

John W. Tai

Building Civil Society in Authoritarian China

Importance of Leadership
Connections for
Establishing Effective
Nongovernmental
Organizations in a
Non-Democracy

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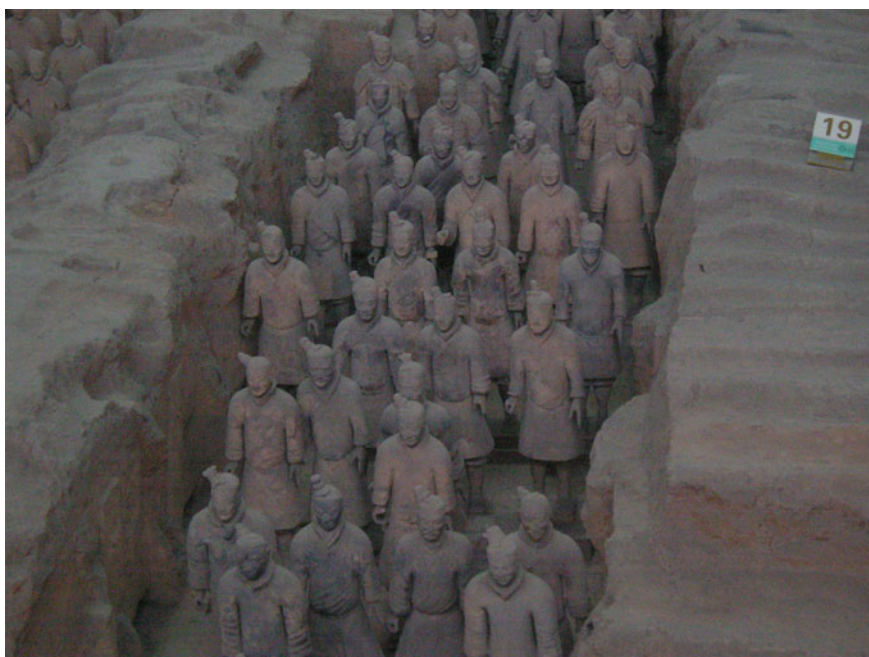
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Cover photo: The famous terracotta warriors stand guard at the tomb of China's first emperor on the outskirts of the ancient capital of Xi'an (photo by author).

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To Dad, Mom, Rebecca

Acknowledgments

The situation of China's civil society is fluid. Much of that has to do with the confusing signals that the state has been sending about its attitude toward civil society organizations. In the past few years, the state has cracked down on migrant worker NGOs in Guangdong, closed a Beijing-based NGO devoted to political reform, and convicted and imprisoned a former NGO leader who has been at the forefront of advocacy for legal and political reforms. Yet, at the same time, the state has rolled out a pilot program to ease the registration requirements for NGOs. Before this initiative, the state had begun experimentation with government procurement of NGO services. At the micro level, a few private organizations have achieved official nonprofit registration status, including Rural Women, which is featured in this book.

Amidst this uncertainty, China's NGO sector has been growing and it appears that NGOs are here to stay. However, there is no question that China's NGOs remain at a nascent stage of development, which reflects the fact that China's civil society is still under construction. While the public legitimacy of China's NGO is increasing, it still cannot rival that of the state. In addition, they continue to be resource-challenged while the state has only grown more resource-rich. In this state of affairs, the leaders of China's NGOs are critical for navigating their respective organizations through these uncertain terrains and, just as importantly, as *resource agents* for their respective organizations. Therefore, in a sense, China's NGO leaders are both planners and engineers of this great civil society-building project.

The critical importance of China's NGO leaders for their respective organizations reflects the under-institutionalized nature of China's civil society and its constituent parts. As time progresses, China's NGOs may one day achieve the organizational legitimacy that will sustain them even after their founders pass from the scene. However, until that day arrives, we must not ignore the men and women who are working daily to sustain this great construction effort. They serve as the collective inspiration for this study.

I have had the good fortune of learning about the building of China's civil society in general and NGOs in particular directly from some of these individuals. This book would not have been possible without the willingness of Chinese NGO

leaders, volunteers, and experts to take the time to share with me their travails as well as their hopes and dreams. Here I would like to especially express my gratitude to Chen Jian, Chen Yuying, Gao Guanglin, Ma Yang, Wang Fang, Wei Wei, Xie Lihua, and Zhang Wenjuan, who opened their organizations to me. However, they are not to be held accountable for my portrayal and assessment of their organizations.

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Michael Zhao deserves special thanks for playing a critical role in funding my research in China. By offering me the opportunity to become the first visiting scholar at the Beijing Study Center of the Institute for the International Education of Students, he allowed my family and me to live in China together for an extended period of time so that I could begin the field research that has now culminated in this book. At the Beijing Study Center, I benefited from insights and interview referrals by my colleagues, Yuan Yinghua and Wendy Kang, whose knowledge of China's NGO sector was invaluable. Through the Beijing Study Center, I was also introduced to He Ping, whose experience and insights about China's NGO sector in general and environmental NGOs in particular contributed a great deal to my understanding. Also there, I had the pleasure of meeting Yang Jingyong, who introduced me to the world of the physically disabled persons in China. It was also at the Beijing Study Center that I met Wang Kan, to whom I am greatly indebted for his interview referrals and insights about China's migrant workers, state of labor relations, and NGOs.

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Finally, this book would not have been possible without the support of my family. They have encouraged me with their words and with their own achievements. In particular, my brother, a highly accomplished creative artist, has inspired me by his example. Similarly, my father-in-law has encouraged me with his endless

pursuit of scholarship, even after over three decades in an army uniform that resulted in reaching the pinnacle of his profession. A special note about my sons, who were born just before I began this study. They have witnessed my journey, even though they were most likely oblivious to most of what had happened, which is perhaps a good thing. In any case, they have been a source of joy and they are definitely gifts from God.

I reserve my greatest love and most profound gratitude to three people. My parents have made this book a possibility a long time ago when they decided to bring my brother and me to the United States, where they have allowed me and my brother to pursue our interests and dreams without interference. My wife has not only supported my decision to return to school at the cost of a significant reduction to our household income; she has also endured my emotional ups and downs during the journey. There is no question that she is the better half in our relationship. It is to these three wonderful people that I dedicate this book.

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Abbreviations

ACLA	All-China Lawyers' Association
ACWF	All-China Women's Federation
AMO	Administered Mass Organization
CDPF	China Disabled Persons' Federation
CJCRA	China Juvenile Crime Research Association
CMWSSC	China Migrant Worker Social Service Center
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
CYL	Communist Youth League
ENGO	Environmental NGO
EU	European Union
FON	Friends of Nature
GONGO	Government-Organized NGO
INGO	International NGO
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NPC	National People's Congress
NPO	Nonprofit Organization
PRC	People's Republic of China
SEPA	State Environmental Protection Administration
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

Chapter 1

Building Civil Society Under the Shadows of Authoritarianism

Abstract Writings about civil society in general and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in particular have downplayed the value of state linkage for the development of non-state social actors in non-democratic settings. Those writings have generally emphasized the state's constraints on the development of NGOs in authoritarian countries. However, an increasing number of scholars have discovered that NGOs in non-democratic countries can accrue real benefits by establishing strong linkages to the authoritarian state, which control critical organizational resources. Similarly, in existing studies about NGOs in non-democratic states, the importance of NGO leadership has been overshadowed by the attention to structural factors. Yet, NGO leaders are valuable resources for their respective organizations. Among the critical roles that NGO leaders play in advancing organizational effectiveness is their role as resource agents. The NGO's dependence on external resources means that the leader's social ties are among the most valuable leadership skills. Given the state's control of critical organizational resources in contemporary China, state linkages constitute the most valuable form of leadership ties for China's NGOs.

Keywords Nongovernmental organization (NGO) • Civil society • Leadership ties • State linkage • Media connections • International ties • Resource dependence • Organizational effectiveness • Accountability • Legitimacy • Organizational capacity

Sitting in a small meeting room on top of a storefront on the edge of the Yangzi River, I sat listening to a young, disabled woman talk about her life. It was a day in the month of May in Chongqing, one of China's famed "furnaces." The temperature was still at a reasonable 80 °F, albeit the humidity was clearly felt. Throughout the one-hour session, the young woman, who was approximately 30 years old, smiled even as she recounted her tragic past. She spoke of how she worked as a migrant worker in sweatshop conditions in Shenzhen, the driver of China's economic boom that sits immediately north of Hong Kong. She spoke about how she survived a major factory fire that claimed the lives of 100 workers. Although she lived through the disaster, she suffered severe burn to 75 % of her body. It would take several

years of physical and psychological healing before she regained her independence of movement and self-esteem. During her recuperation, she found the love of her life and eventually became the mother of a young girl.

If her story ended there, it would have been an inspiring tale of individual courage. However, for those involved in building China's civil society, the story thankfully did not end there. Eventually, Chen Yuying, who is affectionately known as Xiao Ying or "Little Ying," founded the Self-Empowerment Service Center for Disabled Persons, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that has been committed to educating and assisting local residents who are either preparing to work or are working in other parts of China as rural migrant workers. The organization also provides assistance to residents who have returned to their hometown due to occupational injuries.

This book is about men and women like Xiao Ying, people who are working to build China's civil society. In particular, it seeks to examine how leaders of China's NGOs have built those organizations. Therefore, it is unlike many other books on China's civil society, which emphasize the institutional context, notably the obstacles, to the establishment of NGOs and, ultimately, the development of a modern civil society that is familiar to Westerners. Instead, by examining individual Chinese NGOs, this book attempts to uncover the means by which modern civil society is being created in a political environment that is known for its intolerance of independent social actors.

With this approach, I am not suggesting that institutional factors are insignificant. However, the emphasis on them has cast a long shadow over analysis about the fast-developing civil society landscape in China. Similarly, this emphasis suggests that NGOs in non-democracies cannot be effective organizations because they have not brought about dramatic political changes. However, the absence of dramatic political changes does not mean that these organizations have failed to meet organizational objectives and in the process have an impact on state policies and practices while contributing to societal well-being. In fact, many NGOs in China have been effective in precisely those terms.

Another drawback to the focus on institutions is that it has drawn our attention away from the agents of those changes, i.e., the men and women who have committed their lives to the building of a modern civil society in China. A fuller understanding of China's civil society in general and its NGOs in particular cannot be achieved without examining these individuals and, most importantly, how they are leveraging their social ties to create effective organizations.

The basic premise of this book is that relations with state institutions are by far the social ties with the greatest value for China's NGOs. By extension, the value of other social ties is best judged by whether they can facilitate linkages with the state. In this respect, aside from state linkages, media connections have proven to constitute a valuable set of social ties. By contrast, international ties have been significantly less impactful. In fact, the value of international ties seems to be contingent on the presence of state linkages, media connections, or both. However, as indicated in the following section, experts have generally dismissed the

importance of state linkages for civil society building in non-democracies in general and in China in particular due to their perception about the proper nature of state-civil society relationship, a perception that can impede the civil society-building project.

1.1 NGOs in Non-Democracies: The Dilemma of External Dependence

A common conceptualization of civil society is one that is labeled by some scholars as the “political” definition (White et al. 1996; Simon 2013). Those who subscribe to this conceptualization argue that civil society should be “autonomous from the state” (Diamond 1994: 5) and even in “permanent tension” with the state (Keane 1998: 6). Therefore, experts have argued that NGOs, as principal units of a modern civil society, should adopt the strategy of maintaining organizational autonomy from the state.¹

This prescribed strategy is connected to the presumed function of civil society in general and NGOs in particular, which is to check the state: “A robust civil society, [relatively autonomous from the state], with the capacity to generate political alternatives and to monitor government and state can help [democratic] transitions get started, help resist reversals, help push [democratic] transitions to their completion, help [democracies] consolidate, and help deepen democracy” (Linz and Stepan 1996: 7, 9). This statement also suggests that in non-democratic states, NGOs and other civil society actors are expected to bring about dramatic political change, notably the overturn of non-democratic states. Given the expected adversarial relationship between civil society organizations and the authoritarian state, it is no wonder that organizational autonomy has been perceived to be of utmost importance.

This zero-sum notion has influenced even those who are not necessarily advocating that NGOs undertake programs to overturn non-democratic regimes. Julie Fisher, who has written widely on NGOs in developing countries, stated: “[The] key factor associated with the political clout of NGOs appears to be organizational autonomy.... [Organizations] that strengthen their own identities and autonomy before seeking to influence policy makers are likely to have greater latitude in initiating their own political strategies or in responding to government policies within a wide range of political contexts” (Fisher 1998: 76). According to Michael Edwards and David Hulme, the lack of organizational autonomy vis-à-vis the state means that NGOs “run the risk of being co-opted into [government] agendas” and

¹ One notable exception is Andrew Wells-Dang, who argued that networks of organizations and individuals are the most important constituents of civil society in non-democracies like China and Vietnam. See Wells-Dang (2012).

thereby lose their legitimacy as nongovernmental, grassroots-oriented institutions (Edwards and Hulme 1996: 4).

Some scholars who study China's NGO sector have likewise emphasized the value of organizational autonomy in their analyses (Shue 1994; Howell 1998; He 2008). For instance, Yiyi Lu argued that dependence on the state, or the lack of autonomy vis-à-vis the state, has been the main, indeed if not the only, cause of the ineffectiveness of Chinese NGOs: "[There] is no question that [the NGOs'] dependence on the state limits their usefulness as champions of interests and values that are different from those of the state" (Lu 2009: 116).

As these statements show, many experts have defined NGOs as "anti-government" organizations. In this conceptualization, state ties are viewed as liabilities because those relationships are perceived to act as obstacles to NGOs carrying out their functions to either check the state or overturn it. However, the political functions of NGOs are not limited to these two. Another function, as detailed in the welfare state literature, is participation in societal governance. In carrying out this function, the relationship between the state and NGOs must be more complementary, even collaborative, than adversarial. James Douglas' analysis has illustrated this idea very well (Douglas 1987: 46–7). In fact, an NGO's effectiveness in performing this function is premised on the presence of a positive state-NGO relationship.

In recent years, an increasing number of studies on China's civil society have also highlighted the complementary nature of state-civil society relations. In his study of China's response to the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), Jonathan Schwartz revealed that civil society actors worked closely with the state, often at the state's instigation, to combat the crisis (Schwartz 2009). Similarly, Joan Kaufman found that the state has worked closely with NGOs to respond to China's AIDS crisis (Kaufman 2009). Jennifer Hsu and Reza Hasmath have also made similar observations about the situation pertaining to China's migrant population (Hsu and Hasmath 2013).

In short, despite the fact that many experts advocate the value of organizational autonomy for NGOs, there are indications which suggest that achieving organizational autonomy should not, and cannot, be interpreted to mean that NGOs should and are able to avoid the state without negative consequences for organizational effectiveness. This is the case even in non-democracies, especially powerful states like the one found in contemporary China. For instance, for scholars interested in the effects of civil society actors on the political system, notably NGOs involved in policy advocacy, the notion of NGO autonomy vis-à-vis the state means that autonomous groups are at risk of losing the opportunity to change the state. As Mary Gallagher wrote: "[State]-civil society interaction is important because it is changing the nature of the Chinese state" (Gallagher 2004: 422). This is a useful reminder that, for NGOs wanting to influence existing state policies and practices, they should be most interested in engaging the state. The alternative could be marginalization by the state, which are likely to result in organizational ineffectiveness.

Gallagher's statement also highlights the value of state linkage as a means to access state *resources*, which in this case is the state's policy apparatus. This idea is

in contrast to the perception that an NGO must maintain resource autonomy vis-à-vis the state out of concern that the price of obtaining state resources is the loss of “decisional competence, recruitment of leaders, and control of important economic and managerial resources” (Hyden 1997). According to this perspective, a reliance on “state funding and support can also be dangerous to [an NGO] in that it may compromise the group’s ability to criticize state policies...” (Sperling 2006: 164). The implication of this perspective on organizational autonomy is that NGOs should diversify the origins of organizational resources, with the clear goal of maintaining a distance from the state.

However, the challenging resource environment has often meant that efforts to achieve resource autonomy from the state have led NGOs in non-democracies to develop dependence on foreign resources. Such resource dependence has led to the criticism that NGOs have succumbed to foreign agenda, become elitist, and lost touch with both the state and the people, thereby becoming illegitimate (Hudock 1999; Hemment 2007). Even more damning has been the charge that foreign funding has had the effect of “fueling” the very socio-political system that NGOs were supposed to transform (Chabal and Daloz 1999: 23). Just as importantly, foreign funding is very limited and difficult to access. In other words, a reliance on foreign resources can simply result in substituting state dependence with a reliance on foreign donors, with negative consequences for organizational effectiveness.

Ultimately, the preference for resource autonomy vis-à-vis the state is likely to be an unsustainable proposition. In a resource-poor environment in which the powerful state controls all key organizational resources, including policy access and material resources, the standard of organizational autonomy vis-à-vis the state would place NGOs in non-democracies in a bind. Resource attainment, regardless of the sources, should be the priority for NGOs. Similarly, policy advocacy NGOs must do all it can to gain access to the state. In this sense, it seems counterproductive for NGOs to maintain autonomy from the state. In addition, it is important to be reminded that the establishment of state linkages does not automatically imply that NGOs lose the ability to maintain organizational control. In sum, in order for NGOs in non-democracies to achieve their objectives, they need to engage the state.

1.2 Disaggregated State: Opportunities for Accessing Resources and Achieving Effectiveness

Similar to Gallagher’s finding in the context of the Chinese NGOs, Kate Thomson, in her study of Russian disability NGOs, found that close ties to government agencies have helped some Russian organizations access state and non-state resources (Thomson 2006: 237). Likewise, Amaney Jamal found that in Palestine organizations linked to the Palestinian National Authority have enjoyed access to important organizational resources (Jamal 2007: 51–58). These and other authors pointed out that resources of importance to NGOs have not been limited to material

and financial goods. For example, Jamal identified “a sense of reassurance and security” as an important organizational resource (Jamal 2007: 56). Lisa Sundstrom and Laura Henry suggested that public legitimacy is another key organizational resource for NGOs in non-democratic countries because in those places “many citizens continue to believe that the state’s authority should be largely unquestioned, and that the state’s imposition of order is more important than freedom or democracy” (Sundstrom and Henry 2006: 318). Collectively, these findings suggest that the rewards for engaging the state can be quite significant for NGOs. But why would a non-democratic state be willing to allow NGOs, which often draw state suspicion, to access valuable state resources?

An answer may be found in the fact that authoritarian states behave differently with respect to different policy issue areas. For instance, Suzaina Kadir found that in Singapore, NGOs advocating women’s issues have had greater success than those addressing ethnic Malay issues (Kadir 2004). She concluded that this phenomenon had to do with how the state viewed the two sets of issues. According to Kadir, ethnic issues were perceived by the state to touch on the sensitive area of identity politics, which the Singaporean state has always been careful to control out of the fear that these matters, if improperly handled, could lead to political instability. However, as important as issue area is for explaining variations in state-NGO relations, the more fundamental cause in Kadir’s study was the fact that the Singaporean state felt “the need to engage with civil society,” although it wanted “to do so at a pace and scope” that it found “agreeable” (Kadir 2004: 349).

Kadir’s study makes it clear that there are opportunities for NGOs to survive and thrive in non-democracies, and those opportunities have been the products of state policies. Similarly, in his study of environmental, HIV/AIDS, and gay and lesbian NGOs in China, Timothy Hildebrandt credited government policies for creating a demand for NGOs to work in these issue areas (Hildebrandt 2013: 26–31). However, he also pointed out that the state’s program of decentralization has given more responsibilities and powers to sub-national governments, which have played a critical role in determining the nature of government relations with NGOs (Hildebrandt 2013: 44–52).

Hildebrandt’s findings highlight the fact that states, even non-democratic ones, are not monolithic. As Jennifer Coston observed, “governments are not monolithic: [regimes] of all types may incorporate agencies and actors that are more cooperative or repressive than the overall regime” (Coston 1998: 363). The model of “fragmented authoritarianism” developed by Kenneth Lieberthal and Michel Oksenberg shows that this general notion about the disaggregated nature of the state is also applicable to the situation in China (Lieberthal and Oksenberg 1988; Lieberthal 1995).

This understanding about the state is important because it demonstrates that there are many state actors and those actors may harbor different interests. On the one hand, this has created an uncertain political environment for the NGOs to engage the state. On the other hand, it also indicates that there are opportunities for NGOs to develop beneficial relations with state actors. The right NGO leader will be able to uncover and exploit those opportunities to the organization’s advantages.

1.3 NGO Leader as a Resource Agent

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the growing literature on China's civil society remains fixated on structural factors. The importance of institutions notwithstanding, a focus on structural constraints yields an incomplete picture of the relationship between the state and societal actors because it privileges the state side of the equation and by extension favors the state's perspective. Consequently, the NGO's perspective has not been given sufficient attention. With a few exceptions (Economy 2004; Ma 2006), NGOs have either been viewed in a negative light (Lu 2009), overshadowed by structural constraints (Hildebrandt 2013), or analyzed as a component of other units of analysis (Wells-Dang 2012). In addition, this conceptual emphasis has overshadowed the importance of organizational leadership for China's NGOs.

In contrast to the writings on China's NGOs, organizational leadership has been a subject of considerable interest among the large body of works on nonprofit organizations (NPOs). These works offer some observations about the qualities and skills of successful leaders. For instance, one identified quality is charisma. A charismatic leader is valuable because he or she "inspires staff and members to put aside personal self-interest for the common good of the organization and to have confidence in their ability to achieve the 'extraordinary' challenges before them" (Anheier 2005: 163). According to some NPO experts, a successful leader is also often an entrepreneur who fosters innovation (Young 1987: 168). A third quality is that NPO leaders, in contrast to their business and political peers, are motivated neither by political ambitions nor by financial gains (James 1987: 404–405). Lastly, in keeping with these observations, David Bornstein indicated that as "social entrepreneurs" who aim to provide solutions to social problems, NGO leaders have often displayed a willingness to "self-correct," "share credit," "break free of established structures," "cross disciplinary boundaries," "work quietly," as well as demonstrating a "strong ethical impetus" (Bornstein 2007: 238–246).

These leadership qualities are surely important. However, we must not overlook another important leadership quality, or skill, which is resource acquisition. Resource attainment is important for any type of organization. The importance of acquiring resources thus makes "resource dependence" an important organizational attribute. According to Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald Salancik, resource dependence demonstrates that every organization is affected by its environment because organizational resources often originate outside the organization (Pfeffer and Salancik 2003). In this situation, an organization's leaders/managers are important because they manage the organization's resource environment. Put simply, these individuals are central to resource acquisition.

As indicated earlier, the powerful non-democratic state is an important object of resource attainment for NGOs because the former controls, in fact monopolizes, critical resources. Therefore, arguably a key responsibility of NGO leaders should be to play a decisive role in facilitating access to state resources, including whether to engage the state. In fact, scholars have identified this role among NGO leaders in

non-democracies around the world. For instance, leaders of environmental NGOs (ENGOs) in Russia make the “decision of whether to oppose, cooperate with, or avoid the state...” (Henry 2006: 224). Highlighting the linkage between NGO leaders and access to state resources, Maha Abdelrahman has found that a disproportionate number of NGO leaders in Egypt were government employees (Abdelrahman 2004: 154). Scholars who study NGOs in China have made similar observations. According to Kang Xiaoguang and his colleagues, NGO leaders in China have had a positive effect on the efforts of Chinese NGOs to obtain virtually all forms of state resources (Kang et al. 2010: 26–30). Likewise, Jiang Ru and Leonard Ortolano have found that successful Chinese ENGOs have often been led by leaders with connections to the state (Ru and Ortolano 2008: 62).

Put simply, from the perspective of resource dependence, the NGO leader’s function as a *resource agent* stands out as the most important leadership role. His or her ability to help the organization access resources, notably state resources, goes a long way to define the extent to which an NGO leader is a successful one, and the extent to which the organization can achieve effectiveness.

1.4 Concepts: NGO Effectiveness and Leadership Ties

The resource-dependent nature of NGOs and their significant reliance on external resources make it very clear that the most important skill of the leaders of Chinese NGOs is their social ties. However, before analyzing how the social ties of NGO leaders in China can contribute to organizational effectiveness, it is necessary to define the concept of *NGO effectiveness* and determine the *leadership ties* that will be the focus of this study. As will be seen in the remainder of this section, the concept of NGO effectiveness is a heavily-contested one. In comparison, the leadership ties identified are less controversial. However, there is still a need to explain why some leadership ties are removed from more detailed examination.

1.4.1 *NGO Effectiveness*

The focus of this study is to examine how NGO leaders contribute to organizational success. Hence, I do not emphasize the capacity of NGOs to achieve dramatic political change, which does not correspond to reality in China because many, if not most, NGO leaders do not perceive this to be their aim. Instead, organizational success is defined in this book as *organizational effectiveness*. In turn, organizational effectiveness is defined as “goal effectiveness”: “the extent to which [an NGO] is able to achieve the goals it sets for itself” (Calnan 2008: 231).

One reason for choosing this definition is to avoid the endless debate about the best definition for organizational effectiveness. Indeed, it is nearly impossible for experts to reach a consensus on the definition of effectiveness. One challenge is that

depending on the type of work in which an NGO engages, its specific performance indicators may be different from another NGO that conducts a different type of work. For example, the performance indicators for an NGO that provides services to autistic children may include ones that measure the number of autistic children under its care, the number of staff devoted to each child, the number of beds in the facilities, and other similar indicators. The same performance indicators obviously cannot be applied to a policy research NGO, the effectiveness of which is probably best assessed in terms of the extent to which its policy recommendations have been adopted by government agencies.

The lack of consensus about the measurements for effective NGOs can be readily observed by the comments made by the staff of international donors who work in China. One former program officer for an international donor in China told me that donors have generally agreed that effectiveness should be measured in terms of “process” rather than “outcome.” A process-based indicator of effectiveness is one that assesses the extent to which an NGO effectively engages the organization’s multiple stakeholders (Fowler 1997: 177–179). In a nutshell, this type of measurement is associated with a focus on the extent to which NGOs are accountable. In contrast to this line of reasoning, a former research director for a U.S.-based donor shared with me his opinion that organizational capacity should be the fundamental criterion for NGO effectiveness.

In addition to the notion that effectiveness should be assessed based on stakeholder relationships, some experts and practitioners have indicated that there are some common indicators of effectiveness that would apply to all NGOs because there are certain organizational characteristics that distinguish NGOs from other types of organizations. The shared NGO characteristics include the prominence of values in NGO work and the public-interest nature of NGO missions and goals. Therefore, based on existing studies, many writers advocate that NGO effectiveness be measured in terms of the NGO’s organizational capacity, accountability, and public legitimacy.

Although these three characteristics have been distinguished for analytical purposes, they are in reality inter-connected. The reason is that NGOs are widely perceived to be value-driven entities, as indicated above, especially in comparison to for-profit firms (Anheier 2005: 160). Therefore, many experts have argued that the effectiveness of any NGO cannot be judged solely on capacity indicators, as important as they are (Fowler 1997). Moreover, because NGOs engage in public-interest activities, they are also perceived to be accountable to multiple stakeholders, both within and outside the NGOs. Therefore, the effectiveness of any NGO must also be assessed in terms of whether it can maintain accountability and establish public legitimacy.

In situations such as China, where grassroots NGOs face a significantly constrained resource environment, there is considerable validity to the observation that NGO effectiveness should be synonymous with NGO survival (McMahon 2006: 49). Even so, some NGO leaders have clearly been interested in surviving “better” than others. An indication of this desire has been the comments made by some

Chinese NGO leaders that their priority has been the building up of their respective organizational “brand names” (Interview BJ040109; Wei Wei Interview 2009).

In any case, the issue of organizational survival is essentially one about organizational capacity, or the ability of the organization to carry out its stated objectives. Sarah Michael, in her study of local African development NGOs, has made a direct connection between organizational effectiveness and organizational capacity (Michael 2004). In her study, Michael defined effectiveness in terms of power. She observed that four features have characterized the most powerful development NGOs in the world: size, wealth, reputation, and the ability to write and rewrite the rules (Michael 2004: 24–37). The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) was cited by her as an illustration of an effective, or powerful, NGO. As Michael described it, BRAC had employed 60,000 people, not including volunteers, to administer projects involving services to over 4 million people. The organization’s 1999 budget was over \$130 million.

However, there are reasons to believe that organizational capacity may not be the best indicator of NGO effectiveness, especially with respect to NGOs operating in contemporary China. First, no Chinese grassroots NGO has achieved the level of effectiveness that has been demonstrated by BRAC. In fact, Chinese experts on the Chinese NGO sector have observed consistently that the Chinese NGOs, irrespective of their registration status, have lacked strong organizational capacity (Deng 2007). A more important reason, however, is that we cannot presuppose that organizations with strong capacity will put those resources into good use, just as we can no more assume that organizations lacking capacity will be ineffective. The case of the Self-Empowerment Service Center for Disabled Persons will testify to this point. The NGO’s organizational capacity pales in comparison to those of many other Chinese NGOs; but the NGO has been quite effective in servicing its constituents.

Experts have also identified accountability to be another important criterion to evaluate NGO effectiveness (Edwards and Hulme 1996; Fowler 1997: 180–183; Jordan and van Tuijl 2006). At the core of the issue of accountability is the notion that NGOs, as public organizations with multiple stakeholders, should be held accountable for how they use the resources at their command. Transparency is therefore directly related to the notion of accountability. And there are internal and external dimensions of accountability. Internal accountability often involves the presence of a board of directors (Tandon 1996). External accountability, on the other hand, may involve the extent to which the NGO is transparent to stakeholders outside the organization about its activities through regular reports and audits that are made available publicly in an easily accessible manner (Deng 2007: 175).

Organizational accountability or lack thereof can certainly have implications for NGO effectiveness. An accountable NGO is arguably more likely to use its resources wisely and efficiently, thereby contributing to optimal organizational performance. Moreover, an NGO that enjoys a reputation as one that upholds the principles of accountability is more likely to attract more resources to support its efforts to meet the organization’s goals. However, accountability by itself may not be the best indicator of organizational effectiveness. One reason is that any

assessment of accountability has to take into account multiple objects of accountability, or stakeholders, and stakeholders do not and should not exercise equal influence upon the organization. The employment of accountability as an indicator of organizational effectiveness is therefore likely to require the analyst to engage in somewhat arbitrary selection and prioritization of the various objects of accountability. In this vein, it will be difficult to come up with a set of indicators that can objectively measure accountability. Furthermore, as is the case with organizational capacity, we cannot assume that an accountable NGO will perform effectively.

Related to the issue of accountability is the notion of organizational legitimacy. For Chinese NGOs, legitimacy has important meanings because the public has generally displayed very little trust in these organizations. Nonetheless, some Chinese NGOs have clearly enjoyed greater legitimacy than others, as reflected in the positive evaluations by government officials, donors, media agencies, outside experts, and beneficiaries (Deng 2007: 152, 177). Indeed, strong organizational legitimacy may be a means for the NGO to achieve effectiveness because it facilitates access to organizational resources and protects the organization from state predation. But many of the same problems associated with the use of accountability as an indicator for effectiveness are also applicable to the use of public legitimacy as an indicator of effectiveness.

In sum, a review of the existing literature makes it quite clear that despite the plethora of offerings by experts about indicators for NGO effectiveness, most of the indicators are either difficult to measure or have serious deficiencies. Therefore, the definition that I have chosen appears to be the best by default. However, there are more valid reasons to adopt goal effectiveness as the definition for NGO effectiveness. One important reason is that by using the organization's own set of standards, it eliminates the inevitable biases that come with imposing outside standards on the organization. Another important reason is that this definition of NGO effectiveness best facilitates comparisons among NGOs, regardless of any differences with respect to issue area and focus.

1.4.2 Leadership Ties

As a resource agent, the NGO leader must possess the skills to acquire resources for her organization. Among those skills, her social ties arguably exercise the most decisive influence on her ability to acquire resources. Given the significance of state resources, those social ties must first and foremost help her access state resources. In this study, I will examine the extent to which the state linkages, media connections, and international ties of NGO leaders have impacted organizational performance.

The choice of these three sets of social ties has been informed by the writings of other analysts and by my interactions with NGO leaders in China. However, while mentioning the value of these three types of social ties, writers have not examined in detail how those ties contribute to China's NGOs. They also have not examined

the interactions among the ties and how those interactions affect China's NGOs. Therefore, in this book, I will not only examine how each type of social tie is translated into benefits for the NGOs in question; I will also examine how they interact with each other and, ultimately, how they stack up against each other in terms of contributions to NGO effectiveness.

In emphasizing these ties, I am clearly leaving out others. Therefore, it is important to address potential criticisms about those ties that I have left out, notably the relationship with other NGOs.

Inter-NGO linkages may be valuable for NGOs. In recent years, we have witnessed the presence of various types of networks involving Chinese NGOs. However, based on my research, we can only speak about the benefits of inter-NGO linkages in China in potential terms. There are at least two reasons for this observation. First, substantive inter-NGO linkages, through which NGOs interact with each other on a regular basis and which involve substantial transfers of benefits, remain limited in scope. The most developed networks in this respect have been found among ENGOs, and these networks have generally revolved around China's most prominent ENGOs (Ru and Ortolano 2008; Wells-Dang 2012). More importantly, the NGOs involved in those networks constitute only a small fraction of the Chinese NGO population. Second, due to the limited resources available to NGOs, most Chinese NGO leaders, even the leaders of the most prominent and long-standing NGOs, have made it very clear that their priority is to build their respective organizational brand (*pinpai*). This means that they have jealously guarded their hard-earned resources, which has resulted in a minimal transfer of resources among NGOs. Furthermore, given the Chinese NGO sector's lack of political and popular legitimacy, and given the fact that organizational resources needed by the NGOs are either owned or regulated by the state, building linkages among NGOs can yield very little, if any, direct and immediate benefits on individual NGOs. In fact, inter-NGO linkages may be detrimental to NGOs' relations with the state (Hildebrandt 2013: 79). All of this is not to deny the fact that NGO alliances have had noticeable effects on major advocacy campaigns and, most recently, post-disaster relief efforts. But the effects of those alliances have required the presence of friendly state officials (Mertha 2008; Wells-Dang 2012). Moreover, the effects of such alliances on the effectiveness of individual NGOs have been inconsistent at best.

Therefore, it should be unsurprising that in non-democracies like China, NGOs have generally sought linkages with non-NGO entities that could best advance the organization's interests. The importance of the state in China means that it is important for the NGO to establish ties with the state. And the degree to which the leadership possesses state linkages is correlated with the relative effectiveness of the NGO.

Although it is not necessary to be state employees in order to have state linkages, membership in the officialdom is certainly a useful means to acquire state linkages. Scholars have indeed observed that many effective NGOs in non-democracies have been led by current and former government employees. In some cases, such as Egypt, this phenomenon has reflected the enormous scale of that country's state

bureaucracy and public sector (Abdelrahman 2004: 155). Like Egypt, China is also home to a huge state bureaucracy and public sector (Pei 2006). But other factors may also account for the value of being state officials in China. One of those factors may be historical. Throughout Chinese history, membership in the officialdom has usually conferred that individual with a degree of respect and legitimacy that virtually no other social position could rival.

Whatever the nature of state linkages, NGO leaders who possess this type of social ties may be more likely to benefit their organizations mainly because in comparison with those leaders who do not possess similar linkages, NGO leaders who possess them are more likely to have access to state resources, including financial capital and political networks. Similarly, leaders with state linkages are presumably more likely to have access to the policymaking process. In this manner, NGOs led by such individuals will more likely to have opportunities to impact policies.

Interestingly, NGOs that are led by leaders with state linkages have also been successful in accessing non-state resources. One reason is that state linkages have often been accepted by ordinary citizens in those countries as a sign of legitimacy and reliability. Abdelrahman observed that in Egypt, local people would trust NGOs more if they were led by government officials because people expected that “respectable civil servants [would] not misuse public money or their position in the NGO for any personal gain” (Abdelrahman 2004: 155). In China, there has also been a perception that NGO leaders with state linkages are more trustworthy because they are more likely to manage their organizations in accordance with rules and regulations (Interview BJZX042209).

Another type of social ties is media connections. A significant number of Chinese NGO leaders are either current or former journalists. The media’s impact on NGO effectiveness cannot be underestimated, especially in China where the media have historically served as a powerful instrument of the authoritarian state. By virtue of the media’s political association with the state, there has been a popular perception among both government officials and ordinary people that media workers have access to the most important and updated information about political and social issues. This also suggests that media professionals also have access to policymakers and the policy process. In recent years, as China’s media organizations have attempted to carve out more autonomous spaces, Chinese journalists have increasingly written news reports that are critical of state agencies and officials. As a result, Chinese media organizations in general and Chinese journalists in particular have earned increasing popular legitimacy. One consequence has been the fact that ordinary Chinese people have sought out journalists to provide information about official wrongdoing (Economy 2004). The increasing popular legitimacy of the Chinese media has also meant that media reports about NGOs have the potential to do much to enhance “the visibility, reputation, and influence of the NGOs” (Shieh 2009: 36). In fact, Chinese journalists and media outlets have become more outspoken and critical of state policies and practices despite the common perception that China remains a “propaganda state.”

However, just as it would be simplistic to assume that collectively the Chinese media are simply the mouthpiece of the state, we should not assume that a journalist profession is the only ticket to the media for an NGO leader. In other words, an NGO leader may possess media connections without ever having worked as a media professional. As media reporting has enhanced the NGOs' organizational visibility and reputation, media reporting has also raised the profile of NGO leaders who were not professional journalists. As "media darlings," these NGO leaders have enjoyed regular media exposure. Access to media has become an important vehicle for these individuals to establish state connections, both for them as individuals and for the organizations that they lead. Wei Wei, the founder of the Little Bird Migrant Workers Mutual Support Hotline, which is one of the four core NGO cases featured in this book, is a well-known representative of NGO leaders who have benefited from tremendous media support without owning a journalist pedigree.

The third and final type of leadership ties is international ties. It is a well-known fact that NGOs in non-democracies and developing countries have relied on foreign donors, notably those from Western countries, for the necessary organizational resources. The reasons for this phenomenon are many and they have to do with the situations in non-democracies and developing countries. One reason has been that in those parts of the world, states have not been supportive of NGOs, either because the states have lacked the capacity to do so, lacked the will to do so, or, in most cases, both. Another reason has been that the fundraising environment outside the state apparatus in those countries has been equally unsupportive. In those cases, the resource-poor environment might be either an outcome of state regulations, the underdevelopment of an indigenous culture of philanthropy, or the NGO's lack of legitimacy as a social institution.

However, in contrast to the NGO leader's political ties and his media connections, international ties may not facilitate positive connections with the state in a direct manner. In fact, some scholars have argued that in China, international ties have generally served as a means by which NGOs could achieve greater organizational autonomy vis-à-vis the state (Shieh 2009: 35). Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that state linkages and media connections may be stronger predictors of international ties than the other way around.

1.5 Organization of the Book

The remainder of this book is structured around a presentation of each of the three types of leadership ties, namely state linkages, media connections, and international ties. In Chap. 2 I will provide a description of the NGO landscape in contemporary China, with an emphasis on the political challenges facing NGOs in China, which highlights the importance of the state for NGOs operating there. I will also examine the state of China's rural migrants, with a look at the NGOs servicing this large

population. Chapter 2 will end with a formal presentation of the four core cases and three shadow cases that constitute the key analytical elements of this book.

The empirical findings will be presented in the three subsequent chapters. Each chapter is structured around one of the three types of leadership ties. The aim of each chapter is to analyze the processes through which each type of ties has exerted positive impact on NGO effectiveness. As a part of the comparative framework, the discussions in Chaps. 4 and 5 will include analyses about how the different types of leadership ties interact with each other. Taken together, the three chapters should make clear the relative causal weight of each type of ties through an examination of the interactions among the three types of ties and the effects those interactions have on NGO effectiveness.

In Chap. 6 and the concluding chapter, I will review the central argument of this thesis as well as its main findings and their implications. I will also suggest new avenues for further research. In addition, I will make some recommendations to international donors and domestic Chinese NGOs about how best to advance the civil society-building project in contemporary China.

The last section of the book is the appendix, which provides details about the scope of the study, the data sources, the research methodology, as well as the study's limitations.

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Chapter 2

Chinese NGOs: Thriving Amidst Adversity

Abstract Notwithstanding media reports about how the authoritarian state in China has repressed its civil society, China's NGO sector has grown significantly in number over the past two decades. In fact, the state has played a decisive role in the emergence of the NGO sector in China, which is also highly diverse. It includes both organizations that are officially registered as nonprofit organizations and those that do not possess this status; it also includes organizations that should be more properly viewed as state institutions and those organizations that meet the conventional criteria for NGOs. However, despite the state's positive contributions to the development of China's NGO sector, it continues to view NGOs with suspicion and has adopted legal, political, and practical measures to control China's NGOs. A significant consequence of these control measures is that many Chinese NGOs are unable to attain official nonprofit registration status, thereby negatively impacting their social and political legitimacy. This fact, in combination with the state's overwhelming legitimacy, makes it all the more important for individual Chinese NGOs to reach out to the state, thereby affirming the value of state linkages. In recent years, the rising demand for rural migrant workers to contribute to China's modernization and urbanization has highlighted the institutionalized discrimination against this population group. Consequently, migrant NGOs have emerged to advocate on behalf of migrant workers and their dependents as well as to serve their needs. These NGOs are keenly aware of the value of state linkages. Some of these organizations have also been quite effective. Therefore, a close look at these organizations can help us understand how China's NGOs have been able to achieve their goals while allowing us to gain an in-depth understanding of migrant NGOs in contemporary China.

Keywords Government-organized NGO (GONGO) • Mass organization • State control • Registration status • Organizational legitimacy • Rural migrant worker • *Hukou* • Shadow case

2.1 Rapid Growth of China's NGO Sector

China has been undergoing an “association revolution” over the last 20 years, particularly since the second half of the 1990s. By the end of 2013, there were over 500,000 registered NGOs in China. Between 1988 and 2013, the number of registered NGOs had increased over 100 times, from just under 4,500 in 1988 to over 540,000 in 2013 (Fig. 2.1). In addition, during the same time period, the categories of registered NGOs have also increased from one in 1988 (social groups) to three by 2004, with the introduction of non-state non-commercial groups and foundations. Most of these registered organizations were, and are, former state institutions like hospitals and schools, as well as state-sponsored trade and professional associations. However, there are also genuine NGOs involved in other sectors and engaged in other types of activities within this growing group.

According to many experts, the aforementioned number of NGOs does not even come close to representing the size of the NGO sector in China. For example, He Jianyu and Wang Shaoguang estimated that there might be over 8 million NGOs in China (He and Wang 2008: 162). Like the aforementioned population of registered groups, a majority of the 8 million groups are not genuine NGOs because they were created by the state, which continues to exercise direct control over the groups' personnel, financial, and general management decisions. Moreover, a significant number of those groups are exempted from the registration requirement. Examples of these groups include the Communist Youth League (CYL) at all administrative levels, which are essentially the administrative arms of the state.

Still, there is a growing number of grassroots NGOs that have been created by private citizens, including individual state officials who have funded their own NGO operations and who have retained the powers to make important organizational decisions without state interference. This type of NGO is characterized by a

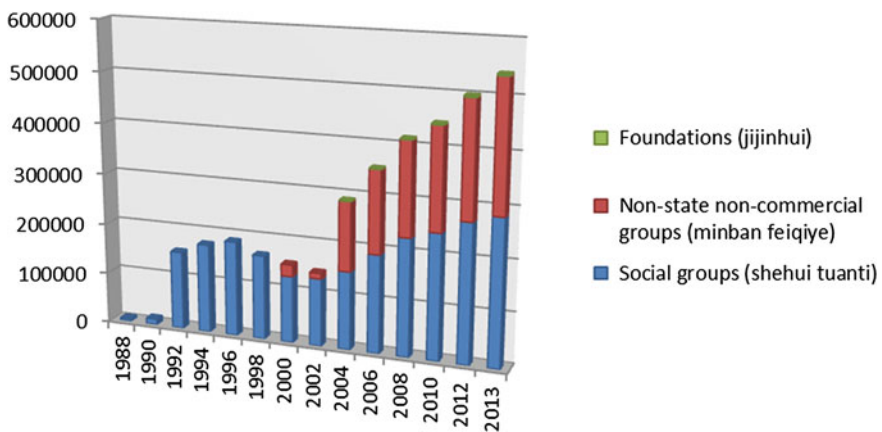


Fig. 2.1 Registered NGOs in China, 1988–2013. Sources PRC Ministry of Civil Affairs, Ying and Zhao (2010: 9), Zhongguo Shehui Zuzhi Wang (2014)

wide range of legal status. Based on surveys conducted by Wang and He, there might be as many as 1 million such grassroots NGOs in China (Ibid).

As suggested by the preceding discussion, the Chinese NGO sector is characterized by diversity in terms of their linkages to the state. Based on this observation, He and Wang developed four categories of domestic Chinese NGOs. In the first category are the “mass organizations,” which number eight at the national level. These mass organizations are what Gregory Kasza referred to as “administered mass organizations” (AMOs) (Kasza 1995). Like AMOs elsewhere, China’s mass organizations were created by the “incumbent regime...to augment [its] control over the rest of society” (Ibid: 8). Indeed, China’s mass organizations were established to “execute the various policies and orders of the [Communist Party of China (CPC)] and the state” as well as to “understand and collect the opinions, perspectives, and interests of the masses” for the regime to consider during policy formulation (He and Wang 2008: 135). In this sense, China’s mass organizations are not truly NGOs. In fact, they most resemble state agencies, but they may also fall under the broader category of government-organized NGOs (GONGOs). A prominent example of the mass organizations in China is the aforementioned CYL, which was headed by Hu Jintao before he became the head of the CPC and president of the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

In He and Wang’s conceptualization, “quasi-governmental organizations” constitute the second category of NGOs. Like the mass organizations, quasi-governmental organizations were founded by the government. They also have the function of mobilizing individuals and organizations within their respective industries or sectors and, in this manner, assist relevant government agencies (Ibid: 154). According to He and Wang, the quasi-governmental organizations may possess more limited political autonomy than the mass organizations. However, they may function more like NGOs due to their representative role. One example of quasi-governmental organizations is the China Disabled Persons’ Federation (CDPF), which was founded in 1988 by Deng Pufang, a son of former CPC leader Deng Xiaoping. According to He and Wang, the CDPF is subsidized as an item in the state budget and its personnel are recruited through the civil service selection mechanism (Ibid). The CDPF indicated that in addition to “representing the interests of disabled persons” and “defending the legal rights of disabled persons,” the organization is also “commissioned by the government to manage and develop the affairs of the disabled persons” (CDPF 2011).

The last two categories according to He and Wang are the “registered social groups” and the unregistered “grassroots social groups.” The registered groups are made up of three types of registered NGOs: the social groups, the non-state non-commercial groups, and the foundations. Based on their 2003 national survey of over 3,000 registered social groups, He and Wang noted that the great majority of these registered groups were started up by government or CPC agencies (Ibid: 158). Yet, an equally large number of the registered social groups have retained organizational autonomy vis-à-vis the state in daily operations. In other words, many of the registered social groups operate as “hybrid” NGOs.

Altogether, He and Wang observed that the various types of NGOs in China numbered approximately 8.2 million by 2007 (Ibid: 162). In all likelihood China's NGO sector has grown significantly since the publication of He and Wang's report. For instance, at the time of their report, there were just over 200,000 registered social groups. In 2012, however, there were over 270,000 registered social groups. Similarly, the number of unregistered grassroots social groups has most likely exceeded He and Wang's estimate of 1 million. Therefore, there is reason to believe that China's NGO sector has moved even closer to the 10 million mark.

When examining China's NGO sector, it is clear that the state has been instrumental in its creation. In this respect, although the aforementioned grassroots groups are unregistered, state involvement is often observed in the founding and operation of those groups (Ibid: 161). Therefore, the development of China's NGO sector closely tracks global trends, which indicate that the expansion of the NGO sector has been closely related to government support, notably monetary support (Anheier 2005: 282).

The growth of China's NGO sector also reflects state policy. In particular, the emergence of the NGO sector in China in the 1990s was an outcome of the state's policy of promoting "small government, big society." This policy reflected the state's intention to divest its social responsibilities as a means to facilitate economic reform as well as the state's admission that its capacity was limited (Saich 2003). In this context, the state viewed NGOs as useful for performing many important functions of governance. In particular, NGOs could reduce the state's burden of social service provision (Wong 1998). In addition, NGOs could serve as vehicles for mobilizing societal resources to supplement state spending (Lu 2005). Moreover, NGOs could be created to accommodate excess government personnel (Gallagher 2004; Ma 2006). Therefore, recognizing the value of NGOs as a governance vehicle, the Chinese government has continued the call for all state agencies to support NGOs as a part of the effort to encourage society to become more involved in welfare provision (People's Daily 2010).

2.2 State Control and the Politics of Registration

Given the state's prominent role in the development of China's NGO sector, one may forget that China remains a one-party authoritarian regime. As such, the party-state has remained vigilant about potentially subversive forces even as it tried to promote the idea that more NGOs should be involved in the provision of social welfare. This ambivalence toward the NGOs helps to explain continued state restrictions and even repression against Chinese NGOs since various color revolutions swept across parts of the former Soviet Union between 2003 and 2005. In fact, senior PRC officials have made it clear that the color revolutions constituted the source of the government's suspicion about NGOs (Wang 2012).

For instance, before and during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, the 2009 celebration of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, and the 2010 Shanghai World Exposition, the state had maintained strict vigilance over the Chinese NGOs. Chinese NGO leaders were told not to host foreign visitors during these important national events and NGO leaders have either been placed under house arrest and extensive surveillance, or encouraged to go abroad.¹

However, state sanctions against NGOs have not been limited to periods during which events of national significance were held. In fact, they have occurred quite regularly. For instance, in 2007 the original English version of the *China Development Brief*, which had been an authoritative source for the latest news and analyses about Chinese NGOs for over 10 years, was closed down by the government and the founder of the publication, who was not a PRC citizen, was eventually forced to leave China. In 2008, in the aftermath of the Wenchuan Earthquake in Sichuan Province, the government took control of the disaster area and effectively restricted the activities of Chinese NGOs. In 2009, Gongmeng, a Beijing-based NGO focused on providing legal aid to the common people and supporting constitutional reform, was closed down by the Beijing government on charges of tax evasion. In 2010, Peking University dissociated itself from its Women's Legal Aid Center, allegedly due to government pressure. In the same year, Wan Yanhai, China's leading AIDS activist and head of the Aizixing NGO, announced that he and his family had left China for the United States due to government harassment. Most recently, in July 2013, the Transition Institute, which has been committed to research and advocacy on governance issues and institutional reforms, was officially shut down by the Beijing government.

The state's behavior reflects its fundamental desire to control civil society actors. Enforcing the legal requirement that all NGOs must register with the government is a means to exercise that control. In particular, civil affairs agencies, which are tasked with registering and managing NGOs, are legally empowered with a range of broad justifications to deny registration. For instance, civil affairs agencies can deny registration if the work and mission of the applicant NGO are determined to contravene stipulations in the PRC Constitution, harm the interests of the state and the "unity of the nationalities," and go against the "society's moral customs." In addition, the government can deny registration to NGO applicants if registered NGOs engaged in similar work are already present within the same geographical administrative area. This stipulation ensures that existing GONGOs will continue to enjoy sectoral monopoly (Saich 2000: 131). In a related manner, it may provide the legal basis for local government officials to create GONGOs to prevent NGOs from obtaining government registration (Simon 2013: 244). Furthermore, registration may be denied if the leader(s) of the applicant NGO is found to lack the "capacity for civil conduct."

¹ I had intended to take a group of American students to visit a local NGO in Shanghai in May 2010, but was told by the NGO leader that local government officials had informed the organization that it should not host any foreign visitors during the period that the World Exposition was held in Shanghai.



A certificate of non-state non-commercial group registration. *Source* The author

The most important legal stipulation that allows the state to deny registration is a well-known clause in both the “Regulations for the Management and Registration of Social Organizations” and the “Temporary Regulations for the Management and Registration of Non-State Non-Commercial Groups,” which stipulates that a key condition for attaining the registration status is that the applicant NGO must secure the sponsorship of a governmental or quasi-governmental agency that works in the relevant sector. In practice, many, if not most, NGOs are unable to become registered in large part because they could not meet the requirement of sponsorship (Deng 2010). Why?

Karla Simon identified two major reasons that account for this phenomenon. First, the potential sponsors may simply be unwilling to bear the responsibility of overseeing NGOs, especially since the sponsor is legally and politically liable for the activities and finances of the organizations under their charge (Simon 2013: 242). Second, the “unwillingness” of the potential sponsors may be a result of the fact that the law does not explicitly require the potential sponsoring entities to act on an application, even though there is an implicit understanding that they should take action to determine whether the applicant NGOs are qualified for sponsorship. Moreover, the lack of clarity with respect to the documents needed for approval further encourages the potential sponsors to drag their feet (Ibid). Ultimately, since potential sponsors have nearly absolute discretion in determining whether to sponsor any NGO, these legal considerations may simply serve as useful justifications for de facto denial of registration to NGOs.

In 2012, the government of Guangdong province launched a pilot program in which NGOs were permitted to acquire the nonprofit registration status without a sponsor (Caixin 2012). By the end of 2013, similar pilot programs have reportedly been launched in 26 provinces and five cities, enabling “more than 19,000 [NGOs] to register directly” with the government (China Daily 2013). Although many experts have expressed optimism about this development, it is still too early to know for certain the extent to which this pilot program will be institutionalized across the country. In addition, the pilot program has a limited scope in terms of the fields to which it applies: only NGOs providing social services and engage in non-political activities have been explicitly permitted to register under the pilot program (The Economist 2014). Labor advocacy is not included in the list of approved fields, even though some labor NGOs have apparently been approached about direct registration (Ibid).

There are also practical reasons for government agencies to deny registration to NGOs. These reasons again highlight the tremendous discretion that government agencies wield in determining whether and which NGOs may be registered. One reason is that local governments recognize that most NGOs exercise positive influences on society. However, registration cannot be granted to many NGOs because they are unable to meet the stringent legal requirements. Yet, banning those organizations are likely to result in some degree of resistance, not including the financial cost of implementing the ban. Therefore, local government agencies have instituted the unwritten rule of “no banning, no recognition, and no intervention” (Deng 2010: 195). In this case, the denial of registration has been motivated in part by pragmatism and expediency.

Lastly, government officials may also decide against registering NGOs because they believe that unregistered NGOs are easier to control since they will be more dependent on good relations with the state than are registered groups (Hildebrandt 2013: 72). In a related manner, since unregistered NGOs cannot access certain financial resources in a direct manner due to the organization’s illegal status, they must rely on informal ties with state institutions and officials to obtain those resources. This type of situation offers government agencies and officials an opportunity to enrich their organizational coffers and individual pockets. This is especially the case for NGOs working in the HIV/AIDS sector, in which significant foreign funding is administered through the state (Ibid). Therefore, there are financial incentives for government officials to deny registration to NGOs.

2.3 Crisis of Legitimacy

The inability to obtain government approval has serious long-term consequences for China’s NGOs. One important consequence is that these organizations possess weak legitimacy, both politically and socially. This is in contrast to the state’s overwhelming legitimacy. In this context, it is not difficult to see how state linkages can be valuable assets for China’s NGOs.

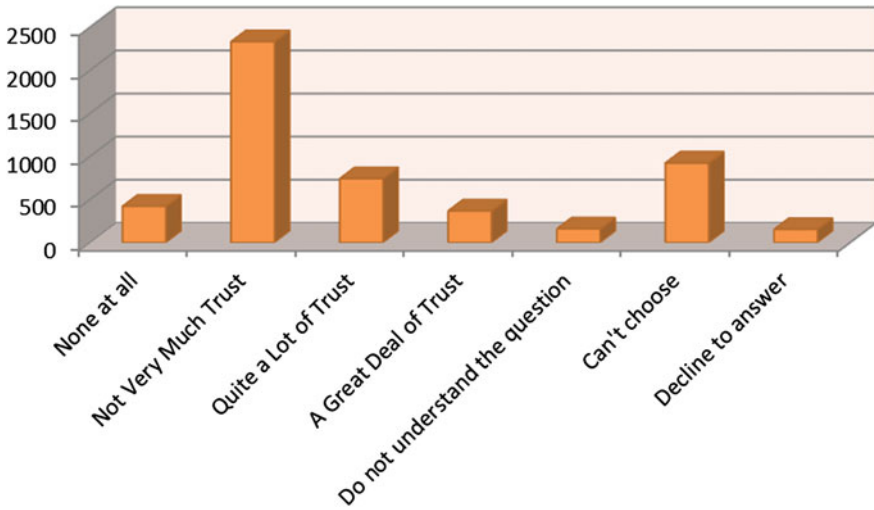


Fig. 2.2 Public trust in NGOs. *Source* Asian Barometer (2008); $n = 5098$

Recent research suggests that China's NGOs are enjoying greater social legitimacy even in the absence of state linkages (Brown and Hu 2012; Spires et al. 2014). As China's NGOs make important contributions to society by delivering valuable services and engaging in policy advocacy in an increasing manner, it is very likely that they will enjoy increasing popular support. However, that day has not yet arrived.

Indeed, the majority of the ordinary Chinese people have no knowledge of NGOs and certainly no understanding of its operations.² Some studies even show that in general people in China are highly suspicious of NGOs because these organizations are perceived to be anti-government and anarchical (He 2012: 170–171). In 2008, the investigators of the Asian Barometer survey project found that over 45 % of the respondents in China indicated that they did not harbor very much trust in NGOs and over 8 % of the respondents stated that they had no trust in NGOs at all (Fig. 2.2). This means that over half of the respondents expressed little trust in NGOs. At the same time, <15 % of the respondents said that they had “quite a lot of trust” in NGOs and only about 7 % of the respondents said that they had a “great deal of trust” in NGOs (Ibid). Altogether, <25 % of the respondents expressed confidence in NGOs.

The NGOs' state of public legitimacy is in significant contrast to that of the government. Today, over 20 years after the top Chinese leaders decided to use

² In my field interviews, a theme that recurred on a regular basis is that the ordinary Chinese people do not understand why nonprofit organizations would need to solicit outside funding. Therefore, in the mindset of many, if not most, Chinese persons, organizations that claim to be nonprofit in nature and yet openly seek funding must have ulterior motives and thus cannot be trusted.

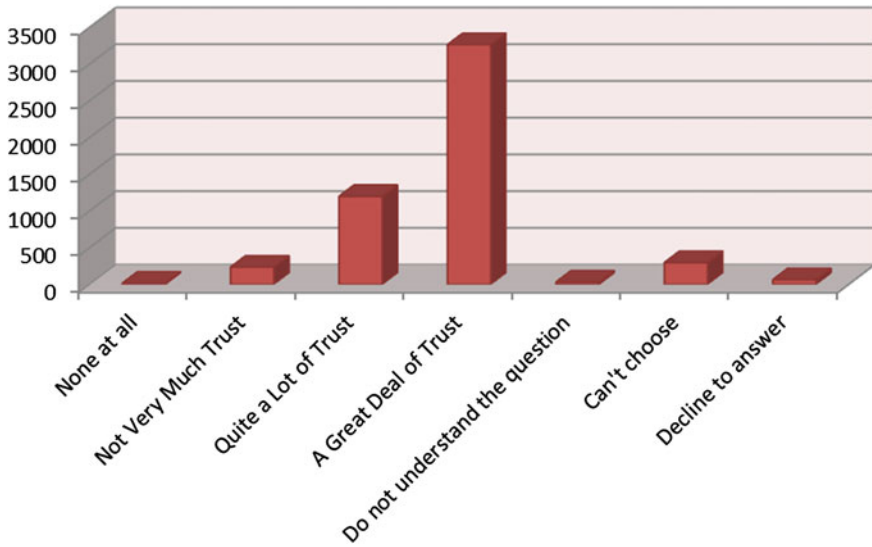


Fig. 2.3 Public trust in central government. *Source* Asian Barometer (2008); $n = 5098$

military force against protesting students assembling in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square, the state seems securely ensconced in its position as the most legitimate entity in China. As experts have noted, the state has successfully employed a range of incentives and coercive measures to ensure general political compliance (Tong 2009; Chen and Dickson 2010; Michelson and Liu 2010; Wright 2010). Notwithstanding the regular grumblings of individual Chinese persons and the rise of local protests about official corruption, the unresponsiveness of government agencies, and even the inappropriate use of force against Chinese citizens, the reality is that the communist regime is the only political game in town. In survey after survey, popular support for the current political system has remained high (Chen 2004).

Again, the findings of the Asian Barometer are instructive. According to the survey’s 2008 findings, 64 % of the respondents in China expressed a “great deal of trust” in China’s central government while another 23.5 % expressed “quite a lot of trust” in the central government (Fig. 2.3). This means that nearly 90 % of the respondents expressed considerable trust in the central government. Even China’s local governments, which have been the main objects of popular grievances, received better overall ratings than the NGOs, with over 50 % of the respondents expressing confidence in them.

These findings suggest that China’s NGOs must look to the state in their search for social legitimacy. Indeed, research has shown that China’s NGOs acquire public legitimacy by displaying their ties to the state (Lu 2009: 53). However, as valuable as public trust may be for the long-term development of China’s NGOs, the above findings also make it clear that gaining legitimacy in the eyes of the state, i.e., political legitimacy, should be even more important to the NGOs.

Indeed, political legitimacy has its advantages. For instance, NGOs with ties to the state are protected from predatory behavior by state agencies (Ibid: 56). In addition, political legitimacy can help NGOs enhance organization capacity by obtaining state resources to maintain organizational operations and implement projects (Ibid; Spires et al. 2014: 88). Moreover, as subsequent chapters will show, political legitimacy is necessary for advocacy NGOs that want to participate in the policy process. Furthermore, it can be a vehicle to access foreign funding. These advantages are not lost on NGOs that work in sensitive issue areas, such as migrant labor.

2.4 Migrant Workers: Objects of Institutionalized Discrimination

Labor-related issues have always been high on the agenda of any government because the state of labor concerns the state of the economy, which ultimately has political implications. For non-democratic states, there is an added dimension to the general concern about labor, which is the fear that labor could act as a force to effect political change. Particularly for non-democratic states with a socialist past, labor must be treated with special care, i.e., controlled, given the states' historical claim to represent the interests of the workers. Therefore, for the Chinese state, the fact that hundreds of millions of rural migrant workers (*nongmingong*) have been running around the country, seemingly out of control, has understandably been a source of concern even as the state has recognized that this "floating population" is necessary for the state to achieve its ultimate modernization goals.

According to the 1990 PRC government census, there were approximately 30 million rural migrant workers in China who engaged regularly in work outside their official places of residence (Liang 2004: 251). Ten years later, the 2000 census reported that the total number of rural migrant workers had reached 79 million (cited in Liang and Ma 2004: 470). At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, there were over 220 million rural migrant workers in China (Xinhua 2011). In 2010, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions released a report about the state of migrant workers who were between the ages of 16 and 30, who constituted nearly 62 % of the overall rural migrant population (All-China Federation of Trade Unions 2010). The report indicated that as of 2009, the average age of this cohort was 23 years old. Most of them began their lives as migrant workers before they turned 20. Eighty percent were unmarried and approximately 70 % had obtained a middle-school education or less. In a nutshell, Chinese rural migrant workers are young, single, and have low educational attainment.

Deng Xiaoping's policy of economic reform and opening has produced an economic miracle in China that has arguably been unprecedented in terms of the speed, scale, and nature of the transformation. The social consequences of this

economic transformation are multiple and are still being felt today. The emergence of the rural migrant workers is one of those consequences. By definition, rural migrant workers originated from non-urban areas where they had been expected to engage in agricultural work.³ Migrant workers have flocked to urban areas, especially the first-tier cities along China's eastern coast—Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou/Shenzhen, in increasing numbers at an accelerated pace over the past 25 years.

Individually and collectively, rural migrant workers have contributed to China's modernization, urbanization, and growing affluence. China's economic miracle has essentially been a product of their sweat and blood. Yet, migrant workers and their dependents have been living on the margins of the Chinese society, both literally and figuratively. In fact, scholars have observed that the Chinese rural migrant workers are at best second-class citizens. Some experts have even argued that the rural migrant workers are really third-class and fourth-class citizens (Fan 2002).

There is a consensus that the fundamental reason for the low socio-political status of the rural migrants is institutional. The household registration (*hukou*) system has been identified as the source of institutionalized discrimination against the rural migrants. Every Chinese citizen is required to maintain a *hukou*, which identifies his or her official place of residence and the type as well as quantity of social benefits to which he or she is entitled. In essence, the *hukou* system is a system for social control and resource allocation or subsidization. It channels critical resources to urban residents as a part of the state-led program to industrialize and modernize China. In this respect, it has served as the political-legal means to justify, not without popular resistance, the fact that persons with rural *hukou* status receive significantly less social benefits and of poorer quality than their urban peers.⁴ It is also a mechanism for regulating internal migration. More specifically, it is a means for limiting the flow of rural residents to urban areas. Therefore, the system has not only institutionalized the wide disparities between the rural areas and the urban areas in China; it has in fact exacerbated the urban-rural gap.

³ Although there seems to be a consensus among researchers, including Chinese government researchers, about the rural origins of the migrant workers, this understanding is not reflected in the government census, which uses the category of “floating population” to describe all persons who “lived in places other than the towns (townships or streets) of their household registration where they had left for over 6 months” National Bureau of Statistics of China (2011).

⁴ Fei-ling Wang, a leading expert on the *hukou* system, wrote that until 2006, “victims with different *hukou* types suffering the same wrongful injury or death were compensated very differently....[In] death, the family of a victim with a rural *hukou* generally brought about half to one-third of that awarded to a victim with an urban *hukou*.” Wang (2010), 92–93.



Courtyard/playground of Beijing's Mingyuan School for migrant children. *Source* The author

The *hukou* system, because it has institutionalized the disparity in social status between rural residents and their urban peers, has thus given license to official and public discriminatory views and practices about rural migrants. For example, for a long time, the general perception has been that rural migrants have contributed significantly to rising crime rates in major urban areas. Experts, however, have generally found the widespread perception to be inconsistent with reality (Zhao and Kipnis 2000; Han 2010). Notwithstanding these expert findings, it has proven difficult to change popular perception.⁵

Similarly, the *hukou* system has exerted direct effects on the ability of the rural migrants to access the necessary social welfare resources while they live and work in urban areas. Because rural migrants are not legal urban residents, they cannot access the basic health services that are available to those who have legal urban residencies (Jacka 2006: 111–113). Likewise, the lack of legal residency has prevented children of migrant workers from accessing local public schools (Kwong 2004). Although health services and public education can be purchased, rural migrants' low incomes have effectively barred them and their children from

⁵ During the 4 years that I lived in Beijing and Shanghai (2007–2011), just before the annual lunar New Year holidays, local residents consistently reminded each other to be cautious of cash-strapped rural migrant workers who might perpetrate crimes against local residents.

accessing social resources, notably public education, that have been guaranteed by law. As a result, migrants have had to establish schools, often unregistered, for their children, which pale in comparison to public schools in terms of the quality of school facilities and instructional resources. These problems notwithstanding, the main long-standing complaint among migrant workers has been the inability to collect wage arrears from employers. A related problem has been the lack of knowledge among the migrant workers about their legal rights, especially before they leave for their eventual destinations.

In general, the state's response to the problems that migrant workers have faced can be characterized as negative, slow, and inconsistent. Only in the last 10 years have individual central government leaders come out publicly to speak favorably about migrant workers (Associated Press 2010). And that only happened after media reports about the dire consequences of the existing institutions for individual migrants have caused public uproar.⁶

2.5 Migrant NGOs: Introducing the Core Cases

In this environment, NGOs that engage in migrant worker advocacy and service provisions to migrant workers and their families have been established across China, especially in China's major urban centers along the country's eastern coast (Hsu 2012a, b). This book focuses on four of these NGOs, all of which are based in Beijing, but the leaders of all four organizations have made the development of nationwide reach an important organizational goal. In this respect, all four organizations have established physical presence beyond China's capital city. The four organizations, however, vary in organizational effectiveness. In the remainder of this section, I will describe the general conditions of the four NGOs, with a particular focus on the extent to which each organization has achieved its stated objectives, i.e., effectiveness.

2.5.1 Zhicheng Public Interest Law NGO

The first NGO is the Zhicheng Public Interest Law NGO (hereafter referred to as Zhicheng). The organization has been committed to the protection of the rights of minors and migrant workers, and the establishment of appropriate laws and regulations in these areas. This organization began operation in 1999 as a part of a Beijing law firm under the jurisdiction of a sub-municipal justice bureau. No

⁶ The most well-known case here is the 2003 death of Sun Zhigang, who was a college-educated migrant worker in Guangdong who was beaten to death by the local police while in detention for failing to produce documents that proved he was legally permitted to work in Guangdong.

member of the NGO staff appears to be on the payroll of any state agency.⁷ This NGO has two major organizational arms, reflecting the organization's interest in two areas of law: the rights of migrant workers and the rights of minors. The two organizational arms have attained the nonprofit registration status separately. To support the NGO's mission, its leader and staff have engaged in the provision of free legal aid, the establishment of nationwide networks of public interest lawyers, conducting research and publishing writings about the two areas of the law, and participating in the lawmaking processes at the national and sub-national levels. Meanwhile, Zhicheng and its founder, Tong Lihua, have enjoyed a strong reputation in the field of public interest law in China. Tong Lihua, in particular, has been widely considered one of China's top 10 public interest lawyers.⁸ Tong has been featured in media reports along with other giants in the field of public interest law, such as Guo Jianmei, the founder of the former Women's Legal Aid Center at the Peking University.⁹

Zhicheng has been quite successful in meeting its own goals. Since its establishment, the organization's staff has handled numerous legal cases concerning children and migrant workers. For example, in 2010, on average, each month the NGO provided free legal advice involving nearly 600 cases concerning the welfare of minors (Zhicheng Beijing Children's Legal Aid and Research Center 2010). During the same time period, the NGO directly handled over 300 cases concerning the rights of minors and provided support to lawyers who were involved in over 500 cases throughout China (People's Daily 2011).

Although the migrant worker arm of the NGO had a later beginning, its record has been even more impressive than the record of the children's arm. As of the end of April 2011, the organization has provided free legal advice involving over 35,000 cases throughout China (People's Daily 2011). Over 100,000 migrant workers have reportedly benefited from the NGO's work. Meanwhile, the organization had directly handled and completed nearly 16,000 cases that involved nearly 26,000 migrant workers. The sum of money associated with these cases totaled over

⁷ According to Tong's biographical sketch, the original Zhicheng Law Office was administratively attached to Fengtai district's justice bureau in Beijing. When Tong became the head of that office in 1998, the office still held this administrative status. According to Wang Fang, a Zhicheng staff lawyer who I interviewed in 2008, the law office had been privatized since the establishment of the NGO, and all the lawyers who were employed at the law office when the founder was first employed there had since then resigned from the law office. All current members of the NGO staff were hired much later. For example, the majority of the staff lawyers in the Zhicheng Migrant Center joined the NGO after 2004. Wang's claim that the law firm had been privatized corresponds to the understanding that by 2001, all state-owned law firms in Beijing had been privatized. Michelson (2007), 373.

⁸ LawFirm50 (2009). LawFirm50 is reportedly an NGO that focuses on collecting and reporting about the quality of lawyers and law firms in China. The organization reported that the ranking was based on the survey responses of nearly 2,500 lawyers, government officials, and other legal practitioners in China.

⁹ Feng (2007). In this news report, which was re-published on the website of Guo Jianmei's NGO, Guo and Tong were the only two public interest lawyers who were featured.

300 million Chinese yuan (approximately \$50 million), of which nearly 200 million were already distributed to the victims (People's Daily 2011).

As of the end of 2011, Zhicheng coordinated a national network of 20 migrant worker legal aid stations, involving approximately 60 lawyers and 40 administrative staff working in different Chinese provinces and other provincial-level administrative areas. Similarly, it has created a network of 8,900 lawyers working in over 20 provinces and provincial-level administrative areas to protect the interests and rights of minors. As of 2014, the network of lawyers working on issues pertaining to the rights of minors has expanded to include 9,000 lawyers. In addition, the organization coordinates the work of 30 public interest law organizations on the rights of migrant workers (US-Asia Law Institute 2014).

The NGO has also been quite prolific with respect to publishing reports concerning the rights of minors and the rights of migrant workers. As of 2010, Zhicheng's staff produced over 50 book-length reports. The most recent report was published in 2010 and dealt with legal issues in China's rural areas (Tong 2010). The volume includes a chapter based on the NGO's research about corruption among village cadres.

The most impressive aspect of Zhicheng's history, however, has been the NGO staff's repeated participation in law-making processes at both the national and the municipal levels. Between 2002 and 2011, Tong and his colleagues were involved in the modification of nearly a dozen national laws and municipal regulations concerning minors and migrant workers. The NGO has also been commissioned by central government and municipal agencies to conduct original policy research and the crafting of legal handbooks.

2.5.2 Rural Women

The Rural Women NGO, which was established in 1993 as a magazine, has been the leading Chinese NGO that addresses issues concerning Chinese women from the rural parts of the country. The organization is committed to the promotion and protection of the interests and rights of women in China's rural areas, which has included helping female migrant workers in urban areas to acquire the necessary skills and awareness to transition successfully to urban life. Rural Women is made up of three main components: the Cultural Development Center for Rural Women; the Migrant Women's Club, which is administratively part of the Cultural Development Center; and the Practical Skills Training Center. Up until 2012, the NGO also published a monthly magazine entitled *Rural Women*. Between 1993 and 2012, the magazine was operating legally through the flagship newspaper of the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), which is the leading mass organization on women's issues. The Cultural Development Center was registered as a commercial enterprise while the Practical Skills Training Center was registered as a private, nonprofit

education provider. To support its mission of developing the potential of rural women, defending the rights of rural women, and cultivating rural women talents, the NGO has provided opportunities for ordinary rural women to educate themselves and speak out, provided skills training to rural women, and, to an increasing degree, published research reports about the situations concerning rural women in general and female migrants in particular as well as engage in legal advocacy. Since 2007, Rural Women has also been involved in training and promoting female public officials in China's villages.

The NGO's publications have constituted an important avenue through which ordinary rural women could educate and express themselves. In addition to the *Rural Women* magazine, the NGO has also published a newsletter through the Migrant Women's Club and a publication through the book club project. A few years ago, the NGO introduced a publication targeting female village cadres entitled *Women Village Head*. However, this publication appears to have gone out of public circulation. Through these publications, rural women have been able to obtain advice about marriage, child-rearing, and their legal rights. Moreover, they could submit essays to have their voices heard. And the publications were distributed throughout the country, essentially via the nationwide networks of sub-national ACWFs. In this manner, the NGO's impact was felt by hundreds of thousands of Chinese rural women.

The primary organizational network of Rural Women has been the 66 village book clubs around the country. The central aim of the book club project is to combat illiteracy among rural women. And the project has involved nearly 10,000 rural women as of 2010. As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, a publication was associated with the project. The publication primarily served as a platform for rural women to express themselves through short written pieces.

Perhaps the most invested component of Rural Women's efforts to empower rural women in general and female migrant workers in particular has been its training center, which is located on the outskirts of Beijing municipality. Since the center's establishment in 1998, it has trained over 10,000 persons, most of whom until recently have been female migrant workers in the Beijing area. At the center, female migrant workers, most of whom were quite young and who hailed from different parts of China, have received vocational and basic skill training, mostly in preparation for jobs in the domestic help industry and kinder care. Training has also included post-training job placement. In recent years, the center has included an entrepreneurship program to encourage rural women to become business owners.



Logos of migrant worker NGOs and schools for migrant children. *Source* The author

Before 2010, the NGO had a very small legal aid project (Milwertz 2002; Shang 2007).¹⁰ However since early 2010, it has devoted, on an annual basis, nearly one million Chinese yuan (approximately \$154,000) to legal aid-related projects. According to Rural Women’s 2010 Annual Report, it expected that its legal aid program would affect several thousand people on an annual basis (Rural Women 2010). Likewise, before 2010, the NGO had published no book-length research report.¹¹ However, in 2010, under the direction of the organization’s newly-appointed chief executive officer, who is a well-known and published expert on

¹⁰ When I first visited the NGO in June 2008, I met with one of the two lawyers on the staff. It was clear from our conversation that the NGO handled very few cases and was more involved in referring cases to other NGOs. It is also noteworthy that the NGO’s legal aid program has not been mentioned by other writers who have studied this NGO.

¹¹ One of the two co-founders of Rural Women, however, did co-author a book about the history of China’s women’s movement in the reform era, which profiled the key Chinese NGOs, including Rural Women.

rural women in China, the NGO published a survey report about the land rights of migrant women.¹²

2.5.3 Little Bird Migrant Workers Mutual Support Hotline

The Little Bird Migrant Workers Mutual Support Hotline (hereafter referred to as Little Bird) was established in 1999 as a mutual support group for migrant workers in China's capital. Very soon after the organization's establishment, the founder of the NGO committed the organization to a focus on the defense of the legal rights of the migrant workers. Although it has not attained nonprofit registration status, since 2004 Little Bird has been in a partnership with a local justice bureau in Beijing and has functioned as an authorized labor dispute resolution agency.

Since 1999 and ending in December 2012, by the organization's own documented account, Little Bird has helped migrant workers around the country obtain over 180 million Chinese yuan (approximately \$30 million) in wage arrears (Little Bird 2013). The NGO's telephone hotline, which was established in 2000, had accounted for a majority of the legal cases that the NGO has handled. Since its inception, the telephone hotline has received over 166,000 telephone calls (Little Bird 2013). In 2010 alone, the NGO received nearly 10,000 telephone calls and helped migrant workers obtain over 14 million Chinese yuan (\$2.15 million) in wage arrears (Little Bird 2010).

Even more impressively, as the first state-approved non-state dispute resolution committee (*renmin tiaojie weiyuanhui*) in China that addresses the labor dispute needs of migrant workers, Little Bird has successfully settled 70 % of the labor dispute cases that it managed. Just as impressively, Wei claimed that his organization was able to resolve 50 % of the legal dispute cases over the telephone (Interview with Wei Wei 2009).

Little Bird has expanded its operations beyond Beijing. It has offices in Beijing, Shenzhen, Shenyang (center of China's northeast rust belt), and Shanghai. This means that the NGO has a presence in the most important labor centers in China. Wei Wei, the founder of Little Bird, had plans to establish branches in Xi'an, Zhengzhou, and Chongqing, which represent the three largest inland Chinese cities (Little Bird 2011).

¹² The book was by Wu Zhiping and entitled *Zhongguo Liudong Funu Tudi Quanyi Zhuangkuang Diaocha* [An Investigation on the State of Chinese Migrant Women's Land Rights]. It was published by the Social Sciences Academic Press of China. Since then, a book on female participation in public affairs in China by the deputy CEO of the NGO was also published by the same publisher. In addition, the NGO published a handbook on protecting the land rights of female migrant workers.

2.5.4 On Action International Cultural Center

The On Action International Cultural Center (hereafter referred to as On Action) was founded in 2006 and was registered as a commercial enterprise. At the establishment of the NGO, its founder had set as the goals of the organization (1) the provision of legal aid; (2) the promotion of corporate social responsibility; (3) the holding of activities to build up the “knowledge, physical, and mental capacity” of individual migrant workers; (4) policy advocacy through the publication of original research reports; (5) the encouragement of migrant workers to engage in self-empowerment and mutual understanding through the performing arts; and (6) the sponsorship of activities to promote the building of civil society (On Action). Unfortunately, On Action has yet to deliver on its founder’s promises. In this study, On Action is clearly the least effective among the four featured cases.

With respect to the area of policy advocacy through the publication of original research, since the founding of the NGO in late 2006, the organization has conducted small-sample surveys about the state of migrant workers in Beijing and Suzhou. The surveys were conducted years apart and none offered new insights with expert analyses about potentially new issues facing the migrant working population. The survey also did not garner significant media coverage. Needless to say, the impact of both surveys has been minimal to nonexistent.

On Action has committed more resources to the dissemination of legal information. For example, On Action’s 2010 annual report has shown that well over 80 % of the organization’s activities in that year appear to have involved the dissemination of information about laws and regulations, notably information about the 2008 Labor Contract Law (On Action 2010). However, the impact of this effort is not obvious, perhaps due to the fact that the activity was seasonal and indirect, meaning that information dissemination did not generally involve visits to factories and construction sites, although the organization’s volunteers have disseminated information in schools for the children of migrant workers and in areas where migrants lived.

The remaining few non-legal aid activities that On Action had participated in 2010, as reported in the NGO’s 2010 annual report, involved citizenship education and NGO capacity building. Virtually all of the listed activities were not sponsored by the NGO. The NGO staff members were essentially attendees. Although the NGO’s website has posted information about lawyers who may be able to provide legal aid, there is no indication of any significant legal aid activity being sponsored on a continuous basis by the organization. A foreign observer had lamented how Chinese NGOs have spent too much time and efforts on holding activities (Interview BJ032209). It appears that On Action has exemplified this problem and has not been particularly successful even in this respect.

In 2009, the organization suffered a serious financial scandal, which was reported in the chief Chinese publication about NGOs. The financial scandal involved accusations by several organizational staff and members of the board of directors that the founder of the NGO had engaged in deliberate false reporting

about the performance of the NGO and its accounting. The immediate consequence was that all the members of the board resigned.

Through a detailed treatment of each of these core NGO cases, I intend to explore the relative significance of the three types of leadership ties and examine the process through which each type of leadership ties contributes to NGO effectiveness. At the same time, I hope that we will be able to gain a more profound understanding of how NGOs have served rural migrant workers in contemporary China.

2.6 The Shadow Cases

Based on the information provided about each core case, one may understandably point to the possibility that On Action's organizational youthfulness may be a factor in determining its level of effectiveness. One may also suggest that the cases are applicable only to NGOs in Beijing that service migrant workers. To address these concerns, the following shadow cases will be examined with several objectives in mind. First, they will corroborate the central argument of this book, which is that leadership ties that facilitate state linkages for the organization have constituted the main contributor to NGO effectiveness in China. Second, the shadow cases will show that similar leadership mechanisms can be found in NGOs working in different issue areas and in different geographical locations throughout China. Third, they will illustrate that leadership ties are able to account for organizational effectiveness regardless of organizational age.

2.6.1 *Friends of Nature*

The Beijing-based Friends of Nature (FON) is arguably China's most well-known NGO. It is certainly the most prominent Chinese environmental NGO. Since its establishment in 1994, FON has been committed to the promotion of environmental protection in China. The NGO, through its founder, had led or coordinated several well-publicized environmental campaigns involving government officials and other NGOs, the most famous of which was the 2003 campaign to halt the Nu River dam project in the southwestern province of Yunnan. It has published an annual volume, with essays written by journalists, government officials, and academic researchers, which reports on the state of environment in China. The NGO has also developed a nationwide network of individual and organizational members, and FON has contributed directly to the establishment of other environmental NGOs in China.¹³

¹³ The founder of the Beijing-based Brooks NGO was a project manager at FON before she established her own organization. Interview BJ121207. Likewise, the founder of the Chongqing Green League has been a long-time FON member. Interview CQ040908.

2.6.2 *Yirenping*

Although the organization was only established in 2006, the Beijing-based Yirenping has become China's most successful advocate of the rights of individuals and groups that have been the objects of discrimination in the workplace and in schools. Yirenping's main constituents have been the approximately 120 million Hepatitis-B carriers and patients in China. However, it has expanded its constituencies to include people who are physically handicapped as well as mental health patients. In the short period of its existence, Yirenping has already successfully contributed to changes in the government's policies and practices and those of multinational corporations.

2.6.3 *Self-Empowerment Service Center for Disabled Persons*

Established in 2002 in a rural county of the Chongqing municipality in south-central China, the Self-Empowerment Service Center for Disabled Persons (hereafter referred to as the Self-Empowerment Center) has committed its resources to service the 230,000 local residents, approximately one-third of them either are or have been migrant workers in other parts of China. The NGO's primary activities have been educating outbound migrant workers and providing physical and psychological examinations and counseling to residents who have returned to the county after suffering debilitating injuries while working as migrant workers in China's coastal regions. In this manner, the NGO has reached out to tens of thousands of local residents over the years. Lastly, the NGO has provided limited input to local governments with respect to policies concerning handicapped persons.

2.7 Conclusion

China's NGOs are born in the midst of tremendous political uncertainty. The state is at once their benefactor and their oppressor. NGOs that work in the field of migrant labor face additional challenges due to the sensitivity of the topic that they deal with. Yet, many of these organizations have not only survived; they have thrived. The main factor for success has been the ability of the NGOs to become beneficiaries of the state. And the leaders of those organizations play the critical role in facilitating access to state resources. In the following chapters, we will see how the leaders of China's NGOs, notably those that serve migrant workers, have been able to do just that through their various social ties. We will begin our story in the next chapter with a look at how China's NGO leaders have used their ties to the state to advance the missions of the organizations that they lead.

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Chapter 3

State Linkage Has Its Advantages

Abstract State linkages have real benefits for NGOs in China. They can help NGOs build organizational capacity, achieve political legitimacy, and access the state's policymaking apparatus and process. State linkages are also especially valuable for NGOs with aspirations to create national networks because those linkages allow NGOs to access state networks around the country. Organizational linkages to the state begin with the NGO leader's state linkages. In contrast to writings about the significance of membership in the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC), this study has found that the most significant form of personal state linkage is not CPC membership. Instead, the leaders of China's most successful NGOs possess affiliations with well-endowed and authoritative state organizations. Moreover, membership in China's ruling party is not necessary for NGO leaders to establish the proper state affiliations. Armed with state affiliations, China's NGO leaders can establish formal relationships between their respective organizations and state agencies even in the absence of the nonprofit registration status.

Keywords State linkage · State affiliations · Organizational capacity · Policymaking · Lawmaking · Legitimacy · National People's Congress · Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference · All-China Women's Federation · All-China Lawyers' Association

3.1 Linkages, Affiliations, and Effectiveness

What are the benefits of state linkages for NGOs in China? Based on the cases presented in this book and the findings of other researchers, state linkages have benefited Chinese NGOs in three respects: building organizational capacity, enhancing organizational legitimacy, and influencing state policies and practices.

These benefits have had direct bearings on the NGOs' ability to meet organizational goals. Let us first consider organizational capacity.

The issue of organizational capacity is essentially about the organization's ability to carry out activities that support the organization's goals. And material resources are at the foundation of any organization's ability to meet its goals. The most basic form of material resource is monetary in nature. In this respect, the most obvious form of state resource is financial support from the state. A related form of organizational resource is consisted of other material resources, such as office space and personnel income, including the salary of the NGO leader, which is no small matter because if an NGO leader can maintain a livelihood without tapping into the NGO's limited financial resources, then it means that more financial resources can be devoted to building organizational capacity and undertaking activities to further the NGO's mission.

Other types of resources are important to achieve specific organizational purposes, such as the geographical networks of state institutions. In China, no NGO is legally permitted to establish formal geographical branches outside the administrative area in which it is registered. Although this legal requirement may not be applied to unregistered NGOs, logic suggests that unregistered organizations have to be just as cautious, if not more so, about establishing cross-regional networks. In addition, access to state networks means that NGOs do not have to incur the significant cost required to establish networks from scratch.

The second area of interest when it comes to establishing state linkages is the perception that those linkages can confer legitimacy on the Chinese NGOs and organizational legitimacy has advantages. As mentioned earlier in this book, formal linkages to the state can solve the problem of legitimacy for the Chinese NGOs in large part because both the elite and the general public continue to see the state as the most legitimate institution. Therefore, linkages to the state should be able to help the NGO overcome its own legitimacy deficits.

It is important, however, to note that there are different forms of formal linkage to the state. The different forms of nonprofit registration status constitute one type of formal state linkage. However, as mentioned earlier in this book, the attainment of this legal status has been extremely difficult to achieve. In contrast, registration as a commercial enterprise does not require state sponsorship. Therefore, by default, the commercial registration status has become the choice of most Chinese NGOs that require some kind of legal status for organizational purposes, such as the establishment of an organizational bank account.

Although this type of registration provides the NGO with a legal status, it does not resolve the Chinese NGO's legitimacy dilemma because the NGO is operating as a nonprofit enterprise with a commercial license. In this sense, Chinese NGOs with this type of registration are still illegal because they are technically engaging in activities under false pretense. Of course, government officials are aware of this phenomenon and in many instances have chosen to look the other way. However,

as the case of Gongmeng has demonstrated, the state can always use this legal technicality as a “legitimate” excuse to crack down on Chinese NGOs.¹

Therefore, many NGOs with commercial registration status would want to find ways to develop other types of state linkage that would serve as protective covers. In this respect, the case of the Little Bird Migrant Workers Mutual Support Hotline demonstrates that there is an effective alternative to the nonprofit registration status. Although Little Bird has been unable to attain the nonprofit registration status, it has been designated publicly by the local justice bureau as a nongovernmental labor dispute resolution committee (*renmin laodong zongcai xietiao weiyuanhui*) that is affiliated with the justice bureau. As we shall see, this affiliation has established Little Bird’s legitimacy in the eyes of employers who owed monies to the NGO’s migrant worker clients.

As Little Bird’s experience shows, formal state linkages can enhance an NGO’s social legitimacy. However, those linkages are especially valuable because they demonstrate the organization’s political legitimacy to the state. Put simply, organizational legitimacy derived from formal state linkages serves as a signal to the state that the NGO in question is politically reliable. By extension, we should expect the NGO to derive some material benefits from political legitimacy. To be more precise, we might expect the state to be more willing to provide material resources to a linked NGO and even partner with that NGO, which further solidifies the NGO’s legitimacy. In addition, as will be detailed in Chap. 5, organizational legitimacy derived from state linkages can also be valuable in terms of its positive effects on acquiring international resources.²

Lastly, as Zhicheng’s case will demonstrate, organizational legitimacy facilitates access to the state’s policymaking process. In a closed political system like China’s, it is virtually inconceivable that individuals and organizations without state linkages can access the policymaking process. Again, the central factor is that political legitimacy signals political reliability. Therefore, for NGOs with the aspiration to influence policy, developing state linkages is an important strategy.

Given the benefits of establishing state linkages, which forms of state association will allow a Chinese NGO leader to establish state linkages that can facilitate access to those benefits? Before we examine the specific forms of state association, we should be explicit about two related premises. The first premise is that there are variations among Chinese state agencies in terms of the nature

¹ The Beijing-based Gongmeng constitutional law NGO was registered as a commercial enterprise. In 2009, it was closed down by the Beijing government on charges of tax evasion. Commercial enterprises are subjected to higher tax rates than nonprofit organizations and the charge was that Gongmeng had failed to report its real income. The leader of Gongmeng was temporarily detained in the process. It was widely speculated that the real reason for the state’s actions was that Gongmeng had written and circulated a research report on the factors contributing to the unrest in Tibet in March 2008.

² According to some experts, foreign donors are often more willing to fund Chinese NGOs with proper state linkages than those without. Interview SHWY010511.

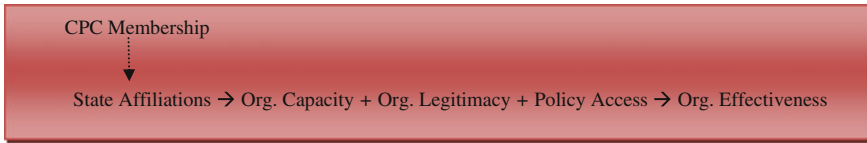


Fig. 3.1 State linkage and organizational effectiveness

and extent of material resources and authority under their control. This premise is also applicable to the policymaking process. Therefore, it follows that we should assume that the best forms of personal state linkage are those that allow the NGO to link up with well-endowed state organizations. *I refer to those forms of personal state linkage that facilitate connections to well-endowed state organizations as state affiliations.*

In a single-party authoritarian political system like China's, there are many valuable forms of state linkage, one of which is membership in the ruling party. With important qualifications, scholars have observed the importance of party membership for employment prospects, job advancements, and wage rates in China, during both the Maoist period and reform era (Walder 1995; Li and Walder 2001; Appleton et al. 2008). However, the same scholars have also observed that this form of state linkage has not guaranteed equal access to state resources and authority, in large part because the Communist Party of China (CPC) is an organization with millions of members, and only a very small percentage of its members have benefited significantly from membership (Walder 1995: 324; Li and Walder 2001: 1374).

Similarly, party membership may not help an NGO leader gain access to state institutions with control over important and desirable resources and authority. Indeed, while the respective leaders of Zhicheng, Rural Women, and On Action have all acquired CPC membership, the three NGOs have demonstrated varying abilities to access state resources and secure organizational legitimacy. Meanwhile, although the leader of Little Bird has not acquired the coveted CPC membership, Little Bird has nonetheless established beneficial state linkages. In other words, as valuable as CPC membership may be, by itself it may be insufficient to ensure the creation of valuable state linkages that can lead to the presence of effective Chinese NGOs. Indeed, instead of the leader's CPC membership, the cases show that affiliations with well-endowed state organizations have distinguished Zhicheng, Rural Women, and Little Bird from On Action with respect to organizational effectiveness.

Figure 3.1 is a diagram of the elements involved in the pathway from state linkages to organizational effectiveness. The dotted arrow between CPC membership and state affiliations reflects the possible, yet unnecessary, connection between the two forms of personal state linkage.

In the next section, the four core cases will be presented to demonstrate the path from the state affiliations of the NGO leader to organizational effectiveness. The first three cases will demonstrate the positive effects of the NGO leader's state affiliations. The fourth case will show what can happen when the NGO leader has not developed the appropriate state affiliations.

3.2 Tong Lihua and the Zhicheng Public Interest Law NGO

Since 1999, Zhicheng has been an advocacy NGO committed to the protection of the rights of minors and migrant workers as well as the establishment of appropriate laws and regulations in these areas. Accessibility to state resources to build organizational capacity, the establishment of organizational legitimacy that has resulted from the development of formal organizational linkages to the state, and participation in the state's lawmaking process have characterized Zhicheng's ability to meet its goals. By most accounts, Zhicheng's achievements have been inextricably connected to its founder and leader, Tong Lihua. And Tong's multiple state affiliations have allowed the NGO to derive benefits from linkages to the state, which have had direct effects on the organization's effectiveness.

Tong's state linkages encompassed both state affiliations and other forms of personal state linkage. For example, Tong has been a member of the CPC. He acquired this form of linkage when he was a student at the Beijing-based China University of Political Science and Law (CUPL), which is home to one of China's most prestigious law schools.

As a CPC member and a graduate of one of China's most prestigious law schools, Tong was probably correct in speculating that he could have easily obtained employment with many party organizations and government ministries at the central level (Tong 2009: 8–9). But he did not choose this career route. Instead, in 1995, after graduation, Tong chose to work at a small law firm that was administratively attached to the justice bureau of Beijing's Fengtai district. Although there is no evidence that Tong obtained this position as a result of his CPC membership, based on empirical evidence and logic, we can reasonably speculate that this form of state linkage certainly did not harm his employment prospects.

Although the law firm position promised neither financial security nor bureaucratic advancements, it provided the freedom and the space for Tong to begin his foray into public interest law, which he officially started in 1998 with the establishment of a legal hotline in collaboration with his alma mater. Meanwhile, Tong was promoted to become a deputy director of the law firm in August 1997. At the end of 1999, he was promoted to the directorship of the law firm, which effectively made him a mid-level bureaucrat in the justice system.³

Employment at the law firm also led to Tong's first state affiliation, which was with the local justice bureau. This affiliation has been advantageous for Zhicheng's development in terms of accessing state resources (building capacity), establishing organizational linkages to the state (achieving organizational legitimacy), and participating in the lawmaking process (influencing state policies).

First, in terms of accessing state resources, Tong's affiliation to the justice bureau provided the NGO with free office space. Given the costly nature of

³ Tong's bureaucratic rank was equivalent to the associate "chu" level. In general, county magistrates are at this level of bureaucracy. See Zhou (2004: 55).

Beijing's real estate, free access to office space is a valuable NGO resource. When I visited the NGO on two occasions in the summer of 2008, all the spaces in the law firm's two-story building were devoted to the NGO's work. In addition, the justice bureau had given the NGO additional space in a building across the street from the law firm to operate the organization's migrant worker arm. In 2010, after a newly-constructed building was allocated to the justice bureau, Zhicheng's staff moved into the new building. Since Tong had used his own funds to start up the NGO enterprise, the free use of the law office has meant that he could apply his limited start-up funding to areas that were directly germane to the NGO's mission.

Second, Tong's personal connection to the justice bureau eventually translated into a formal state linkage for Zhicheng. Zhicheng's organizational linkage to the state was first established in early 1999, when Tong co-founded the "Fengtai District Juvenile Legal Aid Station" in partnership with the justice bureau and the local Communist Youth League (CYL) (Ibid: 12).⁴ The organizational linkage was formalized in 2005, when the justice bureau agreed to sponsor the migrant worker arm of the NGO for nonprofit registration status (Ibid: 25).

Third, Tong's affiliation with the justice bureau facilitated the NGO's ability to influence state policies by providing opportunities for Tong to establish connections with policymaking state agencies. In this sense, Tong's institutional affiliation to the justice bureau provided opportunities for Tong to establish affiliations with other state agencies. In the fall of 2002, Tong was recruited by the Beijing municipal CYL to become the research coordinator for the drafting committee to amend the municipal regulations concerning child protection (Ibid: 173). Tong's recruitment was likely a result of the CYL's prior working relationship with Tong in setting up the juvenile legal aid station, thereby making Tong a known quantity to the CYL. This experience marked the first time that Zhicheng had participated in any law-making processes, and it took the form of an agreement between the office of the Beijing Municipal Child Protection Commission and Tong, thereby demonstrating Tong's central role in Zhicheng's access to the state's lawmaking apparatus (Ibid).⁵

It is worthwhile to point out here that Tong had established a reputation as a *state* legal expert on the legal rights of minors just one year prior to his recruitment as the drafting committee's research coordinator. In early 2001, Tong's first book, which was apparently the first published work on Chinese jurisprudence for minors, was published.⁶ The book earned Tong the praises of senior officials in the justice system and established his reputation as a legal expert (Ibid: 19–20). Although Tong never suggested any connection between his legal reputation and his recruitment to serve as the drafting committee's research coordinator, we cannot

⁴ The legal aid station was administratively connected to the district.

⁵ Tong recruited a deputy director of the NGO and another NGO staff lawyer to make up the research team. The commission is staffed by the same set of personnel as municipal CYL's department of rights and interests (*quanyi bu*).

⁶ The book is entitled *Weichengnianren Faxue [Juvenile Jurisprudence]*.

rule out that Tong's expertise in an issue area that was directly connected to the CYL's organizational mission was a factor in his recruitment.

Nonetheless, it would appear that Tong's affiliations with the CYL and state organizations that are connected to the CYL had more significant effects on Tong's recruitment. In addition to the partnership with the Fengtai district CYL (and the district justice bureau) to establish the legal aid station in early 1999, later that year Tong collaborated with the China Juvenile Crime Research Association (CJCRA) to establish the "Juvenile Legal Aid and Research Center," which was the precursor to Zhicheng's children's legal rights arm (Ibid: 13). The CJCRA is another state organization that has strong historical ties to the CYL. The founding president of CJCRA was a political leader who had served as a senior official in the CYL.⁷

The CJCRA affiliation appears to have had a direct impact on the NGO's effort to gain organizational legitimacy for Zhicheng's children's legal rights arm. Since Tong's initial partnership with the CJCRA, he has become a member of the association's standing committee. In 2003, CJCRA became the sponsor of the NGO's successful attempt to attain the nonprofit registration status for its children's legal rights arm (Ibid).

In the meantime, Tong also established institutional affiliation with the All-China Lawyers' Association (ACLA), the Chinese equivalent of the American Bar Association. The closeness of the inter-institutional relationship between ACLA and the Chinese justice system should not be of great surprise. Many former senior officials of the justice system have moved onto ACLA after retiring from their government positions (Ibid: 79).

In 2002, Tong was appointed head of the newly-created professional committee on the protection of children's rights in the Beijing municipal ACLA (Ibid: 78). Not soon after, Tong was appointed the convener of the same committee in the national ACLA (Ibid: 80). Eventually, Tong became the leader of that committee. In 2005, Tong was appointed the deputy director of the newly-created legal aid committee in the national ACLA (Ibid: 26). Since then, Tong has been a member of the ACLA's 35-member standing committee.

Just as Tong's affiliation with the justice bureau has resulted in the NGO's access to valuable state resources, i.e., free office space, his affiliation with ACLA has given Zhicheng access to ACLA's national network of local lawyers associations to create nationwide networks of public interest lawyers and organizations to provide legal aid to children and migrant workers around the country, which has been a goal of the NGO. As the national GONGO that allegedly represents the interests of all Chinese lawyers, ACLA has direct working relationships with sub-national lawyers associations, which are often obligated to accept directives from ACLA. To gain the use of the ACLA network, Tong at first successfully convinced other ACLA leaders to support formally the creation of a nationwide network of lawyers for the protection of children's rights (Ibid: 82). Later Tong was equally successful with

⁷ The founding president of the association was Zhang Liqun. For his biographical sketch, see <http://baike.baidu.com/view/1514850.htm> (accessed 22 December 2011).

respect to promoting the creation of a nationwide network of lawyers and law firms to provide free legal aid to migrant workers (Ibid: 26–29).

Among the three benefits of state linkages, it is worthwhile at this point to examine more closely the significance of formal organizational linkages to the state because Zhicheng's relationship with ACLA illustrates the value of formal state linkages for the NGO. I stated earlier that formal organizational linkages to the state can be valuable because they can confer organizational legitimacy on the NGOs in question, and organizational legitimacy has benefits. One of those benefits for Zhicheng has been enhanced direct collaboration between the NGO and the state, which can be observed through Zhicheng's working relationship with ACLA to operate the nationwide networks of public interest lawyers.

After Tong successfully persuaded the ACLA leadership to support the idea of creating these national networks, the ACLA leadership entrusted the ACLA committees under Tong's leadership with the responsibility to coordinate them. Subsequently, the ACLA, through those committees, entered into formal agreements with Zhicheng to coordinate these networks, which involved thousands of lawyers and dozens of local lawyers associations (Liu 2011). Formally, these networks have operated in the name of the ACLA; however, practically speaking, with Tong at the helm of the relevant ACLA professional committees and with his NGO contracted by ACLA to operate the networks, they have become Zhicheng's networks. To be sure, we do not deny Tong's central role in creating and sustaining Zhicheng's access to the ACLA's network. Yet, at the same time, we cannot overlook the fact that Zhicheng's organizational legitimacy, indeed legality, had facilitated the establishment of formal inter-organizational collaboration between Zhicheng and the ACLA because, as stated earlier, organizational legitimacy is a signal to the state that the NGO is politically reliable.

In a similar fashion, Zhicheng's organizational linkages to the state have sustained and even enhanced the NGO's ability to participate directly in the state's lawmaking processes. Although Zhicheng's initial involvement in the lawmaking process may be directly attributed to Tong's personal state affiliations, the NGO's subsequent involvements in the lawmaking process have been more clearly instances of direct NGO-state collaboration. This is evident in the fact that in nearly all cases of the NGO's participation in the lawmaking processes since 2002, they had taken the form of written contracts between state institutions and the NGO (Tong 2009: 173–212). For instance, in 2003 the national CYL signed a letter of agreement directly with Zhicheng's children's legal aid arm to conduct background research in preparation for the amendment of the national child protection law (Ibid: 181). In other words, while Tong was clearly the reason that Zhicheng was able to gain initial access to the lawmaking process, Zhicheng's organizational legitimacy has at a minimum facilitated the NGO's subsequent involvements.

Furthermore, Zhicheng's organizational linkages facilitated the NGO's access to even more state resources to undertake activities that would meet its organizational goals. As stated earlier, a central organizational goal has been the provision of legal aid to migrant workers. In 2006, after the migrant worker arm of the NGO had acquired the nonprofit registration status, the NGO received financial support from

the China Legal Aid Foundation for its work on legal aid to migrant workers (Interview with Zhicheng research director Zhang Wenjuan 2008).⁸ The foundation has been one of the three financial supporters that financed Zhicheng's free provision of legal aid (Interview with Zhicheng staff lawyer Wang Fang 2008). Another financial supporter was the Beijing municipal justice bureau, which paid the NGO at the rate of 800 Chinese yuan per legal case (Interview with Wang), which was a significantly higher rate than the national average (Ibid). In fact, it would appear that Zhicheng received this contracted rate as a part of the package that granted nonprofit status to the NGO's migrant worker arm (Tong 2009: 24–25). With these resources, within 6 years of the establishment of the migrant worker arm, Zhicheng was able to handle approximately 35,000 cases involving migrant workers throughout China (People's Daily 2011). And those legal cases have served as the empirical data for Zhicheng's subsequent published reports, thereby contributing to the NGO's expertise that in turn enhanced the NGO's effectiveness as a policy advocacy organization.

In addition to access to more state resources, we should not overlook the fact that after Zhicheng's organizational linkages to the state were established it received substantial support from foreign sources, which will be detailed in Chap. 5.

In sum, Zhicheng's successes as an advocacy NGO have been the consequence of its leader's state affiliations. Tong's state affiliations have exercised direct effects on Zhicheng's organizational capacity, organizational legitimacy, and access to the state's policy apparatus. Zhicheng's organizational legitimacy has in turn enhanced the NGO's ability to develop inter-organizational collaboration with state organizations and helped the NGO obtain even more monetary resources from the state. In the following section, we will see how Rural Women has benefited similarly from the state affiliations of its leader. However, in contrast to Tong's multiple state affiliations, the ACWF has been Xie Lihua's sole state affiliation. Her case suggests that, when it comes to state affiliations, it is not necessary to emphasize quantity.

3.3 Xie Lihua and Rural Women

Since its establishment in 1993, Rural Women has been the leading Chinese NGO that addresses issues concerning rural Chinese women. The organization is committed to the promotion and protection of the interests and rights of women in China's rural areas, which has included helping female migrant workers acquire the necessary skills and awareness to transition successfully to urban life. To support its mission of developing the potential of rural women, advocating the rights and interests of rural women, and cultivating rural women talents (Rural Women Brief

⁸ The foundation is a GONGO led by senior central government officials representing the legislative, justice, and public security systems. See China Legal Aid Foundation's website, <http://www.claf.com.cn/>.

Introduction), the NGO has focused on the following activities: the publication and dissemination of the *Rural Women* magazine; the implementation of the anti-illiteracy network in Chinese villages; and the operation of the Practical Skills Training Center. Rural Women's success in carrying out these activities has been the result of its ability to access state resources and achieve organizational legitimacy through the establishment of organizational linkages to the state. And, as was the case with Zhicheng, Rural Women has been able to derive those advantages from the state as a consequence of the state affiliations of Xie Lihua, one of its two co-founders.

Before we focus our attention on Xie Lihua (no relations to Zhicheng's Tong Lihua), it is necessary to talk briefly about Wu Qing, Rural Women's other founder. Wu's contributions to the NGO, while considerable, have been concentrated primarily in the areas of soliciting international resources and publicizing the NGO, especially the training center, through her personal networks, which have included state officials. Wu was a long-time member of the Beijing Municipal People's Congress and was a popular instructor at the Beijing Foreign Studies University. Wu came from an illustrious family, both intellectually and politically. After the Cultural Revolution, Wu's mother was appointed a delegate to the National People's Congress (NPC), China's national legislature.

Nonetheless, in terms of accessing state resources and building formal organizational linkages to the state, Xie Lihua has arguably exercised stronger influences through her affiliation with the ACWF. However, before establishing her connections to the ACWF, Xie Lihua, like Tong Lihua, was already a member of the ruling CPC. In the early 1980s, she left the military, where she served for approximately a decade, to join the staff of the *Women's News*, which is ACWF's flagship newspaper. The federation is a mass organization directly subordinate to the CPC. When Xie co-founded Rural Women in 1993, she was already a member of the newspaper's editorial committee and the director of the department of family and society for the publication (Shang 2007: 239). Soon after Rural Women was established, Xie was promoted to the position of deputy chief editor.

As was the case with Tong Lihua, we can only speculate about the kind of impact that the Xie's CPC membership has had on the establishment of her state affiliations. Yet, similarly, we can reasonably conclude that her CPC membership would certainly not constitute an impediment to the establishment of those institutional affiliations. Nonetheless, it is clear that Xie's ACWF affiliation has had a more direct impact on the NGO's ability to access state resources and establish formal linkages with the state than her membership in China's ruling party.

Xie Lihua's personal affiliation with the *Women's News* played a direct role in the NGO's ability to access valuable organizational resources from the state, especially during the organization's start-up period. In fact, the NGO's creation was a direct result of the fact that Xie obtained insider's information about the intent of the *Women's News* to sponsor a magazine publication about rural women (Interview with Xie Lihua 2009). Before Xie took over the publication, *Women's News* had difficulties in getting either a state organization or a state employee to take on the task of running the publication (Ibid). Xie approached the *Women's News* about

her interest to operate it (Ibid). In this manner, the *Women's News* became the NGO's first benefactor.⁹

The initial agreement between Xie and *Women's News* regarding the operation of the magazine suggested that, in essence, the state newspaper would provide the majority of the resources necessary to run the magazine. Under the agreement, *Women's News* provided a start-up fund of 60,000 Chinese yuan and Xie was responsible for meeting any additional costs (Ibid). In exchange, *Women's News* would receive dividends for its investment when the magazine became profitable (Ibid; Shang 2007: 240). However, if the magazine failed to be profitable within three years of its establishment, Xie would declare bankruptcy and she would not have to pay the newspaper back for its investment (Interview with Xie).¹⁰

In addition to the one-time financial support, the magazine's operations would also gain use of the newspaper's office space, which eliminated the need for Xie to search for and finance, on her own, other spaces to operate the publication. Moreover, Xie's agreement with *Women's News* was such that Xie would retain her position in the state-run newspaper but allowed to work full-time on the magazine. In other words, Xie would remain on the newspaper's payroll. Therefore, in essence, the newspaper was supporting the magazine by providing its personnel resources to the magazine, free of charge, while supplying the start-up funding and the free office space. Furthermore, *Women's News* would take on the task of disseminating the publication through its own nationwide publication network, again at no charge to Xie.

Over time, Rural Women developed into a full-fledged organization with multiple distinct organizational components. In addition, as a consequence of Xie's personal affiliations with the ACWF, Rural Women has benefited directly from access to state resources that helped the NGO achieve its organizational goals.

One such goal has been to raise public awareness about the interests and rights of rural women throughout China. Another related goal has been to reach out to Chinese rural women to help them improve their personal "qualities" or "levels of sophistication" (*suzhi*). An important organizational project, in this respect, is the anti-illiteracy project, which has been ongoing since 1996, and as of 2010 it has

⁹ Shang, "Funu gongmin shehui zuzhi," 239–240. The arrangement between Xie and the *Women's News* was a product of China's initial transition into the reform era. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, to relieve the state from the burden of subsidizing numerous state institutions, the state provided limited incentives to individual state officials to "plunge into the sea" of commercial activities (*xiahai*). This phenomenon was most apparent in the commercial sector, but this activity was also encouraged in the nonprofit sector. The arrangement was also a result of a state campaign at the time to encourage rural women to make greater contributions to society. As the state organization that allegedly represented the interests of all Chinese women, ACWF actively sponsored programs and publications that focused on the state of rural women in China.

¹⁰ Xie claimed that ultimately the money from *Women's News* was never used and she promptly returned the investment to the newspaper when she received foreign support to publish the magazine.

affected the lives of nearly 10,000 rural women (Zhang 2011a). The successful achievement of these organizational objectives and the successful implementation of the anti-illiteracy project in particular require access to the state's nationwide networks because Chinese NGOs are legally and practically barred from establishing formal networks of operation beyond their base areas. And politically, local Chinese governments are guarded against suspicious outside influences. These institutional considerations have made it necessary for Chinese NGOs to work with state organizations in order to expand their influences.

The central component of the anti-illiteracy project is the establishment of book clubs for women in villages throughout China. The book club is a physical space that female villagers can access to borrow reading materials and conduct other activities. Given the public nature of the book club program, its sustainability is very much dependent on the political support of village leaders, particularly those with responsibilities for women's affairs. One of those responsibilities was to implement projects sponsored by ACWFs at higher levels. Therefore, any project that bears the ACWF imprints is likely to face little resistance from local village leaders. In this respect, we can see that the network of Rural Women book clubs in rural China was established in large part because Xie was a senior ACWF manager at the central state level (Shang 2007: 245). Xie in fact acknowledged that she has used her affiliation with the central ACWF to get the NGO's projects implemented at the local level (Interview with Xie). In this manner, as of early 2011, Rural Women has been operating 50 book clubs in villages throughout China. On paper, each book club has been a part of the local ACWF. In reality, each book club has been funded by Rural Women and the NGO has maintained "control" over each book club through funding ties. In this respect, each book club is a reflection of the partnership between the NGO and the local ACWF. It is difficult to imagine how Rural Women could have implemented this project without the collaboration of the local ACWFs. That it has been able to do so has been an outcome of Xie's ACWF affiliation.

Although Xie's personal ACWF affiliation clearly had an effect on Rural Women's partnerships with local ACWFs, in all likelihood Rural Women's organizational linkage to the ACWF also contributed significantly to the realization of those inter-organizational partnerships. Because those partnerships were between Rural Women and the local ACWFs, it was important, from the perspective of the local ACWFs, that the partnering NGO was a legitimate entity, especially politically. This illustration shows the importance of organizational linkage to the state. As indicated earlier, organizational linkage to the state has been valuable for Chinese NGOs because it has conferred legitimacy upon the NGO in question. Organizational legitimacy, in turn, has allowed the Chinese NGO to access other state resources. In this respect, Rural Women's organizational legitimacy has played a role in its ability to access local ACWFs, which has been critical to the NGO's ability to meet a key organizational goal.

Xie's affiliation with ACWF has also contributed directly to the Rural Women's success in securing the nonprofit registration status for its training center. Since its establishment, over 10,000 migrant women have received vocational and other

training at the center. Many state agencies and state-owned enterprises have contracted with the center to provide training for their employees (Kang et al. 2010: 48). The training center's official sponsor has been the local ACWF in Beijing's Changping district (Kang et al. 2010: 61). Although Wu Qing's connection to the municipal people's congress, her personal network of state officials and intellectuals, and her background as a prominent university instructor might have facilitated the establishment of the training center's nonprofit registration status, the training center's official ACWF sponsorship suggested that Xie's ACWF affiliation has had a more direct and significant impact.

Like the NGO's book club project, the training center has derived benefits from the organizational legitimacy that resulted from the establishment of formal organizational linkages to the state. In particular, the training center has benefited from direct funding by state agencies. In 2010, approximately one-third of the training center's financial resources came from the ACWF and the Changping District Education Commission, which approved the training center's registration application and has acted as one of its supervisory organizations, even though the local ACWF has been on the books as the training center's sole official sponsor (Deng 2000; Kang et al. 2010: 61, 89; Rural Women 2010).

As one can see, Xie has played a central role in accessing valuable state resources for Rural Women. Similarly, her affiliation with *Women's News* has established the political legitimacy of all components of the organization, especially given that the Cultural Development Center of the NGO has been operating as a legally-registered commercial enterprise, a status that is legally inconsistent with the organization's operations as a nonprofit entity. Hence, it is unsurprising that Xie was actively making plans to preserve those institutional affiliations in anticipation of her retirement from *Women's News*. During my 2009 interview with Xie, she indicated that she placed a trusted friend, who she had appointed to be Rural Women's chief executive officer for several years, on the staff of the newspaper (Interview with Xie). In addition to this personnel move, Xie did other things to maintain institutional connections to the state, one of which has been to make sure that the publisher of *Women's News* always occupies a seat on the NGO's board of directors.

In sum, as Tong Lihua had done for Zhicheng, Xie Lihua has used her state affiliation to advance Rural Women's organizational objectives. Moreover, the case of Xie Lihua and Rural Women shows that, depending on the objectives of the NGO, a strong linkage to one state organization that possesses valuable organizational resources can be just as valuable as establishing linkages with multiple state organizations. Furthermore, this case suggested that, to some extent, the ill effects of the absence of formal legal nonprofit registration status could be mitigated by the establishment of inter-organizational partnerships with the state. In the following section, through an examination of the case of Little Bird, we will obtain an even clearer picture about the potential benefits of this type of partnership with the state.

3.4 Wei Wei and the Little Bird Migrant Workers Mutual Support Hotline

Since its establishment in 1999, Little Bird has been committed to the protection of the legal rights of migrant workers in China's major cities. To further this organizational objective, the NGO has been involved in the provision of free legal aid to migrant workers. In particular, Little Bird has become directly involved in the process of resolving disputes between migrant workers and their employers. Over time, from its base in Beijing the NGO has established a physical presence in Shenzhen, which is the catalyst of China's post-Mao economic reforms and which lies across from Hong Kong; in Shenyang, which is the center of China's north-eastern rustbelt; and in Shanghai, which is China's financial center.

Wei Wei, the leader of Little Bird, did not begin his NGO career with the personal state linkages enjoyed by Zhicheng's Tong Lihua and Rural Women's Xie Lihua and Wu Qing. He was neither a CPC member nor an employee of a state institution. In addition, unlike Wu, he did not descend from a politically-connected family. Moreover, unlike the three aforementioned NGO leaders, Wei was not a university graduate. Yet, in 2004, under his leadership, Little Bird established an organizational linkage to the Beijing municipal justice system.

How was this possible? The answer is that Wei Wei was able to make up for his "political deficiency" by building extensive connections to the Chinese media. Given the institutional connection between the Chinese media and the ruling CPC, it may be reasonable to argue that Wei's media connections constituted his initial form of state affiliation. However, as will be discussed in Chap. 4, the institutional relationship between the communist state and the media in China is no longer one-dimensional in the sense that the Chinese media remain strictly an instrument of the state. Media organizations and individual journalists in China have attempted to carve out more independent spaces vis-à-vis the state. In fact, there are media organizations that are distinctly non-state in nature. For this reason, connections to the media are not automatically synonymous with state linkages. Therefore, it seems appropriate to distinguish media connections in general from state linkages.

In this section, we focus on Wei's affiliations with the Beijing municipal justice system. This state affiliation has provided the critical resource for Little Bird to become a successful defender of the migrant workers' legal rights through its effectiveness as a dispute resolution mechanism. That critical resource is political legitimacy.

In 2004, five years after the founding of the NGO, a district justice bureau in Beijing authorized Little Bird as a labor dispute resolution committee of the justice bureau (*sifaju renmin xietiao weiyuanhui*) (Liu 2009: 98). In this manner, as Little Bird's leader, Wei Wei's institutional affiliation to the justice bureau was established. As one can see, in Little Bird's case, the NGO leader's state affiliation and the NGO's organization linkage to the state were established simultaneously. But, as will be elaborated in Chap. 4, Wei's central role in creating this linkage is undeniable.

Like Rural Women's Cultural Development Center, Little Bird has been officially registered as a commercial enterprise. Therefore, Little Bird's partnership with a government agency that possesses law-enforcement powers also highlights the possibility for NGOs without proper registration status to establish positive working relationships with the state. More importantly, Little Bird's case shows that the disadvantages of improper registration status could be overcome by the establishment of *professional* relationships with government agencies. An important indicator is the fact that Little Bird was not targeted by the local government in Beijing in the campaigns against Chinese NGOs during the period from 2007 to 2011, despite the organization's focus on the sensitive issue of labor rights.

Of course, Little Bird has derived benefits from this form of state linkage in a more direct manner. Put simply, the partnership allowed the NGO to become highly successful in settling wage disputes between migrant workers and their employers. Since the establishment of the partnership in 2004 and ending in October 2010, the NGO was successful in helping its clients reclaim approximately 90 million Chinese yuan in wage arrears (Wang and Ye 2011). In comparison, in the five-year period prior to the establishment of the government partnership, the NGO was only able to help its clients reclaim approximately 10 million yuan in wage arrears (Ibid). How did the partnership have such a dramatic effect on Little Bird's performance?

The answer is that Wei and his colleagues have used the affiliation with the justice bureau very liberally. As Wei stated matter-of-factly, he often identified himself and his organization to employers as agents of the justice bureau (*yi sifaju de mingyi*) (Interview with Wei Wei 2008). In other words, Wei and his NGO colleagues have advertised themselves not as NGO workers but as government agents. When the employers were told of this identity, they apparently became "fearful" that the state had become actively involved in the process (Wang and Ye 2011). In this manner, Little Bird was able to satisfactorily resolve 50 % of the wage disputes over the telephone (Interview with Wei). As one can see, the political legitimacy associated with the NGO's connection to the justice bureau has served the NGO effectively in its dealings with other non-state actors, which has had direct bearings on organizational effectiveness. The importance of the government affiliation for the NGO's performance is further demonstrated by the fact that Little Bird's branch offices in Shenzhen and Shenyang were not nearly as successful as the Beijing office. Wei admitted that the challenge was that the NGO had yet to secure the same type of partnership with government agencies in Shenzhen and Shenyang (Interview with Wei; Wang and Ye 2011).

In a nutshell, Little Bird's relationship with the justice bureau has conferred political legitimacy on the NGO, even though the NGO has yet to achieve the nonprofit registration status. Moreover, Little Bird's case has provided strong evidence of how advantageous organizational linkages to the state can be achieved even without the formal nonprofit registration status. Furthermore, Little Bird's case is proof that formal state linkages have had direct bearings on the effectiveness of Chinese NGOs.

Lastly, as was the case for Zhicheng and Rural Women, Little Bird's linkage to the justice bureau has made it possible for the NGO to obtain additional financial

support from the Beijing municipal government. The additional funding, which has totaled, on an annual basis, hundreds of thousands of Chinese yuan, have been used to support the NGO's other projects (Interview with Wei).

In sum, Little Bird's organizational successes have been the direct outcome of its connections to the justice bureau. That form of state linkage gave Wei and the Little Bird the political legitimacy that was necessary for them to serve their clients effectively because state linkage has acted as a "deterrent" against uncooperative employers (Wang and Ye 2011). Therefore, it was the credible threat that state linkage provided which made Little Bird an effective advocate of the rights of migrant workers.

3.5 Ma Yang and the On Action International Cultural Center

As described in Chap. 2, On Action has been the least effective of the four NGOs with respect to meeting its goals of becoming an advocate for migrant workers and a provider of services to them and their families. The case of Ma Yang and On Action is significant in that it confirms that the state affiliations of the Chinese NGO leader constitute the Chinese NGO's most valuable assets. The absence of institutional affiliations to state organizations with strong resource endowments and authority can impact negatively the NGO's ability to achieve its goals. We begin our account with Ma Yang, the founder of the NGO.

Ma Yang shares the political profile of Rural Women's Xie Lihua. Before arriving in Beijing in the late 1990s, Ma had served in the army. Ma also became a CPC member. However, unlike Xie, Ma did not obtain employment with another state institution upon the end of his military service. Instead, he arrived in China's national capital without clear employment prospects and essentially became one of the millions of migrant workers in the city. During that period of time, he worked as a volunteer at Little Bird.

About two years after On Action's founding, Ma established an affiliation with the China Migrant Worker Social Service Center (CMWSSC) as the center's Beijing office director and director of human resources (Interview with Ma 2008). By Ma's own admission, neither his CPC membership nor his service in the military was a factor in being offered a position in CMWSSC. Instead, Ma claimed that he was hired because no one in the CMWSSC had substantive knowledge about the situations facing the average migrant worker.

The CMWSSC was a creation of eight industry and professional GONGOs, including the All-China Charity Federation (Luo 2007). According to Ma, CMWSSC was created as a part of a state-sponsored effort to engage in poverty alleviation and rural reconstruction throughout China. The leaders of CMWSSC were mostly former executives of business enterprises and they were appointed to their CMWSSC posts by various GONGOs. As the Beijing office director, Ma

received no compensation. However, as the center's director of human resources, he received 1,200 RMB a month for "visiting" the headquarters for perhaps two to three days each week. In this sense, Ma's affiliation with CMWSSC has had some benefits for On Action. At a very minimum, like the relationship between Xie Lihua and *Women's News*, the CMWSSC affiliation provided for Ma's personal financial needs, so that Ma did not have to worry about allocating funds from the NGO to stay alive. But this marked the extent to which the connection to CMWSSC was beneficial for On Action.

The reality was that as a low-ranking and poorly-endowed GONGO, CMWSSC was in no position to offer any additional organizational resources to On Action. Moreover, CMWSSC could not provide the sponsorship necessary to help On Action to achieve the nonprofit registration status. This situation had important implications for the NGO's development. First, without access to state resources, it was not certain that On Action would be sustainable after its international resources ran out. As will be detailed in Chap. 5, On Action had been more fortunate than most Chinese NGOs in that it was able to obtain foreign funding at the outset of the organization's establishment. However, there was no guarantee that foreign funding would continue even if the projects had been completed satisfactorily. Indeed, when the international resources ran out in 2009, it had a serious sustainability problem.



Collected donations for victims of the 2008 earthquake in Sichuan stored in On Action's office before they're sent to distribution centers. *Source* The author

We can only imagine that had On Action been able to access state resources at the same time, the situation might have been different.

Even more importantly, the absence of state affiliations has meant that Ma would have a difficult time in fulfilling his original aspirations for the NGO. As described in Chap. 2, Ma had intended the NGO to provide free legal aid to migrant workers and develop policy impact. Moreover, he expressed to me his plan to develop a national influence. But he did not have the state affiliations that Tong Lihua, Xie Lihua, and Wei Wei possessed. The CMWSSC did not possess the organizational networks that were found in ACLA and ACWF, respectively. It also was not in a position to provide On Action access to the policymaking process. Moreover, the CMWSSC could not provide Ma and On Action the same organizational legitimacy that Wei and Little Bird received from the justice bureau, which allowed the latter to become a successful representative of migrant workers in Beijing. In fact, CMWSSC could not even provide free office space to On Action.

In July 2010, Ma was able to establish connection with a state organization that could provide resources and legitimacy to On Action. The “partnership” with the Beijing Municipal Social Work Commission (*Beijing Shi Shehui Gongzuo Weiyuanhui*) provided On Action with the nonprofit registration status and state resources in the form of “government purchases” of the NGO’s services. However, the formal linkage also came with a new name and a new organizational mandate. The new full name of the NGO is the Beijing On Action Social Work Office (*Beijing Zaixingdong Shehui Gongzuo Shiwusuo*). The stated mandate of the reconstituted NGO became the promotion of social stability and harmony among the residents of urban communities in Beijing, as well as the training of social workers (China Social Worker Service Platform 2010). One can only speculate that Ma had decided on this path due to his lack of success with CMWSSC. The cost of this new affiliation has been that Ma had to abandon his original goals and adhere to the new mandates of the partnership.

3.6 Corroboration from Additional Cases: Friends of Nature, Yirenping, and the Self-Empowerment Service Center for Disabled Persons

Is the significance of the NGO leader’s affiliations limited to those working on issues concerning migrant workers? In addition, some may argue that On Action’s level of organizational effectiveness might have been a result of its young organizational age. However, the cases of the Friends of Nature (FON), Yirenping, and the Self-Empowerment Center show that the importance of state affiliations can be found in Chinese NGOs working in different issue areas and geographical regions. Just as importantly, they show that organizational effectiveness is not necessarily limited to “mature” NGOs.

As China's first and most prominent environmental NGO (ENGO), FON has taken the lead to put the issue of environmental degradation in China on the political and public agendas. The NGO's political and public legitimacy have gone a long way in facilitating its ability to achieve organizational objectives. In its illustrious history, FON had led or coordinated several well-publicized public environmental campaigns. In addition, it has provided recommendations to the state. Moreover, it has continued to raise public awareness about environmental issues through various activities, including the publication of an annual edited volume, with essays written by journalists, government officials, and scholars. The NGO's organizational legitimacy and access to the policymaking process were the results of the state affiliations of Liang Congjie, one of its co-founders.

Liang, who died in October 2010, was not a CPC member. However, he was a multi-term delegate to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), which is the Chinese central government's chief advisory body. He was an historian by training and he was a founding member of China's environmental GONGO, the All-China Environment Federation. Liang's family background was even more illustrious than Wu Qing's. Liang's grandfather was the late-Qing political reformer Liang Qichao. His father was a famous U.S.-trained Chinese architect who, after the PRC's founding, strongly urged, without success, Mao Zedong and the other CPC leaders to preserve the old Beijing city walls.

The Friends of Nature is the first Chinese ENGO to attain the nonprofit registration status. And Liang secured this organizational linkage through his affiliation with the Chinese Academy of Culture,¹¹ where he was one of the three vice presidents. The academy, which was under the direct administration of the Ministry of Culture, was established in 1984. The academy reportedly received the support of top political leaders, notably Deng Xiaoping and his first designated successor Hu Yaobang. The academy's founding faculty included China's top establishment intellectuals. The first two heads of the academy were senior members of the CPPCC and NPC, respectively.

In a similar manner, Liang served as the conduit through which the NGO could access the state's policymaking process. Liang's membership in the CPPCC was the means by which Liang played this role. As an advisory body, CPPCC has no authority to create laws. However, members of the institution are legally permitted to engage in policy deliberations (*yizheng*) and can submit legislative proposals. In March 1997, during the CPPCC annual meeting, Liang submitted a proposal to relocate the state-owned Capital Steel Corporation from Beijing. As the third largest steelmaker in China, Capital Steel has been a major contributor to the poor air quality in the Chinese capital. In February 1997, FON conducted a meeting to discuss the feasibility of relocating Capital Steel's upstream operations from Beijing

¹¹ The following profile of the academy is based on information garnered from a range of Internet sources, including the websites maintained by the academy. Chinese Academy of Culture, <http://www.iafcc.org/> and <http://www.guoxue.com/study/iacc/iaccindex.htm> (accessed 9 June 2011).

(Friends of Nature 1997). The results of that meeting formed the basis for Liang's proposal to the CPPCC in March.¹²

The example of FON's access to the state's policymaking apparatus has shown that, in the reform era, opportunities have increased for non-state actors to engage the policymaking process in China. At the same time, however, the case of Liang and FON has demonstrated that the NGO leader's state affiliations have remained central to the organization's ability to access the state, especially with respect to accessing the state's policy apparatus. It is telling that over the last several years, since Liang had retreated from the NGO scene due to failing health and eventually, death, FON's direct access to the policymaking apparatus had deteriorated, even though FON is still treated with some degree of reverence because it is contemporary China's first ENGO. In this respect, the case of FON serves as a strong reminder that the leader's membership in the state apparatus is critical to the effectiveness of the Chinese NGO. Nonetheless, the situation is evolving and Yirenping's case has shown the possibility that Chinese NGOs can access the state's policymaking institutions without having a leader with Liang Congjie's political profile.

Yirenping, which was established in 2006, has within a short time become the leading Chinese NGO to advocate the rights of individuals and groups that have been the objects of employment and educational discrimination. In particular, Yirenping has been recognized as the champion of the approximately 120 million Hepatitis-B carriers and patients. It has successfully worked to end employment discrimination against victims of Hepatitis-B by multinational corporations like Nokia. In 2009 Yirenping scored its greatest victory to date when the Ministry of Health issued new rules that abolished mandatory Hepatitis-B testing during physical examinations for prospective college students, factory workers, and government employees (Jacobs 2009).

One of the main factors that affected Yirenping's rise within such a short period of time is its leader's personal connections to sympathetic NPC delegates and CPPCC members. Lu Jun's connections to those delegates have been a reflection of the increased opportunities for ordinary Chinese citizens to engage in lobbying during the reform era (Kennedy 2005; Zhang 2011b). Beginning in 2003, before Yirenping's establishment, Lu Jun has written proposals to NPC delegates and CPPCC members concerning discriminatory practices against Hepatitis-B carriers in the workplace. In 2004, he submitted a proposal to Professor Zhou Hongyu, who was an NPC delegate and the vice chairman of the standing committee of the Hubei

¹² Since then, the steelmaker has taken public measures to reduce its pollution emission and just prior to the 2008 Olympic Games, had been building a new plant in Caofeidian, which is located on the Bohai Bay inlet, about 200 km east of Beijing. In January 2011, the steelmaker shut down its entire operation in Beijing. Xinhua News Agency, "Beijing Steelmaker Halts Production in Capital," http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-01/13/content_11847739.htm (accessed 29 December 2011).

provincial people's congress since 2008, regarding this issue (Shidai Zhoubao 2011). In 2003, Zhou established a website that solicited legislative proposals from ordinary citizens and non-state groups.¹³ Through this channel, Lu established connections with Zhou and the two have collaborated on many occasions. The basic form of collaboration was as follows. Lu Jun would provide the data and even drafted the legislative proposals. Zhou would then submit those proposals to the NPC. During the March 2007 annual NPC meeting, Zhou was one of the delegates who sponsored proposals to end discriminatory policies and practices against victims of Hepatitis-B (Lu 2007). Between 2004 and 2007, the two men had a third collaborator, the recently-deceased constitutional scholar Cai Dingjian (Shidai Zhoubao 2011).¹⁴

The persistent efforts of NPC delegates and CPPCC members like Zhou had served as pressures on government ministries, notably the Ministry of Health. In this sense, Zhou's role was very similar to that of Liang Congjie. Therefore, the main difference between FON and Yirenping has been that whereas Liang was the embodiment of two identities—political advisor to the state and NGO leader, Lu had to rely on his personal connections to members of those advisory and legislative bodies to get his message to government officials. Nonetheless, regardless of the nature of the NGO leader's state affiliations, the results have been the same.

Just as the case of FON and Liang Congjie, the case of Yirenping and Lu Jun shows that the value of connections to the right state institutions has applied to NGOs working in issue areas other than migrant workers. In addition, Yirenping's case shows that the NGO leader's personal connections to members of the state apparatus may be just as effective in serving the needs of the Chinese NGO as NGO leaders who are directly affiliated with state institutions. Moreover, Yirenping's case demonstrates that organizational age is not a necessary determinant of organizational performance. Yirenping and On Action were both established in 2006. The fact that there are such differences with respect to the organizational effectiveness of the two organizations should cast doubt on any speculation that organizational "youth" is a necessary cause of reduced organizational effectiveness.

Similarly, the findings presented thus far in this chapter have also been observed in other parts of China, including rural and inland jurisdictions. The case of the Self-Empowerment Center, which is located in a rural county within the jurisdiction of the Chongqing municipality in south-central China, shows that the NGO leader's state affiliations have been equally valuable for NGOs operating in China's hinterland.

Since the Self-Empowerment Center's establishment in 2002, it has focused on servicing the needs of the local population. Approximately one-third of the county's 230,000 residents have either been working outside the county as migrant workers

¹³ The name of the website is called "Hongyu Zaixian" [Hongyu Online], <http://www.hongyu-online.com/> (accessed 29 December 2011).

¹⁴ Before starting an academic career, Cai was a long-time senior NPC staff member.

or returned to the county after suffering physical disabilities as a result of work-related injuries. As a result of the nature of the NGO's clientele, the center has devoted considerable time, energies, and resources to serving and promoting the needs of the disabled former migrant workers.

In this respect, the NGO has benefited from its connections to the local disabled persons' federation. Like the case of Wei Wei and Little Bird, the center and its leader obtained their institutional affiliations with the disabled persons' federation almost simultaneously. In particular, the center is a fully registered nonprofit institution with the local disabled person's federation as its sponsor. Meanwhile, Chen Yuying, the founder of the NGO, has been the chairperson of the local association of physically disabled persons, which is a subsidiary of the local disabled persons' federation, a GONGO. Although Chen's position is largely honorific, the institutional affiliation has benefited the NGO in both tangible and intangible ways. For instance, the NGO has used the local disabled persons' federation to spread the word about the NGO and its work (Written correspondence with Chen Yuying 2011). Moreover, the local government even mobilized "volunteers" among local government employees to support the center's seasonal effort to distribute leaflets to outgoing migrant workers in the county's main transportation centers (Interview with Chen Yuying 2009). Furthermore, as the chairperson of the local association of physically disabled persons, Chen has been invited to participate in events sponsored by the Chongqing municipal disabled persons' federation and the county disabled persons' federation, where Chen would use the opportunities to submit reports about the state of disabled persons in the county and provide policy recommendations to address their needs (Ibid).

Along the way, the center has been able to effect some policy changes in the local government. For instance, the NGO had organized a forum of handicapped residents and invited a local people's congress delegate to participate in the forum. During that forum, four policy recommendations about handicapped persons were developed. The delegate took the recommendations to the local people's congress, where they were ratified (Interview with Chen Jian 2008). More specific policy recommendations that were implemented included the placement of plaques designating seats for handicapped persons and the elderly on public transportations carriers (Interview with Chen Jian 2009).

As these shadow cases have demonstrated, the value of the state affiliations of the Chinese NGO leader has been observed across issue areas, geographical regions, and organizational age. And all the cases have shown that state linkage is an important precondition for NGO effectiveness in China.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I show that state linkage has been an important precondition for NGO effectiveness in China. However, the positive impact of state linkage is premised on the presence of several conditions. First and foremost, the personal

state linkages of the NGO leader, notably the leader's state affiliations, have constituted the central causal mechanism that determined whether an NGO would be able to acquire state resources, organizational linkages to the state, and access to the policymaking apparatus. Because state resources are scattered among state organizations, it is important for NGO leaders and their NGOs to establish relations with resource-rich organizations. In this sense, it is clear that not all institutional connections to the state have been equally beneficial for Chinese NGOs. Therefore, an important lesson for Chinese NGO leaders is that whenever possible, choose wisely when it comes to the state organizations with which one would like to associate.

The cases also suggest that for advocacy NGOs in China, the opportunities to access the policymaking apparatus have increased in the reform era. This phenomenon is in part the result of the increasing willingness among NPC delegates and CPPCC members to exercise their constitutional responsibilities. Therefore, even NGOs that have not been led by leaders with explicit state identities, such as Yirenping's Lu Jun, have been able to lobby the state successfully through collaboration with likeminded NPC delegates and CPPCC members.

This type of policy collaboration has taken place in an environment in which the Chinese media organizations and journalists have also become more independent and daring. Indeed, as many have discovered, Chinese media organizations and individual journalists have played a valuable role in spreading the influence of the Chinese NGOs. In so doing, the Chinese media have also contributed to the positive interactions between the NGOs and the state and its agents. In the next chapter, we will examine how Chinese NGO leaders have been able to use the media to develop and enhance their state affiliations.

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Chapter 4

Media Connections: Bridging the State-Society Divide

Abstract The literature on media-state relations has generally emphasized the media's function as a watchdog of the state. According to this line of reasoning, a strong democracy is characterized by the presence of independent media to check the state. By extension, the absence of independent media generally characterizes non-democracies, thereby implying that media in non-democracies do not hold any value for non-state actors. However, this simple distinction of state-media relations by regime type ignores the fact that media in transitioning states like China have retained their connections to the state even as they exercise greater independence. In fact, Chinese media's ability to straddle the state-society divide makes them uniquely positioned to contribute to the work of the NGOs, which can employ media connections to establish state linkages as well as obtain other state resources. Although it is important not to overstate the value of media connections when compared with that of state linkages, the cases presented in this chapter nevertheless show that media connections are extremely valuable as means to acquire state linkages and can help NGOs strengthen those linkages.

Keywords Media connections · State-society divide · Decentralization · Commercialization · Legitimacy · Journalist · Internet

On 5 March 2005, the *People's Daily*, which is the flagship newspaper of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC), published a report entitled "An anti-leak cover is being installed under the lake in the Old Summer Palace: Is this an act of protection or destruction?"¹ Soon after the report's publication, it was republished on the websites of other Chinese newspapers and online platforms. In the next two days, the *People's Daily* continued its coverage of the issue and other newspapers,

¹ The account of this incident in this section is based completely on its recounting in Jia et al. (2008, 238–241).

including the *Southern Weekend* and the *China Youth Daily*, also published lengthy reports about the anti-leak project that was taking place at the historic Old Summer Palace in Beijing.²

The government responded almost immediately to the media reports. On 30 March, the Beijing Municipal Environmental Protection Bureau began an investigation into the project. The following day, the central government's State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) issued a statement that the project was undertaken without conducting the required environmental impact assessment; therefore, the project must cease until the assessment has been conducted. On 1 April, the Haidian district government, which had direct administrative jurisdiction over the area in which the palace was located, ordered the complete stoppage of all work relating to the installation of the anti-leak cover.

The media furor over the work project began with an e-mail message from Dr. Li Hao to the *People's Daily* reporter who eventually penned the first news report on the project. Li was the leader of Beijing Earthview Environment Education and Research Center, a Chinese environment NGO (ENGO). Li received the tip-off about the work project from Professor Zhang Zhengchun, who accidentally discovered the project while visiting the palace. Li believed that the best way to get public attention on the project was to inform the media.

After the Haidian district government issued the work-stoppage order, SEPA conducted a public hearing on the anti-leak cover project. The hearing was attended by journalists from dozens of media organizations. After the hearing, media reporting about the project continued. On 5 July, SEPA posted an environmental impact report about the project on its website. The report indicated that the project was illegal and would have a negative impact on the palace's ecology. The entire anti-leak project therefore had to be redone. An even more exciting piece of news for the environmental activists was issued on 22 February 2006. On that day, SEPA promulgated a set of temporary regulations on public involvement in environmental impact assessments (SEPA 2006).

This case illustrates a successful case of collaboration between a Chinese NGO and the Chinese media to change state practices and establish new state policies. It also seems to conform more closely to the media's ideal function, which is to supervise the state. Yet, we can also make the argument that this case is an illustration of how the media have bridged the state-society divide and provided an opportunity for collaboration between one Chinese NGO and a particular government agency that shared an interest in stopping a project that was sponsored, or at least approved, by other state agencies. Even so, the "collaboration" that is illustrated above was indirect. The cases presented in this book, however, demonstrate that the Chinese media may also facilitate the establishment of direct collaborative

² The Chinese name for the Old Summer Palace is "Yuanmingyuan." The garden was pillaged and plundered in 1860 by British and French troops. The palace has been designated by the Chinese government as a historical monument to China's "century of humiliation," which dates from the mid-19th century to the PRC's founding in 1949.

relationships between Chinese NGOs and China's state agencies. In doing so, the Chinese media can play an invaluable role in facilitating NGO effectiveness.

The Chinese media's positive effects on the NGOs are derived from the various functions of the media. In particular, the media can empower NGOs through the former's roles as (1) publicists of events, issues, organizations, and individuals; (2) legitimating agents; and (3) information collectors for the policymakers. But in order for any NGO to benefit from these media functions, it must gain access to the media. In this respect, the leader of a Chinese NGO plays a critical role. Put simply, a leader with strong media connections is a necessary condition for organizational access to the media. However, it is important to recognize that although the NGO leader's media connections may exert positive effects on the organization's state linkages, the effects of media connections on state linkages may be more indirect when compared to the NGO leader's state affiliations.

4.1 Civil Society, Media, and State

The free flow of information is an important aspect of any free society. Therefore, there should be little disagreement that an "independent and pluralistic media are an essential bulwark of a mature and effective democracy" (Ballentine 2002: 91). As this statement suggests, the role of the state's watchdog has often been championed as the media's most important function. In this manner, the media in a liberal democracy ensure that elected officials will not abuse the powers that they have been entrusted.

By most accounts, the media in non-democracies have not performed this function effectively, if at all. An often-cited reason is that the media in non-democratic states are subjected to a wide range of state measures to control the media (Rugh 2004). Consequently, the media in this type of political environment have become tools of the state. In this role, instead of checking the state, the media in non-democracies have become instruments to weaken the regime's opponents (Ottaway 2003).

When it comes to China, the prevailing opinion is that before the reform era the Chinese media served collectively as the state's mouthpiece. During the Maoist period, the Chinese media's main function was to transmit the state's directives to the masses. Their other function was to serve as an intelligence-gathering agency for the state by collecting information about the Chinese masses and the situations abroad for consumption by the political elite. During periods of intra-elite struggles, the Chinese media could also be counted on to serve the interests of competing factions. To a large extent, the state has sustained its control over the Chinese media into the twenty-first century (Zhao 2008; Stockmann 2013; Young 2013). Therefore, it would appear that the Chinese media, like the media in other non-democracies, have not strayed very far from the authoritarian state. In this sense, we should expect the Chinese media to continue to remain a tool of the state. By extension, it seems inconceivable for the Chinese media to be of any help to Chinese NGOs.

Although there is no doubt that Chinese media organizations do not enjoy the level of freedom that their counterparts in democracies possess, it would be wrong to simply assume that the Chinese media system has remained unchanged over the past 60 years. In fact, the Chinese media system today has become significantly more pluralized, commercialized, and globalized. This development has positive implications for societal actors like NGOs because it ensures that Chinese media organizations are more accessible to non-state entities today than at any other time since the PRC's founding.

To a large extent, the changing Chinese media system is the outcome of its decentralization during the reform era. The process of decentralization has resulted in the creation of numerous media organizations at the sub-national level. In this sense, the decentralization of the Chinese media system has contributed directly to the system's pluralization. Because many of the newly-emerged media organizations are creatures of the local party-state, they reflect local interests to a considerable extent (Zhao 2008). A consequence is the emergence of a wider range of political views, even neo-liberal ones, in the Chinese media landscape.

The decentralization of the media system has undoubtedly contributed to the commercialization of the media industry. Here, it is important to recognize that decentralization is not a process unique to the media system in China. The state has promoted decentralization in other areas of governance. One important reason for promoting decentralization is to relieve the central state of the burden of maintaining an enormous state apparatus. The financial implication of decentralization for Chinese media organizations is thus quite clear. In exchange for greater "freedom," they are now responsible for their own financial well-being. Therefore, in order to maintain and improve their bottom line, Chinese media organizations are motivated to publish contents that will attract more readers, which is important in large part because a large readership will result in increased advertising revenue. In this manner, one can see that just as decentralization has led directly to increases in the number of media outlets in reform-era China, it has also contributed to media commercialization, which have resulted in media contents that are "spiritually polluting," "vulgar," and "pornographic" in nature (Lynch 1999: 6)

Naturally, it would be wrong to suggest that the only consequences of commercialization have been negative in nature. The key implication of commercialization is that Chinese media organizations have become more interested in publishing materials that would be of interest to readers. In this manner, commercialization has affected the editorial process so that Chinese journalists are encouraged to uncover sensitive social issues that would be of interest to the readers. Consequently, just as tabloid journalism has made its way into the Chinese media system, the system has also become a relatively hospitable environment for muckraking journalism.

Lastly, in a related fashion, China's integration with the international community has had profound effects on the Chinese media system, especially in terms of the effects on a new generation of Chinese journalists. As China opened up to the world, its journalists have also had more opportunities to access information about journalistic norms and practices outside China. Nowadays, for those Chinese

journalists who have the will and the language proficiency, they often have opportunities to interact with foreign journalists and media experts in China through foreign-sponsored forums and seminars, where they learn about those norms and values (Interview BJ052808). Access to information about media professionals outside China has undoubtedly contributed to the increasingly liberal attitudes of Chinese journalists (Lin 2010).

Collectively, these processes have contributed to the creation of a media environment within which Chinese media organizations are exercising functions that they did not perform during the Maoist days. As shown by the case about the anti-leak cover in Beijing's Old Summer Palace, one of the new functions of the Chinese media has been to check the behavior of the state and its agents. In a similar and related vein, the Chinese media have also become vehicles through which members of the Chinese society have voiced their opinions. Therefore, just as Chinese media organizations have solicited commercial advertisements to bolster their financial conditions, they have become publicists of individuals, organizations, and issues that are of concern to the Chinese public.

However, lest we become too excited about the liberal tendencies of the Chinese media system, we should be aware that the Chinese media organizations have remained keenly cognizant of the political bottom line (Stockmann 2013). In principle, Chinese media's main mandate continues to be that of "[telling] China and the world about the communist party's agenda" (Young 2013: 4). Indeed, although the Chinese political system is no longer a totalitarian system, Chinese media organizations must still adhere to the "party principle," which stipulates that "the news media must accept the [communist] party's guiding ideology as its own; that they must propagate the party's programs, policies, and directives; and that they must accept the party's leadership and stick to the party's organizational principles and press policies" (Zhao 1998). Thus, there are still real consequences for media agencies and individual journalists should they go too far. Similarly, the majority of Chinese media organizations and journalists are fully aware of the need to stay away from issues that are "politically sensitive," which lie within the exclusive domain of the state's official media outlets (Stockmann 2013: 77–103).

But this fact also has important implications for Chinese NGOs. Given that they have retained their close association with the state, Chinese media organizations have thereby maintained their traditional functions, such as transmitters of state policies. The other traditional function of the Chinese media has been that of intelligence collectors and compilers with direct access to policymakers.³ From the NGO's perspective, Chinese media organizations are thus important conduits to policymakers and the policy apparatus. An important reason that Chinese media

³ This media function has been manifested primarily, if not chiefly, in the presence of the "internal reference" (*neibu cankao*, or *neican* for short) system. The internal reference system is essentially a mechanism through which the Chinese media compile and provide classified reports about domestic and international happenings to top political leaders. Despite its shortcomings, it has been an important portal to China's policymakers and the policymaking process. For criticisms of the mechanism, see Magnier (2004) and The Economist (2010).

organizations are able to access the policy apparatus is that they are *legitimate* state organizations. Therefore, to a certain extent, the media's positive reporting of the Chinese NGO leader and his organization can act as a signal to the state, as well as to the society, about the legitimacy of the leader and his group. In this sense, from the NGO's point of view, Chinese media organizations are valuable because they are *legitimizing agents*.

Given that the Chinese media have developed strong connections with members of the society and still retain their close association with the state, the Chinese media have become uniquely positioned to play the role of the bridge across the state-society divide. Moreover, the combination of their new function as publicists of societal organizations and interests with their old function as state intelligence agencies means that Chinese media organizations are very valuable resources for Chinese NGOs that want state recognition and access to the state's policy apparatus. But how can a Chinese NGO acquire these value media commodities? What can a Chinese NGO do to attract the media's attention to itself and its issues of interest?

Analysts have spent much time talking about the importance of issue framing for Chinese NGOs. Indeed, this has been a valuable and effective strategy to establish media connections. At the risk of simplification, issue framing is essentially storytelling. This notion also suggests an intention to create stories. But in many cases, NGOs and their leaders have become media stories without making a conscious effort to create them. At the same time, no matter how compelling the stories may be, there is no guarantee that the media will report on them. In this situation, successful issue framing that garners media attention entails the prior existence of media connections. In this respect, the prior media connections of the Chinese NGO leaders are invaluable.

In sum, just as the Chinese NGO leader's state affiliations to the state have provided her organization with access to the state, her media connections have collectively served as a portal to the world of the Chinese media for her organization. As a portal, the media connections of a Chinese NGO leader need not be exhaustive. The most important thing is that those connections should serve as constant points of media access for the NGOs.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect about the present state of the Chinese media is that Chinese media organizations have become points of state access for Chinese NGOs led by persons without established political ties. Little Bird's experience demonstrate this point clearly. Through connections to media organizations, Chinese NGO leaders are thus able to establish state linkages.

Figure 4.1 is a diagram of the elements involved in the pathway from media connections to organizational effectiveness. As indicated by the solid-line arrow to the NGO leader's state affiliations, the leader's media connections have been more facilitative than direct when it comes to helping the NGO acquire the benefits of state linkage. This means that in all cases the positive effects of media connections have been either contingent on the prior existence of the leader's affiliations to the state or dependent on the creation of state affiliations by those media connections. Most obviously, media connections have not played a direct role in providing the Chinese NGO with access to state resources, such as funding, office space, and personnel.

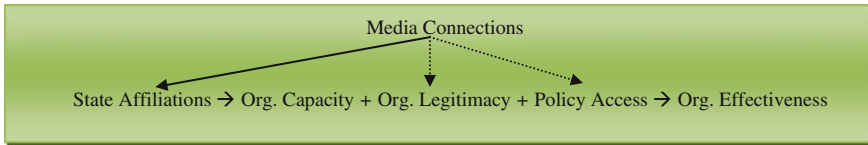


Fig. 4.1 Media connections and organizational effectiveness

As the two dotted arrows to “organizational legitimacy” and “policy access” indicate, the media connections of the NGO leader may help the NGO access certain benefits of state linkage independent of the media connections’ impact on the NGO leader’s affiliations to the state. But again, in many of those cases, the salutary effects of media connections have been facilitative and involve the prior existence of the leader’s state affiliations, thus making it difficult to ascertain the media connections’ independent effects. In sum, as valuable as the NGO leader’s media connections, we need to be cautious in asserting that the value of media connections can rival that of the leader’s state affiliations with respect to obtaining the most important benefits of state linkage.

4.2 Tong Lihua and the Zhicheng Public Interest Law NGO

In Chap. 3, we had seen how Zhicheng benefited from the strong state affiliations of its leader. Tong Lihua has employed his state affiliations to enhance Zhicheng’s organizational capacity, develop formal organizational linkages to the state, and established the foundation on which Zhicheng has been able to do what virtually no other Chinese NGOs have been able to accomplish, which is direct participation in the state’s lawmaking process. Given the present political situation in China, it would seem that Tong’s ties to the state should constitute sufficient resources to support Zhicheng’s efforts to achieve its organizational goals.

Instead, both Tong and his Zhicheng colleagues have emphasized how the media have played a significant role in the NGO’s achievements (Interview with Zhicheng staff lawyer Wang Fang 2008; interview with Zhicheng research director Zhang Wenjuan 2008). In Tong’s 2009 book about his own NGO career and Zhicheng’s development, he wrote about the importance of media collaboration for the Chinese NGO:

“[As an NGO, even] if we had shouted ourselves blue in the face, it would seem that, [working] at a time of advanced broadcast media, the simple reliance on speeches and face-to-face [methods] to publicize and popularize [issues] is both wasteful and clumsy. As a public interest law organization, in order to publicize justice, it is necessary to pay attention to the effects of the media; it is necessary to work closely with the media” (Tong 2009: 37; author’s translation).

Indeed, throughout the pages of Tong's 2009 book are repeated references to the media, particularly examples of how Tong and his Zhicheng colleagues have reached out to members of the Chinese media, and the effects that media collaboration have had on Zhicheng's work. Given Tong's obvious belief in the value of the media for Zhicheng's success, Tong has developed strong media connections alongside his extensive state affiliations. Tong's media connections have established channels for publicizing Zhicheng and its views on issues of interest to the NGO. Moreover, they have provided additional means through which the NGO could impact state policies and practices, and even establish formal organizational linkage to the state.

Among his media connections, Tong has singled out his professional relationship with Cui Li, a senior journalist at the *China Youth Daily* (CYD) (Tong 2009: 37). Before we describe how Tong and Zhicheng have benefited from his relationship with Cui, it's important to understand the reasons that Cui and CYD might have been willing to establish this connection with Tong. Based on the information that is available, we can infer three reasons.

The first reason was CYD's reputation. Although the CYD is the official newspaper of the Communist Youth League (CYL), it has developed a reputation in recent years as the only outspoken central-level state paper in China (Zhao 2008: 43). True to its reputation, the editors of the CYD have not been afraid to publish writings about controversial subjects and which challenge the dominant state perspectives. In January 2006, for example, the newspaper's weekly published a lengthy article, written by a Chinese university professor, which challenged the dominant state narrative that the Taiping rebels in the nineteenth century and the Boxers in early twentieth century were patriotic anti-imperialists who represented the Chinese peasantry. This historical characterization has important political implications because the CPC has claimed that it is the ideological descendant of the Taiping rebels and the Boxers. For publishing this article, the CYL issued an order to suspend the newspaper's publication and the removal of the weekly's chief editor (Zhao 2008: 57–58).

The second reason was Cui's background. Cui was not simply a CYD journalist. She had been the deputy director of the current affairs department at CYD. Moreover, she earned a law degree and has been the newspaper's senior legal correspondent.⁴ She had written many reports about legal matters, including a series of articles about the 2003 Sun Zhigang case, which involved a young university graduate who was beaten to death by the local police in the southeastern city of Guangzhou while in detention for failing to produce a proper working/residential permit. His case became a national and international sensation, and the public outcry generated from the case forced the state to abolish the notorious system of custody and repatriation, which in practice authorized the local police to detain almost anyone who was deemed to be undesirable by the authorities. Although the

⁴ For Cui's biography, see the *China Youth Daily* website at http://zqb.cyol.com/node/node_7051.htm (accessed 12 August 2014).

CYD did not break the news about the Sun case, Cui was the first Chinese journalist to write about the petitions made by Chinese legal students and scholars to the National People's Congress (NPC) to authorize special investigations into the case (Cui 2003a, b). Cui's professional background and interest suggest that she would be quite interested in Tong's legal aid operation.

Compared to the two above reasons, the third reason is more speculative. Nonetheless, there is reason to believe that Tong's state affiliations, notably his ties to the CYL, had probably contributed somewhat to his connection to Cui and the CYD. We cannot rule out the possibility that the fact that both Cui and Tong were affiliated with the CYL had played a role in connecting the two individuals⁷.

Whatever the reasons for their relationship, Tong's ties to Cui have been both long and substantive. The two apparently became acquainted with each other before 2001, which was before Zhicheng's children's legal aid arm attained the nonprofit registration status and before the establishment of Zhicheng's migrant worker arm. Evidently, Cui had developed a high regard for Tong's expertise. In November 2002, she invited Tong to speak to 40 CYD journalists about the NGO's effort to promote the legal protection of children's rights and the inadequacies of the existing legal system in addressing this issue (Tong 2009: 37). And Cui was routinely among the first journalists that Tong would contact if he wanted to publicize the NGO's activities.

From Tong's perspective, the primary benefit of his relationship with Cui has been the latter's role in publicizing Tong and Zhicheng's activities. Over the years, Cui had either written or coordinated the writing of numerous articles that featured Tong and Zhicheng. In most cases, collaboration between Tong and Cui began with Tong contacting Cui about the NGO's work. An illustration of the successful partnership between Tong and Cui is the May 2001 case involving Tong's decision to file a lawsuit against the state tobacco bureau and China's leading tobacco firms. The lawsuit charged the defendants with failure to comply with laws and regulations that required tobacco companies to indicate clearly on their advertisements that smoking was hazardous to health and that minors were prohibited from smoking.

On 11 May 2001, Tong held a press conference to announce his plan to file the lawsuit. He invited journalists he knew to attend the press conference and Cui Li was one of the invitees (Tong 2009: 244). After the press conference, Cui penned a report about the planned lawsuit that was published in the CYD (Cui 2001a). Cui's essay was among the first of dozens of domestic and foreign news writings about the case over the next year and half.

The report by Cui and the writings of other news organizations about the lawsuit produced several observable effects that benefited the NGO. First, the media publicity turned Tong into an instant media sensation (Cui 2001b; Xin 2001). At the same time that Tong became a media personality as a result of the published reports about the lawsuit, the media reporting also put Zhicheng on the map in that nearly all stories about Tong had indicated clearly his association with Zhicheng. Second, the media publicity helped Tong achieve the goal of garnering widespread attention about the negative effects of tobacco on the health of China's minors (Tong 2009: 257).

Third, although the court had refused to accept the lawsuit, the media attention had compelled the defendants to take immediate actions to address the lawsuit's main charges. For example, soon after the plan to file a lawsuit was publicized, the state tobacco bureau, for the first time, made it clear that all advertisements and labels for tobacco companies must include the message that existing regulations prohibited smoking by elementary and secondary students as well as the selling of tobacco to minors (Zhang 2001). Lastly, Tong used all the media interview opportunities resulting from the news reports to talk about broader issues concerning the protection of the rights of minors (Tong 2009: 257). In this manner, Zhicheng became even better known to the media and, by extension, to the state.

In sum, Tong's relationship with Cui in particular and journalists in general have benefited Zhicheng by publicizing the organization and the issues that have concerned the NGO. Furthermore, in getting the state tobacco bureau to make clear its support of the existing regulations and change existing practices, Tong's media connections have provide another means for Tong and Zhicheng to access and impact the state policy apparatus. This example thus illustrates the relatively independent effects of the media on the NGO's ability to influence state policies and practices.

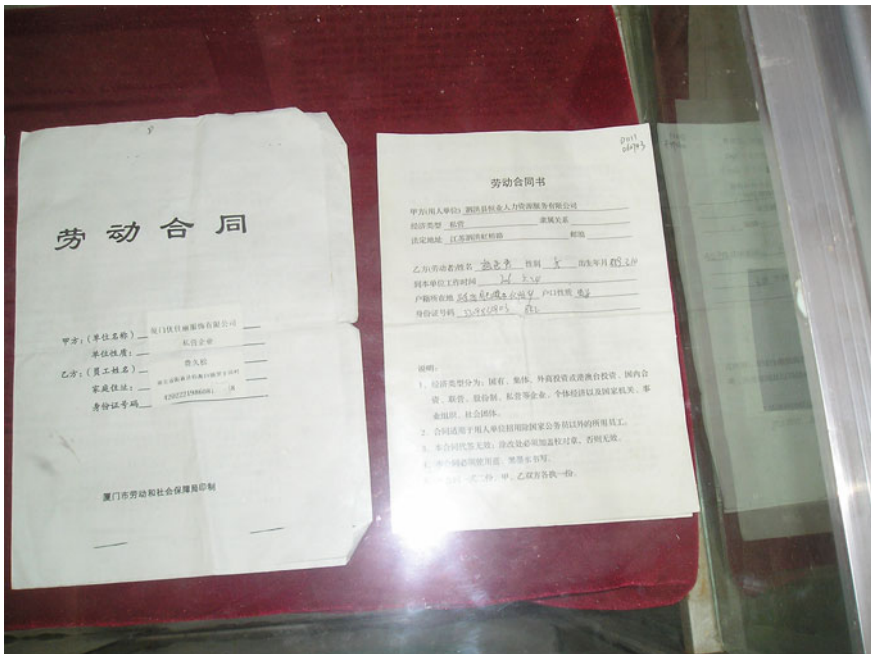
To be sure, Tong's media connections have not been limited to his relationship with Cui Li and other CYD journalists. Journalists associated with the official Xinhua News Agency have also helped to publicize Tong and Zhicheng through its published writings. However, for Zhicheng and any Chinese NGO, it is arguable that Xinhua's greatest value is its access to the pinnacle of China's political system through its writing of the classified "internal references," which are consumed exclusively by senior Chinese political leaders. Tong's connections to Xinhua journalists have often had the effect of getting the ideas that Tong and his Zhicheng colleagues crafted to become featured in internal reference reports. In this fashion, Tong's media connections have provided another means through which Zhicheng was able to affect state policies.

An example of the positive effects of Tong's connections with Xinhua journalists took place in July 2003, not long after the children's arm of the NGO attained the nonprofit registration status. In June of that year, the State Council promulgated the "Management Measures for Supporting the Homeless and Beggars in Urban Life." The new regulations called for government agencies to cease practices that forced the homeless to "accept government assistance." The new regulations would go into effect on 1 August. But Tong and his Zhicheng colleagues felt that the new regulations failed to address the different needs between adult homeless persons and those who were minors. Tong expressed Zhicheng's views on the issue in a 28 July conference. Immediately after the conference, Xinhua journalists approached Tong about conducting an interview with Tong with the intent of submitting the written report to top central government leaders. The report ultimately reached Premier Wen Jiabao, who responded to the report by instructing the State Council's legal office and the Ministry of Civil Affairs to look into the matter (Tong 2009: 230).

This example is illustrative of how a Chinese NGO is able to access the state policy apparatus through connections with the appropriate Chinese media

organizations. Yet, it is also suggestive of the contingent nature of the salutary effects of media connections. Although the evidence is not precise, we can speculate that Xinhua journalists' willingness to report about Tong's views was based in part on Tong's established state linkages. As described in Chap. 3, Tong and his colleagues were first invited in 2002 to participate in the Beijing municipal law-making process concerning the revision of the law on child protection. In other words, Tong's political credentials were established before the interview with the Xinhua journalists. Perhaps reflecting his state affiliation, Tong was invited to the state-sponsored conference where he made his 28 July speech. Therefore, to an important extent, we can reasonably infer that at least some of the salutary effects of Tong's media connections have been contingent on his profile as an expert who was politically connected.

Nonetheless, the value of media connections for establishing Zhicheng's state linkages must be recognized. At the very least, positive media coverage has enhanced Zhicheng's reputation, which has made it easier for state agencies to work with Zhicheng. The reason for this speculation is that one of the functions of the Chinese media has been that of a legitimating agent. Positive media coverage of a person, an issue, or an organization is a signal to the political establishment, as well as the general population, that the featured entity is legitimate. Therefore, even if the impact of the media has not been sufficient to create state linkages for the Chinese NGO, the media have nonetheless been facilitative. This function of the Chinese media can be inferred from the example of the establishment of Zhicheng's migrant worker arm.



A labor contract agreement between a migrant worker and his employer. *Source* The author

Although Tong established Zhicheng first as an organization promoting the legal rights of children, in 2003 he and his colleagues began to pay attention to the legal conditions of migrant workers. Their interest was spurred in part by a case involving over 60 migrant workers who were unable to obtain wage arrears from their employer. When the leader of the migrant workers could not resolve the case on his own, he sought assistance from Zhicheng with a referral from a journalist. With the help of Zhicheng's lawyers, the leader of the migrant workers filed the first legal case in the Beijing municipality concerning wage arrears for migrant workers (Tong 2009: 347–366).

The case motivated Tong and his colleagues to undertake research about the legal state of the migrant workers, notably their ability to recover wage arrears. The result was a one-year research project that involved extensive interviews with migrant workers, the distribution of 8,000 surveys covering eight provinces, and 17 case studies (Tong 2009: 21). One of the significant findings of the report was that a major challenge to defending the rights of migrant workers was the high cost associated with each case. The cost would be even higher if the government took on those cases directly.

In June 2005, Zhicheng held a forum about the results of the report and Cui Li was the only journalist invited to the forum (Tong 2009: 22). A few days later, CYD published an essay about the report. In August 2005, Tong, on behalf of Zhicheng, submitted a proposal to the Beijing municipal justice bureau, essentially suggesting that the government purchase Zhicheng's services to provide legal aid to migrant workers at a cost that would be significantly cheaper than if the government took on those cases directly. In September 2005, the migrant worker arm of the NGO was registered as a nonprofit organization under the sponsorship of the justice bureau (Tong 2009: 25).

It appears that the CYD report had exercised some influence on the ability of Zhicheng's migrant worker arm to attain the nonprofit registration status. Some, however, may counter that the justice bureau's willingness to accept Tong's proposal had to do with numerous other factors, including Tong's already established ties to the justice system and his reputation as a legal expert. However, as a prominent CPC newspaper at the central state level, the CYD article probably added political legitimacy to Tong's request. The effects of the CYD article were observed in two instances. First, the CYD report was widely republished on the Internet by other media outlets. In fact, according to Tong, Cui Li informed him that the article was reposted on 40 Chinese media websites on the day that it was published (Tong 2009: 22). This means that the CYD article was effective in publicizing Zhicheng's research report. Second, Tong reported that in later state-organized meetings that he attended, senior government officials had made specific references to aspects of the report that were contained in the CYD article (Tong 2009: 22).

These facts suggest that we cannot overlook the potential impact of the CYD article on the establishment of formal linkage between Zhicheng's migrant workers arm and the justice bureau. At a minimum, it would not be far-fetched to suggest that the CYD article reduced the political risk for the justice bureau to sponsor the migrant worker arm. Indeed, by Tong's own account, the issue of providing legal

aid to migrant workers was still a politically sensitive issue in 2005, so much so that Tong's friends had counseled him against getting involved in this issue area (Tong 2009: 23). It was very likely that the CYD article signaled to the justice bureau that Tong and Zhicheng, as well as Tong's proposal about the government funding a non-state legal aid operation, were politically legitimate.

What can we learn from the case of Tong Lihua and Zhicheng about the importance of the Chinese NGO leader's media connections? First, media connections have indeed played an important role in helping Tong and Zhicheng gain access to the state's policymaking process. Indeed, at times the effects of media connections seem to have exercised independent effects vis-à-vis Tong's state affiliations. Second, as the 2001 tobacco lawsuit and the 2005 CYD article about Zhicheng's survey report on the migrant workers have illustrated, the Chinese NGO leader's media connections can guarantee the leader and his organization access to media outlets to publicize their activities and ideas. To be sure, as these two examples and the 2003 example involving the Xinhua journalists have illustrated, the media's willingness to publicize a Chinese NGO and its leader seemed to also be dependent on the NGO's ability to develop interesting stories. However, the case of Tong and Zhicheng also suggests that successful "story-telling" by the Chinese NGO has often relied on the NGO leader's ability to get the media to report about the story. In this case, strong personal connections to journalists and media organizations have made it easier for Tong and Zhicheng to get their stories publicized. This was demonstrated when Tong was successful in inviting Cui Li to attend the NGO's forum about the report.

However, Tong's relationship with a senior CYD journalist and the 2003 Xinhua example also suggest that Tong's state affiliations might have paved the way for the establishment of media connections that finally led to internal reports to China's top political leaders. Although the evidence cannot be considered robust, we cannot easily dismiss the possibility that Tong's strong state affiliations had exercised a positive effect on his media connections.

For Tong, who was not a professional journalist, having personal ties to top reporters like CYD's Cui Li has been valuable because those personal relationships have allowed Tong to use the Chinese media to promote Zhicheng's agenda. However, for Chinese NGO leaders who are professional journalists, their media connections might simply be their journalist background. In the following section, we will see how Xie Lihua has used the publications under her influence to publicize Rural Women's issues of interest and, by extension, establish collaboration with state organizations.

4.3 Xie Lihua and Rural Women

Xie Lihua has been a journalist for approximately 30 years. As a senior journalist with direct access to multiple national publications, Xie, unlike Tong, did not need to rely on personal connections with journalists to access the Chinese media.

Indeed, Xie's position as a senior editor of multiple national publications has meant that Xie has been her own media connection.⁵ And Xie's media connections have provided guaranteed channels to publicize Rural Women and, in the process, facilitated the establishment of collaborative relationships between Rural Women and sub-national state organizations. In fact, the impact of Xie's credentials as a senior state journalist was manifested from the very beginning, starting with the creation of the NGO.

For nearly 10 years before becoming the chief editor of the NGO's flagship publication *Rural Women Knowing All*, which eventually became known simply as *Rural Women*, Xie Lihua was a senior journalist and editor of *Women's News* (Shang 2007: 239),⁶ which is the leading women's newspaper in China under the sponsorship of the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF). The newspaper's relationship to the ACWF is quite similar to the relationship between the CYD and the CYL. As a reporter for *Women's News*, Xie had become familiar with the conditions of the rural women during her assignments (Interview with Xie Lihua 2009). In 1994, soon after the establishment of the magazine, Xie was promoted to become a deputy chief editor of *Women's News*.

In Chap. 3, we learned how Xie Lihua's affiliations with ACWF in general and *Women's News* in particular had allowed her to be in a unique position to establish Rural Women. Although it is undeniable that Xie's ACWF affiliation had a decisive impact on the creation of the NGO, Xie's position as a senior journalist at *Women's News* also made her uniquely qualified to do so, particularly since the first manifestation of the NGO was a magazine publication.

According to Xie, the magazine was created by *Women's News* a few years before Xie would take over its rein (Interview with Xie). For two years, *Women's News* had been searching for a qualified person or group to manage the publication. In addition to political reliability, the ideal person or group chosen to operate the publication should possess journalistic/media qualifications. However, for two years, no qualified state employee and no appropriate state organization came forward to take on the responsibility. Xie learned about the publication and submitted her proposal to take over its helm. *Women's News* clearly believed that she possessed the right qualifications and her proposal was approved. In this manner, not only was the NGO created, but its most important state linkage was also established.

⁵ In her career, Xie has been either a senior editor or the senior editor of three national publications: *Women's News*, *Rural Women*, and *Women Village Heads*, the last publication being the most recent addition to the NGO and was quite short-lived. Xie managed the latter two publications directly. Rural Women had compensated *Women's News* for circulating the latter two publications on behalf of the NGO.

⁶ Xie was a reporter, a member of the newspaper's editorial committee, the director of the department of family and social affairs, and was responsible for the newspaper's "marriage and family" columns.

As the case of Tong Lihua and Zhicheng demonstrated, the value of the NGO leader's media connections is due in part to the fact that those connections can facilitate access to media outlets so that the NGO can publicize its activities and issue positions. Because Tong was not employed in a media organization, it was necessary for him to establish connections with journalists and media organizations. As a senior editor for *Women's News* and the chief editor for two publications with national circulations, however, Xie could use the publications under her editorship to publicize her NGO.⁷ Although we might expect this to be the case for the two Rural Women publications that have been under her direct control, we might wonder whether Xie would have had similar influence with *Women's News*, in which she was a deputy chief editor and who, according to Xie, had become progressively less involved in the media organization's day-to-day operations (Interview with Xie).

As it turned out, Xie's influence at *Women's News* had not entirely dissipated. In fact, her editorial influence remained quite significant, as we can see in the following example. In August 2011, a group of University of Chicago students made a visit to the NGO's training center. After their visit, *Women's News* published a report about the visit (Pu 2011). The fact that the newspaper had published a report about the visit was suggestive of Xie's influence. But an even stronger indication of Xie's editorial influence was the fact that the news article was penned by a member of the Rural Women training center's staff.

This report was not an isolated incident. In fact, *Women's News* had served as a regular media outlet for publicizing the NGO and its activities. In December 2011, the newspaper published a lengthy report about the NGO's activity to experiment with newly-created materials to teach sex education to children in a county in Hebei, which is the province surrounding Beijing (Ren 2011). In July 2011, the newspaper published on its website a report about a conference on the legal rights of domestic workers, which was co-sponsored by Rural Women, the International Labor Organization, and Oxfam Hong Kong (Funu Wang 2011). Also, in September 2010, the newspaper published a full-length report about the NGO-hosted event for past members of the Migrant Women's Club (Funu Bao 2010).

In the process of publicizing the NGO, *Women's News* had also helped Rural Women establish long-term partnerships with sub-national ACWFs. As indicated earlier, an important ongoing nationwide project of the NGO has been the anti-illiteracy project. The project has been implemented across China through the sponsorship of books clubs by local ACWFs. Again, as described earlier, a major reason that sub-national ACWFs have been willing to sponsor the book clubs has been Xie's affiliation with *Women's News*. However, upon closer inspection, this factor, while critical, might not have been the only reason.

⁷ Administratively, the two NGO publications were publications of *Women's News*. Rural Women paid annual fees to the ACWF newspaper to "manage" the publications, including their circulation among sub-national ACWFs and their employees.

According to Li Tao, who was a senior staff member of Rural Women in the 1990s, there were important incentives for local ACWFs to partner with Rural Women. According to Li, local ACWFs often have difficulties representing the interests of local women effectively because their financial resources are extremely limited, resulting in heavy dependency on local governments (Shang 2007: 245). Consequently, local ACWFs have had to engage in activities in accordance with the interests of local CPC committees, which have generally emphasized family planning matters when it came to women's issues. Therefore, if local ACWFs wanted to better represent local women's interests and obtain the skills and resources to do so, they needed to find qualified partners. From the perspective of the local ACWFs, Rural Women was an ideal partner because the NGO shared the general objectives of the national ACWF. In addition, Rural Women had access to skills and resources that the national ACWF did not possess.

Li's analysis suggests two things about the local ACWFs' perception of Rural Women. First, the local ACWFs were able to distinguish Rural Women from the national ACWF. Second, the local ACWFs had sufficient knowledge about the NGO that they concluded that the NGO shared similar goals with the national ACWF. But how did the local ACWFs obtain the information about Rural Women?

Based on the data that are available, we can infer that local ACWFs most likely have benefited from access to *Women's News* and the Rural Women publications, to which the local ACWFs have had regular access. Indeed, *Women's News* is a must-read for all local ACWFs and the newspaper, in an agreement with Rural Women, had promised to circulate the NGO's publications to all the local ACWFs. In a nutshell, there has been no shortage of information about Rural Women for local ACWFs. In short, *Women's News* and Rural Women's own publications have served as effective outlets for publicizing the NGO and its activities, and in so doing they have facilitated the establishment of partnerships between the NGO and local ACWFs. And we must not overlook the fact that all the media reporting about Rural Women had taken place under Xie's editorial leadership.

There are some lessons that we can draw from the case of Xie Lihua and Rural Women. First, through this case study, we can see how having a leader who is a journalist can benefit a Chinese NGO. Many writers have observed that successful Chinese NGOs have been led by professional journalists. However, most have not specified how this leadership trait can serve the NGO. The case of Xie Lihua and Rural Women clarifies to some extent the causal connection between a leader with a journalist background and the success of the NGO. Second, along with the case of Tong Lihua and Zhicheng, the case of Xie Lihua and Rural Women demonstrates the media's value as a publicist for an NGO.

Third, as was the case with Tong Lihua and Zhicheng, the potential impact of Xie Lihua's state affiliations on her media connections cannot be easily dismissed. For example, starting with the creation of the *Rural Women* magazine and ending with the implementation of the book club project, one may understandably wonder

whether the respective effects of Xie's state affiliations and her media connections could be easily observed. In other words, was it her affiliations to *Women's News* that helped her acquire the magazine or was it her background as a journalist? Similarly, was it her ACWF affiliations that obtained the collaboration of the local ACWFs or was it the media publicity that was generated from the reporting directed by her? Xie is likely to respond that it has been her state affiliations, and that may be the logical answer. If so, then it would offer proof about the contingent nature of the NGO leader's media connections.

Lastly, this case has shown, to a limited extent, that the NGO leader's media connections can facilitate an NGO's formal linkages to state organizations. However, the evidence on this point is significantly stronger and more observable in the case of Wei Wei and the Little Bird Migrant Workers Mutual Support Hotline. And it is to that case that we will now turn.

4.4 Wei Wei and the Little Bird Migrant Workers Mutual-Support Hotline

State linkages are important for NGO successes in China and the NGO leader's state affiliations play a critical role in facilitating organizational linkages to the state. However, this observation presents a dilemma for aspiring NGO entrepreneurs who lacked the necessary political connections. How can these individuals help their NGOs acquire state linkages? Wei Wei's case shows that there is hope for the aspiring NGO entrepreneurs, so long as they acquire media connections.

In Chap. 3, we focused on Wei's affiliations with the Beijing municipal justice bureau. Through that connection, Wei has been able to use the legitimacy associated with state linkage to resolve labor disputes between his migrant worker clients and their employers. In the process, Wei and Little Bird also received state funding to finance their activities. But how was Wei able to do that given his disadvantaged background?

Indeed, in comparison to Tong Lihua and Xie Lihua, Wei Wei stood out in terms of his weak socio-political background. First, Wei did not receive a college education. Second, in a related manner, Wei had never worked as a white-collar professional. Third, he has never attained membership in the CPC. Fourth, unlike Tong and Xie, Wei did not enjoy institutional affiliations to state organizations before he became an NGO leader. Given the absence of these socio-political pedigrees, it would seem difficult, if not impossible, for Wei to develop state linkages.

The changing media system in China, however, has provided a means through which NGO leaders like Wei, who lacked the desired socio-political background, can still establish state linkages. It seems that Wei had recognized the potential advantages of media connections early in his NGO career. That awareness might have been developed when Wei was working in the advertising department of the

China News Agency, which is one of China's two national-level news agencies (the other being the Xinhua News Agency).⁸

In fact, Wei's success in securing a partnership between Little Bird and the municipal justice bureau can be traced back to his media connections. Here again, Wei differed from Tong and Xie in terms of how his media connections were developed. As we had seen from the case of Xie and Rural Women, Xie's media connections were essentially her professional background as a senior journalist. As for Tong, although the evidence is less clear, it would seem that Tong's media connections were developed as a result of Tong's state affiliations and his reputation as a legal expert. Wei did not possess either set of attributes. An important implication is that, unlike Xie and Tong, Wei would have had to do more to initiate contacts with the Chinese media. That was in fact what Wei had done.

In 1999, Wei developed the idea of starting a migrant worker mutual-support group. By his own account, he realized that he needed members and fellow workers in order to bring the idea to fruition. The challenge for Wei was therefore how to attract similar-minded migrant workers to join his initiative. It was at that time that Wei noticed that the *Beijing Youth Daily*⁹ published, on a daily basis, a free message board, on which there were approximately 20 messages each day through which migrant workers in Beijing were either looking for new friends or re-establishing old connections (Wei 2005: 37). Wei then wrote a letter to the newspaper, asking that a message be published in the paper for all migrant workers in Beijing who were interested in knowing more about Wei's idea of establishing a mutual-support group to contact him (Wei 2005: 39). The responses to his message resulted in the group's first meeting, which was attended by 29 migrant workers (Liu 2009: 97). Little Bird was thus born.

In the year-and-half after Little Bird's first meeting, Wei continued to initiate contact with the media. For instance, after establishing the group's first office, Wei and his colleagues hosted a lunch with some journalists to introduce the group (Wei 2005: 42). After reading that the Hong Kong-based Phoenix Television was soliciting innovative entrepreneurial ideas for a competition, with the winner receiving 200,000 Chinese yuan, Wei sent materials about his group to the television company's Beijing station, which led to Little Bird's being featured on a nationally-broadcast television program (Wei 2005: 48). Later, when Wei and his colleagues decided to engage in a tree-planting activity, Wei contacted the state-owned Beijing Television Company to inform its staff that a migrant worker group in Beijing would be engaging in a voluntary tree-planting activity in a part of Beijing's Haidian district that has historically been home to many migrant workers in the capital city. The result was that the group became prominently featured in a major nightly television program (Wei 2005: 50–51).

In many ways, these initial successes with "cold-calling" Chinese journalists and media organizations had to do with the fact that the plight of the migrant workers

⁸ The chief function of the China News Agency is to disseminate news stories about China to the foreign and overseas Chinese communities.

⁹ The *Beijing Youth Daily* is a newspaper of the Beijing municipal CYL.

was gaining increasing media interest by the turn of the twenty-first century. The large number of migrant workers and the social tensions resulting from their increases due to a rising demand for cheap labor to finance China's urbanization and export machine had contributed to the issue's media prominence. It is therefore unsurprising that a majority of China's most prominent migrant worker NGOs, including Little Bird, were established at this time.

In 2000, a year after Little Bird's establishment, Wei established a media connection that allowed the NGO to acquire a "media profile." In that year, at someone's suggestion, Wei contacted the host of the "Life Hotline" radio program at the state-owned Beijing Radio Station (Wei 2005: 65). He spoke to the program host and asked whether the program could publicize the group. The program host agreed and even asked to meet Wei. At the meeting, the program host told Wei that he wanted to give the Thursday night slot to Wei and Little Bird, renaming the Thursday night program as the "Night of the Migrants" (Wei 2005: 66). The new program would be hosted by Wei and his fellow migrant workers. By this time, Wei had already started to move the mutual-support group in the direction of becoming a counseling hotline, through which free legal advice would be given. The radio program advertised Little Bird's organizational goals and activities, and as a result, Little Bird began to gain consistent and increasing publicity. In addition, it solidified the direction of Little Bird's organizational development into a legal aid NGO. Through the radio program, migrant workers in and around Beijing have called Wei and Little Bird, seeking advice about many things, particularly legal issues. The radio program has become a mainstay of the NGO's work and it has been funded by foreign donors, including the United States Embassy in China.

With increasing publicity for Little Bird, more and more legal professionals had joined the organization's volunteer legal aid team. Meanwhile, the increasing publicity also attracted the attention of government agencies. Through a report of Little Bird by the *Beijing Evening News*, the justice bureau in Beijing's Dongcheng district, which is also home to Beijing municipal government, took notice of Little Bird and its legal aid work. The justice bureau contacted Wei and in September 2004 approved the collaboration between the Little Bird and a judicial office in the district to establish the country's first non-governmental labor dispute resolution committee, which would be led and operated by Little Bird (Liu 2009: 98). In this manner, Wei's institutional affiliation to the state and Little Bird's organizational linkage to the state were established.

To be sure, the collaboration between Wei's Little Bird and the justice bureau was a reflection of the general political environment in 2004, which was favorable to migrant worker NGOs. In 2003, as noted earlier, the Sun Zhigang case had caused a media furor that resulted in the government's decision to abolish the custody and repatriation system. Also in that year, Premier Wen Jiabao made a personal pledge to help migrant workers obtain their wage arrears. Consequently, government agencies at all levels, especially Beijing, took greater interest in defending the legal rights of migrant workers. Wei undoubtedly benefited from this change in the political wind.

However, without Wei's media connections that resulted in constant media coverage for Wei and Little Bird, he would not have been able to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the changing political environment with respect to migrant workers. More specifically, the positive media coverage resulting from Wei's media connections had legitimized Wei and Little Bird in the eyes of some state agencies. Through the positive reporting, media organizations sent a signal to state organizations that Wei and Little Bird were politically reliable. In this respect, Wei's media connections were instrumental in Wei's ability to take advantage of the new political opportunities.

The case of Wei Wei and the Little Bird demonstrates several items of importance concerning the value of media connections for Chinese NGOs. First, media connections can help Chinese NGO leaders who lack political pedigrees to achieve state linkages for their organizations. In this respect, this case shows that in some cases, the leader's media connections may impact his state affiliations in a direct and independent manner. The media can do so by publicizing the NGO and its activities. In the process of publicizing the NGO, the media send signals to state organizations about the NGO's political reliability. However, the salutary effects of media connections in this respect must still depend on the existence of appropriate political opportunities, thereby once again demonstrating the contingent nature of the media's effects. Nonetheless, an important implication of the case of Wei and the Little Bird is that without media connections, the Chinese NGO leader cannot expect media publicity for his organization, which has implications for the NGO's ability to establish state linkages.

4.5 Ma Yang and the On Action International Cultural Center

In comparison to Zhicheng, Rural Women, and Little Bird, On Action has been noticeably less effective since its establishment. What effects, if any, did Ma's lack of media connections have had on On Action's performance? Could On Action have benefited from a leader with stronger media connections? Let us examine the data for possible answers to these questions.

In the previous chapter, we learned that until July 2010, Ma did not possess institutional affiliations to a state organization that could confer organizational resources, state linkage, and access to the state policy apparatus. We also learned that the absence of institutional connections to an appropriate state organization have deprived On Action of state resources and access that might have made a difference in On Action's performance. However, in July 2010 Ma was able to establish a connection to the Beijing Municipal Social Work Commission.

In addition to the lack of appropriate state affiliations, Ma also did not possess strong media connections. This was clearly manifested in the extremely poor media coverage that Ma and On Action had received over the years. Although Ma had

professed his belief in the value of media coverage as a means to publicize the NGO and its work, the unfortunate reality was that between 2006, when Ma established On Action, and January 2012, the NGO and its activities have been covered by less than 10 media organizations, most of which were local and specialized in focus.¹⁰ This record certainly pales in comparison to the regular and extensive coverage by major Chinese and international media organizations that Wei and the Little Bird received, which involved over 100 Chinese and international media organizations as of 2012. Moreover, the great majority of the media organizations that reported about On Action were not major outlets, such as the CYD and the *Southern Weekend*. Furthermore, neither Ma nor On Action had been the featured subject in most of those reports.

What can we infer from the existing data about the likely effects of Ma's lack of media connections and the resultant poor media coverage? We can draw some inferences from a comparison between On Action's situation and the situations of the previous three NGO cases, especially that of Little Bird.

As illustrated earlier, the Chinese media have performed three functions that have facilitated state linkages for Chinese NGOs. Two of those functions, or roles, namely publicist and legitimating agent, are closely connected. To some extent, Zhicheng, Rural Women, and Little Bird have all benefited from these media functions. However, Little Bird has arguably derived the greatest benefit from the media publicity, since Wei Wei established the organization without any prior state linkages at either the individual or the organizational level. To recall, it was the media's coverage of Little Bird that attracted the attention of the municipal justice bureau, which led the bureau to contact Wei about the possibility of collaboration.

In 2006, when On Action was established, issues concerning migrant workers had remained a leading subject of media interest. It was during that year that Zhicheng was involved in a highly-publicized legal battle with Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) over the latter's practice of employing workers, most of whom were migrant workers, through third-party human resource companies (Tong 2009: 367–396). Meanwhile, in March 2006, partly in response to increasing incidents of labor disputes, especially those involving migrant workers, the NPC began to conduct research to revise the Labor Contract Law, which would go into effect in 2008. In other words, political and media interest in issues concerning migrant workers remained high when On Action was established, thus ensuring a relatively positive environment for Chinese migrant worker NGOs to publicize their activities, if they could gain access to the media. And Little Bird's case has shown that with proper media coverage, there were opportunities for migrant worker NGOs to establish useful state linkages.

¹⁰ This observation was based on a review of the published information on On Action's website in January 2012. The URLs were http://www.swcn.org.cn/news_more.asp?page=1&1m=56&1m2= and http://www.zxd.org.cn/news_more.asp?page=1&word=&1m=122&1m2=&1mname=&open=&n=&hot=&tj=. In April 2014, both URLs have apparently been disconnected and the posted information was not observed. However, relevant information posted on the organization's website indicates that On Action's coverage by the media has remained sparse and localized. See Zaixingdong, <http://www.zxd.org.cn/Article/List.asp?lmid=114&page=1> (accessed 27 April 2014).

Therefore, it is highly likely that Ma's lack of media connections deprived him of opportunities to publicize the NGO. In turn, the absence of media coverage had limited Ma's chances of establishing valuable connections with interested state organizations, which might have given On Action the resources, legitimacy, and access that were needed to become more effective in meeting its goals. Media connections alone probably could not have helped Ma and On Action, but they might have supplied the necessary push for Ma and On Action to develop connections with state organizations without having to change the NGO's mandate, which as shown in Chap. 3 was the price that Ma had to pay for him to establish state linkage for On Action.

4.6 Corroboration from Additional Cases: Friends of Nature, Yirenping, the Self-Empowerment Service Center for Disabled Persons

The importance of the leader's media connections can also be seen in NGOs that work in different issue areas in different localities, and at different stages of organizational development. The cases of the Friends of Nature (FON), Yirenping, and the Chongqing-based Self-Empowerment Service Center for Disabled Persons provide further evidence that the NGO leader's media connections have contributed to the creation of state linkages for the Chinese NGO and, ultimately, organizational success. Let us begin with the Friends of Nature.

Earlier in this book, we saw how the political connections of Liang Congjie, the principal FON founder, had contributed directly to the establishment of the ENGO's state linkage and its access to the state policy apparatus. Although Liang's media connections might not have had similarly direct effects on FON's linkage to the state, his media connections have allowed him to publicize issues that were of concern to FON and other Chinese environmental activists and groups. The resulting publicity had forced the government to take measures to address those concerns. Before we examine a specific example of the effects of Liang's media connections, let us review Liang's media connections.

Liang's connections to the media, both Chinese and international, were in large part the reflection of the fact that he was the leader of contemporary China's first ENGO. To be sure, even before FON was established, Liang had already developed friendships with Chinese journalists who became interested in environmental issues. One of those journalist friends, for example, was Dai Qing, who actually encouraged Liang to establish an ENGO.¹¹

¹¹ Elizabeth C. Economy (2004, 146). Economy credited Dai, along with two others, with establishing the "intellectual roots of environmental activism" in contemporary China.

Possessing media connections has allowed NGO leaders like Liang to have ready outlets to publicize issues of concern to them. The advertising of those issues, particularly if they involved government agencies, might result in government actions to address those concerns. This theory was put to the test, relatively successfully, early in FON's history. In 1995, a media uproar took place over extensive logging in a Yunnan county, which contributed to the near-extinction of the Yunnan snub-nosed monkey (Economy 2004: 149–151). Xi Zhihong, the man who noticed this problem, was an employee of the Yunnan Forestry Department and his protest to the department's leadership fell on deaf ears. Even the local media refused to report on the issue due to the sensitivity of the matter resulting from the involvement of the local Tibetan minority. A friend of Xi then contacted Tang Xiyang, a former *Beijing Daily* reporter who, along with Dai, was considered the intellectual leader of contemporary Chinese environmental activism. Tang then contacted Xi to write a letter to the then-head of the State Environmental Protection Commission about the linkage between the deforestation and the near-extinction of the snub-nosed monkey. Meanwhile, Tang passed the letter onto Liang, who then shared copies of the letter with international and Chinese media. The letter was first published by the Associated Press and was picked up quickly by Chinese media organizations. The immediate result of the media campaign was a central government investigation. Eventually, the central government ordered the local government to stop the illegal logging.

This example pertaining to Liang and FON is very similar to the incident involving the anti-leaking cover in Beijing's Old Summer Palace. In both cases, media connections involved the passing of relevant information to the media in the "old-fashioned" way. As China moved into the twenty-first century, the use of the Internet technology has become another means by which Chinese NGO leaders can build media connections. In particular, younger enterprising NGO leaders have often established their media presence on the Internet, through which they have developed their connections with traditional media organizations.

Yirenping's Lu Jun is a member of this generation of Chinese NGO leaders and an example of one who has successfully established media connections through the Internet. Lu Jun first became involved in the work to protect the interests of Hepatitis-B carriers when in 2003 he joined the online forum "In the Hepatitis B Camp" (*dangan xiangzhao*). The online forum was created in 2001 and as of 2010 it had 400,000 registered members.¹² The forum allowed members to post information as well as to share their views.

Lu became very active soon after he joined the forum. Consequently, he was elected to become a forum moderator. In that position, Lu started writing commentaries and petitions to government officials. It was in this position that he established connections with NPC delegates and members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), China's top political advisory body. He also wrote letters to media organizations, supplying them with information about the

¹² Hepatitis B Carriers BBS, <http://www.hbvhbv.com/english/> (accessed 18 January 2012).

disease as well as informing them that their writings and advertisements had violated anti-discrimination regulations. He even appeared on television shows to talk about the issue (Hao 2009). In a sense, despite operating on a technologically advanced platform, Lu was nevertheless engaging in relatively traditional media work. In any case, in this manner, Lu established his connections with the media organizations.

When Lu and several colleagues established Yirenping, those media connections that he developed stayed with him, and the effects of the media connections were immediate and clear. According to Lu, in the first two and half years after the establishment of the NGO, there were over 1,900 media reports about Yirenping and its work, or an average of 64 reports per month in a 30-month period (Hao 2009). Yirenping's numerous successes, including the 2009 Ministry of Health order to abolish mandatory Hepatitis-B testing, were testaments of Lu's extensive media connections, which have done much to publicize Yirenping and its issues of concern. The media publicity had pressured government agencies, state institutions such as commercial enterprises and educational institutions, and foreign enterprises to address charges of discriminatory practices. In sum, Lu's media connections, when coupled with his connections to like-minded NPC delegates and CPPCC members, contributed to Yirenping's success as an advocate for victims of discrimination.

Lu had done much to create the media connections that would eventually serve Yirenping's needs. At times, media connections have been developed not as a conscious act on the part of the NGO entrepreneur. Chen Yuying's situation is a case in point. Although the initial circumstances surrounding the development of Chen's media connections were tragic, the outcome ensured that the Self-Empowerment Center would be established with the blessings of the state, which allowed the NGO to achieve state linkage, acquire state resources, and access the state policy apparatus.

Chen gained considerable Chinese and international media attention as a result of her unintended involvement in the 19 November 1993 fire that engulfed a Shenzhen toy factory and which took the lives of over 80 young Chinese female migrant workers. As a result of the fire, Chen suffered severe burns to 75 % of her body, and her left leg had to be amputated while she lost three fingers on her left hand.

As one of the survivors of the factory fire, Chen became the focus of local and overseas media reporting. The nationally well-known muckraking newspaper *Southern Weekend* wrote stories about her (Self-Empowerment Center 2009). Similarly, Hong Kong newspapers, such as *The Sun*, had also published stories about Chen. Media attention continued after she returned to her hometown nearly a year later. Put simply, as tragic as her personal experience was, her identity as a survivor of the incident also made her an instant media celebrity.

As Chen's physical rehabilitation progressed, Chen began to provide free individual counseling and other services to handicapped persons who lived in her neighboring communities (Interview with Chen Jian 2008). In the process, she was motivated to consider establishing a more formal service platform. In early 2002, Chen approached the local civil affairs bureau, which had the responsibility for registering and managing NGOs, and the local handicapped person's association about her idea of establishing a service station for people with physical disabilities (Self-Empowerment Center 2009).

According to Chen's brother, Chen's status as a media celebrity was instrumental in the establishment of her NGO and the state linkages that it has enjoyed (Interview with Chen). As a result of her media celebrity status, Chen was able to obtain from the local civil affairs bureau nonprofit registration for her organization, and the local disabled persons' federation agreed to serve as the NGO's supervisory agency (Ibid). As noted earlier in this book, one persistent complaint by Chinese NGO practitioners and experts has been the challenges associated with attaining this registration status. One of those challenges is the difficulty of getting state agencies to serve as a supervisory agency. The fact that Chen was able to attain this legal status for her organization was impressive enough. Yet, even more impressive than this achievement was the fact that the civil affairs bureau approved the application in one month (Interview with Chen). In the process, all fees and cumbersome administrative procedures, such as a review of the organization's assets by an independent auditing firm, which are associated with an application for nonprofit registration, were waived by the bureau (Interview with Chen). At the same time that the NGO was officially registered, Chen was made the chairperson of the local association of physically disabled persons, which operates under the jurisdiction of the local disabled persons' federation (Interview with Chen). Chen was also appointed a senior manager in the local association of physically disabled persons. In sum, Chen's media connections have helped her and her NGO to achieve legitimacy to work in the county and access to make changes to local policies and practices.

Collectively, the cases of the Friends of Nature, Yirenping, and the Self-Empowerment Center show that, regardless of the issue area, the location, and the stage of organizational development, successful Chinese NGOs have been led by leaders with strong media connections. However, as was the case for the four core cases, the three shadow cases also demonstrate the facilitative nature of the Chinese NGO leader's media connections. In other words, media connections might not be sufficient for Chinese NGOs to establish optimal state linkages. Nonetheless, through the power of media publicity and the fact that the Chinese media occupy a position that straddles the public-private divide, successful Chinese NGOs have been able to enhance and even establish their relationships with the state.

4.7 Conclusion

Scholars have long observed the lack of a genuine civil society in contemporary China because the authoritarian state remains the dominant political actor and it has continued to obstruct any efforts to institutionalize civil society. The cases presented in this book support this long-held perspective. The reality is that state linkages remain important for civil society actors that want to be effective, particularly those working in non-democracies. Of course, in the eyes of most NGO practitioners in China, effectiveness is not defined in terms of successes in challenging and even subverting the state. To those NGO leaders who are featured here,

organizational effectiveness has been defined largely in terms of the extent to which the NGO can provide needed services to its “clients.” And the state controls important resources that could allow these NGOs to become better service providers. Therefore, it has made perfect sense for NGO leaders to pursue the establishment of positive linkages with the state.

However, this chapter shows that Chinese NGOs do not have to be led by leaders with political pedigrees and connections, which has interesting implications for the Chinese civil society’s current state of development. The fact that there are successful NGOs in today’s China, which are led by members of the non-elite, or “non-mainstream” (*feizhuliu*) individuals in Chinese parlance, suggests that Chinese civil society may be moving in a direction that is more congruent with the hopes and expectations of Western scholars, policy-makers, and pundits.

Although a Chinese NGO leader’s media connections have not helped his organization gain direct access to most state resources, media connections have allowed some NGO leaders to acquire state affiliations, thereby helping those leaders obtain state resources for their organizations in an indirect manner. And if the NGO leader already possesses state affiliations, then his media connections will most likely enhance those affiliations. Therefore, from the organization’s perspective, the media connections of the NGO leader should be quite valuable. However, the value of the media has not been limited to its contribution to the development of state linkages for the NGO. The media have also contributed to the NGO’s public legitimacy, both domestically and abroad. In this respect, the media have in many cases been instrumental in facilitating the development of international ties for the Chinese NGOs.

On this note, we are left with one final set of leadership ties to examine, i.e., international ties. How do the NGO leader’s international ties stack up against his media connections and state affiliations? More importantly, can the leader’s international ties facilitate state linkages for his organization? In the next chapter, the cases will provide some tentative answers to these questions.

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Chapter 5

Capacity Without Legitimacy: The Limits of International Ties

Abstract International resources have played an invaluable role in the creation of NGOs in contemporary China, mainly through financial support and human resource training. However, contrary to some views, the cases presented in this book show that international resources may not necessarily contribute to the political legitimacy of China's NGOs. In fact, optimal utilization of international resources by China's NGOs may require the prior establishment of state linkages and media connections to ensure an NGO's political legitimacy and its ability to access state resources that are necessary to realize the objectives of the NGO. In addition, the cases presented here show that state linkages and media connections may play a direct role in helping China's NGOs acquire international resources. These observations suggest that aspiring Chinese NGO entrepreneurs should not view international ties as the ultimate solution to their needs, but instead should invest considerable resources to developing state linkages and media connections.

Keywords International ties · INGO · Financial support · Human resource training · State linkages · Media connections

In 2009, the Chinese government's State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) issued the "Circular of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange on Relevant Issues Concerning the Administration of Donations in Foreign Exchange by Domestic Institutions" (SAFE 2009). Chinese NGO practitioners as well as foreign donors and experts expressed concern about the circular's implications, especially with respect to its stipulation that all foreign grant agreements must be legally notarized and presented to Chinese banks before the funds are released. A central challenge was that the foreign donors and their Chinese beneficiaries, as well as the Chinese banks, seemed to lack the knowledge on how the agreements would be notarized (Zhang 2010; Ford 2010; Davis 2010). What made the situation worse was that SAFE made no effort to clarify the uncertainties.

In general, for Chinese NGOs, the majority of which are dependent on foreign funding, this circular, if implemented, represented a potentially critical blow. In

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addition, the announcement about the new set of regulations was, although not entirely surprising given what seemed to be the state's increasing hostility toward members of the Chinese civil society, was nonetheless disconcerting because it represented another shift in the state's attitude about international funding for Chinese NGOs. There was thus noticeable concern among members of the Chinese NGO community that most, if not all, Chinese NGOs would have their lifelines cut by this new regulation.

The SAFE circular provides an illustration of the power of the Chinese government as well as the constantly shifting nature of its attitude toward NGOs. At the same time, this example underscores the importance of international funding for Chinese NGOs. Indeed, it is difficult to underestimate the importance of foreign financial support for Chinese NGOs. Nearly every NGO in contemporary China has received international funding at some point in its organizational lifetime. All of the most prominent and successful NGOs have been the recipients of foreign largess. And the most successful organizations have consistently and continuously benefited from international support.

The positive effects of international ties, notably foreign funding, has been observed among NGOs operating at different stages of organizational development, working on different issue areas, and locating in different geographical regions. However, the relationship between international ties and NGO effectiveness is not a clear-cut one. There are important conditions that facilitate the positive effects of international ties for NGO effectiveness. In particular, the cases in this book show that the positive effects of international ties on NGO effectiveness are contingent on the presence of the following conditions: (1) the NGO leader's institutional affiliations with state organizations and (2) the leader's media connections.

This finding suggests that the effects of international ties on the Chinese NGO's ability to achieve organizational effectiveness may be less significant than those of state linkages and media connections. In particular, it appears that international ties do not facilitate state linkages, which is a critical element of an effective NGO. Given the importance of international resources for the capacity of Chinese NGOs, the leader's international ties cannot be dismissed. However, that its utility has been dependent on the leader's state affiliations tells us much about the power of state linkage for successful Chinese NGOs. Collectively, the importance of state linkages and the value of media connections vis-à-vis international ties demonstrate the greater significance of domestic factors for NGO effectiveness in contemporary China.

5.1 International Ties: Functions and Limitations

There is no denying that international forces have played a positive role in civil society-building in contemporary China. In particular, international events and actors have contributed to the establishment of individual NGOs in China and the NGO sector's subsequent growth. For example, experts have noted the positive

impact of the Fourth World Conference on Women, which was held in Beijing in 1995, in launching many individuals, including Rural Women's Xie Lihua, onto careers in the NGO sector. Through these individuals, the 1995 conference contributed significantly to the formation of "an independent Chinese women's NGO sector" (Kaufman 2012: 594). In addition, international NGOs (INGO) have produced demonstration effects: China's NGO entrepreneurs have established their organizations because they wanted to create Chinese NGOs similar to those found outside the country (Chen 2012: 80). In this respect, many founders of Chinese NGOs benefited from valuable experiences working for prominent INGOs operating in China (Chen 2012: 84). These experiences suggest that, as a type of relationship, international ties can yield tangible benefits for China's NGO leaders, the most significant of which is resources to build up organizational capacity.

In general, international actors have provided two types of resource support to Chinese NGOs. Financial resources have constituted one type of support (Chen 2012: 85–87). As mentioned earlier, most Chinese NGOs are heavily dependent on international funding. The reasons for this phenomenon are many, but they mostly have to do with the fact that the Chinese NGOs have had difficulties accessing local resources. Chinese government and local private enterprises have generally been unwilling to share their resources with NGOs. At the same time, individual giving in China has not been significant. Although this situation is evolving as government purchases of NGO services (Teets 2011, 2013) and private corporate donations have been experiencing incremental rises, there is no clear indication that Chinese NGOs will be able to forego international funding any time soon in the near future.

Human resource training has constituted the second type of support to enhance organizational capacity (Chen 2012: 84). In addition to providing financial resources directly to Chinese NGOs, Chinese NGO workers have also benefited from participation in training programs as part of the efforts of international donors and their Chinese partners to engage in NGO capacity building. Training venues have taken place both inside and outside China. For example, the leaders of Zhicheng, Rural Women, and Yirenping, as well as many full-time staff members of the respective organizations, have gone overseas, including Hong Kong, to participate in training conferences or on short-term fellowships. Chinese NGOs, such as Little Bird, have also conducted in-country training programs on behalf of their international donors.

Notwithstanding some writings noting that international ties have enhanced the legitimacy of local Chinese NGOs (Shieh 2009: 35; Chen 2012: 96), the verdict is still out on this claim. In fact, even though international NGOs and international funding have been operating in China for a long time, the Chinese government has continued to express concern that international support of local NGOs has constituted the key vehicle through which foreign subversive ideas and activities have entered China. Many in fact believed that the SAFE circular illustrated at the beginning of this chapter was a reflection of the state's uneasiness about international forces' potential impact on domestic political situation through their provision of financial resources to Chinese NGOs. Many Chinese NGO leaders have thus expressed the view that international ties, while providing the necessary

organizational resources, may negatively affect the political legitimacy of their persons and organizations (interview with Wei Wei 2009; interview with Xie Lihua 2009). In this sense, an important limitation of international ties is its potentially negative impact on a Chinese NGO's ability to achieve state linkage. Therefore, alleviating the state's concerns is very important for unleashing the benefits of international ties.

The situation in China closely resembles the situations in other non-democracies, where the positive effects of international ties have been found to be premised on the presence of domestic factors, notably the attitude of the state. In her study of the effects of foreign assistance on NGOs in post-communist Russia, Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom observed that international aid has had the most positive effects on local NGOs in Russian regions with relatively supportive local states (Sundstrom 2006). With respect to China, analysts have likewise observed that the successes of donor-supported migrant worker NGOs in China have depended a great deal on the support of the local states (Zhang and Smith 2009; Hsu and Hasmath 2013).

To a significantly lesser extent, however, analysts have not written about the impact of the media on the NGO's international support. However, the cases presented in this book show that media connections have in some cases had direct causal effects on Chinese NGOs' access to international support. In this vein, not only had media connections resulted in positive media exposure that led to access to international support; negative media exposure appears to have had similarly strong, albeit negative, impact on access to international support. In fact, negative media exposure has in some cases removed international support from those NGOs that had previously possessed foreign support.

An important reason that state linkages and media connections have acted as catalysts of international ties has to do with the fact that international donors have shown a general proclivity to work with Chinese NGOs that have been deemed politically legitimate. State linkages and media connections serve as signals to the international donors that the Chinese individuals and organizations are legitimate entities, which suggest that such organizations are less likely to attract the ire of the state (Zhang and Smith 2009). Similarly, international donors have adopted the view that NGOs with political legitimacy have been more likely to access the state's policy apparatus and have greater potential to develop national networks (Ibid). Furthermore, international donors have subscribed to the general perception that organizations with formal state linkages, such as the nonprofit registration status, have been more likely to comply with laws and regulations, which has important implications for organizational accountability (Ibid). In short, the importance of organizational legitimacy has mattered not only for the state and the local NGO; it has also acted as a positive signal to the international donors about the reputation, political and otherwise, of the NGO in question, which has implications for its potential as a local partner to international donors.

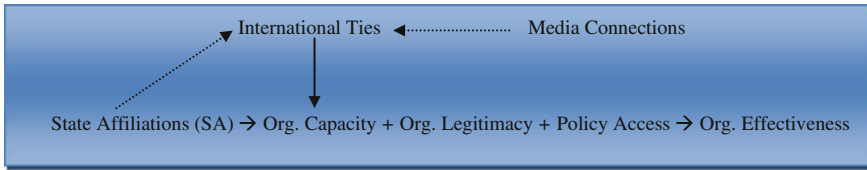


Fig. 5.1 International ties and organizational effectiveness

To a large extent, a Chinese NGO's access to international resources has been linked to its leader's international ties. But those international ties have in most cases been preceded by the leader's possession of state affiliations, media connections, or both. In fact, the cases presented in this book show that a Chinese NGO leader's international ties have often been the direct outcome of the leader's state affiliations and/or media connections. In a nutshell, not only have the Chinese NGO leader's state affiliations and media connections conditioned the positive effects of her international ties; state affiliations and media connections may even *cause* the leader's international ties.

In Fig. 5.1 we can see how the three types of leadership ties interact with each other to impact organizational capacity. As indicated, international ties often have direct effects on a Chinese NGO's organizational capacity. However, enhanced organizational capacity is only one element of organizational effectiveness. In fact, as important as organizational capacity is, the cases in this book show that organizational legitimacy and policy access may be more valuable, especially for advocacy NGOs. The reason is obvious: an advocacy NGO will have limited success in achieving its goals if it cannot access the state's policymaking process, no matter how much money or other material resources it has at its command. Yet, the direct effects of international ties on the latter two elements are insignificant, if non-existent. Instead, the NGO leader must rely on his state affiliations and, to a lesser extent, his media connections to attain organizational legitimacy and access to the policymaking process. More interestingly, as mentioned earlier, international ties may constitute an outcome of the prior existence of state affiliations and media connections.

5.2 Tong Lihua and the Zhicheng Public Interest Law NGO

Just as he has built up strong state affiliations and media connections, Tong Lihua has established extensive international ties. Much of Tong's international ties are connected to the United States. In 2004, Tong served as a PILNET fellow at the Columbia University's School of Law (Interview with Zhicheng research director

Zhang Wenjuan 2008; Tong 2009: 181).¹ Later, in early 2005, Tong was invited, along with several other Chinese lawyers, by the New York-based National Committee on U.S.-China Relations to learn about public interest law in the United States (Tong 2009: 22–23). During that visit, the American sponsor arranged for Tong, at his request, to visit the California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. in Modesto, California, which was funded by the U.S. government to provide legal services to rural migrant workers. The experience inspired Tong to approach the local Beijing government to fund the provision of free legal aid to migrant workers (Tong 2009: 22–23).

In October 2006 in Beijing, at the annual conference of the Multinational Association of Independent Law Firms (Multilaw), which is an association of law firms in over 70 countries, Tong was given the association's 2006 award in recognition of his work in public interest law. The award reflected Tong's growing international prestige, which has since then been enhanced through his participation in several rounds of human rights dialogue between China and the European Union (EU) as well as visiting fellowships to foreign academic institutions, including a visiting fellowship at the Yale University School of Law in summer 2008.

Befitting the extent of its leader's international ties, Zhicheng has gained access to numerous international sources for organizational resources. Zhicheng has in fact enjoyed strong ties with many benefactors, which cut across countries and regions and which include governments, international organizations, and INGOs. In particular, Zhicheng has received support from the Ford Foundation, the Asia Foundation, the American Bar Association, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the EU, and individual European governments. Those connections have provided the material resources for Zhicheng to become a leading advocacy NGO for migrant workers and minors. Through a few illustrations, we can see how international resources have supported Zhicheng's work.

An important aspect of the work of advocacy NGOs around the world is to conduct original research and produce published reports based on the research. Like other advocacy NGOs, and perhaps even more so, Zhicheng's staff has been extremely prolific with respect to the production of published writings. Up until 2009, Zhicheng's staff had produced over 50 publications. And international assistance has made much of the NGO's work in this area possible. For example, Zhicheng's first published report about the rights of migrant workers, which was based on cases that the NGO had handled and nationwide surveys that the NGO had conducted, was supported by the UNDP and the Belgian government (Interview with Zhicheng staff lawyer Wang Fang 2008). These published reports have established Zhicheng's staff as the leading legal experts in China on migrant workers and the rights of minors.

¹ PILNET (<http://www.pilnet.org>) was originally established in 1997 as a program in the Columbia University's School of Law. The mission of the organization has been in part to promote public interest law and to build civil society in post-communist countries.



Books on migrant workers, legal governance in China's rural areas, and minors by Tong Lihua and his colleagues. *Source* The author

Similarly, international resources helped Tong to establish Zhicheng's national networks of lawyers and legal aid stations to provide free legal aid to migrant workers and minors. Between 2007 and 2009, for example, a Hong Kong philanthropist had contributed 1.5 million Hong Kong dollars to the implementation of a national network of lawyers engaged in the protection of the rights of minors (Tong 2009: 114). In 2007, the Asia Foundation had also allotted funds to support this project (Ibid). In 2008, the Asia Foundation deepened its commitment to Zhicheng by supporting the NGO's project to set up migrant worker legal aid stations in 20 provinces (Ibid). Similarly, in 2007–2008, through the UNDP, the Belgian government provided \$500,000 to the NGO to establish migrant worker legal aid stations in 15 provinces (Interview with Zhang).

International support has also built up Zhicheng's human resource capacity. International resources have allowed its staff lawyers, including Tong, to undertake short-term studies overseas, notably in the United States. Tong, as noted above, had been a visiting fellow at Columbia University, had been sponsored by the Committee on U.S.-China Relations to learn about rural legal aid in the United States, and had been a visiting fellow at the Yale University School of Law. However, other members of the NGO staff have also had similar opportunities. When I visited the NGO's migrant worker arm, Wang Fang, the staff lawyer who met with me, informed me that she was preparing to study at Yale University for 6 months (Interview with Wang).² Similarly, Zhang Wenjuan, the director of research, had been a visiting fellow at Columbia University and interned at the American Bar

² Tong was also a visiting fellow at the school at the same time, but for a shorter period of time.

Association (Interview with Zhang).³ In 2011, the NGO's manager of the national network of migrant worker legal aid stations also became a PILNET fellow. The overseas experience has helped individual staff lawyers to become better public interest lawyers and together these individual experiences have made Zhicheng the best-staffed public interest law NGO in China.

The NGO staff's overseas experience and the relationships that they had established there, notably in the United States, have also provided the organization with foreign student interns who provided assistance to the NGO in matters concerning the organization's international connections. When I met with Zhang Wenjuan, she introduced me to two Stanford University undergraduate students who were interning at the NGO at the recommendation of their professors. In the summer of 2011, the NGO hosted three American student interns, including a law student from the University of William and Mary. The law student's professor had recommended her to the NGO for a summer internship. And the student stated that one of the projects in which she was asked to be involved was to contribute to a report about the experiences in other countries with respect to pro bono legal work, which was to be submitted to the All-China Lawyers Association (ACLA).⁴ In this manner, Zhicheng has utilized foreign intellectual capital to build up its own intellectual capital.

Zhicheng's international support seems to have derived significantly from Tong's international ties. This assumption is logical given the fact that international donors have often based their decisions to provide support to Chinese NGOs on interpersonal networks involving the leaders of those Chinese NGOs. However, we are still left with an even more fundamental question, which is how Tong had acquired his international ties. An examination of the process through which Tong had acquired his international ties shows the importance of Tong's state affiliations. We can begin the process tracing in 2004.

As mentioned earlier, that year Tong became a PILNET fellow. It so happens that during the same year, Zhicheng partnered with the national Communist Youth League (CYL) to implement a project to train state officials involved in the provision of legal aid to minors in 12 mid-western Chinese provinces (Tong 2009: 40). The EU was the benefactor of the project. In particular, the Zhicheng-CYL partnership was one of the projects funded by the China-EU inter-governmental judicial collaboration in 2004. It also represented the first time that Zhicheng's work had received international support. As was shown in Chap. 3, Tong has developed extensive ties to CYL and its affiliated organizations, and those personal ties have

³ As of February 2014, Zhang, the director of research, was reported to be pursuing an LL.M. at Columbia University. US-Asia Law Institute, "Zhang Wenjuan of Zhicheng Public Interest Lawyers Organization Speaks at USALI," New York University School of Law, <http://usali.org/media-entities/zhang-wenjuan-of-zhicheng-public-interest-lawyers-organization-speaks-at-usali-2/> (accessed 10 May 2014).

⁴ Laura Bain, "Second Week and Sanlitun," William and Mary Law School, <http://law.wm.edu/academics/intellectuallife/researchcenters/postconflictjustice/studentsummerblogs/laurabain/second-week-and-sanlitun.php> (accessed 2 October 2011).

benefited Zhicheng. These state ties, including ties to the justice system, have in all likelihood played a significant role in helping Tong gain access to the EU funding, given the fact that the Chinese government almost certainly did not advertise openly the availability of this resource.

One may conclude from this illustration that not only did Tong's state affiliations helped him develop his personal ties to the international community, in fact it was his state affiliations that allowed him to gain access to international resources for his organization. However, one may also argue that the evidence from this example is quite circumstantial. But Tong has provided another example that more clearly indicated the importance of Tong's state affiliations in establishing his international ties and garnering international resources for Zhicheng.

In August 2006, after Zhicheng's migrant worker arm was formally established, Tong was invited to participate in a meeting held by the State Council's Office of Poverty Alleviation. At the meeting, he met a UNDP representative. During the conversation with the UNDP representative, Tong introduced Zhicheng's migrant worker legal aid program (Tong 2009: 27). After the meeting, the UNDP representative contacted Tong to inform him that the Belgian government wanted to provide \$500,000 through the UNDP to support a project in China. The UNDP representative suggested that Tong submit an application. In November 2006, UNDP selected Tong's application, which proposed to establish migrant worker legal aid stations in 15 provinces. Because the UNDP/Belgian government fund was allocated through the Chinese government, the project had to be approved by the latter. Sure enough, the Chinese Ministry of Justice approved the project.

This example shows that in some cases the ability to access state resources precede the ability to access international resources if the Chinese NGO leader wants to meet his organizational goals. An important organizational goal for Tong was the development of national networks of legal aid offices and public interest lawyers. To overcome the legal and political barriers to the establishment of such formal networks, Tong has used his state affiliations to serve as the front for the NGO project. In this case, Tong's ACLA affiliations allowed him to do just that. As it turned out, although Tong and his Zhicheng colleagues had drafted the proposal and submitted the funding application to the UNDP, the official beneficiary of the funding was the ACLA (Tong 2009: 28). This fact undoubtedly made it easier for the Ministry of Justice to approve the project. And even though the UNDP had selected Tong's application before the ministry gave its stamp of approval, it would not be inconceivable for the ministry to veto the UNDP selection if the ministry had concerns about any aspect of the project, including Zhicheng. In other words, from the perspective of the Chinese NGO, the utility of international resource is maximized only when the funded project has been given the state's blessings. Indeed, once the ministry gave its approval, ACLA officially commissioned Zhicheng to administer the project. Therefore, although on paper ACLA was the project coordinator and recipient of the UNDP funding, in practice it was Zhicheng that managed the project and the international funding that supported it.

This illustration also highlights the value of state linkages in another way. Tong's state affiliations were probably an important factor in his invitation to attend an official government function at the State Council, which oversees all ministries and ministerial-level government agencies. Tong's attendance at the government meeting gave him the opportunity to establish contact with a representative of an international inter-governmental organization. As a result of that contact, Zhicheng was able to gain access to international funding for a project that was a very important element of the NGO's mission. In a nutshell, it was Tong's state affiliations that gave him the opportunity to develop his international ties (to the UNDP representative), which allowed Zhicheng to be in a position to receive international support.

The central lesson here is that, for the Chinese NGO, the value of international support is highly dependent on the organization's state linkages. Moreover, the Chinese NGO leader's state affiliations can contribute directly to the establishment of the leader's international ties, which can then lead to international support for the NGO.

5.3 Xie Lihua, Wu Qing, and Rural Women

To a large extent, Rural Women's experience with international ties has mirrored that of Zhicheng. However, Rural Women's experience also allows us to see the media's possible impact on international support.

Before we analyze these different factors, let us first gain an understanding about the nature and extent of Rural Women's international support and the international ties of the NGO's two leaders. In the previous chapters, we had focused primarily on Xie's leadership ties. In this chapter, we will pay more attention to Wu Qing, who played a valuable role in the creation of the NGO and was a co-founder, along with Xie, of the Practical Skills Training Center in 1998. Indeed, it is both appropriate and necessary for us to do so given that Wu Qing has played a prominent role in obtaining international resources for Rural Women, especially its training center.

Since its creation in 1993, Rural Women has become the leading Chinese NGO that promotes the interests of Chinese rural women, and international support has played a big role in making this possible. Indeed, international funding has constituted nearly 100 % of the NGO's resource base (Interview with Gao Guanglin, chief executive of Rural Women Cultural Development Center, 2008).⁵ And a range of international organizations has constituted that resource base. Approximately 47 % of the NGO funding came from foreign foundations (Ibid). More than 10 % of the funding came from multinational corporations like Microsoft. Nearly 30 % of the funding came from other international groups and individual foreigners. All in all, only 10 % of the NGO's financial base came from domestic sources, namely state agencies.

⁵ In 2011, Gao stepped down from this position.

International financial support has been critical for Rural Women to undertake projects that are directly connected to the organization's goals. For example, the Practical Skills Training Center, where the NGO administers training programs for young female migrant workers as well as rural women across China, has received funding from multinational corporations such as J.P. Morgan, Exxon Mobile, and the Barclays Bank, as well as foreign governments and private foreign persons (Rural Women 2010). The Ford Foundation has also been a consistent benefactor of the training center. Similarly, the anti-illiteracy project has been funded by Goldman Sachs and the Tiger Woods Foundation. The book club project, which has been a component of the anti-illiteracy project and which has established 50 book clubs in rural villages across 11 Chinese provinces, was partially funded by Oxfam Hong Kong, which has also supported Rural Women's legal aid project. The United Nations has also provided financial support to the NGO's project to promote the protection of rural girls from sexual predation. Lastly, the Asia Foundation had funded the NGO's involvement in the writing of the NGO shadow report on China for the United Nations' Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Like Zhicheng, international support had also allowed the staff of Rural Women to receive training. In addition to the numerous overseas trips and personal meetings with foreign dignitaries for the NGO's founder and co-founder, other staff members also took part on trips outside China. In 1998, for example, a staff member was sent to George Mason University in Virginia's Fairfax County, a suburb of Washington, D.C., to participate in a one-year training program on strategic management (Shang 2007: 248). Oxfam Hong Kong has been especially active in supporting the NGO staff to receive training and participate in exchanges in Hong Kong (Ibid). Meanwhile, experts and organizations outside China have visited the NGO to provide training to the NGO staff. These international exposures have introduced ideas that impacted Rural Women's organizational goals (Ibid).

The two leaders of Rural Women, especially Wu Qing, possess extensive international ties. To a certain extent, Wu's international ties have been unsurprising given her family history. Wu's parents were educated in the United States. Her father was trained at Dartmouth College and Columbia University after he graduated from China's Tsinghua University. Her mother in turn earned her graduate degree from Wellesley College. Although Wu was born in China, Wu's parents took her and her siblings to Japan in 1945 when Wu's father was appointed a member of the Chinese diplomatic delegation there. In 1951, the family returned to China. In 1961, Wu graduated from the Beijing Foreign Language Institute (later renamed the Beijing Foreign Studies University), where she remained as an English instructor until her retirement in recent years.⁶

⁶ Wu has an excellent command of the English language. I had an opportunity to listen to her speak to a group of U.S. college students engaging in short-term study at the Beijing Foreign Studies University. Her delivery was smooth and natural. In addition, she deftly handled on-the-spot questions from the students.



A group of college students from the United States visiting a migrant community on the outskirts of Beijing. *Source* The author

In the early 1980s, Wu began to establish her own international connections when she was sent by the foreign language institute to study at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) for one year (Phoenix Television 2008). At MIT Wu came into contact with American community activists. By Wu's own account, inspired by what she had seen and learned in the United States, she wanted to promote the rule of law in China (Ibid). Therefore, immediately upon her return to Beijing, she accepted the foreign language institute's nomination to become a delegate to the Haidian district legislature and in 1989 she was appointed to become a delegate to the Beijing municipal legislature, a position that she kept until 2004. While in office, Wu developed a reputation as a consistent and persistent challenger of government practices and the political status quo, as well as a tireless advocate of women's rights. In fact, she is widely known as the first delegate to the Beijing municipal legislature who voted openly against government measures.

Wu's international ties continued to deepen since her time at MIT in the early 1980s. In 1993–1994, Wu once again visited the United States in an academic capacity, this time as a Fulbright Fellow at Stanford University. In 1995, Wu became a member of the Geneva-based Women's World Summit Foundation, which achieved United Nations consultative status. Wu eventually became the president of the foundation. Between 1996 and 2002, she was also a board member of the Global Fund for Women. In 2001, she was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award.

A review of Wu's personal history offers some clues about the origins of her international ties. Although we can infer logically that Wu's personal experiences in the United States had exposed her to new ideas and perhaps even established some personal connections, it was probably her political activism after her return to China that truly solidified her international reputation and expanded her extensive international ties. This seems to be a logical connection given that she began to acquire important international recognition in the 1990s, approximately 10 years after she began her activism as a "trouble-making" Chinese legislator. Put simply, Wu's international reputation has been due as much to her state affiliations as to her foreign experiences.

By the 1990s, Wu had already established her international reputation and was in a position to help Chinese NGO entrepreneurs working on women's issues to obtain much-needed international support. One of her first significant contributions to Rural Women was her introduction of Dr. Mary Ann Burris to Xie Lihua. Dr. Burris was the Ford Foundation program officer in Beijing responsible for developing the foundation's programs on reproductive health and women's rights.⁷ This connection turned out to be Xie's very first international tie. At the time of the referral, Xie was struggling to operate the *Rural Women Knowing All* magazine with the limited funding that she had received from the *Women's News* of the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF). After the meeting with Xie, Burris offered to fund the magazine for three consecutive years if Xie agreed to include a regular column about reproductive health in the magazine. Ford Foundation funding was in the form of an annual purchase of 10,000 copies of the magazine at an annual cost of 96,000 Chinese yuan. The magazines would then be distributed, free of charge, to women's federations and women living in China's poorest regions (Deng 2000: 222–223).

Xie's relationship with Burris would continue to grow while Burris worked in Beijing until 1995. Between 1993 and 1995, Burris helped Xie gain international experiences and develop new international ties when she arranged for Xie to attend two international women's conferences in 1994 and 1995, respectively (Interview with Xie Lihua 2009). The interesting thing is that in both cases Xie attended as a member of an ACWF delegation (Ibid).⁸ Later, during the 1995 UN Women's Conference in Beijing, Burris arranged for a dozen international women's NGOs and journalists to visit Rural Women, further exposing Xie to foreign practices while publicizing Xie and her operation (Deng 2000: 223). Xie again participated in the UN conference as an ACWF staff and an outcome of Xie's participation in the 1995 conference in Beijing was her introduction to Hillary Clinton. Since then, Xie had met the future U.S. senator and secretary of state on five occasions. The most recent meeting took place in 2010, when Clinton was in Beijing to participate in the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue. At that time, Xie was invited to meet

⁷ Burris's Chinese name was "Bai Mei" (White Plum). She is now the founder and executive director of the Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health (<http://www.ticahealthy.org>).

⁸ Xie told me that attendance at the conferences had to be approved by ACWF and the federation expected the Chinese participants to represent the federation.

Clinton on a Chinese Central Television program in which Clinton was the featured guest.

Here it is worthwhile for us to pause and trace the development of Xie's international ties closely. First, it is clear that Wu Qing played a foundational role in developing Xie's international ties. Second, Xie's relationship with the Ford Foundation in general and Burris in particular had a clear and immediate impact on Rural Women's capacity and the relationship was instrumental in allowing Xie to develop more international ties. Moreover, other than the building of additional international ties, those international experiences served to inspire Xie with ideas about the ideal objectives of a women's NGO and the types of projects that a women's NGO should undertake (Shang 2007: 242). In this manner, Xie would eventually enhance her and Rural Women's international reputations, which would lead to the building of more international ties, because the NGO's projects and organizational goals would become more in line with international practices, thereby gaining the approbation of international donors.

Lastly, and perhaps most significantly, even though Wu Qing was the direct catalyst in Xie's ties with Burris and the Ford Foundation, Xie's ACWF affiliations played a role in allowing her to take advantage of Burris's arrangements, as evidenced by Xie's attendance at the two international conferences between 1993 and 1995 as an ACWF delegate as well as her participation in the UN Women's Conference as an ACWF representative. Although we cannot say with great certainty that it would have been impossible for Xie to take part in these activities if she had not been affiliated with ACWF, I think that it is safe to say that it would have been very difficult for her to take advantage of those opportunities had she not been affiliated with ACWF. The main reason is that as the CPC-sanctioned corporatist body on women's issues ACWF, in essence, monopolizes the issue area of women's affairs in China. In this manner, it determines the overall agenda for the issue area and how other actors, both non-state and foreign, are able to take part in the issue area. Therefore, it should be of no surprise that the most prominent Chinese NGO leaders in the area of women's issues have all possessed some form of connection to ACWF. In addition, we must not forget that the state's decision to crack down on the students in 1989 had just taken place a few years before. The regime was therefore still in a high state of alert about factors that may impact the domestic political situation to the ruling party's detriment. In this context, Xie's affiliations with ACWF provided the political cover that she needed to take advantage of these international opportunities without arousing the state's suspicion.

Just as the international ties of the NGO leader are affected by her state affiliations, the salutary effects of international support for the NGO are conditioned upon the respective leaders' state affiliations. This was clearly evident with both the establishment and operation of the training center and the book club project. As mentioned earlier in this section, Rural Women have received tremendous international support for both the training center and the book club project. However, as demonstrated in Chap. 3, neither the training center nor the book club project could have been established and sustained without Xie's ACWF affiliations because

ACWF has been the official state sponsor of the training center while the book club project involved the cooperation of local ACWFs. In other words, international resources are useful to the extent that they help an NGO engage in projects that serve the NGO's organizational objectives. However, international ties are unlikely to help the NGO establish the state linkages necessary to implement projects that require state collaboration.

In this respect, the book club project also suggests that the salutary effects of Xie's international ties were conditioned upon her media connections. Recalling that in Chap. 4 we had discussed how Rural Women was able to collaborate with the local ACWFs in part because the *Women's News* and the NGO's own publications had served as effective vehicles to advertise the NGO. In this manner, Xie's media connections have facilitated state support for a project that was directly connected to the NGO's objective. With the state support the NGO also achieved legitimacy. As a consequence, as was the case with Tong and Zhicheng, Xie could use international resources freely without being concerned about arousing the state's suspicion. In the process, international resources have helped to ensure the project's successful implementation.

The media connections of both NGO leaders might have exercised more direct effects on their ability to attract international resources for Rural Women. After all, both Xie and Wu have been widely featured in foreign publications, and those international reports have likely contributed to increased media exposure for the NGO, which in all likelihood served as a means to draw international support.⁹ But admittedly the evidence for this connection is relatively sketchy.

To a large extent, the case of Rural Women teaches us the same lessons that we have learned from the case of Zhicheng, albeit with some minor twists. As was the case with Zhicheng, the state affiliations of the Rural Women leaders were likely to be catalysts in the development of their respective international ties. However, the means by which Rural Women received the international resources and the nature of those resources were different from Zhicheng's. Whereas Zhicheng had used Tong's state affiliations to obtain international funding that was being distributed by the state, Xie's state affiliations allowed her to obtain approval to use international resources that were not filtered through the state, even though the state most likely had an important say in whether its employees were allowed to access those resources. Moreover, in Rural Women's case, we gained a glimpse of the potential impact of the NGO leader's media connections on international support for the NGO. However, a glimpse is simply not satisfying. Therefore, we now move to the case of the Little Bird, which shows that the effects of the NGO leader's media connections on international ties can be more direct, observable, and immediate.

⁹ Both Wu Qing and Xie Lihua had been featured in international press. For example, in January 2008, the *Los Angeles Times* published a story about Xie Lihua: John M. Glionna, "A Voice for Rural Women of China," *Los Angeles Times*, 2 January 2008, <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/jan/02/world/fg-women2> (accessed 26 January 2012). Moreover, Xie Lihua and Rural Women have been featured prominently in published studies by foreign scholars.

5.4 Wei Wei and the Little Bird Migrant Workers Mutual Support Hotline

If the evidence for the impact of media connections on international ties was circumstantial and the causal connection was speculative for the case of Rural Women, then the case of Wei Wei and Little Bird shows more clearly the value of media connections. Indeed, among the NGO cases presented in this book, Little Bird offers the best illustration of the power of the media. However, before we analyze the relationship between Wei's media connections and his international ties, let us first get an idea of the nature and extent of Little Bird's international support.

Since 2004, Little Bird has relied extensively on international resources. According to the organization's 2010 annual report, over 70 % of Little Bird's financial resources have originated outside China (Little Bird 2011). Unlike Rural Women, the list of approximately 13 international organizations that have funded the NGO up to 2010 does not include multinational corporations. Nonetheless, the donors have represented a wide range of foreign governments, international governmental organizations, and foreign foundations, all of which have been well-known for their long-term interest in China.

For example, Little Bird has received financial support from the Canadian Embassy in China, the Australian Embassy in China, and the American Embassy in China (Ibid; Liu 2009: 100). In addition, the International Republican Institute (IRI), the Ford Foundation, the Asia Foundation, Oxfam Hong Kong, the American Bar Association, and the German Catholic foundation Misereor have all been Little Bird's benefactors. Moreover, Little Bird has had financial relationships with international government organizations, notably the World Bank and the EU.

These resources have sustained and even enhanced Little Bird's capacity to advocate and serve the migrant workers. For example, the three aforementioned foreign embassies have all supported the NGO's radio programming, which has been an important vehicle for the NGO to advocate the rights and interests of the migrant workers in general (Ibid). The radio programming has also been an important instrument to promote the organization's telephone hotline. And the hosting of the radio program is also important for the NGO to maintain its connections to the media sector and, by extension, the positive state linkages that it has enjoyed.

International resources have even allowed Little Bird to expand its geographical coverage so that it can serve more migrant workers throughout China. In 2006, with the support of the German Embassy in China and the German Catholic foundation Misereor, the NGO opened its hotlines in Shenzhen to the southeast and Shenyang to the northeast (Ibid). In June 2011, through the support of the American Bar Association, the Little Bird telephone hotline was opened in Shanghai (Ibid). With the establishment of the Shanghai branch, the NGO now has a presence in northeastern, northern (Beijing), eastern, and southeastern China. Wei had indicated that his objective was to establish branches in Xi'an, Zhengzhou, and Chongqing, which together would constitute central China.

Furthermore, international support has given Little Bird the capacity to hold training programs to assist Chinese migrant workers. For example, the German government and German foundations have supported the NGO's efforts to hold training sessions for migrant workers on topics that include occupational safety and employment contract signing (Little Bird 2011). Little Bird has also been funded by IRI to hold capacity-building training programs for Chinese NGOs (Ibid). In this vein, international ties have not only supplied Little Bird with material resources; those relationships have also affected the organization's practices and values so that the NGO could meet the standards of the international donors.

Wei had made clear to me that Little Bird's international resources have been the result of his efforts to build international ties (Interview with Wei Wei 2009). In other words, Little Bird's international support has reflected the extent of Wei's international ties. But how did Wei acquire those international ties in the first place? The answer is Wei's media connections.

In Chap. 4, we had seen how Wei's media connections have garnered media exposure for Little Bird, which allowed the NGO to establish a partnership with the local justice bureau. Wei's media connections were also instrumental in the creation of Wei's first international tie. In 2003, Beijing's *Jinghua News*, which was created under the supervision of the *People's Daily*, published a story about Wei and the Little Bird. The *Jinghua* story resulted in a reader telephoning Wei. The reader gave Wei the contact information for an officer in the Canadian Embassy in Beijing. According to Wei, the Canadian Embassy official helped Wei obtain 100,000 yuan in funding from the Canadian government and provided Wei with a letter of reference that he could use to approach other foreign donors, which Wei of course did (Ibid).

As Wei and Little Bird continued to receive extensive media coverage, international resources also continued to pour into the NGO, even during the past few years when Western countries have experienced significant economic downturns. Therefore, it would seem that Wei's media connections have continued to be effective in getting the NGO to access international resources. Even so, we cannot overlook the potential significance of Wei's institutional affiliations to the local justice bureau. As stated earlier, international donors have demonstrated a proclivity to support Chinese NGOs with political and legal legitimacy because of the perception that NGOs with organizational legitimacy have been less likely to arouse state suspicion as well as having greater potential for policy influence and the development of national networks. Although we do not have direct evidence to prove that Wei's state affiliations have had direct causal links to international support for Little Bird, it is safe to conclude that his state affiliations certainly did not harm the interests of the organization. At a minimum, the existence of state linkage has meant that the state would be less concerned about "inappropriate" use of international resources by Wei.¹⁰ In this respect, the state linkages of Wei and the

¹⁰ In this respect, Wei had made sure that he kept the relevant government officials informed about his activities and the sources of support for his activities. Wei believed that it was important to sustain the trust of government officials, even though Wei's behavior has elicited criticisms from other leaders of Chinese migrant worker NGOs.

Little Bird have very likely played an important role in attracting continuous international support.

What lessons can we draw from the case of Wei Wei and the Little Bird? First and foremost, Little Bird shows us that the Chinese NGO leader's media connections can have direct and positive effects on the leader's ability to develop international ties and access international resources for his organization. However, this does not mean that the leader's state affiliations have been unimportant. In fact, the case of Little Bird demonstrates how the combination of media connections and state affiliations can play a valuable role in ensuring a continuous supply of international resources to help the NGO achieve its goals, without causing the ever-suspicious state to be concerned.

5.5 Ma Yang and the On Action International Cultural Center

The focus of this chapter is to show that the maximum value of international ties and the resources that came with those ties can be manifested only when they are coupled with the presence of state affiliations and media connections. Although the three previous cases have illustrated the interactions among the three types of leadership ties, the case of On Action should further clarify the contingent nature of the importance of international ties for the Chinese NGO.

In contrast to Zhicheng, Rural Women, and Little Bird, On Action was established with international resources in hand. Starting in late 2006, when the NGO was established and ending in summer 2009, On Action received approximately 700,000 yuan from three foreign sources (On Action 2008). One of the three donors was the U.S. Embassy in China (Interview with Ma Yang 2008). Funding from the U.S. Embassy had created a reading room for migrant workers in the NGO's office.¹¹ The other two foreign sources, one of which was the Dutch Labor Union, supplied funds for the NGO to conduct information sessions about occupational health and the 2008 Labor Contract Law (Ibid). According to the report that On Action released in commemoration of the second anniversary of the NGO's establishment, all three projects were completed in 2009.

It seems that these international resources have supported activities that worked toward satisfying an extremely tiny fraction of the organizational goals. For example, none of the projects funded by the international donors dealt with policy research and advocacy and none dealt with the issue of providing legal aid to migrant workers. Moreover, none of the funding seems to have addressed the issue of building up staff capacity that would be important for the NGO to undertake

¹¹ The reading room was approximately the size of a 10' × 10' room with some shelves along the walls. The collection of readings was a mixture of popular Chinese novels, newspapers, literature from different NGOs, and some state pamphlets about relevant laws and regulations.

activities to address its organizational objectives. Indeed, none of the funded projects required interactions with the state. Yet, in order for On Action to fulfill its mission it was clear that it would have to undertake activities that involve the state.

To be sure, we cannot blame the international donors for this problem, at least not entirely.¹² After all, it was up to the NGO leaders to develop projects that would best address the organization's mission. But On Action's situation once again calls our attention to the contingent nature of international ties. In this case, the fact that Ma did not conceive projects that were more germane to the mission of the NGO has meant that the international resources On Action received were not going to be put to optimal use, at least in terms of meeting the organization's objectives.

However, this raises an interesting and relevant issue, which is that in order for Ma Yang to develop projects that would more directly address the organizational mission he would most likely have to develop better state affiliations because as we have observed, most successful NGO projects have required the support of the state. Yet, as we discovered in Chap. 3, Ma simply did not possess the requisite state affiliations. Similarly, as was shown in Chap. 4, Ma did not possess strong media connections that could help On Action achieve state linkages.

In fact, Ma obtained the international resources independent of any considerations about his state affiliations. The organization's international resources were the result of the efforts and connections one of its original board members, who had worked previously as a program officer for Oxfam Hong Kong and who had studied for an advanced degree in the United Kingdom. Interestingly, the board member's international ties were never converted into Ma Yang's.

Of course, any hope that Ma Yang had of developing his own international ties was dashed, at least for the time being, when Ma was implicated directly in the publicized organizational financial scandal in 2009, which resulted in the departure of the well-connected board member. Through this example we can see the media's "negative" effects on the Chinese NGO leader's ability to acquire international resources. In short, one simply cannot overestimate the independent value of international ties.

¹² Although international donors have been interested in supporting Chinese NGOs that could engage the state, they have also funded other NGO projects with the aim of developing new local NGOs. In fact, international donors like the Ford Foundation have "encouraged" local NGOs to become more self-sufficient by reducing and even cutting off support to local NGOs after a certain number of years of support. Of course, there have been exceptions to this "rule," such as the ongoing support of Rural Women by the Ford Foundation.

5.6 Corroboration from Additional Cases: Friends of Nature, Yirenping, and the Self-Empowerment Service Center for Disabled Persons

The heavy reliance on international sources has not been limited to Chinese NGOs working on issues concerning migrant workers. This phenomenon involves virtually all Chinese NGOs, regardless of the issue areas. It is also a phenomenon that knows no geographical boundaries. Furthermore, it has concerned all Chinese NGOs right from their birth and this concern has been sustained even when the organizations have become more mature in age. Similarly, the contingent nature of international ties has been observed across issue areas, geographical locations, and stages of organizational development.

In the previous chapters, we had seen how the Friends of Nature (FON) had benefited from its chief founder's state affiliations and media connections. Liang Congjie's state affiliations provide FON with political legitimacy while his media connections helped to publicize issues that were of concern to the NGO and, in turn, garnered the attention of the state. In a nutshell, state affiliations and media connections allowed FON to work effectively as an NGO advocate of environmental concerns.

At the same time, Liang Congjie developed a strong international reputation. Between the time when the NGO was founded and his death, Liang had received numerous awards and recognitions from the international community, including the Ramon Magsaysay Award. He was also featured on a wide range of popular and specialized media. Even his death was reported by the world's most important news outlets, including the *New York Times* and *The Economist*.

Since it first received international funding at the end of 1994, which was also the year that the NGO was established, FON has relied heavily on international support for its operations (Interview BJ120908). Undoubtedly, the strength of Liang's international ties was an important factor in FON's ability to access international resources. The NGO's first international funding commitment, for example, was received immediately after Liang and another co-founder visited American foundations and NGOs in the United States at the end of 1994 (Friends of Nature 1994). However, the international community's interest in Liang and FON probably also had to do with his state affiliations, just as they were a point of attraction for those who sought him out to establish China's first legally-registered environmental NGO (Economy 2004: 146).

Furthermore, international funding would lose its value if it could not be employed to further the NGO's goals. As stated earlier, the primary function of international funding has been the enhancement of an NGO's organizational capacity. But the effectiveness of the NGO, especially one with an advocacy focus, has depended on organizational legitimacy and access to the state policy apparatus. Both of these items required some degree of state linkage. International funding alone is therefore insufficient to meet the Chinese NGO's mission. In this respect, the state connections of Liang and FON as well as their media connections have put

them in a great position to utilize their international resources to further their objectives. Here, we can use the example of FON's *China Environmental Yearbook* project, which has involved the publication of an annual edited volume since 2005, to illustrate the importance of the NGO's prior media and state connections for the optimal use of international resources.

The yearbook series have been funded by the Delta Foundation, which was established by a Taiwanese-American energy entrepreneur. In essence, the yearbook series are edited volumes containing essays written by Chinese journalists, academic experts, and, to a lesser extent, government officials about various aspects of China's environmental conditions. These writings have included rigorous analyses of environmental issues concerning China. The yearbooks have been published by a reputable Chinese publisher of academic writings and have been made available to the public through purchases. Moreover, the findings of the yearbooks were compressed to be submitted eventually to National People's Congress (NPC) delegates and members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) who were connected to FON so that those delegates and members could use the materials to make legislative proposals.

We can see that Delta's money has been able to help Liang and FON achieve the goal of publicizing environmental concerns and making policy impact. But Delta's money was able to make an impact because Liang and FON could enlist journalists, government officials, and other experts to contribute their analyses. The impact of Delta's money would be further felt when the NGO submitted the findings to sympathetic legislators and government advisors. In a nutshell, the effects of Delta's funding on FON were contingent on FON's state linkages and media connections. And Liang played a big role in helping FON achieve those linkages and connections.

The case of FON shows that the general principles concerning the effects of international ties on Chinese NGOs could be applied to NGOs working in different issue areas. Yirenping's case offers further proof of this point. Moreover, the case of Yirenping shows that those principles may also be applied to *young* NGOs.

In the preceding chapters, we have seen how Lu Jun, the chief founder of Yirenping, had developed state affiliations and media connections. We have also seen how those leadership ties have helped Yirenping become the effective voice of 400 million Chinese Hepatitis-B patients and the most successful Chinese NGO advocate against institutionalized discrimination. And the remarkable thing is that those achievements have been made within 5 years of the organization's establishment.

In addition to his state affiliations and media connections, Lu Jun has become a world-famous NGO activist. In 2009, Lu was awarded by the Italian government with a human rights award that was established in commemoration of a Roman Catholic priest who had been gunned down by members of the Italian mafia (Yale University Law School 2010). A year later, Lu was invited to serve as a visiting scholar at the Yale University's China Law Center. Past and present visiting scholars at the China Law Center have included government officials and notable public interest lawyers, such as Zhicheng's Tong Lihua. And Lu has employed his

international ties to obtain international resources that would help Yirenping conduct research, write reports, and submit proposals to government officials and state organizations.

However, without their state linkages and media connections, Lu and Yirenping could not have made their impact no matter how much international resources they had obtained. Indeed, in many ways, Lu's media connections and successes in influencing state policies were probably the factors that attracted international attention and helped build up Lu's international ties, which would result in more international resources for the NGO. On this note, it should be unsurprising that Lu received the Italian award on the same year that Yirenping scored its greatest victory to date, when the Ministry of Health, in response to pressures from activists like Lu and Yirenping, issued new rules to abolish mandatory Hepatitis-B testing during physical examinations for prospective college students, factory workers, and government employees (Jacobs 2009). In sum, Lu's state affiliations and media connections have acted as facilitators of his international ties and the conditions under which international resources to Yirenping have helped the NGO to succeed.

Outside Beijing, other Chinese NGOs have also benefited from the interactive effects of international ties, state affiliations, and media connections. Although the Self-Empowerment Center has not received nearly as much international resources as most of the NGOs that are featured in this book, it has nonetheless relied completely on international resources to establish an office space, create a telephone hotline, hire staff, provide services, and print information pamphlets that would be distributed to outgoing migrant workers.

But international support would have been less effective if Chen Yuying, the founder of the center, had not received the media attention that led to the creation of her affiliations with the local handicapped persons' federation. Those media connections and the resulting state affiliations essentially created the platform on which Chen could pursue her goals for the NGO. Those connections, especially the media connections, have legitimized Chen and her organization and, in the process, those connections have allowed Chen to even influence local policies. In important respects, Chen's state affiliations have held the local state in check so that it would not interfere in the center's activities. In fact, those affiliations have even resulted in getting the state to assist the NGO's activities, such as when the local government mobilized local schoolteachers to serve as "volunteers" to help the center distribute its information pamphlets to outgoing migrant workers in the rural county's main transportation portals. Coupled with state connections, Chen's international ties have helped her to overcome many personal and organizational obstacles, and in the process paved the way for the center to become effective providers of much-needed services to under-served residents of Chen's home county. But it's unlikely that Chen's international ties could have been as effective without her state affiliations and media connections.

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have made the argument that a Chinese NGO leader's international ties are not sufficient to help her NGO achieve its organizational objectives. The reason is that international ties have not had direct and independent effects on the NGO's accessibility to the state, which is important, indeed critical, to the NGO's efforts to achieve its goals because the successful implementation of NGO activities requires the support of the state. In fact, international ties may be a source of concern to the NGO because the Chinese state has remained suspicious of the purpose of international ties. Therefore, in order for international ties to serve the interests of Chinese NGOs, the leaders of the most successful Chinese NGOs have also acquired state affiliations and developed media connections. These two characteristics have been valuable because, among other things, they serve as signals to the state about the legitimacy, i.e., reliability, of the NGO in question. And, of course, as the cases have demonstrated, state affiliations and media connections have often acted in a causal role vis-à-vis the leader's international ties.

Therefore, in an important respect, although a leader's international ties can help her NGO obtain much-needed resources to enhance organizational capacity, the importance of those ties must necessarily take a backseat to the leader's state affiliations and media connections. These findings are generally consistent with observations made by an increasing number of analysts that the effects of international support on the effectiveness of local NGOs have been highly contingent on other factors, especially the attitude of the state. Fewer writers, however, have observed similar effects by the media. Nonetheless, as I tried to demonstrate in this chapter, we should not overlook the importance of the media as a condition for the effective utilization of international ties.

A key lesson to be drawn from this chapter is, therefore, that prospective Chinese NGO leaders need to be mindful about the single-minded pursuit of international ties. In fact, aspiring Chinese NGO entrepreneurs can go a long way in helping their organizations if they first develop their state linkages and media connections. In this respect, Wei Wei and the Little Bird can serve as a useful model for aspiring Chinese NGO entrepreneurs.

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Chapter 6

Understanding the Present, Looking to the Future

Abstract The impressive growth of China's NGO sector belies the fact that China's civil society is still a work in progress. Nonetheless, NGO leaders who are involved in that building process have established effective organizations that are making important contributions to social governance. In this respect, they defy the understanding that effective NGOs cannot be found in non-democracies and that effectiveness can only be defined in terms of effecting revolutionary political changes. As a work in progress, China's NGO sector is under-institutionalized, which means that the NGO leader is especially important for organizational effectiveness. In this respect, contemporary China offers a unique opportunity to assess the importance of NGO leadership and its associated skills. This study's focus on leadership ties in general and state linkages in particular reflects the empirical reality in China. However, it is important to continue monitoring the emergence of other types of leadership ties and a new generation of leaders because such changes may point to important developments in China's civil society and, by extension, changes to China's political landscape. Similarly, the continuing importance of the NGO leader must also be subjected to regular observation. In this vein, the greatest challenges to the development of China's NGO sector in general and NGOs in particular may not be their dependence on linkages with the state. Instead, elitism and individualism may constitute a greater threat to their development. Both Chinese and foreign actors can play an important role in addressing these challenges.

Keywords Organizational effectiveness • Performance benchmark • Revolutionary change • Governance • Leadership ties • Elitism • Individualism

6.1 Leadership Ties and NGO Effectiveness

China's civil society is growing, as evidenced by the impressive growth of China's NGO sector in such a short period of time. However, the fact remains that it is still a work in progress, as reflected in the NGO sector's lack of legitimacy. The leaders of

China's NGOs must be credited for the growth, but they will also be the first to say that many challenges remain and much remains to be done. In any case, whether they realize it or not, these men and women are engaging in a major construction effort and already they are making history by creating effective organizations that are actively taking part in social governance.

China serves as an interesting case to examine the factors that contribute to NGO effectiveness in non-democracies. First, given the dramatic growth in the number of NGOs in China over the past two decades, China is a fertile ground for conducting research about NGOs operating in authoritarian systems. Second, as an authoritarian state, many might not expect China to be home to a large number of NGOs, let alone effective ones. In this respect, China's situation has shown the inadequacy of the argument that effective NGOs and non-democratic political systems are generally incompatible. Yet, it is also true that the Chinese NGO sector has remained under-institutionalized, a consequence of which has been the prominence of NGO leaders. But this phenomenon is valuable because it means that there are numerous observations from which the analyst can draw to understand how NGO leadership can pave the way for organizational effectiveness.

The ability to effect revolutionary political change has been set as the performance benchmark for NGOs in non-democracies. One implication of this perspective is that NGOs in non-democratic settings are unlikely to perform well; in fact, in all likelihood they will under-perform significantly. Yet, it can be unfair and unrealistic to set such a standard of performance for Chinese NGOs, especially given the fact that the communist state in China is a powerful organization that enjoys greater legitimacy than any other group in China and the state controls critical organizational resources. Perhaps more importantly, the leaders of China's NGOs are for the most part uninterested in promoting radical political transformations. They are more interested in finding ways to improve the lives of the Chinese people. Therefore, beyond the issue of the fairness of establishing such a performance standard, focusing on whether China's NGOs have facilitated revolutionary political change has had the effect of ensuring that the visions of China's NGO leaders are ignored and, as a result, analysts would overlook the important contributions that NGO leaders in China have made and are making to public governance.

The cases presented in this book show that Chinese NGOs are indeed contributing to the governance of this vast country. As shown in the preceding chapters, many of these organizations are effective advocates of migrant workers through the provision of free legal aid to migrant workers, the supply of vocational training to migrants, and the sponsorship of publications to raise public and government awareness about the needs of this important population segment. They have also had access, albeit limited, to the state's policy-making process. In the process, these organizations have helped millions of Chinese people who have been otherwise helpless and defenseless. Organizations working in other issue areas are also making similar contributions. Collectively, they show that by defining NGO success in terms of revolutionary political change, the analysts would have overlooked the NGOs' other important political functions.

But this study has also made clear that not all Chinese NGOs have been equally effective. So what factors have contributed to the success of some NGOs? Institutional factors have generally been given to answer this question. For political scientists, the most commonly-cited institutional factor is regime type. According to this line of argument, the type of state that governs society has much to do with whether NGOs are able to achieve effectiveness. Indeed, this argument stipulates that the effectiveness of NGOs, indeed the presence of NGOs, is the consequence of whether the state in question is democratic or authoritarian. In a nutshell, analysts who hold this perspective will argue that NGOs thrive in democracies and these organizations will thus most likely fail in non-democracies.

Unfortunately, empirical evidence does not support this generalization. China, notably, has witnessed an incredible growth of its NGO sector. A clear indication is the fact that there has been a 100 % increase in the number of registered NGOs over the past two decades. And this number does not include the great majority of the millions of grassroots NGOs that either are registered as commercial enterprises or are not registered at all. Moreover, as the preceding chapters have demonstrated, there are many successful Chinese NGOs, in spite of the non-democratic political system with which they have had to contend.

In the face of unfriendly, and often hostile, authoritarian governments, striving for greater organizational autonomy has been advocated by many experts and practitioners as the central precondition for achieving NGO effectiveness. This strategy also has normative value if one views the NGO's *raison d'être* as the authoritarian state's perennial challenger with the ultimate goal of radically transforming the non-democratic political system. Although this strategy seems to make a great deal of sense on the surface, the cases presented in this book suggest that organizational autonomy is certainly not the only precondition for NGO effectiveness. In fact, state linkages arguably constitute a similarly important precondition, if not an even more important precondition, for NGOs operating in non-democratic political systems. And the importance of state linkage seems obvious if one recognizes that the non-democratic state can be an all-powerful state that not only controls critical resources but which is also widely perceived as the most legitimate institution in society.

As the last two statements suggest, state linkages have been important for Chinese NGOs not necessarily because they are inherently valuable. They are valuable because they confer specific benefits to the Chinese NGO. However, contrary to the general impression obtained from the existing literature, the unfortunate reality is that not all state linkages have conferred these advantages on the Chinese NGO, and an important reason is that not all state institutions have been similarly endowed.

The key question therefore is how can a Chinese NGO establish the most advantageous state linkages? What are the mechanisms create those state linkages? The cases presented in this book show that the Chinese NGO leader *is* the mechanism that has created state linkages for the Chinese NGO. In particular, the NGO leader's social ties pave the way for his organization to achieve its goals.

Even though analysts have identified the Chinese NGO leader as an important factor for organizational success, they have not examined in-depth the aspects of the NGO leader that make some more successful than others.

Although some writers have noted the importance of “internal” attributes of the NGO leader, such as personalities, predispositions, and motivations, there are reasons to believe that the leader’s social ties exercise a more direct and visible impact on organizational performance. One of those reasons is that, in most cases, the success of the NGO has relied on its ability to manage the organization’s external environment, notably in terms of resources. If we adopt this perspective, we should then expect that the most valuable NGO leaders, from the perspective of organizational success, are those who possess the relationships that allow them to deal effectively with the external environment, i.e., obtain external resources.

With this mind, in this study, I have taken three commonly-identified characteristics of the successful Chinese NGO—state linkages, media connections, and international ties—and examined them as leadership ties to understand how they have facilitated organizational linkages to the state, how they have interacted with each other, and, ultimately, how they have contributed to organizational effectiveness. In this manner, I tried to understand the importance of each type of leadership ties relative to the others.

In Chap. 3, I explored the Chinese NGO leader’s state linkages in general and institutional affiliations to the state in particular to understand how those individual-level factors have contributed to state linkages for the Chinese NGO and, ultimately, to the NGO’s ability to achieve its goals. The cases showed that even though common forms of state linkage, notably CPC membership, might have facilitated the establishment of the Chinese NGO leaders’ state affiliations, ultimately state affiliations have had more direct bearing on NGO effectiveness. The reason is that state affiliations give NGOs direct access to state resources that are scattered among state institutions. Through these state affiliations, NGOs acquire material resources, organizational legitimacy, and policy access, which together allow NGOs to fulfill their respective organizational missions. In this conceptualization, the key ingredient is the extent to which an NGO leader is able to form linkages with resource-rich and authoritative state organizations.

In Chap. 4, the Chinese NGO leader’s media connections were examined to understand how this type of leadership ties has paved the way for organizational linkages to the state and, ultimately, organizational effectiveness. Most analyses have treated the media either as exogenous to civil society (Ballentine 2002) or as a structural framework of civil society (Butsch 2007). Moreover, the media’s relationship to the state has often been portrayed as either for or against the authoritarian state and, by extension, as either for or against civil society actors. But the reality is that in an evolving media system like China’s, the media have actually achieved a position that has straddled the state-society divide, putting them in a unique position to bridge the gulf between the authoritarian state and the emerging civil society. In this respect, media connections are extremely valuable for Chinese NGO leaders.

Nonetheless, the relationship between the NGO leader's media connections and the organization's access to the state has been facilitative, especially in comparison to the effects of the NGO leader's state affiliations. Media connections, for example, have not had direct effects on the NGO's ability to acquire material resources from the state. The cases presented in this book show that those resources were obtained as the direct consequence of the leader's state affiliations. However, media connections may facilitate resource acquisition by helping the NGO leader acquire state affiliations. Indeed, this may be the most interesting and valuable aspect of the leader's media connections, especially from the perspective of those NGO leaders who do not possess prior state affiliations. In other cases where state affiliations existed, media connections have helped NGOs establish organizational linkages to the state and access to the state policy apparatus. Yet, in those cases media connections have acted more as enhancers of the NGO leader's existing state affiliations rather than as direct causal agents. In other words, the leader's media connections serve more as lubricants than as catalysts, when compared with his state affiliations.

Lastly, in Chap. 5, I examined the effects of the NGO leader's international ties. Like situations in other non-democracies, the international ties of the Chinese NGO leader have been valuable in that those ties have allowed the leader to acquire international financial resources for the NGO. Given the difficulties in accessing state financial resources and the poor local fundraising environment, international resources have been indispensable to the Chinese NGOs. In other words, the primary function of international ties has been to enhance the Chinese NGO's organizational capacity. However, international ties act, in a sense, as a double-edged sword. The Chinese state remains highly suspicious of international ties for fear that they could serve as vehicles to import subversive ideas from abroad into China. In this respect, international ties can have a negative impact on the legitimacy of Chinese NGOs, which is already in short supply. Moreover, as the cases have demonstrated, many projects that have been necessary for the Chinese NGO to achieve its goals must have the support of the state. This means that the Chinese NGO leader must find other means to establish organizational linkages to the state so as to achieve legitimacy.

Quite often the case, the NGO leader has relied on his state affiliations and media connections to achieve the requisite state linkages so as to undertake those projects that were germane to the NGO's mission. Only then would the NGO leader's international ties be optimized. The implication seems clear: the salutary effects of international ties are conditioned upon the prior existence of the leader's state affiliations and/or his media connections. In fact, in some cases, these two sets of connections have been instrumental in the development of the Chinese NGO leader's international ties.

Based on the cases that have been presented, we can see how the three types leadership ties have worked together to address the needs of the Chinese NGO. In the course of this analysis, we have also seen the importance of state linkages in helping Chinese NGOs achieve their organizational goals. Lastly, by examining the interactions among the three types of leadership ties, we have gained a sense of their weight in importance relative to each other. In this respect, what is especially

clear is that the NGO leader's international ties, albeit seemingly indispensable, have not been able to rival the importance of his state affiliations and, to a lesser extent, his media connections.

6.2 Future Research

The state of China's NGO sector is highly fluid. Therefore, it is important to anticipate changes. In this vein, I propose three related avenues for further research. The first avenue involves the exploration of other important leadership ties and qualities. The second avenue involves a close examination of the attributes and skills of the younger generation of NGO leaders. The third avenue involves maintaining a close eye on the coming leadership transitions for many prominent Chinese NGOs. All three research agendas are likely to yield interesting insights not just about the development of the individual Chinese NGO, but more importantly, the development trajectories of the Chinese civil society and even those of the Chinese political system.

The focus on state affiliations, media connections, and international ties reflects current realities. As the state of China's NGO sector continues to evolve, other leadership skills and qualities will surely emerge to exert impact on the Chinese NGO's ability to achieve organizational success. As mentioned in Chap. 2, one type of potential leadership ties is the relations among NGO leaders. As the Chinese NGO sector develops, interactions among NGO leaders have also increased in both frequency and intensity. However, those inter-NGO interactions have not yet yielded noticeable benefits for individual Chinese NGOs. But this does not mean that things will always remain the way it is today. However, an exploration of other leadership ties and qualities is a valuable endeavor not only because of the inherent value in such an exercise. In fact, an exploration of other leadership qualities may tell us much about the evolution of China's civil society and China's overall political trajectory. In this respect, whether or not inter-NGO relationships exercise increasingly important influences on the performance of the Chinese NGO should tell us much about the extent to which a Tocquevillian civil society characterized by interpersonal trust and cooperation as well as public participation independent of the state is being formed in China.

Similarly, researchers should pay attention to the attributes and skills of the new generation of Chinese NGO leaders, namely those who were born after 1980. Unlike previous generations, this generation of NGO leaders has grown up in a China that has been for the most part devoid of domestic political turmoil along with rising prosperity. They have also become more exposed to developments outside China. In addition, they are accustomed to greater individual freedom and initiatives. Consequently, their perceptions of the state and social activism may be very different from previous generations. It will be interesting to see how their generational background shapes their perceptions and practices as NGO leaders, which collectively should have important implications on how they engage the state.

Lastly, this book's emphasis on the organizational impact of the Chinese NGO leader is reflective of the under-institutionalized nature of the Chinese NGO sector. To a large extent, the finding about the importance of the leadership can only be tentative because the majority of the Chinese NGOs are still being led by their founder(s).¹ Therefore, we do not yet have opportunities to observe the full impact of the founder-leader on the Chinese NGO. In addition to the value of gaining a fuller picture of the organizational impact of the NGO leader, whether and how the Chinese NGO will survive the coming leadership transition can tell us much about the extent to which the Chinese NGO sector in particular and the Chinese civil society in general have become institutionalized, which again may have important implications for China's political development.

6.3 Implications and Recommendations: NGO Effectiveness and Civil Society Development

Depending on how the proper political role of civil society is defined, different people may draw different implications from the observations presented in this book. On the one hand, for those who believe that civil society ought to be in perpetual conflict with authoritarian states, the presentation here may be downright depressing. From this perspective, if Chinese NGOs, which are both promoters and constituents of any civil society that is defined as anti-state, need to develop strong relations with the state in order to be effective, then such NGOs are unlikely to become effective agents of civil society in China. Unfortunately, Chinese civil society groups have been simply no match for the Chinese authoritarian state's primacy, both in terms of legitimacy and resources. Therefore, civil society as defined in terms of opposition to the state is unlikely to be found in China, as long as the communist party-state remains in power.

However, even if Chinese NGOs have not demonstrated clear intentions for political subversion, the NGO leaders have not been reluctant to criticize state policies and practices, whenever it's warranted. Even those NGO leaders with strong political ties have not been reticent in expressing their critical views. For example, the leader of the Zhicheng Public Interest Law NGO has possessed the most substantive state linkages, and yet he has been extremely critical of state policies and practices concerning the rights of children and the rights of migrant workers. A substantial portion of his 2009 book-length review of Zhicheng's NGO work since the organization's establishment has included strong criticisms of the state.

¹ To my understanding, the only Chinese NGO that has experienced the departure of its chief founder is the Friends of Nature, which is featured in this book as a shadow case. But in the next five to 10 years, we are likely to see more leadership shifts among Chinese NGOs as the first generation of Chinese NGO entrepreneurs pass from the scene due to age.

Nonetheless, criticisms of the state are not tantamount to open calls for overthrowing the state. In this respect, the observations here provide further evidence for the argument that the concept of civil society as commonly derived from modern Western experiences is not entirely applicable to the reality of state-society relations in China. Hence, many China specialists have favored the concept of corporatism to describe the nature of state-society relations in contemporary China. The problem with this approach, however, is that just as the concept of civil society has been unable to capture the prominence of the Chinese state in managing state-society relations, the concept of corporatism has downplayed the declining role of the state and the increasing degree of independence for Chinese civil society groups. The disjuncture between theoretical concepts and the reality in China has forced later writers to adopt analytical frameworks that emphasized less about the dichotomy between state and society and more about the interactive nature of their relationship.

In adopting the framework of state linkage, I believe that the interactive approach corresponds better to reality. The interactive approach does not suggest that the power relations between state and society in China are symmetrical. But what it does highlight is that civil society groups like NGOs may have more to gain by working with the state than against it. In this sense, the notion of state linkage suggests that the future of the Chinese civil society is not necessarily bleak. Let's take as example the issue of organizational legitimacy to illustrate the potential value of state linkage for Chinese NGOs.

As illustrated in this study, NGOs in China have yet to achieve political and popular legitimacy, especially in comparison to the state. The lack of popular legitimacy has been raised consistently by leading Chinese NGO experts and practitioners as among the greatest challenges for Chinese NGOs. Indeed, the great majority of ordinary Chinese people have either little or no knowledge about civil society and NGOs. Many of those who have heard of the concepts are unable to explain what they mean. It made sense, therefore, for many, if not most, Chinese NGO leaders to emphasize the building of their respective organizations' "brand names" (*pinpai*). What better way to achieve name recognition than through affiliations with the most legitimate institution in the country, namely the state? To be sure, the ultimate goal should be to achieve legitimacy for the entire NGO sector and, in turn, popularize and legitimize the notion of civil society. But the process has to start at the organizational level.

Arguably, a greater threat to the future development of the Chinese civil society in general and the NGO sector in particular is the fact that the Chinese NGOs are characterized by elitism. This book's conceptual focus is a testament to this fact. If the strength of a civil society involves the extent to which ordinary citizens are involved, as many writers have argued, then the elitist nature of the Chinese NGO sector is a cause for concern. However, it would be unfair to attribute the blame for this phenomenon to the Chinese NGO leaders. There are important cultural and institutional factors that have contributed to this reality. Moreover, China is not unique in this respect among non-democratic countries and developing societies. In fact, it is arguable that NGO sector worldwide has become increasingly elitist with

the increasing involvement of highly-educated professionals in the sector. In this sense, the Chinese situation may simply be a reflection of the global trend.

Similarly, individualism among Chinese NGO leaders poses another challenge to the future development of the Chinese civil society. In the scramble to build organizational brand names, Chinese NGO leaders have essentially done so alone. With very few exceptions, such as public environmental campaigns and networking among the leaders of elite Chinese NGOs, there has been little noticeable cooperation among Chinese NGOs. Competition, rather than cooperation, has generally characterized the Chinese NGO sector. Again, it would be unfair to cast all the blame on the NGO leaders for this phenomenon given that, in most cases, they have simply been responding to the existing environment of limited funding and weak legitimacy. Nonetheless, if a critical sign of a strong civil society is the presence of cooperation and mutual trust, then the Chinese civil society has a long way to go.

The situation is not entirely hopeless, but it does call for a concerted effort from all the key stakeholders. With respect to the problem of elitism, private international donors can do much more to cultivate and support non-elite NGO entrepreneurs. Since international donors have gained access to China, they have for the most part interacted with members of the Chinese elite, notably Chinese intellectuals. This has been a reasonable strategy since international donors have understandably wanted to have greater and more direct influences on political decision-making and on shaping societal norms and practices. But after over two decades of presence in China, it is equally reasonable to expect that international donors should do and have done more to promote greater popular participation in the Chinese civil society. In this respect, the observations in this book suggest that one thing that international donors, including foreign governments, can do to promote greater public participation in NGO activities and cultivate more non-elite NGO entrepreneurs is to provide more support and opportunities to empower the Chinese media sector and develop strong ties between the Chinese media and the Chinese NGO entrepreneurs.

To be sure, the prevailing political environment has continued to limit the sphere of activities of the international donors, which continue to be based in the major coastal metropolitan areas in China, namely Beijing and Shanghai. Although this situation should not automatically preclude international donors from accessing the general population to identify potential Chinese NGO entrepreneurs, it has greatly hampered the mobility of the agents of international donors. Therefore, if international donors are to do more to cultivate non-elite NGO entrepreneurs, then they must inevitably rely on others. In this respect, leading Chinese NGO entrepreneurs can aid in this endeavor by working to identify the next generation of Chinese NGO leaders, particularly those who are not members of the elite. It is therefore encouraging that leading Chinese NGOs, such as the Narada Foundation and NPI, which are led by Chinese NGO entrepreneurs with extensive state linkages, have initiated this process through programs like Narada's Gingko Fellow Program and NPI's Incubation Program. Similarly, Chinese NGOs have begun to pay more attention to cultivating connections with the Chinese media.

Even more importantly, leading Chinese NGO entrepreneurs can do more to promote collaboration among Chinese NGOs. At present, inter-NGO collaboration either at the level of the NGO leaders or at the level of the overall organization remains limited. Other than environmental campaigns and the post-2008 Sichuan earthquake NGO alliance, known inter-NGO collaboration defined in terms of regular and close interactions has been confined to a network of the leaders of China's leading women's NGOs; AIDS/homosexual NGO networks; and looser networks of environmental NGOs led by leading organizations, such as the Friends of Nature, the Global Village, and the Green Earth Volunteers. In a nutshell, there is still much room for inter-NGO cooperation.

Lastly, it would seem that Chinese NGOs are unlikely to become agents of revolutionary bottom-up political changes in China, at least not in the foreseeable future. But for the time being they can help build a civil society that will become even more effective and influential as a participant in governance in China. Robert Putnam had argued that a strong civil society can contribute to better democratic governance. There is no reason to believe that a strong civil society cannot do the same in a non-democratic political system. Although this statement will surely disappoint many who would like to see civil society act in more revolutionary ways, the ordinary Chinese people will likely be impressed, and perhaps even grateful, if Chinese NGOs and other civil society groups can do more to get the Chinese state to meet the needs and demands of the masses.

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Appendix

Scope, Data, Methodology, and Limitations

The field work for this study took place between autumn 2007 and summer 2011 and most of the data for this study were collected during this time period.

In this study, the label NGO is used to describe all social organizations that are not “creatures of the state” in the sense that they enjoy the power to make decisions with respect to personnel, financial, and other management matters. Nongovernmental organizations may, however, be created by state employees. In addition, NGOs may include those that possess some administrative connections to the state at some point during organizational development.¹ Moreover, NGOs may, of course, receive financial and other resource support from state agencies. Furthermore, NGOs include those that have achieved the nonprofit registration status and those that have not. This study distinguishes NGOs from GONGOs, such as the All-China Women’s Federation, which is an appendage of the Communist Party of China, and the All-China Lawyers Association, which is a product of state legislation.

In the existing literature on the Chinese NGO sector, scholars have generally included both GONGOs and NGOs in their samples. Some writers have in fact justified this analytical strategy by arguing that both types of organizations face similar environmental constraints and have therefore behaved in similar fashions. Even so, I contend that in doing so we underestimate the differences between the two types of organizations with respect to organizational needs and access to organizational resources. In the process, we are unlikely to capture the different factors that contribute to effectiveness for different organizational types.

¹ Although some may understandably question whether this type of “hybrid” NGO should be included in the sample, I believe that the decision to include such organizations conforms to the reality that organizational origins have not predestined the NGOs to pursue certain paths of development. In other words, how the NGO got started is less important than what it eventually becomes. As long as the organizational leadership can make independent decisions regarding the organization’s development, then we should recognize its independent character. Hybrid NGOs in China have enjoyed strong reputations as “nongovernmental” organizations, and one of China’s most prominent hybrid NGOs is Rural Women, which is featured in this book.

To understand the processes through which certain leadership ties are likely to contribute to NGO effectiveness, this research project adopts the case-study approach, which is best suited to analyzing causal processes and mechanisms (Yin 2002; Ragin 2007). In particular, this study is a multiple-case study (Yin 2002: 45–46). In order to explore the effects of leadership qualities on NGO effectiveness, I compare four core NGO cases that display variations with respect to organizational effectiveness. More specifically, three of the core cases have displayed similar levels of effectiveness while the fourth case has displayed a level of effectiveness different from the first three cases. In addition, the leaders of the four cases vary in terms of key personal attributes, notably level of education, occupation, and gender. In this respect, I employ both the “Mill’s Method of Agreement” and the “Mill’s Indirect Method of Difference” for this study (Ragin 1989: 36–42).

The four cases share certain environmental and organizational characteristics, however. Those characteristics are issue area and geographical location. All four NGO core cases are headquartered in Beijing, which is China’s capital city, even though all of them have varying degrees of organizational reach outside Beijing. In addition, the four organizations work primarily in the same issue area, namely issues concerning migrant workers, even though one organization is also prominent in the field of protecting minors.

In an effort to illustrate that the value of NGO leadership, notably the ties of the NGO leader, has also been found in organizations working in other geographical locations and on different issues, an additional three cases that exhibit variations in these two organizational characteristics are examined.² The three cases also serve another function. The NGO displaying the lowest level of organizational effectiveness also happens to be the youngest of the four organizations featured as core cases. One may thus come to the conclusion that organizational age may be an unaccounted-for factor to explain variations in organizational effectiveness. One of the three additional cases thus serves to show that organizational effectiveness has also been found in similarly young organizations.

Although NGOs serving migrant workers and their dependents constitute the focus of this study, my knowledge of China’s NGO landscape has benefited immensely from personal interviews, informal conversations, participant observation sessions, and written correspondence with the leaders, staff, and volunteers of NGOs that work in other issue areas, including the environment, public health, education, women’s issues, NGO capacity building, and disabled persons, as well as donor representatives. Similarly, while Beijing-based NGOs have constituted the bulk of the organizations with which I have interacted, I have

² The three additional cases are “shadow cases,” which are distinguished from core cases in that they are introduced into the analysis with the specific purposes of corroborating the argument and refuting rival hypotheses. For an example of the use of shadow cases, see Eva Bellin, “Contingent Democrats: Industrialists, Labor, and Democratization in Late-Developing Countries,” *World Politics* 52, 2 (January 2000): 175–205. I thank Bruce Dickson for introducing me to this methodological approach.

also engaged NGOs working in other parts of China. Interviews were also conducted with the staff of two GONGOs (Tables A.1, A.2, A.3 and A.4).

Given the difficulty of ascertaining the true universe of grassroots NGOs in China and accessing individual NGOs, I have adopted the well-known technique of snowball sampling. As a form of the non-probability sampling method, the main criticism of the method is that there is no assurance that the sample is representative of the population. The researcher has little control over the selection of the sample and unknown biases may be introduced into the sample, which can adversely impact the reliability of the findings. Yet, the method has important advantages. Other than the fact that it is easier to execute this method than to conduct probability sampling, the adoption of this method allows the researcher to reach difficult-to-access populations.

In addition to field research, I have studied English-language and Chinese-language publications for case studies of Chinese NGOs. The publications include both traditional and Internet forms. They include books, essays in news magazines, online blogs, academic journal articles, and internal NGO publications. To enhance my understanding of particular NGOs and the Chinese NGO sector in general, I have also interviewed and corresponded with scholars, practitioners, and government officials who are experts on the subject.

Despite these efforts, I am fully aware that I can make, at best, very limited claims about the representativeness of the sample. One obvious reason, which has been mentioned earlier, is that the population of NGOs in China remains a mystery. A second reason is that there remains substantial disagreement among China scholars, especially those who operate in different disciplines, about the appropriate defining qualities of a Chinese NGO. Moreover, given that this project is essentially a small-N study that focuses on NGOs operating in major urban centers, very little generalizations can be made about the state of effective NGOs in contemporary China. In order to evaluate all the possible factors that impact NGO effectiveness, large-N surveys of NGOs across different Chinese provinces and municipalities must be conducted. Nonetheless, through a detailed examination of several core cases and a more cursory examination of other cases, I have confidence that this study can yield insights about the mechanisms that facilitate NGO effectiveness and the processes through which those mechanisms might contribute to organizational success.

Another issue concerns the applicability of my findings to situations found in democracies. After all, the importance of leadership for NGOs anywhere has indeed been identified by writers. However, differences between democracies and non-democracies with respect to the state's policies and practices toward NGOs, the relative openness of the state to non-state entities, the nature of the media's relationship vis-à-vis the government, the extent of the NGOs' reliance on international support, the state and history of private philanthropy, and the importance of cultural considerations, such as religious factors, suggest that there would be differences in terms of the types of leadership qualities and connections that are most valuable for NGOs. Even if the same qualities and skills are found present among the leaders of successful NGOs working in democracies, the nature of those qualities, the relationships among them, as well as the relative weight of

each quality would in all likelihood be different than those found in non-democracies. Therefore, it is important to keep these considerations in mind when deciding how the findings in this book may be applied to situations in democracies.

Lastly, an additional word about the finding concerning the causal importance of NGO leadership in general and leadership qualities in particular. The emphasis on the NGO leader in this study is reflective of the current reality in China that NGOs are under-institutionalized in terms of organizational legitimacy. In this situation, NGOs have relied a great deal on their respective leaders. Even so, my research suggests that most Chinese NGO leaders would like for their organizations to outlive them. In this sense, the findings from this study may ultimately be applicable only for a limited period of time. It will, therefore, be interesting to see whether and how the value of the NGO leadership changes over time. However, at present, the great majority of the Chinese NGO leaders are alive and well. In fact, only one well-known Chinese NGO, the Friends of Nature, which is featured in this study, has thus far survived, with relative success, the passing of its founding leader. Therefore, at this time, we can only speculate about the extent to which the organizational value of the NGO leader will evolve (or decline) over time.

Table A.1 Interviews

BJ090607	September 6, 2007	Beijing, China
BJMY101107	October 11, 2007	Beijing, China
BJ112307	November 23, 2007	Beijing, China
BJ121207	December 12, 2007	Beijing, China
BJ012908	January 29, 2008	Beijing, China
BJ022108	February 21, 2008	Beijing, China
BJWK022108	February 21, 2008	Beijing, China
BJ022708	February 27, 2008	Beijing, China
NPO Shang Yusheng	April 1, 2008	Beijing, China
BJWK042808	April 28, 2008	Beijing, China
BJ052708	May 27, 2008	Beijing, China
On Action Ma Yang	May 27, 2008	Beijing, China
BJ052808	May 28, 2008	Beijing, China
Rural Women Gao Guanglin	June 12, 2008	Beijing, China
Zhicheng Wang Fang	June 13, 2008	Beijing, China
BJWK061608	June 16, 2008	Beijing, China
BJ061908	June 19, 2008	Beijing, China
BJHD062508	June 25, 2008	Beijing, China
BJWK062708	June 27, 2008	Beijing, China
BJ070308	July 3, 2008	Beijing, China
BJ070408	July 4, 2008	Beijing, China
Zhicheng Zhang Wenjuan	July 17, 2008	Beijing, China
BJWK081208	August 12, 2008	Beijing, China
BJ091608	September 16, 2008	Beijing, China
BJ100108	October 1, 2008	Beijing, China
BJMY100808	October 8, 2008	Beijing, China

continued

Table A.1 (continued)

BJ111908	November 19, 2008	Beijing, China
BJWK111908	November 19, 2008	Beijing, China
BJ112508	November 25, 2008	Beijing, China
BJ112608	November 26, 2008	Beijing, China
BJ120608	December 6, 2008	Beijing, China
BJ120908	December 9, 2008	Beijing, China
BJ121808	December 18, 2008	Beijing, China
BJ122108	December 21, 2008	Beijing, China
BJ122308	December 23, 2008	Beijing, China
BJ021609	February 16, 2009	Beijing, China
BJCD021909	February 19, 2009	Beijing, China
BJ022309	February 23, 2009	Beijing, China
BJ032209	March 22, 2009	Beijing, China
BJ032509	March 25, 2009	Beijing, China
BJWK032509	March 25, 2009	Beijing, China
BJAZ040109	April 1, 2009	Beijing, China
Maple Women Wang Xingjuan	April 1, 2009	Beijing, China
BJWK040809	April 8, 2009	Beijing, China
BJ041409	April, 14, 2009	Beijing, China
BJWK041509	April 15, 2009	Beijing, China
BJZX042209	April 22, 2009	Beijing, China
BJ042609	April 26, 2009	Beijing, China
BJHD052709	May 27, 2009	Beijing, China
BJWK060109	June 1, 2009	Beijing, China
Rural Women Xie Lihua	June 3, 2009	Beijing, China
BJWK072609	July 26, 2009	Beijing, China
BJTZ072709	July 27, 2009	Beijing, China
Little Bird Wei Wei	August 6, 2009	Beijing, China
Self-Empowerment Chen Jian	April 6, 2008	Chongqing, China
CQ040808	April 8, 2008	Chongqing, China
CQ040908	April 9, 2008	Chongqing, China
Self-Empowerment Chen Jian	July 31, 2009	Chongqing, China
JN071008	July 10, 2008	Jinan, China
QD070708	July 7, 2008	Qingdao, China
SH041808	April 18, 2008	Shanghai, China
SH092808	September 28, 2008	Shanghai, China
SH031010	March 10, 2010	Shanghai, China
SHWY010511	January 5, 2011	Shanghai, China

continued

Table A.1 (continued)

SHZJ010511	January 5, 2011	Shanghai, China
SH012510	January 25, 2010	Shanghai, China
SHWY011011	January 10, 2011	Shanghai, China
SHWY031011	March 10, 2011	Shanghai, China
XI030308	March 3, 2008	Xian, China
XI030709	March 7, 2009	Xian, China
ZZ072108	July 21, 2008	Zhengzhou, China
Self-Empowerment Chen Yuying and Chen Jian	May 13, 2009	Zhongxian, China
TPWK020811	February 8, 2011	Taipei, Taiwan
EJIC Huang Xuetao	December 29, 2011	Washington, DC (telephone)

Table A.2 Written correspondence

BJYYSK020909	February 9, 2009	Beijing, China
BJYY04052009	April 5, 2009	Beijing, China
Self-Empowerment Chen Yuying	January 10, 2011	Shanghai, China
Self-Empowerment Chen Yuying	January 15, 2011	Shanghai, China
Self-Empowerment Chen Yuying	July 14, 2011	Shanghai, China

Table A.3 Participant observation sessions

NGO forum on taxation	September 18, 2008	Beijing, China
NGO accountability forum	October 24, 2008	Beijing, China
International Volunteers Day	December 5, 2008	Beijing, China
On action anniversary celebration	December 20, 2008	Beijing, China
China Doll Sunday movie program	February 22, 2009	Beijing, China
Unirule bi-weekly seminar	April 10, 2009	Beijing, China
Conference on Sichuan earthquake relief	June 9, 2009	Beijing, China
Visit to cerebral palsy NGO	April 18, 2008	Shanghai, China

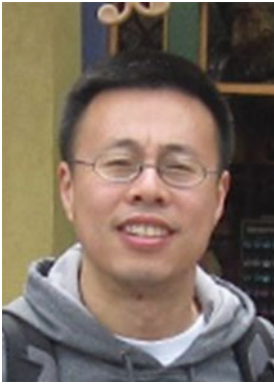
Table A.4 Informal conversation

Foreign NGO officer	March 8, 2011	Shanghai, China
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- Ragin, Charles C. 2007. Comparative Methods. In *The Sage Handbook of Social Science Methodology*, eds. William Outhwaite and Stephen P. Turner, 67-81. London: Sage Publications.
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About the Author



John W. Tai, Ph.D., is an adjunct professor at the George Washington University’s Elliott School of International Affairs and a consultant to the U.S. government. John has written about China’s civil society, religious freedom and human rights in China, and US-China-Taiwan relations. He has also conducted public talks, private briefings, and media interviews on these subjects in both the United States and China. From 2007 to 2011, John taught at the Beijing Foreign Studies University and Shanghai’s East China Normal University, where he managed study-abroad programs for American university students. Most recently, John authored a lengthy

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More information on this author and book is at:

http://afes-press-books.de/html/SpringerBriefs_ESDP_Tai.htm.

About the Book

How is modern civil society created? There are few contemporary studies on this important question. When it is addressed, scholars tend to emphasize the institutional environment that facilitates a modern civil society. However, there is a need for a new perspective on this issue. Contemporary China, where a modern civil society remains at its nascent stage, offers a valuable site to seek new answers. Through a comparative analysis of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in contemporary China, this study shows the importance of the human factor, notably the NGO leadership, in the building of a modern civil society. In particular, in recognition of the social nature of NGOs, this study engages in a comparative examination of the state linkage, media connection, and international tie of Chinese NGO leaders to understand how each contributes to an effective NGO.

More information on this book is at:

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