 2007 and 2008. However, the trend of rising donations stopped and reversed since 2009 (Han 2013). The year 2008 was a great opportunity for domestic CSOs, but also foreshadowed the tightening of the space for foreign NGOs. Domestic CSOs, as mentioned previously, face multiple constraints and the rules prevented them from operating freely across provincial borders. Foreign NGOs, on the other hand, had no such constraints simply because no specific rules have been made regarding their activities yet.

For a long time, the vast majority of foreign NGOs in China operated in a legal gray area, and the government tolerated them because they posed no credible threats and were bringing resources into their jurisdictions. Some foreign NGOs had local partners, and some were registered as commercial enterprises. The quake relief effort in 2008, to some extent, gave the Chinese government a wake-up call. The state suddenly realized the urgency of having to put together a set of comprehensive and coherent rules to regulate the foreign NGOs, since there are so many of them operating in the gray area and any possibility of a potential color revolution in China is not going to be tolerated by the state.[121]

[121] There is no systematic calculation of the number of foreign NGOs operating in China given many of them operated in the legal grey area. The China development brief had a directory in 2005 of about 200 selected foreign NGOs in China. Scholars also estimate that the number of foreign NGOs in China would be 1,000 to 6,000. See Shawn Shieh, "The Origins of China's New Law on Foreign NGOs," *ChinaFile*, 2017. https://www.chinafile.com/viewpoint/origins-of-chinas-new-law-foreign-ngos

Experiments and bifurcation stage II&III: governments participate and take initiatives

Experiments started in Yunnan in 2009 when the provincial government released the "Interim Provisions on the Regulations of Overseas Non-governmental Organizations in Yunnan Province" (云南省规范境外非政府组织活动暂行规定, hereafter referred to as the "Yunnan provisions").[122] Yunnan province has significant foreign NGO presence mainly due to the anti-HIV/AIDs efforts and the environmental movements to protect the last un-dammed river (Nu River) in China (Hsu and Teets 2016). The local government previously tolerated the existence of foreign NGOs within its jurisdictions. Some foreign NGOs also voluntarily filed documentation (备案) to the government before they started their projects, hoping to reduce potential tensions between the state and CSOs. The interviews in Sichuan province conducted in this research also revealed similar behaviors. In 2008 after the Wenchuan earthquake, those CSOs that filed documentation to the government before taking actions were usually better received by local governments and so by the time of the 2013 Lushan earthquake, most CSOs would file documentation first and then take action. The key idea, therefore, in the Yunnan provisions was to spell out how, when and to whom to file the documentation. Through documentation filing and PSU clarification, foreign NGOs were able to register and enjoy their legitimacy to operate in Yunnan. It was clear that the Yunnan provisions were not intended to discourage operations

[122]云南省规范境外非政府组织活动暂行规定(Interim Provisions on the Regulations of Overseas Non-governmental Organizations in Yunan Province) , 2009, < http://yunnan.mca.gov.cn/article/mzgz/mjzzgl/zcfg/201303/20130300423225.shtml>, last accessed on 24 June, 2017.

of foreign NGOs but to make foreign NGOs more transparent so that the government would be able to monitor and control their activities.

Experiments and bifurcation stage IV: promote successful models, replication, and top-down disruption

The experiments in Yunnan were then copied (and slightly modified) in Xiamen to document economic and trade associations from Taiwan setting up representative offices in Xiamen,[123] and other places such as Beijing, Shanghai, Zhejiang, etc (Bao and Sun 2013; Xu 2015). All of these regulations had significant portions that were similar to Yunnan's stipulation about how to get foreign NGOs to file documentations.

Another major turning point was 2013, after Xi Jinping took office. There was major crackdown on foreign NGOs in China for national security purposes. In 2014, one month after the first national security commission meeting, investigations of foreign NGOs in China began. Around the same time, the Chinese state started the draft of the new foreign NGO law. Before that, the ministry of civil affairs was drafting regulations based on the Yunnan experience and subsequent experiments. In 2014, this process was interrupted by a different priority, and the ministry of public security took over.

[123]厦门市人民政府关于印发厦门市台湾经贸社团在厦门设立代表机构备案管理办法的通知 (Circulation of the People's Government of Xiamen on printing and distributing the administrative measures for the establishment of representative office for Taiwanese economic and trade associations), 2012 < http://xxgk.xm.gov.cn/mzj/zfxxgkml/xxgkzcfg/mjzzgl/201209/t20120906_527029.htm >, last accessed on 24 June, 2017.

Legalization

It was clear that the drafting of the new foreign NGO law had a different motivation once the Politburo standing committee deliberated the first draft of the law in 2014 (Shieh 2017). Getting the resources from these foreign NGOs to support economic development is still a viable motivation, but it was overshadowed by the more important motivation: preventing foreign forces from initiating color revolutions and western infiltrations in China. From that point, the bottom-up process of experimentation had been forcefully halted with a top-down agenda.

When the final version of the foreign NGO law was passed in April 2016, a few significant differences were notable between the charity law and the foreign NGO law in governing domestic and international CSOs. Domestic CSOs have already moved beyond the dual management system and no longer need the PSUs. The "supervisory unit" is not a "guidance unit." For foreign NGOs, the dual management system remained, and the PSUs are still necessary. Foreign NGOs have two ways to operate legally in China: register as a representative office, or register for a temporary activities permit lasting one year. Using the term "representative office" means that the offices do not have legal person's qualification. Their foreign organization, therefore, could be pursued for legal responsibility and liability. The temporary activities permit is also extremely difficult to get, with burdensome procedures. This is also why there are zero cases of permit requests in the first three months after the law had taken effect (Jia 2017).[124] Foreign NGOs are also

[124] By 7 May, there are 69 foreign NGO registrations (some NGOs registered at different provinces and therefore are counted more than once). Majority of those registrations are in the development field

directly under the Ministry of Public Security's jurisdiction, unlike domestic CSOs, which remain under the Ministry of Civil Affairs.

There are other restrictions that are applied to foreign NGOs but not necessarily to domestic CSOs. For example, foreign NGOs are not allowed to fundraise in China (rules that have been loosened for domestic CSOs) nor recruit members (the function of domestic social groups). Foreign NGOs are expected to register at the provincial level with PSUs as national government agencies while domestic CSOs could register at different levels of the government.

Such stipulations do not mean the Chinese government wants to drive all foreign NGOs away. The government still encourages some foreign NGOs to provide expertise and spend their money in clearly defined fields such as rural education, poverty alleviation, and water conservancy. Activities in rights protection, advocacy, and religion, etc. are generally prohibited. This is to recognize that even among the foreign NGOs, there might still be regime-supporting groups with resources that the government needs or with similar goals the government has. The deliberate differentiation strategy also works at this level targeting foreign NGOs.

(37), with some in economic and trade (25), and a few in education/culture (5), Science and technology (1), and think tank (1). See Shawn Shieh's count at < http://ngochina.blogspot.hk/2017/05/more-foreign-ngos-register-in-yunnan.html>, last accessed on 25 June, 2017.

Experimentation, state-organized legalization, and bifurcation

If we compare the process of making the charity law and the foreign NGO law, there are striking similarities in their processes. The government allowed a period of intentional legal gray zone for CSOs to operate while it got to know the CSOs more. The government's method of dealing with CSOs growing in the society was also consistent until the intervention of central government with the foreign NGOs. The legalization process, therefore, started to bifurcate when the bottom-up process was quashed by the more determined top-down process. Thus, the outcome is that we have a relatively friendly charity law mainly governing domestic CSOs, and the relatively constraining foreign NGO law mainly containing foreign NGOs.

At the initial stage when the number of CSOs started to grow, the government had an open mind about such new phenomenon. With confidence in being able to manage the CSOs, and with expectations to utilize the resources and opportunities some of the CSOs may and will bring, the government did not make many rules to stipulate their actions. The regulations that were made were mainly incremental rules that became necessary, but still minimal and only governed a specific aspect of the society, whether it is the chamber of commerce, non-enterprise units, or foundations.

Certain events, particularly natural disasters, would stimulate the development of CSOs and therefore speed up the legalization process. The 1998 flood and 2008 earthquake were significant times for the development of both domestic and international CSOs, as well as major international events such as the 1995 UN women's conference. The logic

have been presented and demonstrated in previous chapters that disasters would lead to the increase of trust, networking, the norms of reciprocity between community members, and the rise of voluntarism. Such organic development within the society also led to the natural bottom-up experiments.

The experimentation and bifurcation process also happen in the "legal gray zone." Both the making of the charity law and the making of the NGO law started with similar process when experimentation began. The government let the 512 Center and Joint Relief office play their roles without too much intervention even though such coordination between CSOs was unprecedented. The government tolerated the new developments of CSOs, even though there were not specific laws to regulate them and their status were mainly illegal. The government understands that by allowing their activities and the space for their activities, it would be easier to understand their behavior and assess their consequences. Since the scope was minimal initially, the government had the confidence to manage the risks. Furthermore, the leaders of those experiments all had some past government background or affiliation. So toleration was the norm at the initial stage.

Once it was clear that certain benefits would arise, the government started to participate and become a player in the experiments. The presence of the state in such experimentations sometimes can further improve the outcome of the experiments. For example, the government participated in the Mianzhu platform and provided resources and some legitimacy to the networking of CSOs as well as cross-sector collaboration for quake relief and reconstruction efforts. The government not only witnessed the more efficient

resource allocation and the speedy recovery after the earthquake, it also realized that participating in such efforts would increase the government's positive image.

The next stage of state participation mainly is an opportunity for the government to get to know better of the new developments from within and have a better understanding of the pros and cons. On foreign NGOs during this stage, the CSOs started the filing documentations practices voluntarily. Multiple organizations during the interviews mentioned that they realized reporting to the local government voluntarily and document their activities usually is quite rewarding. This does not mean that they are going to give in to the local government, but transparency would bring trust and will, in turn, make their work more effective. After the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake, and especially during the subsequent major earthquakes in western China, CSOs learned this technique overwhelmingly. It was also rewarding for local governments since they were able to have a very good grasp on the activities without having to spend too many resources.

The state would gradually change from being a participant to take initiatives by starting experiments during the third stage. Learning from past experiences, the state would adjust the experiments to reflect its preferences. The Ya'an center was set up in the name of "mass organizations" and led by the Communist youth league because the government wants to be involved but not too much. Therefore, using the mass organizations and communist youth league as the liaison would be a good solution to achieve goals without exposing the government to too much liability, should the experiment fail. On the governance of foreign NGOs, the government utilized the experiences of voluntary documentation filing and used Yunnan as a pilot to further test the effectiveness of this

process. The specific stipulation of government documentation included in the Yunnan experiment is clearly an effort on the part of the government to get to know more about foreign NGOs' operations in Yunnan province to inform further coping mechanisms.

The subsequent stage involves replication of the successful experiences, whether it is the promotion of the Ya'an experience to the entire Sichuan province and eventually to the entire nation, or the imitation of the Yunnan provisions in other regions such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Zhejiang. The replications were not very different from the original version. At this stage, the government would already be quite comfortable with the experiment and is confident that the practice would be effective nation-wide. Therefore, after this stage, stipulation of formal laws based on such experiences would be put on the agenda.

The main bifurcation happened when the central government, especially the CCP top leadership started to intervene in the process with the foreign NGO law development, turning it from a civil affairs matter to public and national security matter. It was also clear that before the top-down intervention, the ministry of civil affairs was already working on the foreign NGO law based on the Yunnan template. After the intervention, the ministry of public security took over and so the experimentation initiated at the grass-roots level did not run its full course as it had with the charity law.

This is not to suggest that the foreign NGO law is an outlier while the charity law is the norm. Potential bifurcation points exist throughout the process. This research has presented the deliberate differentiation strategy by the state which is bifurcation based on goal-alignment and government effectiveness towards domestic CSOs. Even though

foreign NGOs are under much stricter scrutiny, there are still bifurcations since some of the foreign NGOs are still able to bring resources without bringing too many additional risks. For example, foreign NGOs working in rural education, poverty alleviation, and water conservancy related fields are still encouraged to operate in China, especially if they work closely with a domestic partner.

It is also important to point out that allowing the experiments to play out their courses does not mean the state has minimal involvement during the early stages. In fact, the state is constantly sensitive about how effective policy tools could be used to intervene when necessary. Therefore, incidents similar to the one of taking crosses off the top of churches in Zhejiang province would happen. The government would gain no utility from such actions other than testing the power of its authority. This way, the government knows that even during the most creative period of social innovations and experiments, it is still in control.

The strategy the Chinese state utilized has been quite effective so far, in terms of managing risks and opportunities. The initial zone of indifference exists so that not all unfamiliar and illegal activities are quashed. To some extent, this tolerates (if not encourages) creativity in the society. If no major risks are foreseen, then the government would gradually transition from being the observer to participant and eventually to the implementor of the experimentations. Laws will be made once this whole process runs its full course. If, at any point, there are issues that would raise concerns, it would alert the particular level of the government, and then the government would become more cautious during the next phase. Such alerts would not completely shut down the process but would

serve as bifurcation points for the government to target (and tightly control) the regime-challenging factors while allowing the regime-supporting players to continue with the experimentation. The development would be more limited, but not stopped. This also means that the formal law-making does not indicate the end of the experimentation process, but only serve as a major bifurcation point in a continuing evolving process.

Figure 6.1: the process of state-organized legalization in China

<table>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="3">Intentional Legal Grey Zone (zone of indifference)</td><td>Outcome of legalization</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Initial Condition</td><td>Stimuli</td><td>Experiments and bifurcation (the role of the government)</td><td>Make law</td></tr>
<tr><td>The Charity Law</td><td rowspan="2">Inadequate law; Incre-mental regulation patches when necessary</td><td rowspan="2">Reform and opening 95 UN women's conference 1998 flood 2008 earthquake etc.</td><td>Chengdu(tolerate) ➔ Mianzhu (participate) ➔ Ya'an (take initiatives) ➔ Sichuan (promote) ➔ National (further replication)</td><td>The Charity Law</td></tr>
<tr><td>The Foreign NGO Law</td><td>Chengdu(tolerate) ➔ File documentation (participate) ➔ Yunnan (take initiatives) ➔ Xiamen, Beijing, Shanghai, Zhejiang (further replication) ➔ intervention from the top ➔ civil affairs to public security</td><td>The Foreign NGO Law</td></tr>
</table>

Conclusion

This chapter connects the dots of all chapters in this dissertation, by presenting how a smart, adaptive state would more effectively tackle its governance challenges when facing new phenomenon in the society. It also depicts the fundamental challenges the society is facing on its way to creating an autonomous mature civil society. We know that the major disasters in China created new social capital and new space in which CSOs could operate. The rise of voluntarism under such conditions has led to positive developments and constructive experiments. The government deliberately differentiated different types

of CSOs in order to more efficiently and effectively manage the risks and opportunities and take advantage of the potential resources and benefits CSOs could bring. While the society being skeptical about the newly developed CSO sector is alarming, the bottom-up driven experimentation process could still lead to significant amount of social innovation and policy optimization, regarding better delivery of public goods and services. However, the bottom-up force is vulnerable in the face of the top-down will of the party-state. Any major intervention could create bifurcation points and change the course and consequences for a certain portion of actors in the society. Therefore, even though the major disasters have opened up space and given us the possibility of creating a civil society from the accumulation of social capital and the sudden space opened up for CSOs, we still don't have a clear path to a mature civil society, given the likelihood of strong top-down power intervening the process.

7. Conclusion

Many scholars struggle to understand why China has so many social organizations and charitable foundations operating, and yet, still does not seem to have a meaningful civil society. The 2008 Wenchuan earthquake was seen by many scholars as a special moment for the creation of a potential civil society in China. The voluntary and associational behaviors of many Chinese citizens were seen by the public, and many volunteers who participated in the quake relief have since quit their normal jobs and started their own philanthropic and charitable organizations. The official registration record also suggests the rapid growth of CSOs in the past decade.[125] However, we are still seeing the state tightening control of activities within the public sphere as well as the increase of (sometimes voluntary) subordinations by CSOs to the state several years after the earthquake. How do disasters change state-society relations under authoritarian rule? What are the long term effects once there is initial increase of social capital and opening up of the space for CSOs? We have seen in the case of rural Sichuan that the earthquake has triggered the accumulation of social capital and temporary opening up of the space between the state and the private sphere, but the condition of this space and how the state and society interacts within this space is complex and dynamic.

This dissertation argues that the development of state-society relation after the 2008 earthquake is not as linear or even directional as some have assumed it to be. It is rather a

[125] 2015 年民政事业发展统计公报 (2015 Ministry of Civil Affairs Social Service Development Report), 中华人民共和国民政部 (Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People's Republic of China), 2015, <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/sj/tjgb/201607/20160700001136.shtml>, last accessed on 22 June, 2017.

dynamic process that involves multiple factors and forces. First, social capital and space for CSOs were created after major earthquakes. Within this newly created space, the local governments use a *deliberate differentiation* strategy towards different CSOs. Such differentiation is more driven by the state's interest to extract productivity and outsource responsibility for public goods provision by regime-supporting CSOs, and less dictated by the state's need to acquire information from regime-challenging CSOs with collective action potential. However, unlike civil society in western liberal democracies, the concern for a nascent civil society is not only from the above, with the state trying to intervene and blur the line of the public sphere. The newly created space also faces challenges from the private sphere with individual citizens being skeptical of the CSO sector due to limited interactions, mismatch of criteria, institutional constraints, and the lack of civility. Based on goal alignment and the effectiveness of the government, the initial relations between the state and CSOs would also gradually shift from co-operational, complementary, competitive, and confrontational relations to co-optation or confrontation in the long run as the state gets to know more about specific organizations while improving its effectiveness. This dynamic process is also accompanied by state-organized legalization of the sector. This legalization process would first allow the state to use the "zone of indifference" to get to know the new developments in the public sphere. Then, through a process of toleration, participation, initiation, replication, and bifurcation, the state manages to extract productivity from, and outsource responsibility to, the regime-supporting players, and drive out the regime challenging ones.

Findings from this dissertation add to the literature of disaster politics, authoritarian

resilience, and Chinese politics in several ways. First, the as-if random natural experiment initiated by the earthquake provides evidence that social capital changes before and after a major earthquake, challenging the conventional assumption in the literature that assumes the post-disaster social capital level would mirror before disaster conditions. Second, the findings add to the graduated control and consultative authoritarian literature and use an experimental design to prove deliberate policy differentiation exists in China. However, I challenge the conventional wisdom that an authoritarian state would always pay more attention to regime-challenging CSOs fearing collective action and propose an alternative logic for differentiation that local governments are more interested in extracting productivity and outsourcing responsibility. Third, the findings provide a comparative perspective to the dualistic state-society literature and demonstrate that a skeptical society towards the CSOs could be a major challenge to the development of civil society under authoritarian rule. Finally, the findings provide a dynamic framework that explains why it is possible to have social capital and space for CSOs created under an authoritarian state but still no meaningful paths to an actual independent civil society and democratization.

Earthquake is not a phenomenon that only happens in China. The 1992 Cairo Earthquake in Egypt gave the Islamist groups (especially the Muslim Brotherhood) a golden opportunity to gain support and legitimacy from the people by providing services and delivering goods that the Mubarak government could not (Lester 1999; Besada 2007; Wood and Wright 2014). The 1995 Kobe Earthquake in Japan prepared the groundwork that led to the rapid growth of the neighborhood associations because how voluntary activities were organized during the earthquake (Schwarts 2003). Changes and

developments of state-society relations after earthquakes in India, Turkey (Ozerdem and Jacoby 2006), and other countries have also been documented. Earthquakes, mainly seen as exogenous shocks to the system, not only provide scholars with lenses to look at how a state would react to, and interact with, the society during a crisis, they would also change the behaviors of both the state and society. Here, under the context of the authoritarian China, we have seen that many CSOs emerged from a network of individual altruistic voluntary behaviors while the state also was adaptive in managing the new developments within the society.

Findings from the two rounds of survey conducted between 2014 and 2015 suggest that social capital — a combination of trust, network, and norms of reciprocity — was created after earthquakes. Social capital is not only seen as an important resource to communities but is also the fabrics of civil society. While most scholars have focused on the consequences of social capital, with a few others who have conceptualized hypotheses about how social capital may come about, this dissertation has demonstrated empirically that under certain conditions, social capital and space for CSOs could be created after major disasters.

Against conventional wisdom that an authoritarian state would always be more interested in cracking down activities within the public sphere, the experimental data from this dissertation have suggested otherwise. The audit study compares emails containing slightly different requests to county governors to test whether there would be different responses. The results show that there is, indeed, a differentiation in response between the regime-challenging and regime-supporting CSOs. However, both the interviews and the

experiment suggest that the focus of local governments are not on how to deter the collective action potentials from the regime-challenging groups but, rather, on how to get the regime-supporting organizations to help with local governance, especial public goods and service provision. This result reveals that the decentralized state might potentially have different priorities at different levels.

While many of those who study civil society in authoritarian states focus on how the state challenges and intervenes the society from the above, the data collected from this dissertation also reveals how skeptical the individuals are about CSOs. Global citizen attitudes towards CSOs (and especially charitable organizations) are usually much more favorable than that towards the government. Yet, existing data indicates that in China this attitudinal difference is reversed: people like the government more than CSOs. Not only favorability towards the government is much higher in China, favorability towards charitable organizations is also much lower. Survey data and interview data from this dissertation reveals the key factors that lead to the lack of trust towards CSOs in China. Lack of interaction, particularly in terms of low membership of organizations, plays a key role. Even when comparing among post-communist countries, membership of CSOs in China is still towards the bottom. The analysis also revealed that, on the other hand, if someone is a member of an organization, their attitudes towards the CSOs versus the government would be significantly improved. Individual citizens also see the government as being fairer than CSOs as fairness has become an important part of local governments' policy criteria while CSOs would prioritize justice and effectiveness, and thus distribute resources and benefits unequally. Even when there is sufficient social capital, the low

quality of the social capital (diverse norms or low civility) also contributes to the lack of involvement in, and the distrust of, CSOs. Of course, the institutional constraints created by the state and past interactions between the state and society also affects individual citizens' trust of CSOs.

As one would be able to see from the empirical evidences from this dissertation, many factors have contributed to the change of state-society relations since the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake and some of the significant developments have also been presented. Previously, there lacks an adequate model in the literature that captures the variety of dynamic state-society relations in an authoritarian country. This dissertation utilized the rich qualitative data and presented a dynamic framework that not only looks at typologies immediately after the earthquakes statically, but also traces how these relationships would change dynamically from co-operational, complementary, competitive, and confrontational relations to co-optation or confrontation in the long run by focusing on goal alignment and government effectiveness. This dynamic model could also shed light on the key puzzle proposed in this dissertation. The space between the state and the private sphere is neither always closed nor always open, it is not open for everyone during the short moments when it is open, and both the state and CSOs will adapt to the evolving conditions. Since in an authoritarian state, the newly developed social capital and the CSOs are not mature enough (or are not situated in a mature enough environment), they are not able to become robust enough to check and monitor the state, let alone challenge the state, after a disruption in the scale of an earthquake. Therefore, the state will maintain its upper hand in its interactions with the society.

What are the progresses made besides the creation of a large number of regime-supporting CSOs that would survive the dynamic interactions after the major earthquakes? This dissertation also sheds light on the process of making new laws that govern the society, by comparing how the charity law and the foreign NGO law are developed. From the events that stimulated the creation of the laws, to the evolution of those laws, a pattern is demonstrated in which the state would first allow a "zone of indifference," and then experiment through toleration, participation, taking initiatives, and replicating successes. Eventually, we see a process of bifurcation caused by the occasional intervention by the state from the top down. Both the charity law and foreign NGO law were passed and started to be implemented but the results send mixed signals to CSOs in China. This outcome points out, again, that the state does not make all CSO activities illegal and does not stipulate what activities should be illegal right away. The state-organized legalization process resembles the actual state intervention of, and interaction with, the society. The laws were made after the dynamic interactions, which means for quite a long time, many of the activities happening in the society can be claimed (and potentially punished) as illegal activities. This is a tactic of the authoritarian state to both allow positive innovations to be created and, at the meantime, still hold the leverages to be able to intervene the development at any time. It is also worth noting that the laws may continue to evolve just as the dynamic framework of state-society relations may face other disruptions which could trigger further evolutions. The evidences from this dissertation do suggest that the higher levels of the government could disrupt and intervene the bottom-up lawmaking process and state-society relationship evolvement at any time.

On a slightly more optimistic note, through the numerous interviews conducted in this dissertation, it is not only clear that the government is adaptive and can quickly manage to diffuse challenges and threats, the CSOs are adaptive as well. The CSOs in China appear to be cooperative not because they are completely obedient, but they also have gained experiences in dealing with the government, given the opportunity to work with the government under various governance conditions and different levels of government capacities since the major earthquakes. The CSOs are intentionally trying not to alarm the authorities and trigger bifurcation points so they could survive and, sometimes, thrive. However, without a combination of good timing, being at the right level of the central-local discrepancy, with the auspices of having benevolent and open-minded government officials governing particular jurisdictions who see more of the CSO activities as regime-supporting, and with a window of opportunity long enough for the quality of social capital to improve and short enough to avoid the next top-down intervention from the higher levels of the government, the occasional boundary spanning activities and experiments might always be temporary, and we might not be able to see a mature civil society in China in the near future if nothing else fundamental changes.

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9. Curriculum Vitae