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## Nongovernmental China: 300 Million Migrant Workers and the NGO Response

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NONGOVERNMENTAL CHINA:  
300 MILLION MIGRANT WORKERS AND THE NGO RESPONSE

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NONGOVERNMENTAL CHINA:  
300 MILLION MIGRANT WORKERS AND THE NGO RESPONSE

A Dissertation Presented to the Graduate Faculty of

Dedman College

Southern Methodist University

in

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for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

with a

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by

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Mom, I love you for getting me started and getting me to finish. Dad, I love you for giving me a sense of humor. B, I love you for getting where I come from. L, I love you for inspiring me to think big, and for the cuddles. Chilibeau, I love you for always wanting to play with me. And, S'mores, I love you for singing to me.

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Nongovernmental China:  
300 Million Migrant Workers and the NGO Response

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At the center of China's rapid economic growth are the nearly 300 million migrants who have come from rural areas to work in urban factories. Despite their vital role in China's rise, government policies have created many social, economic, and legal problems for this population. In response, a small but growing number of Chinese have started NGO programs to improve migrants' access to legal aid, education, and sense of community. In a country with such a state-dominated society, this type of non-governmental activity takes on particular significance. Based on 70-weeks of ethnographic fieldwork, and a review of relevant literature, this dissertation analyzes the decision-making of the founders/directors of migrant-focused nongovernmental organizations in China in order to: (1) understand the political, economic, and sociocultural factors that influence their programs; (2) explore how these factors fit within the broader context of China's economic development; (3) broaden literature on the role of the state in nongovernmental activity, and (4) provide insights into changing state-society relations in the transition to capitalism.

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This is dedicated to Victoria Lockwood

## INTRODUCTION

Based on seventy weeks of field research in Beijing and Shenzhen, as well as a review of relevant literature, this dissertation explores the role of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in creating and redefining local economic relationships with China's 300 million internal migrant workers. The founders/directors of these organizations run programs to improve migrants' access to legal aid, education, and sense of community. Their perspectives, experiences, and decision-making provide significant insights into China's paradoxical relationship with its migrant workers as well as changing state-society relations in the transition to capitalism.

The story unfolds on a dusty floor in a rundown building marked for demolition on the outskirts of one of China's largest eastern cities. Several women squat around a woven mat, enthusiastically sharing neighborhood gossip. "I'm certainly not here for the food," one of them comments. "It'll never be as good as home."<sup>1</sup> Spread in front of them are a variety of fabric swatches, a rainbow of spooled sewing thread, and an array of beads and decorative accessories. While chatting, the women meticulously assemble the raw materials into coin purses, book covers, and handbags.

This is not part of the grueling factory work that brought them to the city. They will sell these handmade items at a local market themselves. They will share the profits, using a portion of them to fund an afterschool program for the children of other migrant workers. One of the women working at the mat is the founder of this program. I do my best to follow her instructions

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<sup>1</sup> 我不对因为吃的才在这里的。因为这里的吃的远远比不上家乡的食物。

and make my own coin purse, but to no avail. She tells me not to worry. Pointing to the other women, she says “What they make at the factory is for someone else. What they make here is for them.”<sup>2</sup>

Even in these past few years of growing consumerism and digital technology innovation, the most defining element of China’s development remains the factory-driven export economy. “Made in China” has become a ubiquitous label on consumer goods all over the world. It is a mark of China’s massive share of global trade. It is often a mark of inexpensive goods. It is a mark increasingly downplayed, with propaganda-like taglines such as “designed in the USA, made in China”. Yet, more objectively than any of its other meanings, “Made in China” signifies “made by Chinese migrants”. It is no exaggeration that migrant workers have a hand in producing nearly every single thing made for export from China.

One of the great puzzles in the study of migrants in China is why the government has consistently treated them so poorly. There is no easy or satisfactory answer. China’s strict internal residency laws, known as *hukou*, prevent Chinese citizens from enjoying most legal rights and social services anywhere in their own country except in their home provinces. This includes access to healthcare, education, and shockingly, in a country so dependent on factory workers, most labor protections. The government likely uses these policies to minimize its funding of health and social services. Admittedly, mass migration to east coast megacities could put enormous strain on metropolitan coffers. However, this should be largely offset by the increased tax revenue from labor-based migration.

Given the massive contribution of internal migrant workers to China’s economic boom, the cruelty of current residency laws defies logical explanation. What is particularly interesting,

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<sup>2</sup> 他们在工厂做的活是为了别人。他们在这里做的事情是为了自己。

however, is that a handful of very committed Chinese citizens run nongovernmental programs to help the migrant workers in their country. I wish I could report that a lot more organizations were working to solve the many legal, social, and economic problems facing these 300 million internal migrants. Someday the number of civil society organizations may become commensurate with the breadth and depth of the problem. However, in a country with such a panoptic government apparatus, even the limited scope of this non-governmental activity takes on particular significance.

As others have suggested (notably Kleinman 2011), migrant-focused NGOs in China could be part of a larger societal shift toward greater social responsibility, what Hopen (2010) defines as a sense of obligation both to improve and not to harm society. Comprising a miniscule percentage of the more than half a million total registered nongovernmental organizations (Economist 2014), migrant-focused NGOs in China support but do not provide sufficient evidence for this trend. Yet, the existence of these organizations offers insights into the ways China's state-dominated society influences and is influenced by expressions of social responsibility.

A small but significant body of recent sociological research reveals how the Chinese political economy informs and limits the operations of NGOs. Yu (2011) points out that the success of NGOs in China is primarily dependent on their goals and programs being in line with the state. Hsu, Hsu, and Hasmath (2017) note that the influence of the government is often localized. NGO strategies are shaped by the resources and opportunities available in specific cities. For example, Beijing and Shanghai have large donor pools. Thus, organizations in the largest cities rely less on volunteers than in second-tier cities such as Nanjing. However, because NGOs often cannot officially register with government, they rely on personal connections to

secure official support. As Cheng, Ngok, and Zhuang (2010) point out, this is a political survival strategy that may help improve interaction with the government, but it can become unstable when personal relations change. Moreover, Lu (2009) describes how the use of significant resources to ensure organizational survival often detracts from the programs NGOs run to help others.

Absent from these analyses is the anthropological hallmark of attributing agency to institutional behavior. Anthropologists working in China have a long tradition of this, for example in rural economies (Fei and Chang 1945) and the stock market (Hertz 1998). At least as much as external factors, the decision-making of the founders/directors of Chinese NGOs shapes the programs they run.

I gathered data to explore key questions about the roles of NGO's in China's economic development that remain unanswered by previous research: What obstacles have the founders/directors encountered, and what are their successes and failures in dealing with these? What motivates them and how does their decision-making reflect their perceptions of what it means to be a good citizen and a good person in twenty-first century China? What progress do they see, and what societal and political changes do they view as necessary for lasting change to occur? What do their perspectives and experiences reveal about changing state-society relations in the Chinese development model?

To answer these questions and offer a holistic perspective on the experiences and decision-making of my research population, I first conduct a thorough review of relevant literature. In *Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework*, I situate my research within broader theoretical issues concerning the relationship between the state and NGOs.

In *Chapter 2: Research in Context*, I delve into the historical and cultural significance of nongovernmental organizations in China and their intersection with migrant issues. I trace the origins of Chinese modernity and the ways that historical and cultural roots continue to influence societal trends in the twenty-first century. I explore how Chinese modernity has impacted and been impacted by mass internal migration, and the ways that nongovernmental organizations have come to address many problems related to China's economic development, including migrant issues.

In *Chapter 3: Fieldwork*, I detail the logistics, planning, and local circumstances that informed the field research for this dissertation. I give an overview of my methods and discuss how they each contribute evidence to understanding the experiences and decision-making of my research population. I compare distinguishing characteristics of my field sites, particularly as they relate to China's economic development and internal migration. I use emic perspectives from guided neighborhood tours to enrich descriptions of my field sites from existing literature and from my own observations. Finally, I delve into issues of reflexivity and the realities of conducting this research in the Chinese context.

In *Chapter 4: Population Profile*, I take a deep dive into the lives and work of my research population. I discuss how I sampled this population and the inherent biases of this process. Based on survey data and semi-structured interviews, including professional life histories, I explore the range of variables that shape their experiences and influence their decision-making.

In *Chapter 5: Priorities in Practice*, I analyze data from interviews and pile sorts to understand how the founders/directors prioritize various aspects of their organizations and how



these priorities affect the ways they make decisions related their programs, including their structure, marketing, and funding.

In *Chapter 6: Governing the Non-Governmental*, I use decision-modelling to understand why roughly forty percent of the organizations in my sample receive at least part of their funding from the government. By doing so, they morph into the paradoxical institutional form of a governmental nongovernmental organization (GONGO). After exploring the factors that contribute to this decision, I discuss how the use of these funds further affects decision-making. Finally, I look at how these decisions are both unique to China and comparable to the nongovernmental sectors in other countries.

In *Chapter 7: Dataset Conclusions*, I use the data I collected from fieldwork to provide answers to my core research questions (listed above). I also explore the limitations of my dataset and propose future research to answer questions for which this study did not provide satisfactory answers. Notably, I plan to conduct a follow-up study to understand the impacts of NGO programs on localized migrant problems.

In *Chapter 8: Broader Impacts*, I discuss how the decision-making of the founders/directors holds important implications for understanding the role of the state in shaping civil society, as well as changing state-society relations in the transition to capitalism.

## CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

NGOs in China represent a case of civil society organizations operating in a post-socialist state. Though the countries of the former Soviet Union experienced significant political upheaval, China transitioned from socialism to capitalism without reforming its political system. It has a non-democratic one-party government that interferes in all sectors of the economy far more than we are accustomed to in the West. This creates a nongovernmental sector that shares many traits in common with other countries while also being unique to China. In this chapter, I situate my research within the theoretical frameworks of the anthropology of NGOs and literature on social entrepreneurship, i.e., charitable organizations that rely more on profitable revenue streams than donations to fund their programs.

### **The Anthropology of NGOs**

One of the main contributions of anthropology to the study of NGOs is complicating the relationship between the nongovernmental sector and the state. In a neoliberal framework, nondemocratic systems cannot support a nongovernmental sector. Exemplifying this perspective, Wedel and Wedel (1992, 323) write about former Soviet-era Eastern Europe: “A ‘civil society’ exists when individuals and groups are free to form organizations that function independently of the state, and that can mediate between citizens and the state. [The] lack of civil society was part of the very essence of the all-pervasive communist state...”

Such a perspective is transferable to prevailing Western views on China. It assumes that only Western style democracies can have properly functioning NGOs. However, such narrow

definitions limit our ability to see the diversity of civil society activity around the world.

Following Edwards (2009), I employ a more inclusive definition of civil society as the space in which citizens take part in “associational life” – i.e., where, regardless of government interference, the interests of society at large become organized into topical clubs and organizations.

Participation in voluntary associations is particularly important for migrant populations. Leaving their homes means leaving behind their social bonds and support systems. From the earliest anthropological research on this topic, there has been an awareness of the role of voluntary organizations in alleviating these strains for rural-to-urban migrants. For example, Little (1957) notes that in African cities associations serve as functional if somewhat imperfect replacements for the social bonds of kinship ties in rural societies. This is a vital component of adapting to life in an unfamiliar and often-hostile urban environment, whether in Africa, Latin America (e.g., Mangin 1959), or indeed China.

Reed-Danahay (2008) posits that the main mechanisms driving these association-based support systems are communities of practice. It is important to distinguish this term from the one used by Wenger (1999) to describe a group of professionals engaging in situated learning, even as it pertains to NGO professionals (Hasmath and Hsu 2016). More than anything, migrant-focused organizations, like the ones in this study, build spaces for migrants to share knowledge with each other to deal with specific problems they face in cities, most often related to employment, access to social services, and discrimination. By focusing on the founders/directors of these organizations themselves, this dissertation advances the literature on migrant-focused associations with a particular focus of the factors affecting the process of building and maintaining “replacement” support systems in the form of nongovernmental organizations.

Following Dunn (1996), the prevailing anthropological agenda toward NGOs is to particularize and localize nongovernmental activities within specific cultural and political economic contexts. Seligman (1995) points out that civil society organizations are not inherently locked in zero-sum opposition with the state. Their coexistence occupies the spectrum between complete autonomy and total integration. Asad and Kay (2014) advocate for removing the anti-state bias from considerations of NGOs. The state is no more all bad than NGOs are all good. This theoretical framework sets the stage for considerations of NGOs in a range of political superstructures. My dissertation shows that NGOs in China's authoritarian system function "properly" insofar as they benefit the lives of their target population, namely internal migrant workers, while aligning with the interests of both the state and society at large.

Clark (1995) notes that the relationship between NGOs and the state is the main determinant of nongovernmental programs benefitting their target populations. This effect is particularly pronounced in authoritarian systems like China's. The one-party government tends to view NGOs as a potential threat to its official narrative. It seeks to downplay social problems and promote an image of prosperity and a harmonious society.<sup>3</sup> I will discuss this in detail in the next chapter.

Gallagher (2004) warns that in China the usual state-society dichotomy does not accurately represent the often-porous boundary between the government and civil society organizations. Hsu (2012b) employs the term "civil society" as a familiar reference point, but warns that the nongovernmental sector in China has far more government interference than is typical in democratic countries. It is also important to factor into this equation the variety of ways the NGO programs in my study help migrant workers gain access to legal aid and

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<sup>3</sup> 和谐社会

education for their children. Because this is important to both NGOs and the central government, the situation is perhaps best described by Yang and Alpermann (2014, 313) as one in which all the actors mutually accommodate each other.

In this way, NGOs in China fit within Kamat's (2004, 171) notion that a nongovernmental sector is as much part of civil society as it is part of the remaking of state institutions to better serve public interests. After all, it is widely accepted that deficiencies in government services are one of the main factors leading to the emergence of NGOs globally (e.g. Shah 2005). Thus, NGOs operate at the intersection of changing state-society relations. The ways they make decisions reflect the interaction of government priorities with societal needs.

As I discuss in detail in the next chapter, one of the main effects of this is on the ways Chinese NGOs fund their programs. Due to strict government regulations and growing public skepticism, they are increasingly unable to rely on charitable donations. Thus, they depend on profit-making endeavors to fund their programs. This puts them in line with an emerging phenomenon known as "social entrepreneurship".

In countries around the world, researchers have observed private citizens dubbed "social entrepreneurs" starting for-profit businesses to address localized problems related to poverty, access to education, and public health (e.g., Bornstein 2004, Dees 1998, Leadbeater 1997, Martin and Osberg 2007). Such issues are often linked to larger societal problems resulting from inequalities created by capitalism (e.g., Picketty 2014). In the following section, I discuss how the Chinese case is representative of the literature on social entrepreneurship. In the next chapter, I detail the uniqueness of the Chinese case.

## **Social Entrepreneurship**

The problems faced by internal migrants in China are representative of circumstances in which social entrepreneurs in various parts of the world help migrants participate in the economic life of their communities. For example, in India the Aajeevika Bureau helps rural migrants navigate the complex process of registering for government identity cards that grant them access to banking, healthcare and other social services. Aajeevika funds its operations by charging migrants a small processing fee and from revenue generated by advising similar programs (Ashoka 2014). In Morocco, La Fondation Orient-Occident offers affordable IT and hospitality professional training to migrant workers who are otherwise relegated to low-paying and demeaning jobs (Filali 2016). In Beijing, the Dandelion School provides low cost middle school education for the children of migrants who lack the legal status to attend public schools (Lane 2012, 5).

These examples seem to support the theory of Austin, Stevenson, and Wei-Skillern (2006) that social entrepreneurs have emerged because commercial market forces both create and fail to address economic inequality (see also Poon 2011). This appears to be true in China and worldwide. Dees (1998) suggests that for social entrepreneurs the profit from their businesses is a means to solve problems faced by these populations. This seems to delineate social entrepreneurs from “regular” entrepreneurs who seek to profit from what Prahalad (2009) views as the fortune to be made from unmet market demands among the world’s poor. However, other than the self-reported mission statements of social entrepreneurs and descriptions of their businesses in the existing literature (e.g., Bornstein 2004, Leadbeater 1997), we know little about their individual motivations (c.f., Schwartz 2012, who stresses the importance of formative experiences in shaping the motivations of social entrepreneurs - see Chapter 4).

Social entrepreneurship is a relatively new concept, and the existing literature offers little consensus on its definition. From a composite of definitions compiled by Abu-Saifan (2012), I define social entrepreneurship broadly as the process of designing, starting and running a business with the primary objective of solving a societal problem, particularly one faced by a poor or marginalized group. This implies an “altruistic form of capitalism” (Tan, Williams, and Tan 2005, 2) that combines the philanthropic goals of nonprofit charities with the profit-seeking of “regular” entrepreneurship. Unlike nonprofit charities that rely on financial donations, the businesses run by social entrepreneurs generate revenue to fund their projects. Unlike “regular” entrepreneurs who measure success predominantly in financial terms, social entrepreneurs commit to a “double bottom-line” (e.g., Dart 2014), whereby they measure success both in financial terms and in terms of a positive social impact.

Social entrepreneurship gained widespread international attention when Mohamed Yunus received the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize. He was lauded for issuing micro-loans to rural women in Bangladesh to help them start self-sustaining cottage industries. Like a normal bank, he used the profits to offer more loans, but he also had a second bottom-line measured by reductions to rural poverty. Thus, Yunus (1999) details how he charged interest on the loans, but not nearly at the rates being applied by banks seeking to maximize their profits (see also Bornstein 1997).

The word “social” does not inherently delineate social entrepreneurship from “regular” entrepreneurship. Seelos and Mair (2005, 243) caution that there is no such thing as “non-social” entrepreneurship. Reynolds et al. (2002) underscore that “regular” entrepreneurs create relationships with customers and employees in a community. In this sense, “social” is defined broadly as the creation of voluntary networks of people willing and able either to work for a

business or to spend money on its products or services. Thus, the social aspects of “regular” businesses aid profit-making.

This is even the case in Bourdieu’s (1984, 291) description of the ways business people who donate to charity improve their reputations for honesty and selflessness, which attracts more customers to their businesses. As with corporate gifting practices (e.g., Darr 2003), this behavior appears to be a circuitous, if not necessary route to maximizing profits. Indeed, all businesses foster strong social ties in the process of making a profit.

Social entrepreneurs seem to possess motivations that coexist with profit-seeking. Martin and Osberg (2007, 35) stress that social entrepreneurs typically have “customers” who cannot afford to pay market value for the goods or services they need. Thus, social entrepreneurship serves people in society who, like rural-to-urban migrants, have become marginalized, and whose quality of life thus suffers. Here social comes to mean “social inclusion”, i.e., helping people participate in the economic life of their communities by giving them access to education, employment, and financial services (Buckmaster and Thomas 2009, 9). In this way, social entrepreneurs seek to remedy the social and economic exclusion inherent in the social aspects of “regular” entrepreneurship.

The existence of these “for-profit charities” suggests an alternate narrative to the mechanisms of capitalist industrialization that often disembed social relations from their “situatedness” in local economic practices (see Giddens 1990). Emphasizing this social dimension situates social entrepreneurship within what Polanyi (2001) calls a “double movement” in capitalist economies, whereby individuals strengthen social commitments in response to the de-individualizing effects of market economies.



Social entrepreneurs appear to be entrepreneurial in the sense of the word's French origin, *entreprendre*, meaning "to initiate something significant" (Swedberg 2000, 11). This definition asserts individual agency in market processes, but does not assume universal motivations or outcomes. It departs from Schumpeter's (1934) legacy of considering wealth as the main product of starting a business (e.g., Shane and Venkataraman 2000). Yet, it remains grounded in his view of entrepreneurs as innovators who respond to needs in society (see also Cohen and Levinthal 1990).

The above literature review situates the Chinese case within broader trends in nongovernmental sectors worldwide. The profit-making activities of the founders/directors in my study fit into common definitions of social entrepreneurship. Much like social entrepreneurs in other contexts, the founders/directors in my study use profit-making as a means to negotiate government restrictions, societal demands, and their own motivations for improving the lives of others. In the next chapter, I begin to delve into the factors that make China's NGOs unique. This is a theme I return to throughout my discussion of empirical data gathered for this dissertation.

## CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH IN CONTEXT

In this chapter, I trace the convergence of internal migration and civil society in the context of China's economic development in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. For most China observers, the period of "modern" China – and indeed modernizing China – begins in 1978 at the onset of the country's state-run market economy and rapid industrialization. Expanding on this framework, I trace the origins of this "modern" China as a progression of historical events that appears to directly inform current relations between (1) the state and society, (2) individual citizens, and (3) China and the rest of the world. Into this definition of Chinese modernity, I also factor influential philosophical traditions that continue to inform these relationships, notably Confucianism and Maoism. Finally, I explore the emergence of civil society, particularly the role of NGOs, in China's economic development.

### **The Origins of "Modern" China**

Gillette (2004) asserts that China's recent past continues to have a traumatic psychological effect on both personal and national identity. She is explicitly referencing the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). During this period, Mao Zedong reasserted his political dominance by upending social hierarchies. He called for the destruction of the "Four Olds"<sup>4</sup>, i.e., old customs, old culture, old habits, and old ideas (Spence 1991, 575). For example, he instigated students to ridicule and even physically assault their teachers (Chang 2003, 284),

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<sup>4</sup> 四旧

thereby upsetting the tradition of respect for elders. He lambasted intellectuals who he argued had much more to learn from the knowledge of the workers and peasants than vice versa (Spence 2006, 99). Sym (1996) even found multiple cases of the revolutionary fervor reaching such manic heights that some villagers engaged in cannibalism to demonstrate their disdain for the bourgeois classes. Millions of Chinese citizens were persecuted or sent to rural labor camps, and approximately a half-million people were murdered during the purges of the Cultural Revolution (Meisner 1999, 354).

Now, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, any Chinese person over the age of sixty-five is old enough not only to have experienced these traumas but also to have taken part in them. The legacy of the Cultural Revolution lives on in today's elder teachers, grandparents, and mentors. These shared traumas influence the ways they think about their society and about their trust of their fellow citizens (or lack thereof). Thurston (1985, 5) found many survivors of the Cultural Revolution who describe the long-term effects on their worldview as a "sequela" – i.e., a sickness that remains even after the disease is cured.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, for the Chinese, the direct influences on how they perceive their society, their world, and their lives far predate the Mao Years. At this point, it is important to note that when I discuss the "Chinese" I am really talking about the ethnic Han Chinese. At present, they are the largest ethnic group on earth, accounting for approximately eighteen percent of the global population. In other words, more than one in every six people on this planet are Han. Although present-day China has fifty-five minority groups, the Han make up more than ninety percent of China's

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<sup>5</sup> The exact Chinese term is 后遗症.

current population (China 2012).<sup>6</sup> For this reason, the grand narrative of China's past is largely a history of the Han.

Approximately four thousand years ago, at the advent of the Xia Dynasty (c. 2070–1600 BCE), the Han began keeping written records. Scholars widely agree that Han civilization likely extends at least another thousand years into the past. In fact, archaeological evidence suggests that more than nine thousand years ago tribes with direct cultural links to the Han inhabited the Yellow River Basin (Liu and Chen 2012).



Figure 1: The Yellow River in Present-Day China

Needless to say, the Chinese (i.e., the Han) have one of the longest continuous histories of any present-day civilization. It is neither my intention nor within my capacity to provide a satisfactory overview of the dynastic period. I will leave this Herculean task to the eminently devoted historians who have given us windows into one of the most innovative and culturally-rich periods in human history. These books can be split into two general categories: histories of

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<sup>6</sup> I will discuss these minority groups later in this chapter in the section on *Modernity and Migration*.

the empire and histories of the people. The first is exemplified by Keay (2011) who details how Chinese cultural roots from the beginning of the dynastic period have been as much a function of the rise and fall of emperors as of a constant redefining of geographical borders. The latter has led to the assimilation of outside peoples and philosophical traditions which has been central to the long-term development of the Han identity. The second category is well-represented by Tanner (2010) who focusses on how changes in economic and social institutions have continuously shaped and reshaped the lives of ordinary Chinese citizens. This theme is directly transferrable to considerations of state-society relations in the modern era, a topic I will discuss in the next section.

From these, and many other scholarly works, it becomes clear that the single thread weaving through the dynastic period, and indeed into the modern era, is Confucianism. Confucius lived from 551-479 BCE. His writings on personal and governmental morality had an enormous influence over China's dynastic rulers during his own time and for centuries beyond. For the purposes of this dissertation, it is particularly important to understand how Confucian thought has and continues to influence both interpersonal and state-society relationships in China. Specifically, many aspects of Chinese society revolve around Confucius' notion of the Five Bonds, namely the bond between the ruler and ruled, parents and children, husband and wife, elder and younger siblings, and between friends. In a particularly blunt passage, Confucius (1997, 7) sums up the core elements of what is generally referred to as filial piety:

Nowadays people think they are dutiful sons when they feed their parents. Yet they also feed their dogs and horses. Unless there is respect, where is the difference?<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 论语 2.7: 今之孝者、是謂能養。至於犬馬、皆能有養。不敬、何以別乎。

This sentiment is applicable to each of the Five Bonds. Respect undergirds not only relationships, but also nearly every interaction I have ever had in China. It is common practice to show reverence in both speech and manner to those of higher social status. This is most apparent in the use of honorific language. For example, the Chinese use different terms for “you” to refer to people of equal or lesser status (你) and higher status (您). These colloquialisms also extend beyond individual word use. It is common to speak to people with higher status using less direct phrasing that accentuates the privilege of their position and one’s own inability to fully grasp what it must be like to enjoy such status. This is a particularly foreign concept for non-native speakers who have not been raised with Confucian values. I still struggle to apply it in everyday practice. One example that I often use as a point of reference is the very common question of inquiring about someone’s job. With someone of equal or lesser status, it is common to ask, “Where is your job?”<sup>8</sup> or more simply, “What do you do?”<sup>9</sup> However, when asking someone with higher status, it is advisable to ask, “Where have you been promoted?”<sup>10</sup> Beyond simply asking about employment, the latter question implies not only that the person has a high position but also that he or she has earned the position.

Beyond language use, the Confucian social hierarchy demands deference to one’s superiors. This is as true of the child-parent relationship as it is of the citizen-state relationship. In both cases, it is discouraged to question one’s superiors. The ruling communist party (CCP) has made a variety of efforts to minimize the role of competing ideologies in Chinese society, notably Confucianism. However, the CCP has also taken full advantage of the long-standing tradition to revere one’s superiors. I will discuss its use of social controls in the next section. The

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<sup>8</sup> 你在哪里工作?

<sup>9</sup> 你是做什么的?

<sup>10</sup> 您在哪里高就? (Notice the use of the polite 您.)

point here is that the Five Bonds play as significant a role in modern times as they did during the dynastic period. However, they are not the only forces that influence relationships, both at the interpersonal and societal levels.

One of the earliest and most prominent Western anthropologists to work in China, Morton Fried<sup>11</sup>, pointed out that family was not necessarily the most important element in Chinese social organization. He found that “the friction engendered in the normal living arrangements among kinfolk often moves individuals to seek social outlets beyond the circle of blood or affinal relatives” (Fried 1953, 206). In fact, he observed that the friendships created between classmates were most likely to endure throughout one’s life.

Forming functional relationship outside of the Five Bonds is really the search for *tong*, best translated as “together” or “in common”.<sup>12</sup> The goal is to change strangers into links in one’s network by establishing a basis of familiarity by appealing to shared identities, i.e., *tong*. The nature of one’s relationship to another person is more important than the title of that relationship. This requires a distinction between the expressive and the practical dimensions of relationships. “He is my friend” is not as important to the formation of social networks in China as “he is my college roommate” or “he is my colleague”. Thus, “the Chinese version of the self is formed and reformed through fluid construction of relationships and positioning itself within them” (Smart 1999, 128).

Even in the dynastic era, when the Confucian ideal of filial piety was at its strongest, individuals often sought relationships outside their kin group in order to discuss their problems

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<sup>11</sup> Fried taught at Columbia University from 1950 until his death in 1986. He is most well-known for his adherence and contributions to Julian Steward’s now discredited evolutionary model. However, he also contributed some of the only ethnographic research in China prior to the communist revolution in 1949.

<sup>12</sup> 同

with equals. In Chinese society it is often difficult to be entirely honest with one's father or mother, because these parental relationships require children to abide by complex rules of respect and humility. Supporting this tradition in the modern era, Olga Lang, who worked in China even before Fried, found that a common sentiment among industrial workers in Shanghai was that they could ask a friend for help when it was not possible to ask family. One of her informants commented, "It is better to go to a friend for a loan, he won't sneer at you" (Lang 1946, 327).

As Smart (1999) points out, such relationships should not be conflated with friendship in its purest sense. The Chinese use the term *guanxi* to refer to their type of friendship with implied reciprocity. At all levels of society, things get done by forming and maintaining professional relationships through gift-giving. One might be tempted to conclude that the Chinese are a manipulative people, and that every gift is given with the expectation of reciprocity. While an outsider might need an explicit explanation of the nature of a gift being given in a specific situation, amongst cultural insiders this knowledge is clearly implied by the circumstances of the exchange. The most valuable piece of cultural information is what kind of gift should be given. As a general rule, the more important a connection or a favor the more expensive the gift should be. Gifts can range from a simple box of fruit to butchered meats and even to expensive luxury goods. According to one middle-age factory worker interviewed by Yang (1994, 127), a gift to the head of the provincial labor department of fine chinaware and textiles worth a month's salary was necessary to procure a less erratic (and thus more desirable) work schedule.

The art of *guanxi*<sup>13</sup>, i.e., the adherence to styles and methods of exchange, is critical to its effectiveness. Gifts are used more than money, which is largely viewed as bribery. Exchanges often have a strong ceremonial component. For example, a common offering is a gift card to a

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<sup>13</sup> 关系学



local department store, which is placed in a red envelope, similar to those used for monetary gifts at the new year or weddings. This is then hand delivered, usually through an intermediary to minimize the appearance of being a direct bribe. In fact, one of the most common terms for this kind of purposeful gift-giving is *hongbao*, which translates to “red envelope”.<sup>14</sup>

The final element in a *guanxi* relationship is the obligation to repay, i.e., implied reciprocity. Repayment of a favor (or gift) is seldom of equal value to what was originally given. In fact, repayments of greater value are an essential element in maintaining *guanxi*. Of equal importance is the amount of time between favor and repayment. This is indeed a subtle art. If the repayment is made too quickly, it appears that one is actually paying for the favor. The art of gift giving is entirely geared to avoid any appearance of bribery. Perhaps counterintuitive for Westerners is the notion that “an unpaid debt provides opportunities for further cultivating the relationship” (Yan 1996, 144). In other words, the length of time between favor and repayment is a direct representation of how practical and reliable the relationship is and will continue to be.

This is comparable to the Kula Ring in the Trobriand Islands as described by Malinowski (2002, 62-79). Like the production and maintenance of *guanxi* in China, the Kula Ring, aside from cultural specifics, uses purposeful gift exchange to preserve long-standing and mutually beneficial relationships. In fact, after the islanders exchange symbolic objects, they begin trading commodities, such as seafood and other practical items. Both cases exemplify what Mauss (2002) calls a “total social phenomenon” in which cultural, religious, and economic institutions find simultaneous expression. Thus, these are examples of generating social capital through processes of symbolic exchange that precede the “real” business.

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<sup>14</sup> 红包

The “business” that is most important for the migrants discussed in this dissertation is finding employment. According to Network Theory, personal networks are comprised of both strong and weak interpersonal ties. The strong ties, mostly to family and close friends, are generally more useful for emotional support (Wellman 1992). However, Granovetter (1977) illustrates how weak ties, to acquaintances or even distant kin, are often better for finding employment, because they connect people from different groups with strong ties (quoted in Bian 2018, 257). These are typically the types of networks created by *guanxi*.

One caveat is that the status and power of one’s weak ties directly determines how effective they will be in a job-search. During field research for this dissertation, I found several cases of migrants using *tong* based on native village to help find available jobs and adapt to new conditions by tapping into the networks of migrants who are more established in urban job markets. However, these cases were few and far between. It is here that we begin to see the limits of *guanxi* networks. Migrants mainly know other migrants, and few have productive connections to managers or other people in hiring positions. Thus, the utility of even vast migrant networks is severely limited by homogeneity. This results from various forms of social stigma that migrants confront and that I will discuss in the next section of this chapter.

As with most social problems in China, previous research spotlights many of the complications created by *guanxi*. The difficulty of adding personal connections with higher status causes inequalities in healthcare (Tu 2019), income (DaCosta and Li 2017), and access to affordable education (Xie and Postiglione 2016) and housing (Wang 2017). However, the preceding discussion of the deep cultural roots of social networks in China makes it clear that the system of *guanxi* is unlikely to undergo significant changes in the foreseeable future.

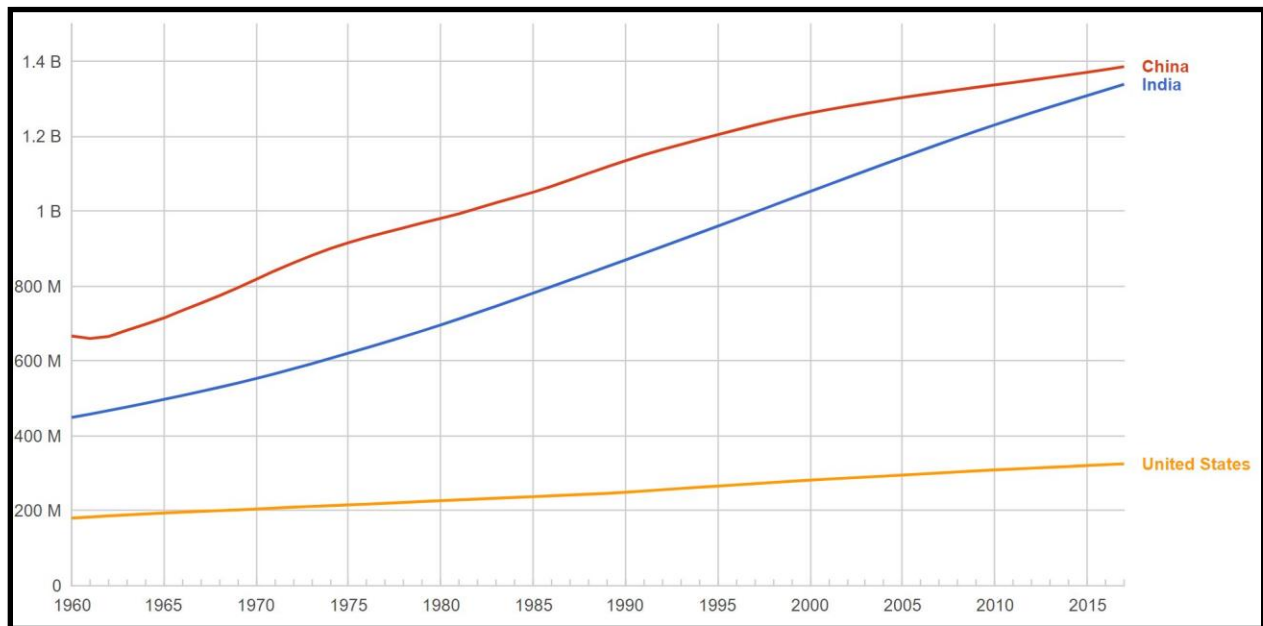
In a variety of ways, the organizations I studied for this dissertation help to fill in these “guanxi gaps” by bringing migrants into the networks of the founders/directors. As I will discuss in *Chapter 4*, the individuals in my research population tend to be well-educated and, although they were often migrants themselves, have far more high-status connections than typical migrants. In this way, their programs operate within the longstanding cultural systems that inform so many of China’s social norms and indeed also its social problems.

### **Modernity and Migration**

The terms “modernity” and “modernization” often evade precise definition. For the purposes of this study, I define them respectively as the state and process of developing industrial manufacturing and becoming integrated into the global capitalist economy. This integration involves producing goods for export as well as diversifying the domestic economy in terms of both consumer and financial markets. By many measures, China has achieved and continues to be in the process of realizing this version of modernity.

The single most defining factor of China’s economic development is its massive population. At 10:00am CST on July 13, 2018, China has a population of 1,415,233,748 (Worldometer 2018). This accounts for approximately 18% of the current global population. China has experienced significant population growth in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. For example, in 1960 its population was roughly 667 million. At that time, it was also the most populous country. Interestingly, it actually made up a greater percentage of the total global population in 1960 than it does today, accounting for approximately 22% of the world’s people. In both relative and absolute terms, China’s population growth has outpaced nearly every country on earth in the past sixty years despite its one-child policy. *Figure 2* depicts this growth

(WorldBank 2018) . With the exception of India, the gap between China’s population and even the third most populous country, the United States, has increased significantly.



*Figure 2: Population Growth Comparison*

China’s enormous population has been a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it serves as the massive labor force necessary for industrial production. On the other hand, it takes an enormous amount of resources to feed and provide social services for so many people. These two conflicting factors have defined the often-tumultuous path of China’s economic development.

In the modern era, Mao Zedong was the first to recognize the true potential of China’s population. In 1949, he swept to power on a populist wave, promising to strengthen and protect China against foreign imperialism, an experience all too familiar in the Chinese consciousness. During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), the Han had been subjugated by the Manchus, relegated to second-class status in their own country, and even prohibited from marry into the ruling class (Rhoads 2000, 42). During the Opium Wars in the late nineteenth century, the British employed their hallmark “gunboat diplomacy” to force the Chinese to allow the sale of opium in the

domestic market and enter into a variety of imbalanced trade agreements. This severely weakened the Chinese economy, and as Lu, Fang, and Wang (2008) point out, created a drug-fueled public health crisis. Then in the first few decades of the twentieth century, the Chinese endured countless atrocities at the hands of the Japanese. These included mass murder, biological weapons testing, and even live vivisections on Chinese peasants (see Cook and Cook 1993).

Based on this collective history of trauma and the long-standing tradition of reverence for leaders (discussed in the previous section), Mao's vision for development was met with widespread obedience and fervor. After consolidating power around his cult of personality and reorganizing Chinese society around rural farming collectives, he launched the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961). His goal was to have China catch up to the West by industrializing in a single decade. In the end, widespread mismanagement led to one of the deadliest famines in human history (Dikötter 2010). However, his policies regarding population control continue to inform many of the issues migrants face in present-day China.

With twenty-twenty hindsight, one of the biggest mistakes Mao made was decentralizing agricultural and industrial production in rural areas. Later in this section, I will discuss the significance of reversing this policy after Mao's death. To accomplish his goal of creating farming collectives, Mao severely limited internal migration. This was also due to his paranoia about urban intellectuals sowing political dissent (see Spence 2006, 99). Thus, through limiting freedom of movement, he hoped to create a dispersed but productive population.

In 1958 Mao instated the draconian residency policy, known as *hukou*<sup>15</sup>. With minor amendments, the *hukou* system remains to this day. Under this law, Chinese citizens only have

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<sup>15</sup> 戸口 – This term originated in the dynastic period. At that time, *hukou* served as a household census, and lacked most of the authoritarian undertones of Mao's policy.

legal residency in the province of their birth. This means that they are only eligible for social services, healthcare, and education in their home province. During the Mao years, this had the effect of binding rural residents to land they could not leave and did not own (Cheng and Selden 1994, 668). Despite this and the erosion of civil liberties, in the context of Mao's decentralized and rural-based development strategy, the *hukou* system made a kind of perverse sense. Freedom of movement would have severely hindered the sustainability of farming collectives by creating an unreliable and transient labor force. As it turned out, Mao's plan was catastrophic, but less because of migration than because of the failures of hardline communism as an economic model (a topic for another dissertation perhaps).

The end of the upheavals of the Mao years coincided almost exactly with his death in 1976. Clearly, both the political and cultural appetite for radical Marxism were all but dead as well. After a brief period of political reorganization, Deng Xiaoping took the helm of China's central government. He famously proclaimed that Mao had been 70% correct in his approach to national development. He and other reform-minded leaders in the new government continued promoting the cult of Mao, realizing its importance in fostering political cohesion and a sense of national identity (Schmidt-Glintzer 2017). To this day, millions of visitors a year pay homage to Mao's embalmed body in a mausoleum at the center of Tiananmen Square.

Clearly, though, even Deng believed that Mao had gotten far more than 30% wrong. In 1978, he initiated the Reform and Opening Policy.<sup>16</sup> Just two years after Mao's death, China embarked on a fundamentally different economic path. Broadly, the Reform Era (1978-present) has been defined by a capitalist market economy with much greater government management than we are typically accustomed to in the West. Especially in the early years, economic growth

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<sup>16</sup> 改革开放

was driven by the government seeking direct foreign investment in state-run enterprises (SOEs). In the last couple decades, the corporate and personal wealth generated by these SOEs has led to a more diversified economy, with a strong and growing private sector. However, even the largest and most innovative private sector companies, especially in digital technology, are heavily scrutinized and managed by the central government.

The ideological divergence from Mao's policies has produced rapid urbanization. Deng created special economic zones (SEZs) in many east coast cities to promote industrial production. I will discuss these further in the next chapter. The effect on urban population growth has been dramatic. In 1982, just after the inception of the Reform and Opening Policy, China's urban population was roughly twenty percent of the total population (Census 1982). In 2016, the urban population had jumped to over fifty-seven percent (Sun 2017). Although the growth rate has declined in the second decade of the twenty-first century (TradingEconomics 2018), China's urban centers are on pace to reach one billion people by the year 2050 (UNDESA 2018).

Unlike economic ideology, the *hukou* system has not been reversed in the Reform Era. Indeed, *hukou* makes a lot less sense in light of mass urbanization than it did during the Mao years. As I will discuss in the following section, modern China has enjoyed many of the benefits of a reformed economy. Yet, these have not coincided with a reformed political system. China continues to be haunted by the ghosts of its authoritarian past.

Capitalist production in China has replicated the economic and social inequalities created in other developing countries by the concentration of wage-labor in urban industrial centers. The *hukou* system has greatly exacerbated these. As of the last official count, China had more than 250 million rural-to-urban migrants (NHFPC 2014), a population that doubled from the

preceding decade. At the current rate of growth, it is likely that there are already more than 300 million internal migrants living in Chinese cities. This represents the largest internal migration in human history (e.g., Chan 2012). Although migrants from rural areas move to cities in search of a better life, they remain a “floating population” and are ineligible for urban residency permits.

Migrants occasionally fare better than poor local residents, for example by opening their own businesses (Cho 2013). However, lacking legal status generally denies migrants access to better paying jobs (Yu 2015), social services (Zhou 2016), and education for their children (Chan 2010). This system is so discriminatory it has been dubbed “China’s apartheid” (e.g., Luard 2005). Most migrants wind up living in dilapidated neighborhoods that are both unrecognized and unsubsidized by city governments – the so-called “urban villages” (e.g., Wen and Hanley 2015). These factors severely limit social mobility (Chan and Zhang 1999, Yang, Liu, and Zhang 2015), and exacerbate economic inequality (Fang and Sakellariou 2015, Wang 2004). Even after pending reforms to the *hukou* laws that govern migrants’ ability to live and work in cities, they are likely to suffer from the effects of multigenerational poverty (see Wu and Treiman 2007).

The main problem migrants face is that they cannot find work in their home provinces. Thus, there is a geographic disconnect between economic opportunities and the availability of a social safety-net. An obvious solution is to decentralize industrial production, moving factories inland and away from the eastern cities. This way those who have become migrants could work and enjoy all the benefits of legal residency in the same place. However, the patterns of migration are now well-established. It will not be so easy to reverse them.

The eastern cities still hold the allure of opportunity, similar to the “golden mountains” that were once promised to Chinese immigrants in the United States. Even if jobs are created in other areas, it will be a long time before they have the glamour and glitz of the eastern cities.



Many migrants in Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen told me that they take enormous pride in living in one of the richest cities in the world. This seems comparable to someone from the Midwest moving to Hollywood to pursue an acting career. In both cases, few will become stars. Yet, in China, as in Tinseltown, tales of rags-to-riches permeate the cultural consciousness.<sup>17</sup> On a daily basis, potential migrants see wealth beyond their wildest dreams. Yet, it seems that economic inequality can be as much a personal motivator as it is the cause of societal problems.

Given all this, it is unlikely that migrants will stop coming to the large eastern cities in the foreseeable future. It is also unlikely that we will see a wholesale move toward incorporating migrants into the social safety nets offered to legal residents of eastern cities. This is particularly evident in renewed efforts by the city governments to evict migrant workers, most recently in Beijing (see Haas 2017). In a convoluted sense, this is understandable. Even with the enormous tax pool in these wealthy urban centers, their massive populations already strain local resources. However, as discussed above, the labor of migrants has been one of the main drivers of urban, and indeed national, prosperity. Herein lies the paradox of government policies toward migrants that creates the space in which migrant-focused NGOs operate. I will discuss this central theme of my research in the following section.

Before diving into the role and significance of the Chinese nongovernmental sector, particularly as it relates to migrants, it is important to humanize the men, women, and children who have come by the hundreds of millions to live and work in China's urban centers. Macro-level trends frame their lives but do not adequately represent their experiences with urban life.

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<sup>17</sup> One of my favorite examples of this, and a story that I have often heard from migrants, is that of Zhou Qunfei, a.k.a. “the touchscreen queen”. As a teenager, Qunfei was a migrant worker in a factory that made glass screens for cellphones. She realized that she could produce the screens better and cheaper. She started her own factory and has since become a multi-billionaire and one of the richest women in China (and indeed the world).

As discussed above, the *hukou* system is the overarching problem they all face. Yet, on a daily basis they experience a variety of attacks on their civil liberties, group and personal reputations, and general well-being.

Based on their tenuous legal status, it is easy to forget that the migrants are citizens living in their own country. As I discuss in *Chapter 4*, they do not fit into typical definitions of a “hidden population”. After all, there are 300 million of them. The government is well aware of their presence. In a country that deploys an unusually high number of panoptic surveillance techniques, migrants endure even more scrutiny than non-migrant citizens.

This was first revealed to me from a survey I conducted with one hundred migrants in Shanghai during preliminary research for this dissertation. The English version of the survey is in *Appendix 1* and the Chinese version is in *Appendix 2*. I was specifically gathering data on what social services were available to migrants and which ones they would like to see offered. This was one of my methods for finding the often-not-well-publicized NGOs working in migrant areas (an issue I will discuss in the next two chapters). The final question of the survey asked migrants what other services they need. One of the most common responses was some iteration of “help with identification cards”.

Initially, I assumed that this meant they needed help with navigating the *hukou* system. This corroborated the prevailing narrative that migrant problems originate with *hukou* problems. However, the hidden complexity of the issue was made clear to me during a visit to an exhibition on migrant workers at a community center run by one of the organizations in this study. *Figure 3* below shows the identification cards legally required by a single migrant worker. In total she needs twenty-one forms of identification to live and work in the city. According to the curator of the exhibit, some of the ID cards allowed her to accomplish mundane activities such as riding

public transportation, renting an apartment, and enrolling her children in public primary school. Others were necessary for travel outside of the city, for example to visit family in her home province during the holidays. Still others were necessary to get a job, get paid, and get the meager benefits offered by her employer. From numerous conversations with migrants, I found this to be a representative number of required ID cards.



*Figure 3: Migrant Identification Cards*

Even if migrants can navigate the process of obtaining all these forms of identification, they still face tenuous living and working conditions. I will detail their living conditions in the next chapter. Poor labor rights have become a hallmark of developing economies. This results from a reliance on cheap labor to remain competitive on the international market. Chinese migrants typically earn far below a living wage, work in dirty and often dangerous factories, and are routinely made to work unpaid overtime. Gillette (2014, 31) even found cases of migrant workers longing for the order and predictability of the Mao years. One of her informants, a factory worker in southeastern China, commented, “The factory felt like your own home. We had good benefits. It was very stable, and very regular. You knew exactly what you were doing,

exactly when you were working, exactly when you got off. And we got end-of-year bonuses every year.”

It speaks volumes to the precarity of present-day working conditions when some migrants long for the societal upheavals of the Mao years. I did not encounter any migrants who spoke fondly of their lives before the Reform Era. Many of my informants viewed their work in the city as a sacrifice for the greater good of their families back home. In most cases, migrants have limited economic opportunities in their home provinces and even poorer living conditions than they have in cities. Several twenty-something migrants even lamented the boring nightlife in their home provinces. During one conversation with a group of young migrant men, a few of them joked with me that their favorite kind of unpaid overtime was going to the club to flirt with pretty city girls. My survey data reinforces this point. *Figure 4* shows the relevant question.

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| <p>If you could live anywhere, would you...?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Stay where you are</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Move to a different part of the city</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Return to your home province</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Move somewhere else (please specify): _____</li></ul> |
|---|

*Figure 4: Migrant Survey*

Less than five percent of respondents indicated that they wanted to return to their home province. More than eighty percent were split nearly equally between wanting to stay put and moving to a different part of the same city. The remaining fifteen percent wanted to move from their current city to another major city where they either had connections or believed there were better employment opportunities. None of this is meant to minimize the enormous obstacles migrants face on a daily basis. It is merely an effort to create a holistic preceptive of migrants’

experiences that seem to exist on a spectrum between nostalgia for a lesser-of-two-evils past and acceptance (and even enjoyment) of a could-be-worse present.

Beyond their lives within governmental and corporate bureaucracies, migrants are subjected to a variety of societal stigma against them. They typically come from the inner provinces, from rural areas where their lives were hard, and their time was spent farming rather than pursuing education. For this reason, their knowledge is practical, and certainly not intellectual in the cosmopolitan sense valued by urbanites. Fei Xiaotong, one of the first and certainly most famous native ethnographers in China<sup>18</sup>, warned against such stereotypes based in the rural-urban divide. He argued that peasants are not stupid simply because they are illiterate, “just as an urbanite is not stupid for being unable to catch grasshoppers” (Fei 1992, 46).

Migrants typically occupy the lower socioeconomic levels. Yet, this does not inherently distinguish them from non-migrants. Their appearance tends not to be particularly glamorous. Their clothes are worn for practicality not fashion. Yet, there are plenty of urban-poor who look similar. Moreover, sometimes they dress up for special occasions, and are then virtually indistinguishable from other city dwellers. In fact, one of the few distinguishing features of migrants is the number of children they have. It is common to meet migrant families with multiple children, and this makes them stand out.

In China’s major cities, it is rare to see families with more than one child. Even though China’s one-child policy has been relaxed in recent years, most people in cities still choose to have only one child. A recent government survey of 10,000 respondents in ten provinces found

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<sup>18</sup> A student of Bronislaw Malinowski, Fei Xiaotong presented an empathetic and prescient account of the problems facing changing village economies in his native land of China. His career was greatly disrupted by two decades of persecution under the Cultural Revolution (Fei 1981). So much suffering and mismanagement could have been avoided if only Mao had listened to the brightest social scientist in the land.

that over fifty percent of couples with one child did not want another (Wu 2017). This jumped to over sixty percent in major east coast cities. Parents cited the financial strain of having more children as the main factor influencing their decision-making.

Under China's one-child policy (1979-2015), rural residents were often allowed to have multiple children. The government recognized the need for families in agricultural areas to have more children to help out on the farms. In fact, rural families who had firstborn girls were encouraged to have more children, in the hope that even second- or thirdborn sons would prevent female infanticide (Baochang et al. 2007). Based on the cultural affinity for sons, China has a long and troubled history of killing baby girls, an atrocity made much more common under the one-child policy (Mungello 2008). Shi and Kennedy (2016) offer a glimmer of hope, finding that as many as 25 million girls who were believed to have been killed were actually hidden by their parents and local authorities to circumvent the one-child policy.

Because they have more children than is common in the cities, migrants face a range of overt and micro-aggressions. Several migrant mothers told me that they were unable to enroll more than one of their children in local elementary schools. They had to find a friend or relative without children to do it for them. Several of my migrant informants reported feeling generally uncomfortable when they were travelling with all their children around the city outside of the migrant neighborhoods. They felt like other people were staring at them. One woman described it as the time when she felt most like an outsider in her own country. She used the term 外地人. The most direct translation is out-of-towner. Yet, it is a word often used in a derogatory way toward migrants. The first character 外 is also used in two of the most common words for non-Chinese foreigner, 外国人 and 老外.

Beyond linguistic cues, it is difficult to quantify the discrimination migrants face because of how they appear to others. One experience I had during fieldwork stands out as clear support for the migrants' perception of their own discrimination. As I will discuss in the next chapter, I rode public transportation a lot in China. It is often crowded and standing-room only. One feature common to all busses and trains is a row of seats in each section reserved for passengers with special needs, for example the elderly, the disabled, pregnant women, and even parents with young children (see *Figure 5* below). Anyone can sit in these seats, but they are expected to get up if someone in need gets on the train. I have seen these types of seats all over the world. Asians, and even the usually pushy Chinese commuters, typically abide by these rules with religious-like devotion, more so than in any other region where I have travelled. This is likely due to deep-rooted cultural respect for the elderly, which of course has its origins in Confucianism (as discussed above).



*Figure 5: Priority Train Seat*

When traveling with young children in China, my wife and I were routinely offered the priority seats, sometimes even by older people who wanted to make sure our kids had a safe

place to sit on the crowded train. One Sunday I was on a train by myself headed to an afternoon meeting. It was not particularly crowded, but all the seats, including the priority seats, were taken. At one point, a young Chinese family got on the train – a mother, a father, and three children who seemed to be between the ages of four and ten. They made their way to the middle of the car, and as the train lurched out of the station, the parents were visibly flustered trying to manage several shopping bags while corralling their kids to prevent them from flying all over the place. This scene was readily noticeable to everyone in the immediate area. Yet, not a single person offered this family a seat.

Even as a cultural outsider, it was apparent to me that this family was most likely from a rural area. The imagery of the three children was further reinforced by the family's hard-worn clothes and tanned skin.<sup>19</sup> Obviously, this case does not offer conclusive evidence of discrimination against migrants based on their outward appearance. Yet, as someone who has spent a significant amount of time in country observing and studying various aspects of Chinese society, something about it just felt wrong.

While I was watching all this happen, various comments I had heard from non-migrant Chinese during the course of fieldwork echoed through my head. *They [migrants] just don't know any better. They're not hard workers. They wouldn't understand.* These persistent stereotypes, in conjunction with informant reports and my own experiences, make it safe to assume that discrimination permeates many aspects of migrants' lives. This is reinforced by Anagnost (1997, 117) who observes that for Chinese parents having one child has expanded

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<sup>19</sup> Since the dynastic era, wealthy Chinese have prized light skin. In direct opposition to Western tastes, the Chinese view tanned skin as a mark manual labor. In the Reform Era, with so many more people being elevated into the wealthy classes, the preference for light skin has become even more pronounced. In fact, my wife was unable to find facial moisturizer in China without some form of whitening cream.



from a patriotic duty to modernize their country to a sign of modernity itself. Greenhalgh (2003) echoes this sentiment by highlighting the contrast between Chinese perceptions of the modern single-child urban family and the “unplanned” and out-of-control multi-child families in rural areas.

In sum, this evidence suggests that the discrimination migrants experience has more to do with their identity as migrant workers than with other factors, notably ethnic identity. In my survey, respondents represented more than twenty ethnic groups. I was not able to find any ethnic data from large scale migrant surveys. However, it seems likely that China’s internal migrants include most if not all ethnic minorities, especially given that migrants from every internal province have been found in eastern cities (Lu and Xia 2016, 11).

My survey did not reveal any significant correlation between ethnicity and discrimination. Moreover, Zhong et al. (2018) found migrants across ethnic groups share a higher-than-normal risk for a variety of mental illnesses. Some of these are related to the stress of resettlement, some to work-related stress, and others are a function of everyday stresses, particularly related to financial instability and widespread discrimination.

Wong and Song (2008) conclude that the most effective way to alleviate these stresses is through community support. This was a prescient conclusion. As I will discuss in the following section, in 2008 NGOs in China were still in their infancy. In fact, less than a quarter of the organizations in my sample were started before 2008. My data suggest that migrant-focused NGOs play a strong role in creating a sense of community for the groups they serve. Both the migrants that I surveyed and the founders/directors of these organizations report that a sense of community is one of the main benefits of the NGO programs. In this way, the primary work of

these NGOs is to reduce the stresses of being a migrant. In the following chapters, I will explore this topic as it relates to specific programs started by the organizations in this study.

### **Nongovernmental China**

The previous section makes it clear that Reform Era policies have greatly exacerbated migrants' problems. In general, the central government prioritizes economic growth over the societal problems created by this growth. This is not an unusual occurrence in capitalist systems, especially in developing countries. As Gudeman (2013) points out, rapid industrialization and the resulting changes to labor requirements typically produce a systemic reordering of state-society relationships. Roseberry (1997, 43) points to the underlying mechanisms at work by asserting that "the forms and relations through which humans produce their livelihoods constitute fundamental and determining relations in society."

The problems faced by China's migrants seem to be a natural extension of what Marx and Engels (1990) called the appropriation of surplus value, whereby workers do not adequately benefit from the profits of the goods they produce. The situation in China also seems to support Appadurai's (1996) theory of rupture, whereby modernity is unevenly experienced rather than one single moment of break between past and present. As I discuss below, China's modernity has meant that many Chinese have become wealthy even as the migrants continue to be treated as second class citizens in their own country.

Until ten years ago, these critiques of capitalism adequately explained the political and economic factors affecting migrants in China. Then, in 2008, China experienced an awakening in the nongovernmental sector.<sup>20</sup> A lot of significant events occurred that year. In August, Beijing

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<sup>20</sup> Deng (2010, 184) points to 1995 as the most quantifiable origin of China's nongovernmental sector. In that year, the Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing, during which there was an NGO forum. After that an increasing number of independent, grassroots NGOs

hosted the summer Olympics. In the leadup to the opening ceremony, the central government launched a variety of campaigns to sharpen China's image on the world stage. They pumped enormous resources into improving air quality (e.g., Watts 2008), modernizing infrastructure (e.g., Cortes 2008), and even had a campaign to teach their citizens to wait in line properly (e.g., Gardner 2008) – something they still only do begrudgingly. These efforts produced a spectacular and commendable performance to the international community.

Indirectly, preparations for the Olympics set the stage for greater government interest in quality-of-life improvements to Chinese society. However, as in the past (and certainly in the present as well), the central government took a heavy-handed, top-down approach to development. They did not seek the approval of the population and assumed the ends would justify the means. This was brought into sharp relief that same year. 2008 marked a turning point not only for China's soft power on the global stage but also for its citizens use of social media, which remains difficult for the central government to censor because of its abbreviated and frequently changing text forms (Si 2017).

Up until that point, messaging apps and microblogging had been novelties for tech-savvy urbanites. Then, in the early afternoon of April 12, 2008, an 8.0-magnitude earthquake struck near Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province in central China. The damage was catastrophic. Roughly 70,000 people died. I have heard that the quake was so strong it rattled buildings in Beijing, over 1100 miles from the epicenter. According to Zhou et al. (2015), China suffers from frequent natural disasters because of its vast territory, varied climatic and geographical zones, and heavy tectonic activity. The central government tends to be quick to respond, but slow and

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began to appear in China. *Figure 6* (below) suggests a correlation (if not a causal relationship) between the conference and the first spike in China's NGOs.

guarded in its release of information to the public. To some degree, the government takes responsibility for everything that happens in China and does not want civil society to interfere with its disaster relief efforts. In another sense, it knows it will be blamed for any failures and does not want to publicize the situation on the ground before it has everything under control.

Typically, the Chinese public finds out about natural disasters through the national, state-run news outlets. However, within minutes of the 2008 earthquake, local residents in Sichuan began posting on Chinese social media. In fact, Thomas (2008) found that the Chinese military used one of these posts to pinpoint survivors in a remote area. Yet, for the first time, the government censors were not able to manage information coming out of the disaster site. The Chinese public was instantly rivetted. Their social media feeds overflowed with images of devastation and suffering. For example, they saw children hiding under desks in rubble-strewn classrooms and thousands of office workers congregating outside of crumbling buildings (Moore 2008).

The effect of this up-to-the-minute uncensored information about the plight of their fellow citizens had a dramatic effect on the Chinese collective consciousness. It sparked a wave of volunteerism and philanthropy, with many people travelling hundreds of miles from their homes to help with relief efforts. In one instance, several private catering companies from a nearby province sent an ad hoc team to hand out fresh food to survivors (Economist 2008). Citizen activism like this and the efforts of several small NGOs in the area seem to have catalyzed a paradigm shift in China's nongovernmental sector. No longer did the central government have a monopoly on addressing social problems. This had important implications for evolving state-society relations in the coming decade.

The civil society response to the 2008 Sichuan earthquake seems to support Kleinman's (2007, 26) assertion that moral decisions are not a result of prolonged self-reflection or adherence to a universal moral code, but more typically a response to pressing local circumstances. However, in China it is essential to consider the role of ideologies championed by the government which tend to have a particularly influential role in shaping societal trends.

Deng Xiaoping directed and rationalized the Chinese market economy by proclaiming that if some people get rich first, the rest of society will benefit.<sup>21</sup> This represents a significantly different approach to national development than the largely failed anti-capitalist ideals of Mao Zedong. Following Deng's lead, the Reform Era government has promoted the individual pursuit of wealth as a path to national prosperity (Hertz 1998, 82). This strategy has brought roughly three hundred million people into an urban middle class that enjoys a far more comfortable lifestyle than the previous generation (e.g., Barton, Chen, and Jin 2013). Indeed, this large and growing segment of the population is increasingly defined by consumerism and self-interest (e.g., Ma and Adams 2014, 210). However, as Jankowiak (2004) points out, this rise in individualism has coincided with a rise in individual responsibility.

Zhang and Ong (2008, 8) describe the Chinese as "post-socialist subjects" who must make sense of a society in which the government remains overbearing but has dramatically reduced social services. Kleinman (2011, 15) highlights the prevalence of the term 松绑 (*to untie*) in the modern Chinese vocabulary. Chinese citizens have been "untied" from institutions that dominated their lives in the Mao years and early Reform Era, notably farming collectives in the

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<sup>21</sup> In the Chinese, 一部分先富起来, "一部分先" means "one part first" and likely refers both to the provinces that got rich first because they were made into special economic zones (SEZs), as well as to the people who got rich first because of official government encouragement of entrepreneurship (see Hsu 2006).

former and state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in the latter. In fact, between 1998 and 2003, more than thirty million workers were laid off from SOEs, representing a forty percent reduction in the government-funded workforce (Hurst and Hurst 2009).

As the government has reduced the social safety net, Chinese citizens have had to shoulder more individual responsibility. This trend is in line with Hsu's (2007) notion that in the Reform Era private citizens, as much as the state and market elites, have a central role in creating new institutions and economic relationships. As the collective response to the 2008 Sichuan earthquake makes clear, some Chinese have interpreted this to mean more than simply being responsible for their own well-being. In fact, when another severe earthquake struck Sichuan in 2013, the volunteer and NGO response was many magnitudes larger and more well-organized (Zhang 2013). This mirrors the steadily increasing numbers of NGOs across sectors in twenty-first century China. *Figure 5* (Economist 2014) illustrates this trend in terms of the total number of registered NGOs between 1990 and 2013.



*Figure 6: Number of Registered NGOs*

Based on the most recent estimate of 675,000 registered domestic NGOs in China (Brookings 2016), it appears that this upward momentum is continuing. Interestingly, as Guo et al. (2012) point out, the nongovernmental sector in China consists mostly of small, local organizations that are not officially registered with the government. Recent estimates of the number of such unregistered NGOs range from eight million (Yu 2008) to ten million (Wang 2011). Thus, the number of officially registered NGOs represents only a small percentage of nongovernmental activity in China.

The high number of unregistered organizations is mostly a function of strict government regulations for registering NGOs. Any organization that wishes to enjoy the tax and other benefits of being officially registered must get sponsored by an official in the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MOCA). As Ru and Ortolano (2009, 154) point out, this often involves a lot of personal networking and bribery, because the sponsors will be held responsible if the NGO breaks any of the often-opaque laws governing their activities. For this reason, most NGOs in China register as for-profit businesses (e.g., Li 2016b). Their programs often rely more on the revenue streams from commercial activity than the donations that are typically associated with the nongovernmental sector. This was true of all the organizations in my study. I discuss this in detail in *Chapter 4*.

Clearly, Chinese NGOs do not operate with the same freedom enjoyed by their counterparts in democratic countries. This was foreshadowed by the misguided predictions of many China observers in the 1980s that after the implementation of the Reform and Opening Policy, China's market economy would inevitably produce a more democratic political system. Representing this optimism, Womack (1984, 436) wrote with confidence that the Chinese government had "made a significant commitment to democratic reforms, and it could do so

because of its self-understanding as the vanguard of the people.” The violent government crackdown on the 1989 pro-democracy protest in Tiananmen Square reinforced the government’s actual commitment – to capitalism without democratically elected leaders or representative government, a precedent that remains to this day.<sup>22</sup>

Since 1989, the central government has sought to minimize the ways that civil society can act independently of the state (Lee 2015, 130). Wallace (2014) asserts that such policies contribute to the longevity of the one-party system. However, the transition to a market economy in China has replicated many of the inequalities being addressed by NGOs in other industrializing nations. Similar societal problems have created political instability and uprisings, most recently the Arab Spring (Murphy 2012). In fact, the Chinese government went to great lengths to censor news of the Arab Spring (Kennedy 2012). Given the history of populist revolutions in China (notably in 1911 and 1949), the central government tends to prioritize social issues with the potential to create unrest, of which mass internal migration is most certainly one.

Despite (and probably because of) this state-level paranoia, the government has looked to NGOs to share its burden of dealing with social issues related to rapid development. These include environmental pollution (e.g., Yang 2005), pandemic diseases, most notably HIV/AIDS (e.g., Kaufman 2011), and poverty alleviation (e.g., Curley 2002). In general, it appears that the state hopes NGOs can mobilize resources to supplement its own spending (see Lu 2008, 136). This is particularly true for migrant issues. Even with the doomsday models used to make population projections in China (see Greenhalgh 2005), the central government never could have

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<sup>22</sup> I empathize with Womack and his contemporaries. Their faith in the inevitable marriage of capitalism and democracy provides a staunch reminder of how much we continue to get wrong about China, a country that is following a development path rarely if ever seen before.



predicted how many migrants there would be by the second decade of the twenty-first century. The numbers have gone way beyond what government agencies alone can handle.

The challenge for NGOs in China is to remain non-governmental without becoming anti-governmental. Liu (2011) points out that the government has tried to incorporate NGOs into its value system, so as to prevent them from becoming instigators of social crises or competitors for public resources. Spires (2011) calls this a “contingent symbiosis” whereby Chinese NGOs survive only insofar as they refrain from democratic claims-making and limit their activities to addressing social needs that might fuel grievances against the state. For example, in the case of migrant workers, NGOs often function as substitutes for official trade unions, from which migrant workers are typically excluded (Froissart 2010). This is true of several of the organization in my study. However, Froissart (2011) points out that such NGOs serve the interests of the central government by channeling complaints in an organized manner, rather than allowing migrants to take to the streets.

For this reason, many NGOs in China morph into GONGOs, i.e., the paradoxical government-operated nongovernmental organization (see Yuanfeng 2015). Hsu (2016) dubs this “state subcontracting” whereby NGOs conduct unofficial (and often unpaid) research and development for government departments. In these cases, NGOs help government officials impress their superiors by providing pre-tested programs that have already effectively solved social problems, at least on a small-scale. Generally, the NGOs receive no credit, but they often do gain government protection and a way to scale up the impact of their programs using state funds. I will explore the implications of this for the founders/directors in my study in *Chapter 6*.

The state-society relationship described above is generally representative of the limitations placed on NGOs by the central government. However, it fails to incorporate what Hsu

(2012a) points out as the more direct role of city governments in the operations of local NGOs. After all, it is the cities themselves that have the most to gain from NGO programs designed to help migrants that live there. The NGOs help alleviate the strain on municipal resources, which Chen et al. (2013) show to be the most important factor determining the suitability of local communities for resettling migrants. This local-national tension is true across contexts. Glick Schiller and Caglar (2010) point out that immigrants/migrants are settled and integrated in local communities, yet policy is set at the federal level. A well-known proverb from the dynastic era aptly describes this often-disjointed relationship between the central government and local authorities: “Heaven is high, and the emperor is far away.”<sup>23</sup>

Two recent national policy changes appear to represent an official acknowledgement of the capacity of NGOs to effect positive social change. First, the “Charity Law” took effect on September 1, 2016. It relaxes policies governing registration and fundraising for most domestic NGOs. However, it reaffirms the government’s commitment to crack down on NGOs that oppose its official viewpoints on sensitive issues, notably related to human rights and geographic borders, specifically with Tibet and other occupied territories. Thus, while encouraging the nongovernmental sector to continue expanding, the new law also requires all NGOs to adhere to much stricter disclosure guidelines for their programs (see Horsely 2016). This is representative of a habitual behavior of the central government to create space for civil society as a means to monitor its activities. This strategy likely originated with Mao’s “Hundred Flowers Campaign”<sup>24</sup> in which he encouraged intellectuals to publicly disagree with him as a means to flush out

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<sup>23</sup> 天高皇帝远

<sup>24</sup> 百花齐放

opposition and sentence his opponents to hard labor at “reeducation camps” (see Peerenboom 2001).

Despite the history of government suppression of civil society, the other recent policy change suggests that, given proper nurturing and management, the central government views its domestic nongovernmental sector less as an opponent and more as a partner. The “Foreign NGO Law” took effect on January 1, 2017. It severely limits the operations of foreign-run NGOs in China, requiring them to register with the public security authorities and comply with new funding restrictions and reporting obligations (see Horsely 2016). During the course of research for this dissertation, I found that this has caused all but the largest international foreign-run NGOs to significantly scale back their operations in China. In addition, several of the founders/directors in my study report that prior to the new law, they received significant portions of their budgets from foreign donors. After January 1, 2017, these have also been severely restricted. Now most NGOs in China must seek funding from either the government or Chinese foundations. This is likely another strategy of the central government to limit foreign influence in domestic affairs.

Even more so than in the past, China has recently scaled up national security concerns about foreign nationals operating within its borders. In fact, a recent publicity campaign portrayed Western researchers as potential spies (I will discuss the implications of this for my own research in the next chapter in the section on *Reflexivity and Research Realities*). However, more than national security, the new foreign NGO law seems to mimic the protectionist policies employed by the central government to catalyze domestic industries. This is particularly apparent in the tech sector, where the major US-based internet firms, for example Google and Facebook,

have been all but banned from the Chinese market.<sup>25</sup> Beyond censoring content, this has resulted in a lack of competition for the Chinese equivalents, for example Baidu and WeChat, which have come to dominate the massive Chinese internet market.

Chinese authorities are habitually wary of foreign influence on their domestic affairs. Thus, the new prohibitions on foreign NGOs come as little surprise. It is certainly encouraging that the government is taking steps to bolster civil society in China. However, even more under the new laws, Chinese NGOs are routinely badgered by MOCA and other government agencies. It appears that the government wants them to expand their programs, just not their influence, particularly over groups prone to civil unrest, for example migrant workers experiencing unjust labor conditions. In a similar vein, the government has instated a law allowing domestic NGOs to have offices in only one city. This severely limits the reach of an NGO's influence at the national level, while still encouraging programs at the local level. This seems to represent a fear of non-governmental entities getting too big and hence challenging the power of the state.

All of the organizations in my study find their programs both supported and hindered by government policies. This contradiction is not particularly surprising given the above discussion of government interference in civil society. Yet, NGOs in China also face opposition from the Chinese public. It is here that we find a clear distinction between civil society and society at large. The former is where citizens find what Edwards (2009, 54) calls “associational life” – i.e., where the interests of society at large become organized into topical clubs and associations. These topics can include hobbies, common belief systems, and also delve into pressing social

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<sup>25</sup> Google refused to comply with Chinese censorship laws and was forced to move its servers to Hong Kong. For this reason, when accessing Google in China, most of the search results are dead ends or severely censored. It is only possible to access Facebook through VPNs, which incidentally have also been cracked down on recently.

issues. I refer to the latter as the nongovernmental sector. For the purposes of this dissertation, I further define civil society as the space in which people can become “civically engaged” – in Putnam’s (2000) terms, finding organizational support to address problems that directly affect one’s own life or the lives of others.

The relationship between civil society and society at large can be as intertwined as that between the state and civil society. While civil society organizations are intended to represent the interests of society at large, the public simultaneously must approve of and support their programs. In China, despite growing governmental support for NGOs, the general public has grown increasingly skeptical of their activities. This may have to do with limited coverage of NGO activities in the state media. This is a factor that Lee, Johnson, and Prakash (2012) view as crucial in determining public trust in the nongovernmental sectors in post-communist countries. Public perception in these state-dominated societies still tends to rely heavily on official narratives. Given the previous discussion of government censorship of even social media, this effect is particularly pronounced in China.

Chinese NGOs are also embedded in a zeitgeist defined by self-interest and the profit-motive that has flourished since the early Reform Era, when teachers even began selling candy in classrooms (Chan, Madsen, and Unger 1992, 274). This has led to what Ikels (1996) calls “the return of the god of wealth”, whereby individualism and materialism permeate perceptions of success in the Chinese collective consciousness. This is bolstered by the *guanxi* system (discussed above) with its reliance on self-interested reciprocity. It seems safe to conclude that charitable giving without the expectation of a tangible return on investment has not entered the Chinese collective consciousness in any significant way.

Many of the founders/directors I interviewed have been asked at some point during their careers at NGOs: “Why don’t you want to make more money?” After all, most of them have the education and connections to amass significant personal wealth. Many informants I interviewed in the general public question the motives of the people running NGOs. They assume something fishy is going on when a person claims to only be interested in doing good for others and not for themselves. Unfortunately, these assumptions have been bolstered by several high-profile scandals in the nongovernmental sector. Notably, in 2011 a manager at the Red Cross in China posted pictures online of her lavish lifestyle. This sparked an investigation into embezzlement, which, among other crimes, uncovered misappropriated donations that were meant to go to victims of the 2008 Sichuan earthquake (see Tiezzi 2014). Interestingly, after jailing the guilty manager, the central government threatened to punish anyone who continued to smear China’s Red Cross (Li 2016a). This offers further evidence of the state’s growing support for the nongovernmental sector.

NGOs around the world increasingly face crises of public trust. As in China, some of this is due to misappropriation of funds. For example, the American Red Cross famously used \$500 million to build just six homes in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake (Sullivan and Elliot 2016). Keating and Thrandardottir (2017) suggest that this is a representative pattern of behavior, resulting from the rapid growth of the operating budgets and political influence of nongovernmental organizations. Callahan (2017) goes as far to argue that the super-rich use massive charitable donations to manipulate public policy, often circumventing elected officials

(see also Giridharadas 2018).<sup>26</sup> Given the strength of China's nondemocratic government, mega-donors seem to be an unlikely contributor to the crisis of public trust.

Despite the universality of public skepticism of NGO programs, there is also widespread concern for social issues around the world. The Chinese want cleaner air, safer food, and less poverty. These were sentiments I heard echoed throughout my field research. It seems these represent the expression of what Ikels (1996, 270) calls "moral murkiness", in which there is a growing sense of disillusionment in a system that values profit-making above all else. Jankowiak (2004, 205) reinforces this point: "The forces that create the opportunity to pursue blind self-interest with little or no regard for another's well-being are the same forces responsible for the expanded moral horizon and heightened civic activism."

Billioud and Thoraval (2015) assert that the recent revival of Confucian ideals, though probably an effort by the government to promote national identity (Wolin 2015), may also be contributing to an increased sense of service to the community. A passage from the *Analects* I heard referenced by several informants supports this claim: "A person of good character understands what is right; a person of bad character understands only what will profit."<sup>27</sup> In addition, the founders/directors of Chinese NGOs tend to have the credentials to succeed in the global market economy, including having a college degree, having previously held a high-paying job, and being well-connected. Thus, it appears that some people who have flourished in the market economy are beginning to help those who continue to struggle. This trend may represent

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<sup>26</sup> This is a fair critique, but also seems to be a case of biting the hand that feeds you. After all, solving major social issues requires a lot of more money than most individuals or even government agencies have to give.

<sup>27</sup> 论语 4.16: 君子喻于义, 小人喻于利。

the evolution of Deng Xiaoping's vision of capitalist wealth accumulation as a path to shared prosperity.

As the above literature review makes clear, political, sociocultural, and economic factors are all likely contributing to the growing nongovernmental sector in China. Previous research reveals many institutional and organizational obstacles faced by China's NGOs. These studies also suggest a lot of potential motivations for the founders/directors of Chinese NGOs. Yet, they devote little time to asking the founders/directors themselves what motivates them. In the following chapters, I will detail how my research for this dissertation begins to remedy this knowledge gap and broaden our understanding of individual responses to rapid economic and societal changes.



## CHAPTER 3: FIELDWORK

This chapter details the logistics, planning, and local circumstances that informed the field research for this dissertation. I give an overview of my methods and discuss how they each contribute evidence to understanding the experiences and decision-making of my research population. I compare distinguishing characteristics of my field sites, particularly as they relate to China's economic development and internal migration. I use emic perspectives from guided neighborhood tours to enrich descriptions of my field sites from existing literature and from my own observations. Finally, I delve into issues of reflexivity and the realities of conducting this research in the Chinese context.

### **Methods**

For this study, I surveyed thirty-four organizations in Beijing (n=17) and Shenzhen (n=17). From these, I sampled twelve organizations in Beijing (n=6) and Shenzhen (n=6), at each taking part in daily operations for three weeks. During these periods of participant observation, I also gathered data using the following methods: (1) a survey of organizations to create a baseline for each NGO and offer key trends and comparisons between the founders/directors and the two field sites; (2) professional life histories to add depth and breadth to the experiences of the founders/directors that continue to inform their decision-making; (3) guided neighborhood tours to offer insights into how the founders/directors view the neighborhoods and people most closely linked to their work; (4) pile sorts to shed light on how the founders/directors prioritize various aspects of their organizations; and (5) decision modelling to explore the factors leading some

founders/directors to accept government funding and the effect of this decision on their subsequent decision-making.

My participation at each organization was not passive. I did not simply wait for things to happen for me to observe and participate in. After a preliminary analysis of survey data, I compiled a list of my own skills that I could offer to each organization on a daily basis. These included some very basic skills, such as word-processing, English language instruction, proof-reading, and handyman work. I also made a list of more involved tasks I could help with, such as grant writing, marketing, and serving as a liaison to potential donors. In one form or another, I took on these roles at each of the organizations I visited. In many cases, I was given a workspace, put in charge of specific parts of their programs, and in very practical ways participated in the daily operations of each organization. Through this method of participation, I was able to make observations below the surface of daily operations, often being consulted on personnel decisions, accounting, marketing, and program evaluations.

Initially, I planned to live in a migrant community in each city. However, for a variety of reasons that I will discuss in the next section, I did not wind up basing myself in these communities. Despite this, I spent most of each day in various migrant neighborhoods throughout Beijing and Shenzhen. In addition to conducting participant observation on the daily operations of NGOs, I also participated in the daily street life of the various migrant communities in which they operated. I frequented neighborhood food stalls, forging friendships with their owners who were mostly migrants themselves. These and other people in the neighborhoods were an invaluable source of information about the communities and their residents.<sup>28</sup> I chatted

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<sup>28</sup> Most of the migrants in these neighborhoods lacked legal residence. I use the term “residents” simply to refer to people that have made their lives in the neighborhood. It is a shame that this is not the primary criteria used by the government for “residency”.

with anyone on the street who was willing to talk to me. As I discuss in the section on *Reflexivity and Research Realities*, casual conversations often yielded key insights into my project and leads to important new connections.

I designed a fifty-question survey<sup>29</sup> to gather categorical data from the founders/directors on: (1) their educational and professional histories; (2) the structure and staffing of their organizations; (3) metrics they use to measure the success of their programs; and (4) challenges they have overcome and/or continue to face. In addition to the survey, I conducted a semi-structured follow-up interview with each respondent.

The survey is composed of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and ranking scale questions. To minimize respondent bias, I developed and carefully vetted answer choices during five months of preliminary research for this dissertation. I crafted the phrasing of each question and answer choice from data I gathered from respondents across the third-sector<sup>30</sup>, including the founders/directors of various Chinese and foreign-run NGOs, volunteers, and academics. These preliminary respondents helped me refine the phrasing to reflect the appropriate terminology in Chinese for my research topic. For example, in the original draft, I used the words 客人 (customers) and 委托人 (clients) to refer to the people the organizations are trying to help. However, numerous respondents in preliminary fieldwork told me that they preferred 受益人 (beneficiaries).

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<sup>29</sup> The English version is in *Appendix 3* and the Chinese version is in *Appendix 4*.

<sup>30</sup> The first sector of society is the public sector, i.e., government entities. The second is the private sector, i.e., for-profit businesses. The third sector refers to NGOs and other civil society organizations, such as clubs and associations. These are typically nonprofits but are not limited to solving social problems. They may simply provide leisure or socializing activities for their members.

In the final version of the survey, I exclusively used 受益人 (beneficiaries) to refer to the people the organizations are trying to help. This term was universally well-received by survey respondents in my sample. Moreover, it reveals that the founders/directors view the migrants not in commercial terms, but in terms of people benefitting from their programs. This sentiment was often repeated in interviews. Thus, in addition to more accurate phrasing, the use of the word 受益人 supplies an important insight into how the founders/directors view their own work.

For the founders/directors of the organizations in this study, their work is not simply a career, but a life passion. This became clear to me not just from talking with them but also through observing their daily activities. For this reason, it seemed likely that many of their life experiences led them to found or direct their organizations and continue to exert significant influence on their decision-making. Throughout the three weeks at each NGO in my sample, I compiled a thorough professional life history of the founder/director.

Following Yoshihama et al. (2005), I created a life history calendar for each informant, in order to broaden and deepen recall of significant life events and formative experiences. During semi-structured interviews, I built a chronological sketch of each informant's life from memorable or easily recalled events. During follow-up interviews, I used open-ended questions to probe for less easily recalled memories. Of particular note was the prevalence of what Schwartz (2012, 239) calls "the stickiness of past experiences", i.e., formative life events that shape one's motivations to help others. In the next chapter, I use these to expand on trends revealed by survey and interview data.

I employed all of the methods for this dissertation to understand how the founders/directors of NGOs view both the migrant situation and the work they are doing to improve it. Although I did not live in migrant communities per se, each organization primarily

operates in one or two (often adjacent) migrant neighborhoods. Thus, the Chinese founders/directors of NGOs not only have native cultural knowledge, but they also possess deep-rooted knowledge of the local settings in which they work.

In order to tap into this knowledge, on the first day of my time at each of the twelve organizations, I requested that the founder/director give me a guided tour of the neighborhood(s) where their programs primarily operate. The tours lasted between forty-five minutes and an hour, and generally coincided with a lunch break. We were often accompanied by office assistants or other workers at the organizations. I gave broad criteria for the tours, asking the founders/directors to show me parts of the neighborhood that are important to them and their work. This was often a sufficient prompt to create a detailed social map of the neighborhood(s). It also set a precedent for any time I joined the founders/directors for meetings in the neighborhood. The initial tour let them know how interested I was. On subsequent walks in the area, they would often go out of their ways to point out and describe other significant neighborhood features. In the next section, I pepper the city-specific sections with snippets from the neighborhood tours.

For the preceding methods, I employed semi-structured interviews. I used open-ended questions to elicit information from respondents that I might not have anticipated. This allowed me to produce a dataset representing the range of perspectives and experiences of my sample. It also helped me create a lexicon of common terminology used in China's third sector. Equipped with these data, I developed structured interview exercises to delve deeper into the main topic of this study, namely the decision-making of the founders/directors. First, I discuss my use of pile sorts to triangulate how the founders/directors prioritize various aspects of their organizations. Then I detail my use of decision modelling.

Pile sorts are a well-established ethnographic method for understanding how members of a group organize and categorize information. For example, Longfield (2004) used pile sorts in Côte d'Ivoire to understand how young women's views of different types of sexual partners affect the spread of HIV/AIDS. Doughty, Lu, and Sorensen (2010) used pile sorts with an indigenous group in Ecuador to understand how their views of the natural world affected their decision to remain in a rapidly developing area, despite disruptions to their traditional way of life. Gretzel and Fesenmaier (2010) used pile sorts to capture the personal meanings and feelings that people associate with vacations to personalize tourist experiences. Clearly, this method has a wide range of applications in a wide range of research populations. The common thread between these examples is that the data give insights into the underlying criteria people use to make decisions.

I used pile sorts in this study to understand how the founders/directors prioritize various aspects of their organizations' operations. This approach requires three assumptions: (1) the founders/directors are frankly indicating their priorities rather than offering normative sorts; (2) there is a significant correlation between the level of priority assigned to a variable and its effect on decision-making. The examples above offer strong precedents for this assumption, one that is rooted in the pile sorts method; and (3) the founders/directors have comprehensive information about the various factors affecting their organizations and are making decisions accordingly.

The effect of the third assumption on this study is particularly significant. As discussed above, the laws in China governing both migrant workers and NGOs are often opaque and amended without forewarning. At any given moment, the founders/directors likely have no more than limited knowledge about many of the external factors affecting their organizations. They are often making decisions that may not be in their organizations' best interests. That said, this is not

a study of optimal outcomes. Rather, it is a study of how the founders/directors are making decisions. In varying degrees, this type of information asymmetry affects many decision-making situations. This effect is particularly pronounced for civil society organizations in nondemocratic systems like China's. I will discuss this thoroughly in the coming chapters.

While the second assumption limits the external validity of the pile sorts dataset, it sheds light on the political economy in which the founders/directors must operate. In fact, interview and survey data confirm that the founders/directors are aware of how the unpredictability of the Chinese system restricts their ability to make optimal decisions. Thus, the limitations placed on the decision-making of the founders/directors reveal at least as much about their experiences as the results of analyzing the pile sorts' data.

To produce the categories for the pile sorts, I employed a directed free-listing exercise with each respondent in my survey sample in Beijing (n=17) and Shenzhen (n=17). In the follow-up interviews, I first asked the founders/directors to list all the important aspects of their organizations. Toward the end of the interviews, I asked each respondent to list all the aspects of their business that they do daily, weekly, monthly, and only occasionally. This process produced a master list of forty-two unique aspects of the organizations. I then removed aspects with no clear directionality, i.e., those that appeared on less than fifty percent of individual respondents' lists (see Doughty, Lu, and Sorensen 2010, 23). This left me with fifteen aspects that had appeared on at least fifty percent of the individual lists. From these I created the cards for the pile sorts.

I conducted the pile sort exercise at the sample of organizations in Beijing (n=6) and Shenzhen (n=6) at which I conducted participant observation. I had the respondents do the pile sorting three times on three separate days during my stint at each of their organizations. First, I

asked them to do a ranking pile sort, placing each card into one of three categories indicating the relative importance of each aspect to their organizations' operations: (1) less Important; (2) important; and (3) very important. The results of the free-listing indicated that all the aspects in the pile sort had at least some importance. So, I did not include a "not important" category.

Next, I asked respondents to place each card in one of five categories related to the frequency that they conducted each aspect: (1) infrequently; (2) annually; (3) monthly; (4) weekly; and (5) daily. Finally, following Bourey et al. (2012), I created a hypothetical situation and asked respondents to place each card in the same three categories as the first exercise indicating their relative importance. For this last pile sort, I used the prompt: "How would you respond to these questions if there were fewer government regulations [of NGOs]?"<sup>31</sup> In *Chapter 5*, I discuss how the results of these three pile sorting exercises interrelate and what this analysis suggests about the decision-making of the founders/directors.

While forty percent of the organizations in my sample received government money, over eighty percent of the founders/directors report being faced with this decision. For this reason, I created a decision tree to model the criteria used by the founders/directors to decide whether or not to accept government funding.<sup>32</sup> Following Ryan and Bernard (2006), I sought to elicit as many possible rationales for the decision, with the expectation of a finite number of possibilities. I created bifurcated decision points by prompting for yes/no responses for decision criteria. I also used survey and interview data to incorporate significant individual and organizational factors into the model.

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<sup>31</sup> 如果有更少的政府管制，你会怎么回答这些问题？

<sup>32</sup> To create the decision trees, I used SilverDecisions 1.0, an open source software available at: <http://silverdecisions.pl/>



I employ decision-modelling for this dissertation not only to predict future behavior (such as Ryan and Martinez 1996), but also to situate choices within what Peterson (2010) calls “decision spaces”. These reveal the link between a decision, the political and economic environment in which the decision is made, and the action to which the decision leads. Thus, I created a second decision tree to model how the decisions to accept or not accept government money affect subsequent decision-making. I discuss the results of both models in *Chapter 6*.

### **Field Sites**

I conducted field research for this dissertation in Beijing and Shenzhen. Both of these cities have large migrant populations. Yet, there are significant differences between them that likely affect the experiences and decision-making of the founders/directors in my sample.

Beijing is China’s most internationally visible city. Particularly following the 2008 Olympics, the central government has used the capital city as a showcase for its accomplishments and political stability. Like many industrial hubs in China, there are still millions of migrant workers in Beijing who lack legal residency in the city. They often live in impermanent housing on the outskirts of the city, and regularly protest their poor living and working conditions. This does not fit well into the official government narrative of a harmonious society. Thus, nongovernmental programs that provide social services in the nation’s capital tend to come under strong government scrutiny. In fact, my requests to meet with at least half a dozen organizations in Beijing were met with one of two replies, both of which insinuate strong government oversight: (1) we are not permitted to meet with “foreign friends”<sup>33</sup>; and (2) in order to meet with us you must be accompanied by a government official. I will discuss this issue in greater detail in the section on *Reflexivity and Research Realities*.

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<sup>33</sup> 外籍朋友

In comparison, Shenzhen was the first Special Economic Zone in the country, and remains a hub of direct foreign investment, manufacturing, and finance. It is the startup capital of China, and as such has become a center for both tech and social innovation. Thus, in Shenzhen the government tends to prioritize business over politics.<sup>34</sup> Comparing these two cities offers a representative perspective on the range of experiences of NGOs working with China's migrant workers. In the following two sections, I will discuss each field site in greater detail.

China has approximately eighty cities more populous than Dallas. In fact, as of 2017 it had 102 cities with more than a million people (Guardian 2017). As the map in *Figure 7* illustrates, these are primarily clustered in the eastern part of the country. They are the hubs of manufacturing that have driven China's meteoric increases in GDP over the past four decades. As such, they all have significant populations of migrant workers.

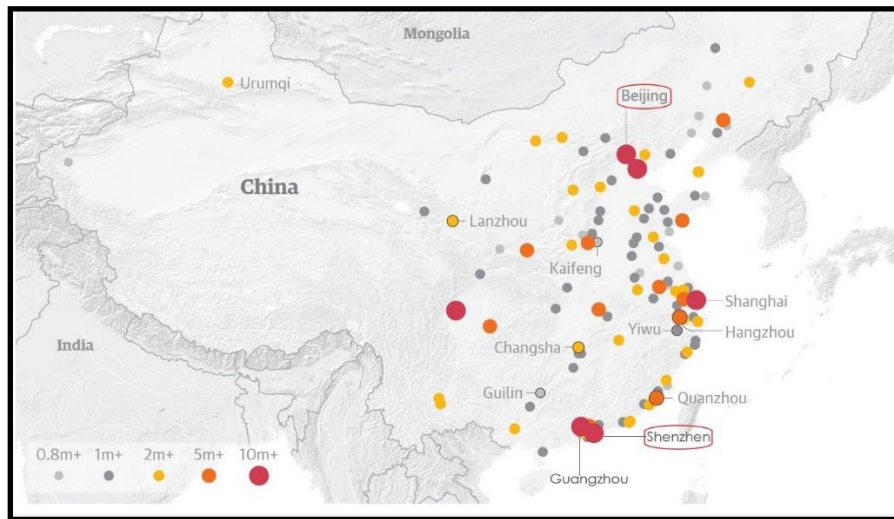


Figure 7: Map of 1 Million+ Cities

<sup>34</sup> While this is generally the case, I had at least one instance of government surveillance in Shenzhen. I did not receive any rejections from organizations in Shenzhen, but the government oversight was far from absent. Again, I will discuss my experiences in greater detail in the section on *Reflexivity and Research Realities*.

I could have chosen any of these cities to conduct research for this dissertation. China's 300 million migrant workers have dispersed to almost any urban center with manufacturing, which is just about every city on the map above. Despite this, however, during the course of my research I found only a few of these cities have a significant number of nongovernmental organizations helping migrants.<sup>35</sup> This is likely due to two factors: (1) as I discussed earlier, the central government severely limits the operations of NGOs; and (2) while many cities now have large migrant populations, most of the cities shown on the map above only began to ramp up their manufacturing in the past ten to fifteen years. Only the main east coast cities have had major manufacturing sectors since the onset of the Reform Era (1978-present). The implication is that, especially in China, it takes a long time for nongovernmental organizations to develop and begin to address societal problems.

The central government takes great pains to obscure potentially damning social injustices, of which the treatment of the migrant population is most certainly one. Thus, I hypothesize that NGOs have primarily appeared in those cities with long-established migrant populations. It should also be noted that most of the country's wealth is concentrated in these eastern cities. This means that there are more local funding opportunities. This further suggests the importance of locality for both interest in and funding of NGO programs.

During preliminary research for this dissertation, I investigated NGOs in Beijing, Shenzhen, and Shanghai. As the financial hub of the country, I actually anticipated finding the most organizations in Shanghai. Given the above discussion of funding, this still seems like a reasonable hypothesis. In fact, of the major Chinese urban centers, Shanghai has the most

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<sup>35</sup> In this case, I use the term "significant" to mean a sufficient number of organizations to conduct a study with proper sampling. I discuss this in the section on *Sampling*.

migrant laborers who lack legal residency (Yang et al. 2017). These ten to eleven million people comprise roughly forty-five percent of the urban population. However, I found no Chinese run NGOs helping migrants in Shanghai. This does not definitively mean there are none. In fact, during research in 2007-2008, Hsu (2012b) interviewed multiple migrant-focused NGOs in Shanghai, though she admits that many of them were not exclusively focused on migrant issues. Regardless, in 2016, after an exhaustive Internet search, and nearly two months of research in Shanghai, I came across not a single Chinese-run NGO helping migrants in the city.<sup>36</sup>

In order to best understand the impacts of China's development on the Chinese, the focus of this study is Chinese-run NGOs. This is not to suggest that the Chinese are the only ones helping migrants in China. During research in Shanghai, I found a handful of international NGOs working on migrant issues, notably the United Way. Its programs were quite limited in scope. When I visited their offices in the summer of 2016, they had only one full-time employee, a Chinese woman who was the director of their programs. They also had four or five summer interns, who were mostly Chinese undergraduates home for the summer from U.S. universities.

I did, however, find several foreign-run NGOs working with migrants. Almost exclusively, these provided employment training programs. For example, I found a French-run organization training migrant teenagers how to bake professionally. This type of culturally-specific foreign expertise has played a strong role in development during the Reform Era.<sup>37</sup> In fact, their literature touts this as an important factor in the success of the program's rate of job

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<sup>36</sup> I found a variety of Chinese-run NGOs working on other societal problems in Shanghai, such as the environment and food safety, as well as those that offer services for senior citizens and the disabled.

<sup>37</sup> Another example is the increasing popularity of after-school sports programs that promote their coaches' country of origin as evidence of their talent in a given sport, e.g., British soccer coaches or American swim coaches.

placement. Unfortunately, the founders of the program declined my request for a visit, citing the “privacy” of their students. I respect the need to protect migrants from unnecessary publicity. The precarity of migrants’ lives is a reality with which all NGOs in China must deal. However, I was unable to learn any specifics about the program, notably funding sources and the actual rates of job placement.

Another foreign-run program I found built a dormitory for homeless migrant teenagers (of which there are a surprisingly large number). This program was founded by a Malaysian woman and is now run by a man from Europe. Once a month, he sets up shower stalls and a free meal for the homeless. At these events, he provides games and other socializing opportunities. He and his staff try to find out as much as they can about any teenagers who attend. For those who are interested and willing to make a serious commitment, he offers a year of free room and board. During this time, participants receive job training. The facility has a small textile factory and industrial kitchen. The teens can either learn high-skill factory work or prepare for jobs in restaurants. In addition to conducting two weeks of participant observation at the facility, I also interviewed several graduates of the program. All of them reported having landed good-paying jobs within a month or so of completing the program. The program does receive money from donors, but also funds its operations by selling originally designed fashion accessories at tourist markets.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> I asked the manager if he uses the fact that the items are made by migrants as a selling point. I was wondering if Chinese consumers cared about this. He said that he has not found that they do. The Chinese will buy a piece if they like it. He only mentions who made the items to foreign tourists, who will often buy them because of just that. This may or may not have broader implications for the state of Chinese interest in societal problems. However, it is certainly an interesting piece of evidence to suggest that the moral shift in China may be far less pervasive than some have asserted (e.g., Kleinman 2011).

I found one main exception to these and other similar training programs, specifically an American-run organization that places foreign English teachers at migrant elementary schools around the city. In addition to some donations, the program is funded by contracts with local schoolboards. The program seems to have far-reaching impacts, both in terms of improving English language education for migrants, as well as spreading awareness of migrant issues, especially in expat communities. The manager of this program offered me the most viable explanation for the absence of Chinese-run NGOs working with migrants in Shanghai. He told me that the Shanghai metropolitan government offers significantly better services to migrants than any of the other major cities. Notably, and unlike anywhere in China, Shanghai offers migrant children free elementary education up to the sixth grade. After that, there are private school options, as well as a handful of spots in public schools for high-achieving migrant kids. Other social services for migrants in Shanghai, for example access to healthcare and afterschool programs, also rank among the best in China.<sup>39</sup>

Shanghai is indeed the wealthiest Chinese city. Although I hypothesized that this would mean a large donor pool, the actual (and perhaps more obvious) implication is a huge tax pool. Simply, Shanghai can afford to offer social services far beyond the means of almost any other Chinese city. Thus, beside anecdotal evidence, the data for this dissertation comes exclusively from my fieldwork in Beijing and Shenzhen.

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<sup>39</sup> Even in Shanghai, migrants are still treated as second-class citizens. After elementary school, most migrant kids must either return to their home provinces to continue their education, or else remain in Shanghai for informal education through the limited number of NGO programs, or simply enter the workforce. The point here is that Shanghai is relatively good for China, but still has a long way to go.

## Beijing

Beijing 北京, literally “northern capital”, has been the hub of China’s national politics for much of the past millennium. Following the success of the communist revolution, it became the national capital of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, and it remains so to this day. By many measures, it is a massive city. Its official population is 20+ million, but with an estimated eight to ten million migrants who lack legal residency (Pabon 2017), the actual number of people living in the city may be as much as fifty percent more. Even with a low estimate, it is by far the most populous national capital on earth. It is also one of the most ancient cities in the world, with a history of continuous habitation dating back nearly three thousand years.



Figure 8: Beijing City Ring Roads

Twenty-first century Beijing continues to have an imperial feel. The city sprawls within six “ring roads” which create concentric circles emanating outward from the center of national historical and political power (see *Figure 8* above). The heart of the city holds the monumental architecture of the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square. The former stands as a testament to the legacy of dynastic China; the latter as both a symbol and seat of the ruling communist party.<sup>40</sup> The first four rings contain what could be considered the “city proper”. Within them are many of the products of China’s rapid urban development over the past four decades. We find gleaming, ultra-modern mall complexes, lavish business districts, several national research universities, a variety of prominent tourist attractions, and even the Olympic Park. In general, the residential neighborhoods within the four rings are upscale, well-manicured, and exclusive, often having front gates and private security guards.

A major exception to this generalization are the *Hutong*, traditional neighborhoods that have been spared the bulldozer of modernization. The narrow, maze-like streets of the *Hutong* are interwoven throughout the concrete jungle of Beijing proper. They house humble residences and small store-fronts, street-side eateries, and musty gaming rooms. Children dart around corners, and it is common to find a group of old men playing cards on a stoop at any time of day. The old-style overhanging roofs offer open-air shelter on rainy and sunny days alike. Stepping into a *Hutong* is like stepping into a time with a slower pace of life than is common in twenty-first century Beijing. The sense of community is palpable, and a welcome contrast to the “me first” mentality that has swept over China in the Reform Era. It is not surprising that “*Hutong* tourism” has grown increasingly popular. The old neighborhoods offer an idyllic reprieve from the frenetic pace of modern urban living.

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<sup>40</sup> I discussed the significance of Tiananmen Square in the previous chapter.



Despite the positive functional and symbolic aspects of the *Hutong*, they are increasingly at odds with the image of modernity projected by the central government. In particular, a lot of migrants use money they have saved from factory work to open small shops in the *Hutong*. These are usually no more than walk-up windows cut into the side of residential buildings. Local residents and tourists can buy snacks and sundries at very reasonable prices. These shops add a distinctive feel of petty-capitalism to the *Hutong*. However, in the past couple years, the government has begun to shutter these stores. One resident of a *Hutong* (who also happened to be a migrant) told me that she received no warning from the authorities before her store was shut down. One night she went to bed, and the next morning she woke up to find her storefront bricked over. Tacked to the mortar was an official notice that her commercial license had been revoked. There was no option for an appeal. She declined to let me photograph the notice because it contained her name and other identifying information. *Figure 9* shows her storefront just two weeks after the government bricked it up.



*Figure 9: Bricked Up Hutong Storefront*

The rushed and shoddy masonry is readily apparent from the picture above. Little if any effort was made to match the brickwork on the surrounding building. This heavy-handedness is representative of an increasingly pervasive government tendency to make migrants feel as unwelcome as possible in the city. The message seems clear: come to work, but don't make a life here. This attitude results in a variety of cruel and inconsistent policies. In addition to discouraging migrant entrepreneurship, the government has recently announced that many migrant neighborhoods contain "illegal" structures and have begun evicting local residents (see Haas 2017). This all seems meant to unsettle migrant communities. It speaks to the irreconcilable needs of China's labor market, on the one hand, and the government's desire to send migrants back to their home provinces, on the other.

Migrant problems are even worse beyond the fourth ring. At the fifth and sixth rings, the density of the urban jungle gives way to expansive industrial parks, interspersed with farmland and the low-rent tenements and narrow alleys of migrant enclaves, the so-called “urban villages”.<sup>41</sup> *Figure 10* shows a typical street scene from one such neighborhood in which I conducted research for this dissertation. I will describe my experiences in urban villages in the section on *Reflexivity and Research Realities*.



*Figure 10: Urban Village Street Scene*

Mirroring the geographical separation, there is also a significant policy divide between these outlying areas and the central parts of the city. Because these areas are predominantly made up of migrants who lack legal residency in the city, the government feels emboldened to make

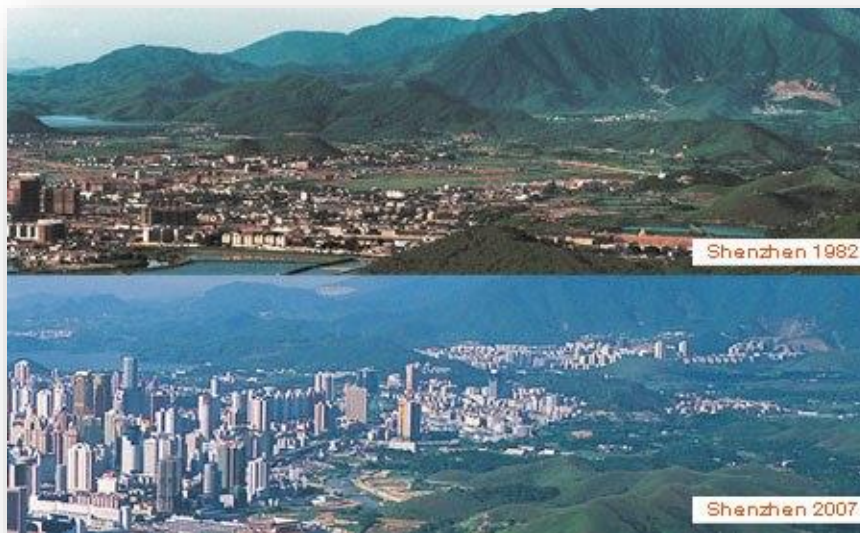
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<sup>41</sup> 城中村

sweeping demolitions from time to time. After all, they do not have to account for housing occupied by legal residents. At least that seems to be the authorities' rationale. I will discuss the issue of demolitions in the next the chapter.

## Shenzhen

Forty years ago, Shenzhen 深圳, located at the Pearl River Delta, was little more than a sprawling series of fishing and farming villages, with less than a hundred thousand people between them. Then, in 1980, Deng Xiaoping declared it a special economic zone. Overnight, direct foreign investment began flowing into the city from across the border in Hong Kong and beyond. People also began pouring into the area from all over China and overseas. The urban landscape changed at a speed fast even by Chinese standards. *Figure 11* shows the results of urbanization in what was a generation ago a sparsely populated backwater.



*Figure 11: Shenzhen Growth 1982-2007*

In today's Shenzhen, the crescent-shaped urban sprawl begins in the southeast with the bustling, often-chaotic Dongmen Market. The Chinese expression 人山人海 (lit: people mountain, people sea) seems apt for an area that, according to a survey I conducted in 2014, receives approximately half-a-million visitors on any given weekend. The narrow alleys, wet markets and vibrant street vendors season this border area with the spice of raw, human commerce. Moving west along the main arc of the city, we come to Futian and Coco Park, Windows of the World, and swooping south, finally arrive at Shekou. These areas, in varying degrees, are sharp departures from the street-level petty capitalism of Dongmen. The shimmering windows of high-rise office buildings tower above broad, clean boulevards. There are numerous high-end malls, and both the shopping and eating are priced for the business elite, Chinese and expat alike.

Currently, the urban area has more than eleven million people. Eight million of these are migrants (Lin 2017). Beijing, a city of nearly double the population, has roughly the same number. Assuming not all of the migrants are counted in the official population, migrants make up roughly eighty percent of the people in Shenzhen. During fieldwork for this dissertation, Shenzhen's status as a "migrant city" became particularly apparent. During the Chinese New Year in most cities, shops and business are closed for a week to ten days. However, in Shenzhen I found myself in a three-week period during which I was not able to schedule any appointments. Most of the restaurants in my neighborhood were closed for this long as well. I spent the time eating cup ramen and analyzing data. During the Chinese New Year, it is common for migrants to return to their home provinces. In fact, it is widely believed that this is the largest annual human migration on earth (e.g., McCarthy 2018). With approximately eighty percent of the urban population engaging in this ritual, there was essentially a "closed for business" sign hanging on the entire city.

Shenzhen has become a beacon for the possibilities of the Reform Era, but also for the inequalities created by the market economy. Like Beijing, Shenzhen has countless urban villages, where migrants reside in the same legal limbo that they endure in other urban centers. Unlike Beijing, these villages are primarily not on the outskirts, but rather scattered throughout the city. This is largely a function of how Shenzhen has developed from farmland to major metropolis in a single generation. Many of the original neighborhoods have been demolished to make room for sprawling malls and corporate complexes. However, many still remain, sandwiched between ultramodern business and shopping districts. During fieldwork for this dissertation, I lived in one such neighborhood. I will discuss my experiences in the next section.

More than in any other major city, the villages in Shenzhen represent the paradoxical treatment of migrants in China as whole. Bach (2010, 423) comments that “the villages appear simultaneously as the city’s condition of existence and perceived obstacle to progress, its recognized heritage and its hidden past, its location for menace or entrepreneurial exuberance.” As I discussed in the previous chapter, this statement could easily be applied to Chinese views of migrant workers.

Interestingly, for the central government, Shenzhen cements the legitimacy of its brand of one-party capitalism. As stated above, the city is a beacon of skyrocketing corporate profits which have even led to the formation of the Shenzhen Stock Exchange, the only other national stock exchange outside of Shanghai. However, Shenzhen is also a hub of illicit capitalism. Even by Chinese standards, Shenzhen has a lot of counterfeits and black-market business, much of it centered in the urban villages. Here again, like their work in factories, the government simultaneously views the migrants as the best and worst of the Chinese economic model. Thus, the reality is that Shenzhen’s success, like the nation as a whole, has emerged from significant

divergence from the officially approved agenda, which has been retroactively incorporated into the official narrative. O'Donnell, Wong, and Bach (2017) view this as a form of myth-making, whereby the success of rogue experiments become models of intentional policies. Thus, the contradictions of Shenzhen's development and defining ethos create a space that is at once welcoming to innovation, both business and social, and dismissive of the problems facing its majority migrant population.

### **Reflexivity and Research Realities**

Research can happen anywhere. This is perhaps the most valuable lesson I learned during fieldwork. I was regularly surprised by the sources of key insights or leads. In particular, I found informal conversations on local busses to be an excellent source of otherwise elusive information.

The single biggest challenge I faced during field research was actually locating the NGOs. While some maintain websites, most keep a low profile. This is primarily due to the heavy government scrutiny of their programs. From my preliminary research, I knew that many of them operated in the so-called urban villages, the makeshift neighborhoods on the outskirts of major cities where migrant workers typically live. So, this is where I continued my search for organizations to survey, and eventually sample for participant observation.

Initially, I planned to base myself in a single migrant community in each city, sampling from all the NGOs working in that area. However, after entering the field, I found that typically only one or two organizations worked within each community. In fact, most organizations in my sample worked with migrants from several different communities. Thus, it was more practical to base myself in a location with easy access to many migrant communities within each city.

Migrant workers are a group that suffers from both economic and political marginalization. Thus, few people with intimate knowledge of urban demographics in China are willing to discuss the urban villages, much less their exact locations. In fact, even researchers at a prominent Chinese university research institute could only point to general vicinities on a map for me to search.

This problem has similarities to conducting research on other hidden populations, for example drug addicts and people with HIV/AIDS. As I discuss in the section on *Sampling*, accessing such populations typically requires a respondent-driven approach. In essence, this involves finding one individual or small group of the target population and asking them to assist in contacting others. This can involve a variety of entry methods, including targeting locations known to be frequented by the population under study (see Magnani et al. 2005), the use of daily routines to anticipate the location of people at certain times of the day (Ferreira et al. 2008), and even using monetary incentives to entice members of the group to participate in both the study and generating more participants (Heckathorn 1997).

I did not find any of the above methods necessary during my research. Migrant workers in China have one significant difference with most of these other marginalized groups: there are approximately 300 million of them, mostly concentrated in the major cities along China's eastern seaboard. Quite simply, they are a massive population hidden in plain sight. Like other hidden populations, the lives of migrant workers in China are entangled in illegal and stigmatized circumstances, notably living in cities without legal residency. Paradoxically, and unlike most



other hidden populations, they have contributed essential work to their country's steady development over the past forty years.<sup>42</sup>

Armed with the knowledge of their massive numbers, and a vague sense of their whereabouts, during the first phase of fieldwork, I boarded local busses and headed in the general direction of migrant enclaves.<sup>43</sup> One morning stands out as representative of my experiences during this phase. Loaded with my field bag<sup>44</sup>, I boarded a bus around the corner from my apartment in Beijing. As on most days, I waited until after the morning rush-hour to start my excursion. At the bus stop, I only had to wait a few minutes for the bus to my first destination, a transfer point about forty-five minutes west. When the bus pulled up, about a dozen people rushed the door. As is customary in China, I pushed my way ahead of at least a couple of them. I got on, swiped my transit card, and found a place to stand midway down the aisle. I took off my field pack, placed it on the floor between my feet, and reached up to grab one

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<sup>42</sup> I am in no way suggesting that other hidden populations lack importance in their own societies. I am merely pointing out the absurdity of such a large and indispensable population having to remain hidden in China.

<sup>43</sup> Local busses in China's major cities, even to remote suburbs, are very reliable and affordable. A multi-hour ride on several busses costs no more than \$5. More remarkable is the accuracy of the public transportation option on Baidu Maps (the Chinese equivalent of Google Maps). Not only could I use it to plan complex, multi-stop routes, but it even gave me up-to-the-minute scheduling information. I truly appreciated our digital age when, standing on the side of a dirt road thirty miles from the nearest train station in Beijing, I could not only see that the next bus would arrive in seven minutes, but also monitor its progress via GPS.

<sup>44</sup> In the field, I carry a dark grey, nondescript JanSport schoolbag. In China I obviously stand out in a crowd because of my skin color and facial features. To remain as unassuming as possible, like my bag, I typically dress in muted tones and wear a hat with the same color profile. My field bag contains what I need for the unexpected nature of fieldwork: water, snacks, an umbrella, business cards, pens, an encrypted jump drive, an external battery pack, charging cables, sunblock, gifts for the founders/managers of organizations, lollipops for the migrant kids, and a waterproof pouch with a notebook, a tablet, and surveys.

of the dangling handholds. A couple seats remained open, but in the high-density areas of the city, someone far more deserving of them is likely to get on at any stop.<sup>45</sup>

Still on the western side of the city center, the passengers represented a broad mix of Chinese society. A few well-dressed young professionals stared and tapped at their cell phones. Several older ladies sat with wheeled shopping bags between their legs. Some of the bags were full to the brim, overflowing with greens and root vegetables. Others were still empty, presumably soon to be filled. Another old lady in a brightly flowered shirt sat with a young child on her lap. Several middle-aged men stood in the aisle and swayed with the flow of traffic. I swayed with them, and was the only white person on that bus.<sup>46</sup>

The bus made frequent stops on the way to the transfer station. When we arrived, everyone got off, and I navigated through the crowds to board the bus bound for the outskirts of the city. As we progressed westward, the stops became fewer and farther between. The crowd thinned out and, by many measures, became more homogenous (except for me, of course). None of the passengers wore suits. On average their clothing appeared more practical, drab, and well-worn than passengers in the center of the city. There were no elderly people onboard.<sup>47</sup> Most of the passengers appeared to be in their thirties or forties. A few women had children with them. One woman had three children. I found a seat at the back next to them.

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<sup>45</sup>On crowded public transportation, I prefer to carve out a comfortable place to stand right from the start. Typically, if I grab a seat, I wind up giving it to a senior citizen or someone with children, only to have to fight through the standing crowd once the train or bus is moving.

<sup>46</sup>I cannot say for sure that I was the only non-Chinese person on that bus. Even after a decade-and-a-half working throughout Asia, I still cannot differentiate Asians by outward appearance alone. On that day, however, I can safely say that I was the only non-Asian on the bus.

<sup>47</sup>This was common on buses in migrant areas of the city. Typically, grandparents stayed at home to watch their grandkids, while the parents ventured into the city to work long hours.

The oldest boy (10) began staring at me immediately. Although non-Asian foreigners are common in the central parts of Chinese cities, it is quite rare to encounter them on the outskirts, especially for migrant children. We had at least an hour-long ride ahead of us, so I wasted no time breaking the ice. I politely asked the woman if the children were all hers.<sup>48</sup> She said yes, and then I asked her if I could give them each a lollipop. She nodded, and I pulled the bag of candy from my backpack. As the children enjoyed their lollipops, I told them I had two daughters who also loved lollipops. The oldest boy looked at me incredulously, so I pulled out my cellphone to show him pictures of the girls. As he looked at them, I said, “See, foreigners can have kids too.” His mom laughed and told him to be polite. Several other passengers at the back of the bus, who were obviously listening to our conversation, turned around and shared a good laugh.

One of the passengers, a man who appeared to be in forties, complimented my Chinese. I gave a well-practiced and humble response, which immediately endeared me to everyone in earshot.<sup>49</sup> I used the opportunity to get some information from the mom and anyone else who would talk to me. I asked her what province she was from. This may seem like an overly direct

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<sup>48</sup> This may seem like an odd question. However, given the One-Child Policy, most urban parents have only a single child. Although some wealthy parents pay the government to have more children, most of the official exceptions to the policy are given to rural families. Given their clothing and use of public transportation on the outskirts of the city, it seemed fair to assume that this mother was not wealthy. Thus, her affirmative reply indicated that she was most likely a migrant.

<sup>49</sup> Non-native Chinese speakers should never thank a Chinese person for complimenting their language abilities. In Chinese this sounds both arrogant and, quite frankly, inaccurate. There are a variety of humble responses I have spent many years perfecting (as far that is possible in Chinese). One of my favorite and most-used is: 哪儿的话, 我的中文还有很大的进步空. In English this best translates as: “What the heck are you talking about?! My Chinese (obviously) has a lot of room for improvement.” This response is a humble brag. It lets the listener know that I speak more than basic Chinese and allows me to interject my own personality into the conversation – one of the greatest challenges faced by all foreign language learners.

opening question. Yet, given the evidence I already had (see *Footnote 43* above), it was a fair assumption that she was not from Beijing. Without hesitation, she told me that she was from Hunan Province. I then asked her what part of Hunan she was from. She told me the western part. “Have you been there?” she asked.

“Not yet,” I replied, “But I really want to go. I’ve heard it’s beautiful.” Her face lit up with my interest in her home province. Honestly, I give the same reply to migrants no matter where they say they come from. Half the time I have no idea where their home regions are until I check the map later. Yet, I do not intend this to be insincere. I have learned to tailor this response to reflect how much pride all migrants I have interviewed take in their home provinces. Given their tenuous legal status, they typically have mixed feelings about the cities in which they now work and live. However, they have resoundingly positive views of their original homes, and typically hope to return to them someday.

I chatted with the mother about her work in a sewing factory, how she was having trouble finding schooling for her oldest son<sup>50</sup>, and the rising rent in her neighborhood. A few other passengers in the back of the bus chimed in with similar stories. Then one of the men asked me what I did. I love this question. First, I ask so many questions to other people that it is refreshing to be asked one in return. Second, it gives me an opportunity to use one of my most well-rehearsed and effective responses: I told him, and at least ten other people who were now listening to the conversation, that I was a student, studying a variety of problems in Chinese society. I told them I heard that people not from Beijing (or whatever other city I happen to be in) are the nicest people, and so I want to talk to them about their problems.

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<sup>50</sup> It is common for migrant children in the major east coast cities to receive free public schooling only through fifth grade.

While seemingly an oversimplification of my research topic, I feel strongly that this explanation accurately reflects the core issues of my research. It resonates with the migrants, who are often looked down upon by legal residents of the big cities, and is readily understandable to people who often have no more than a middle school education. Also, like my response to compliments of my language ability, it interjects humor into the dialog and catalyzes conversation. It certainly had these effects on the people at the back of that particular bus. Not only did I get a more exact location of the neighborhood where they all lived, but one of the men offered me a ride from the bus station in the back of his pickup. In fact, he wound up taking me back to his house for some tea and lunch, and then introduced me to several other people in the neighborhood.

Through this and similar experiences, I was able to locate several so-called “urban villages” in both Beijing and Shenzhen. Admittedly, I also spent many hours travelling out to remote locations only to wind up squatting in an abandoned neighborhood by a pile of trash (see *Figure 12*). Fortunately, this was the exception. More often than not, my excursions landed me in vibrant migrant communities. On the day described above, I actually did not wind up finding any NGOs. However, the guy who invited me to his house told me about another community where he had heard about a museum dedicated to migrant workers.<sup>51</sup> He helped me pinpoint it on the map. As luck would have it, the community with the museum turned out to be one of the most important sites of my research.

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<sup>51</sup> This is the museum I discussed in *Chapter 1* where I found the exhibit on migrant identification cards.



*Figure 12: Squatting in the Field*

The museum was run by an NGO that also operated a community center in the neighborhood. I wound up conducting participant observation at the center and several of the other programs run by that NGO. I will discuss this in the next chapter. Before I went to the museum, however, I considered a hard-earned lesson from my preliminary fieldwork: While many Chinese NGOs are happy to discuss the generalities of their programs via email, they are much less likely to accept my request for a face-to-face interview. I discussed my experiences with these kinds of rejections earlier in this chapter. I suspect that this is significantly due to my not being Chinese. For this reason, and to help me with a variety of other cultural and language barriers inherent to doing research in China, I hired a research assistant. This proved to be invaluable, both in terms of gaining access and in navigating highly specific technical language that far exceeds my Chinese abilities.

My assistant was born near Shanghai. She attended high school and currently attends university in the US. For this reason, she is a near ideal mix of Chinese native and true bilingual speaker, both in terms of vocabulary and cultural awareness. What impressed me most about her, however, was her initiative. I first met her at a conference on social entrepreneurship in Beijing. At the time, she worked for the organization that put on the event. At the final dinner, I wound up at the same table as she and several of her colleagues. I mentioned in passing that I was having trouble finding a chain of thrift stores in the city that were run by a migrant-focused NGO. Then, as is common at such dinners, the topic of conversation quickly changed. After exchanging business cards with the whole table, I headed back to my apartment.

Later the same night, I got a text from my future assistant. She located several of the thrift stores, including their GPS locations and the bus routes I needed to take to get within walking distance. She also recommended I stop using Google Maps and start using Baidu Maps, which is far more accurate in China. As I discussed above, this was invaluable throughout fieldwork. Needless to say, I offered her a job the next day.

Together we composed an introductory email that immediately got much higher response rates than the original version I had been using. She helped me soften the language but make the wording more direct. She sent the emails from her account on my behalf. This also seemed to improve the response rate. In my experience, the Chinese feel much more comfortable dealing with one of their own. In fact, many foreign companies in China hire someone to be the “Chinese face” of their business. Much like my research, this person initiates contact and subsequently introduces the foreigners as his/her associates. However, beyond putting the Chinese at ease, my assistant’s sincere interest in my research topic made her less of an assistant and more of a partner in my project.

When I asked her to contact the NGO that runs the museum, she took the initiative to find another NGO with programs in the same neighborhood. The museum graciously accepted our request. The other NGO sent us a cordial but blunt rejection on the grounds that we would need a government escort to visit their organization. As I discussed earlier, this was a fairly common justification for rejecting my requests. I made several attempts to find a government official to accompany me on visits to the NGOs, but none were willing to help me. I can only assume that this has something to do with another common rejection that I received, stating that an organization will not meet with “foreign friends” (again, I discussed this above).

On the day of the museum visit, we headed to the community on the outskirts of the city where it is located. After almost two hours on a couple trains, a bus, and a long walk along a dusty, smog-clogged road (at first in the wrong direction), we finally arrived at the entrance to the urban village. I asked a couple locals if they knew the museum, and they pointed us in the right direction. Obviously, I could have found it with the GPS on my phone. However, I try to take every opportunity to chat with people on the street, especially in migrant neighborhoods. In this case, the three people I chatted with were really excited that we wanted to go to the museum. They told me they would probably see me later at the community center, and in fact I wound up chatting with all of them over the next few weeks.

We met with the founder of the organization. He gave us a personal tour of the museum, answered all of my questions, and filled out my survey. I will discuss the data I collected from him and his organization in the context of my methods and analysis in the following chapters. For the purposes of the current section, what happened after our visit with him reveals some representative challenges that I faced during fieldwork. After leaving the museum, we wandered around the neighborhood, eventually winding up in a courtyard enclosed by a high stone wall. At



first, it looked like a temple, with several one-story buildings around the perimeter of the complex. Then my assistant noticed a sign on one of the buildings, indicating that it was in fact the headquarters of the NGO that had rejected our request.

We snooped around a bit and found that one of the buildings was a cafeteria and several others were dormitories. Judging from toys and tricycles scattered around, there seemed to be several families living in the cramped but well-constructed facilities. The building with the sign over it looked like an office. Even though our request had been denied by the director of the organization herself, we decided to enter the office anyway. We were greeted warmly by a woman working at a long table in the middle of the small room. We told her exactly who we were (except of course that our original request had been denied), and she was excited to talk with us. She was the director of the organization's childhood education program. She was a migrant herself from Inner Mongolia. She came to the city to work in the publishing industry and then started working for the NGO a year ago. She agreed to fill out a survey. She signed the consent form and meticulously answered all the questions.<sup>52</sup>

She told us that a group of donors were coming in few minutes and asked us to stay for the meeting. This type of chance occurrence is the stuff research dreams. Then we got a rude awakening. Not surprisingly, the director of the organization was also attending the donor meeting. Just as we were settling into our seats at the conference table, she walked through the front door. She immediately caught sight of us, and after a curt introduction, she reminded us that she had rejected our request. She asked us to leave but wanted us to wait in the library across the street. She said she would pick us up for lunch. As we sat in the musty library, I was not

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<sup>52</sup> Despite my initial concerns, using a written consent form seemed to reassure informants that I was conducting serious research, and not just a foreigner asking too many questions.

optimistic that she would actually come get us. And we were starving! But after twenty minutes she came in, all smiles.

She gave us a really informative tour of the neighborhood. She pointed out the museum and told us about several other NGOs that operated in the area (most of which I wound up visiting). Just as I was about to collapse from hunger, we rounded a corner and she told us we were at the best restaurant in town. Before we went in for what was one of the best meals I ate during fieldwork, I noticed a half dozen or so luxury cars parked outside. They were particularly conspicuous against the backdrop of the dusty, narrow back alley where the restaurant was. The director explained that they were probably wealthy people from the city who came to ride horses at a nearby ranch. It would be hard to find a more representative scene of inequality in twenty-first century China. Apparently, the restaurant was even up to the standards of the urban elite.

Much to my surprise, after lunch the director wanted to continue the tour. She took us to an elementary school dedicated to teaching migrant children. The principal told us that although the school had received some threats from local authorities, it had been serving the community for more than ten years. Given all the problems migrant parents have finding schools for their children, it was refreshing to see such dedication to providing a truly nurturing educational environment. The motto hanging over the schoolyard goes a long way to reinforce this commitment (*Figure 13*).



*Figure 13: "Attending a good school makes good people"*

The director did not wind up telling us much about the programs run by her organization. However, she clearly took a lot of time out of her busy day to show us the situation for migrants in the neighborhood and some of the initiatives aimed at improving it. It seems fair to assume that she is under heavy government scrutiny and cannot be seen having official meetings with foreigners (even those represented by Chinese assistants). In fact, the specter of government surveillance hung over much of my fieldwork.

For the most part, it was a slightly ominous presence lurking in the background. Sometimes, however, it came hauntingly close. On one occasion, my assistant and I arrived for a meeting with a legal NGO. The founder greeted us warmly. He then promptly told us that minutes before our arrival a national security official had called him to discourage our meeting. I

had communicated with the founder over WeChat, the most widely used messaging app in China. The founder told us that his phones and WeChat account are monitored by the government. Several years ago, he helped sixty thousand factory workers hold a strike to get their company to pay for insurance. The government finally had to intervene, and the workers got what they wanted. But the government was not happy with him. They even sent a spy to work for him. He finally discovered this, but ever since then his phones and communications have been tapped. They even tried to dissuade him from attending a movie about workers' rights. When he sent his assistant, they contacted him to ask why he had still sent his assistant.

This occurred relatively early in my fieldwork. In my fieldnotes from that meeting, I wrote: "He may be used to this, but I am not – pretty nervous." It stands to reason that my WeChat account is now also being monitored. A friend in the intelligence community tells me that this is fairly common for foreign nationals in China. I have come to accept this as an inherent risk of conducting research in China. After that meeting, I continued to set up interviews over WeChat, because quite honestly it is the only way to get in touch with most people in China. In fact, for the first quarter of 2018, WeChat had more than a billion monthly active users, more than double the number of the same quarter four years earlier (Statista 2018).

To minimize the risks, I typically send voice messages over WeChat. I have heard these are significantly harder to monitor than text messages. I suspect that most of my informants are, to varying degrees, being monitored. For this reason, I take great pains to protect the data I collect from them. I use military-grade encryption for all files and use a complex alphanumeric code for all identifying information.<sup>53</sup> I am also purposefully vague in describing the activities of

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<sup>53</sup> For more information on specific precautions I took, please email me: [ijdorfman\(at\)protonmail.com](mailto:ijdorfman(at)protonmail.com)

the NGOs in this study. I do not believe this is at odds with my research. After all, this dissertation is not a character study. In the coming chapters, I will use the data gathered from fieldwork to situate the decision-making of the founders/directors within larger societal trends in China. My goal is to reveal the various levels of significance of the migrant-focused NGOs in China, without endangering their founders/directors for whom I have unwavering respect (probably my single biggest research bias).

In this chapter, I detailed the setting for my research. The political, economic, and sociocultural context of China as a whole, and my two field sites specifically, plays a significant role in influencing the decision-making of the founders/directors in my sample. In the next chapter, I delve into significant characteristics and distinguishing experiences of my research population. This is what places my research squarely in the realm of anthropological inquiry. As discussed in *Chapter 2*, previous studies of NGOs in China give centrality to institutions and organizational structures. My research takes a human-centered approach, spotlighting the individuals making decisions to define and redefine the role of their organizations in China's economic development.

## CHAPTER 4: POPULATION PROFILE

In this chapter, I take a deep dive into the lives and work of my research population. I discuss how I sampled this population and the inherent biases of this process. Based on survey data and semi-structured interviews, including professional life histories, I explore the range of variables that shape their experiences and influence their decision-making.

### **Sampling**

I surveyed the founders/directors from a total of thirty-four organizations in Beijing (n=17) and Shenzhen (n=17). I surveyed all the organizations I found in Beijing. I came across twenty-three organizations in Shenzhen. It is not particularly surprising to find approximately a third more organizations in Shenzhen. This further supports the hypothesis I discussed in the last chapter that Shenzhen offers a somewhat more welcoming political economic environment for NGOs. In order to maintain equal sample sizes in my two field sites, I used a randomizer to remove six organizations from the sample in Shenzhen. Shenzhen does have slightly more NGOs. However, the two cities have similar population sizes<sup>54</sup>, as well as other comparable demographics I discussed in the previous chapter. Thus, researching organizations in these two cities reveals important insights into the range of circumstances and experiences of migrant-focused NGOs.

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<sup>54</sup> Although Beijing has roughly double the population of Shenzhen, both cities are in the “megacity” category of 10+ million people. They are two of the most populous cities on earth. Comparisons of cities in this category are common, regardless of differing population sizes (e.g. Kötter and Friesecke 2009).

All organizations I surveyed agreed to allow me to participate in their daily operations. From these (n=34), I sampled a total of twelve organizations in Beijing (n=6) and Shenzhen (n=6). At each organization, I conducted three weeks of participant observation and conducted in-depth interviews. After preliminary analysis of survey data, I stratified this sample to represent the two main types of programs offered by the organizations I surveyed, legal and educational. The “legal” category includes organizations run by lawyers, those that teach migrant workers how to use the law to protect their rights, and still others that organize collective bargaining and workers’ strikes. Much of this, of course, involves educating workers. Yet, a lot of the educational programs do not involve legal training. This “educational” category includes early childhood programs for migrant families, and a variety of skills training programs and job placement assistance. In the following sections, I will discuss the range of programs within each category.

Roughly half of all the organizations I surveyed fit into each category. Thus, across both field sites I conducted participant observation at six organizations in each category. However, among the organizations I surveyed, the percentage in each category was not the same across field sites. Approximately thirty percent of the organizations in Beijing were in the “legal” category, whereas this category made up sixty percent of the organizations in Shenzhen. Thus, I visited two (n=2) “legal” organizations in Beijing and four (n=4) in Shenzhen. The proportions were nearly reversed for the “educational” category. Thus, in Beijing I visited two (n=2) “legal” organizations and four (n=4) “educational” organizations. In Shenzhen I visited four (n=4) “legal” organizations and two (n=2) “educational” organizations. In the next section, I will discuss the discrepancy in the proportions of each category of organization between field sites.

I intended to use quota sampling to include representative numbers of males and females. Following Lane (2012), I expected roughly forty percent of the founders/directors in my study to be women. Across both field sites, approximately thirty percent were women. This in itself does not represent a significantly different gender ratio than I expected. In fact, approximately fifty percent of the organizations in Beijing had female founders/directors. Thus, in Beijing the sample at which I conducted participant observation included women (n=3) and men (n=3). However, only one of the founders/directors I surveyed in Shenzhen was a woman. Thus, in Shenzhen I was only able to include one female founder in my sample.

It is difficult for me to account for this discrepancy between field sites. On the one hand, it may be a sampling bias. As I discussed in the section on *Reflexivity and Research Realities*, locating the organizations was one of the biggest challenges I encountered in the field. Once I was able to locate one organization, I typically asked its founder/director if he/she knew of any other organizations that offer programs to help migrant workers. This method led me to what I believe are exhaustive lists of such organizations in each city.

While this type of respondent-driven sampling can bias a sample, it is largely unavoidable when researching hidden populations. I discussed this in detail in the previous chapter. Nonetheless, it is possible that because my sampling in Shenzhen began with a male, he (and the subsequent males whom I surveyed) exclusively knew other males to whom they directed me. In fact, I found the sole female founder during a chance meeting with a businesswoman on a train.<sup>55</sup> However, my sampling in Beijing also began with a male, and using a similar sampling method, produced a much more even gender ratio. Thus, sampling bias is a

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<sup>55</sup> As I discussed in *Reflexivity and Research Realities*, public transportation led to many important insights. I used every opportunity to tell strangers about my research.



possible, if not somewhat incomplete, explanation for the near absence of women in my Shenzhen sample.

The proportion of each category of NGO in the two cities may also partially explain the skewed gender ratio. As I discussed earlier in this section, Shenzhen has significantly more “legal” organizations – sixty percent, as compared to thirty percent in Beijing. Michelson (2009) aggregated survey data on the Chinese legal profession from 1995 through 2007. On average during this period, roughly twenty-five percent of lawyers in China were women. Over those twelve years, this percentage had little variability. More recent studies (e.g., Considine 2016) suggest that the percentage of female lawyers in China has begun to trend slightly upward. Yet, the gender ratio remains highly skewed toward males. Given the relatively small sample size of my study, it is conceivable that my sampling failed to represent a small but significant percentage of female founders/directors of “legal” organizations in Shenzhen.

Of course, not all the organizations I sampled in Shenzhen are in the “legal” category. Thus, sampling bias and profession-specific gender ratios offer unsatisfactory explanations for the near lack of women in my Shenzhen sample. Other than the ratio of “legal” organizations, my data does not support a cause related to differences between the two field sites. It is conceivable that because significantly more men are lawyers (and they have been for a long time), that there are more men in a financial and professional position to devote time to helping migrant workers. It is even conceivable that there are proportionally very few female layers in this position, and that none of them have chosen to help migrants. However, I have no gender ratio data specific to lawyers in Shenzhen.

Not all the organization in the “legal” category have lawyers as their founders/directors. As I discuss in the following section, many of these organizations employ lawyers to train

migrants to advocate for themselves. Finally, a third of the organizations in Shenzhen are in the “educational” category. I can offer no viable explanation for why there are so few women in these organizations, especially because approximately half of the founders/directors of educational organizations in Beijing are women. Despite having only partial explanations for the limited number of women in my Shenzhen sample, nearly a third of the total founders/directors I surveyed were women. Moreover, based on the distinguishing characteristics of the two field sites (discussed above), I still believe that comparing organizations in Beijing and Shenzhen yields important insights into the experiences and decision-making of the founder/directors.

### **Founders/Directors**

I collected data for this dissertation from the founders/directors of nongovernmental organizations in China. The primary target population of each NGO under study is migrant workers. In many cases, the founders of the NGOs still run the daily operations. In other cases, and for a variety of reasons, they have handed over control of the daily operations to a director, typically (though not exclusively) someone who helped them found the organization.<sup>56</sup> In all cases, the person actively in charge of daily operations served as my key informant in each organization. The primary criteria I used to include people in my sample is that they are either the founder or director of an NGO. This definition does not necessitate that they earn a salary from the organization. In fact, many of the founders/directors have other jobs outside of their work at the NGOs.

For the purposes of this study, I define “NGO” in broad terms as an organization that was not originally created by the government. This is as close to “non-governmental” as an organization can get in China. As I discussed in *Chapter 2*, the government often takes over

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<sup>56</sup> I will discuss a specific case of this in detail in following section.

programs originally started by NGOs. All of the organizations I sampled are still run by their own management. However, roughly forty percent of the organizations I surveyed report receiving at least some of their funding from the government. Thus, sources of funding and revenue do not define an organization as being an NGO. In my sample, there are organizations that are both traditional non-profits, as well as those that generate revenue through the sale of goods and/or services. Moreover, the Chinese government tends to scrutinize the operations of all NGOs. This is particularly pronounced for organizations working on sensitive issues, of which migrant workers are most certainly one.

All of the founders/directors in this study are Chinese. Many foreign-run NGOs also help migrant workers in China. It is not my intention to diminish the impact of their programs. For this dissertation, I chose to focus exclusively on Chinese-run NGOs in order to understand how the Chinese themselves are reacting to societal problems created by economic development in their own country. There are so many factors contributing to their decision making that I did not want to further complicate my analysis by factoring for “country of origin”. After completing this dissertation, I would like to conduct a follow-up study on foreign-run NGOs in China, in order to create a more holistic perspective of the role of all NGOs in helping the migrant workers.

In addition to all being Chinese, the founders/directors of the NGOs in this study are all ethnic Han Chinese. According to the 2010 Chinese national census, the Han account for more than ninety percent of China’s overall population (China 2012). The rest of the population is made up of as many as fifty-five minority ethnic groups. Most of these originate from the middle and western provinces, which are also the main points of origin for China’s migrant workers.

Many of the migrant workers I met during this study belong to one of these non-Han ethnic groups. Predictably, most of them report being discriminated against at some point in their lives because of their ethnicity. I only gathered limited survey data for this study from migrant workers. Yet, I interacted regularly with them while conducting participant observation at each organization. I enjoyed many casual conversations with migrant workers from all over China and of many different Chinese ethnicities. One of the most common themes is that the problems and discrimination they now face have much more to do with them being migrant workers than with their ethnicity. As I discussed in *Chapter 2*, past research reveals a lot about the many problems created by the identity of “migrant worker” in China. It is an all-consuming identity, superseding even ethnicity. This realization led me to study solutions to the problems faced by migrant workers, and not simply spend more time criticizing the system that creates these problems.

Interestingly, more than eighty percent of the founders/directors in this study were migrant workers themselves. Beyond the shared identity of being migrant workers, survey data from this study reveals several other defining demographic features of the founders/directors. Approximately two-thirds of the founders/directors are male. The fact that roughly thirty percent are female is significant given the male-dominated business culture in China. Approximately seventy percent have at least a bachelor’s degree. This high-level of education (as compared to the general public) likely has a strong effect on both the decision to found an NGO and decision-making related to the daily operations.

Approximately forty-five percent of the founders/directors in this study are in their thirties. Roughly thirty-five percent are in their forties. Only about ten percent are in their twenties. The same is true for those in their sixties. No one in my sample is in their fifties or in the cohort above seventy years old. As with the other categories mentioned above, I will

deconstruct these age cohorts in the following sections, in order to understand significant effects of this variable on the overall operations and decision-making of each founder/director and my research population as a whole.

### **Defining Their Own Work**

At the heart of the ways the founders/directors perceive their own work are the Chinese terms they use to describe their organizations. Existing literature and my preliminary research offered me enough terms to create seven answer choices in my survey (see *Figure 14* below). For ease of use, in the snippet of question 11 below, I included the approximate English translation of each term in parentheses. This did not appear in the survey I used for this study.

11) 一下哪个词能最准确地描述您的机构？

- 企业 (For-profit Enterprise)
- 社会企业 (Social Enterprise)
- 社会创业 (Social Enterprise)
- 公益创业 (Charity/Public Service Organization)
- 非营利组织 (Nonprofit Organization)
- 非政府组织 (Nongovernmental Organization)
- 慈善组织 (Charitable Organization)
- 其他: \_\_\_\_\_

*Figure 14: Terms for Chinese NGOs*

Some of these terms have identical or very similar English translations. For example, the second and third answer choices both translate as “social enterprise”. Yet, the Chinese characters in these terms are slightly different. The first two characters 社会 are the same for both terms. 社会 means “society” as in “Chinese society” (中国社会). For the second answer choice, the last two characters 企业 are the same characters used in the first answer choice, meaning “a for-profit enterprise”. In the third answer choice, the last two characters 创业 imply a strong sense of the

act of founding a business. This term is thus derivative of the French origin of the word “entrepreneur”, *entreprendre*, meaning “to initiate something significant” (see Swedberg 2000:11). Thus, while both of these terms accurately translate as “social enterprise”, their meanings hold subtle differences in Chinese. This is also true for the two terms used for “charitable organization”.

Interestingly, only about ten percent of respondents selected the second answer choice, and none selected the third. This is certainly representative of a major reality of conducting field work: a sample does not always represent the full range of possibilities for a given population. In this case, however, the discrepancy between what I expected to find and what my data revealed is likely more subtle than mere sampling error.

Defined broadly, a “social enterprise” is a for-profit charity, i.e., it has a revenue stream instead of (or at least supplemental to) donations. Abu-Saifan (2012) asserts that social enterprises commit to a double bottom-line, whereby they measure success in financial terms and in terms of a positive social impact. By these definitions, all of the organizations in my sample qualify as social enterprises. None of them receive more than thirty percent of their revenue from donations. While eighty percent of the organizations I surveyed receive at least some money from government and/or private sector grants, all of them generate at least twenty percent of their revenue from the sale of goods and/or services. I discuss these goods and services in detail later in this chapter.

Moreover, none of the organizations rely on financial reports alone to measure their success. More than sixty percent of them employ independent consultants to assess the success of their programs, using “community improvement” (对社区的改善) as the primary metric of success. The survey data reveals a consensus among the founders/directors that the financial

health of their organizations is a means to an end, but is not the end itself. One respondent summarized this sentiment: “Economics determines the construction of a better civilization.”<sup>57</sup> It seems reasonable to conclude that this indicates the use of a double bottom-line.

The organizations in my sample fit within the common definition of “social enterprise”. This is, however, an English term. Most participants in the study, and many I interviewed during preliminary research, are familiar with the two common Chinese translations of the English term. However, most do not recognize their organizations as fitting into English-language definitions of “social enterprise”. This could have to do with the Chinese terms being relatively new and poorly defined. However, in 2016 I attended a conference in Beijing on Chinese social enterprise and investment. The title of the conference used 社会企业 for “social enterprise”. This is the same term I used for the second answer choice in question 11 (see *Figure 14* above). This does not mean the term is widespread in China. Yet, it does indicate that it is understood by professionals in the third-sector. This last point is supported by the frequent use of both Chinese terms for “social enterprise” by participants in my preliminary research.

Obviously, a nuance of terminology does not adequately explain why so few of the founders/directors in my sample view their organizations as social enterprises. Nearly sixty percent chose “nonprofit organization”. Approximately thirty percent chose “nongovernmental organization”. And, as I mentioned earlier in this section, about ten percent actually chose “social enterprise”.<sup>58</sup> No one chose “for-profit enterprise” or either of the terms for “charitable organization”.

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<sup>57</sup> 经济决定上层文化建设。

<sup>58</sup> Only one respondent wrote in an answer: 公益性非营利性. It translates as: “A civilian-run charitable non-profit.” This is a very specific term, and likely applies to other organizations. Yet, with ninety-seven percent of respondents choosing one of the seven answer choices, I opted not to amend the survey to include this outlier response.

In a way, the founders/directors suffer from an institutional identity crisis. The reality is that none of the organizations in my study are nonprofits. This is not necessarily by choice. As I discussed in *Chapter 2*, the process for legally registering as a nonprofit in China is essentially un navigable. Because they are not officially registered as nonprofits in China, they are able to receive donations from foreign entities. However, they are unable to accept money from Chinese donors, a much deeper and more readily-accessible donor pool. As I mentioned above, all the organizations in my sample supplement whatever donations they are able to raise with other revenue streams. The irony is that all of the founders/directors in my sample view their programs in terms of common definitions of charitable and nonprofit work. Yet, for lack of a well-defined and commonly used alternative, i.e., “social enterprise”, they refer to their organizations by what they want them to be, and what the government dictates they should be called, not what they actually are. I discuss the theoretical implications of this in *Chapter 8*.

It is important to note that every person who filled out a survey was either the founder or director of a Chinese NGO that helps migrant workers. Ten percent of respondents indicated that they were either an employee or a volunteer. However, when I questioned them about their roles during interviews, it became clear that even this ten percent directed major aspects of their organizations’ programs. A couple of these were indeed volunteers. Yet, as I discussed in the previous section, for the purposes of this study, earning a salary does not define one’s role in an organization. In fact, more than forty percent of respondents report having another job, or at least another source of income outside of their work at the NGO.

Approximately fifty percent of respondents in Shenzhen were the founders of their organizations. This was true for thirty percent in Beijing. Yet, interviews reveal that the directors typically have similar roles to the founders both in the planning and daily operations of their



organizations. Thus, this discrepancy between samples from the two field sites does not seem to exert a significant effect on the quality of the dataset.

This conclusion is further supported by the time respondents have worked at their respective organizations in relation to how long the organizations have existed. The organizations in Beijing have existed for between three and nineteen years, with a mean of approximately 7.5 years. The organizations in Shenzhen have existed for between three and seventeen years, with a mean of approximately 7.8 years. This does not represent a statistically significant difference between organizations from the two field sites. The small difference in mean years also likely has an insignificant effect on their institutional structures and operations. Thus, in terms of their time in existence, the two groups of organizations are readily comparable. In the next section, I will categorize organizations based on their time in existence to compare their experiences with obstacles and external opposition.

#### **‘Years in Existence’ as a Key Variable: The Case of *Law One***

More than eighty percent of survey respondents in Beijing reported having worked at their organizations since their founding. This is true for a comparable percentage of respondents in Shenzhen, approximately seventy percent. From the entire sample, all but one respondent who started work at their organizations after the founding did so within two years of the founding. I will discuss this outlier in the next few paragraphs. Aside from this one case, even respondents who were not around for the founding of their organizations have worked at them for at least eighty percent of their time in operation. This further suggests that all respondents, regardless of their self-reported roles, have made significant contributions to the planning and operations of their organizations.

I will use the pseudonym “Law One” to refer to the outlier case mentioned above. In addition to surveying the director, I also included Law One in the sample of organizations at which I conducted participant observation. This offers me a perspective on probable explanations for this outlier. Yet, data I gathered on Law One also suggests that although it is an outlier in terms of the tenure of its director, the experiences of Law One may also be representative of (and foreshadow) the circumstances under which all NGOs in China must operate.

Law One has existed for nearly seventeen years. It is the second longest running organization in my sample.<sup>59</sup> The current director of Law One has been with the organization for only about two years. As the name suggests, Law One can be generally categorized as an organization that offers legal services and counseling to migrant workers, i.e., the “legal” category. Roughly half of all the organizations I surveyed fit into this category – approximately thirty percent in Beijing and sixty percent in Shenzhen. As I detailed in the section on *Sampling*, these percentages were the primary criteria I used to sample organizations at which to conduct participant observation.

Like many organizations in the “legal” category, the founder of Law One was a migrant. As a young man, he came from his home in a neighboring province to work at a factory on the outskirts of the city. One day at work he was seriously burnt by an industrial chemical. He was unable to receive compensation from his bosses or to navigate the legal system to seek justice. Like many of the founders of organizations in my sample, his personal experiences led him to understand that other migrants had similar problems. This similarity between the founders is repeatedly reinforced by data from the professional life histories.

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<sup>59</sup> The longest running organization has been around for nineteen years.

While still working at the factory, the founder formed Law One to host lectures on labor law. He hired lawyers to train him and his coworkers to navigate the legal processes of getting compensation for workplace injuries, as well as negotiating better wages and improved workplace safety. He began publishing a regular newsletter and brochures with articles on collective bargaining and other topics related to labor rights. His goal was to empower the workers to advocate for themselves. He found that this was a much more effective system than hiring lawyers to handle specific cases.

According to the director, the lawyers appointed to labor cases typically do not fight hard for the migrants. In fact, the appointed lawyers often do such a bad job that the migrants who hire them wind up coming to Legal One for help. These lawyers are appointed by the government. They are part of a system likely designed to lull workers into a sense of false hope. Once court cases have been filed and hearings held, the lawyers often advise their clients to drop the charges, or at least accept a greatly reduced compensation package. Otherwise, they are told, the fees and complex legal proceedings will limit their chances of getting any further payouts. If the workers accept this outcome, they are led to believe that their opportunities for legal recourse have been exhausted. Thus, the legal system serves as a proverbial tilt-a-whirl, disorienting workers with a dizzying array of inaction. After being spit out of this nauseating ride, they are understandably disinterested in ever getting back on.<sup>60</sup>

For this reason, Law One relies on lawyers for training, but not for actual legal services. According to the director of Law One, workers trust each other far more than they trust lawyers, especially when their livelihoods are on the line. The founders/directors of several other

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<sup>60</sup> I am not suggesting that all labor lawyers in China treat migrant workers with this kind of disregard – just a lot of them. Later in this section, I discuss several cases of lawyers going above and beyond their fiduciary obligations to help migrant clients.

organizations in the “legal” category repeated this sentiment. When workers have specific legal needs, members of the organization who have been trained by lawyers are able to write up legal documents and submit them in court. In fact, starting in 2008, the court fees for submission of such documents has been paid for by the government. This subsidy, like many other nuances of the legal system, is not well-publicized.

The members of Legal One are able to take advantage of such hidden benefits only because of the training they receive from lawyers. This situation conceals a deceptively important question, and one that gets to heart of my research: Given all the legal obstacles hindering migrants from defending their rights, and many lawyers’ complicity in this system, why do some lawyers choose to help workers, if not as litigators, then at least in an advisory role?

I attended several training sessions at Legal One run by lawyers. Each time, the lawyers were very interested in learning about my research, but were not interested in participating, particularly when I asked for written consent. This is understandable given governmental scrutiny of labor law. However, my sample also included several organizations founded and run by lawyers. These organizations offer a variety of legal services, from filing court documents to representing clients in the courtroom. The founders/directors of these organizations, all of whom are lawyers, frequently repeated a plausible explanation for why they and other lawyers, despite governmental opposition, are interested in helping migrant workers: As lawyers they have been trained and have an obligation to seek justice and the greatest benefits for their clients within the limits of the law.

Lawyers interpret this guiding principle in numerous ways. Clearly, defending migrant workers is a legal specialty that is neither the most lucrative nor one that has a particularly high

rate of success in the courtroom. In twenty-first century Chinese society, much like American society, status is largely based on financial success. Thus, relatively “low income” lawyers enjoy very little prestige. They are obviously not doing it for fame or fortune. I found that lawyers who choose to interpret their legal obligations as a duty to serve an underrepresented group such as migrant workers typically have had experiences that in some way inspire them to empathize with the plights of these workers. These include, for example, having a volunteer experience with migrants while in college or law school, or witnessing the mistreatment of workers while actually representing a factory owner. These are the “sticky” experiences that were ubiquitous in the professional life histories. The important point here is that the lawyers who train members of Law One have also likely had these kinds of experiences. My data do not suggest other motivations that they may have.

Regardless of their motivations, the lawyers who train members of Law One have given the organization a variety of legal tools to fight for the labor rights of migrant workers. With these tools the founder and other members of the organization were able to help workers achieve several important legal victories and numerous successful negotiations with factory owners.

Unlike many other organizations in this study, Law One has not suffered from a reduction in funding. I cover this issue later in this section as it relates to opposition faced by the organizations. In the early days of Law One, the founder was able to secure ample funding to hire lawyers for training, build and maintain a community center, and publish training manuals and the newsletter. Even though his application to register Law One as an NGO was rejected by the Chinese government, foreign donors nevertheless treated him as an NGO. He received funding from several international charitable funds, as well as a handful of foreign religious groups with an interest in labor rights. In fact, the rejection of his NGO application has been a

blessing in disguise. As I discussed in *Chapter 2*, recent laws severely limit foreign donations to organizations registered as NGOs in China. Thus, because Law One is not officially registered as an NGO, these laws have not affected its fundraising or revenue stream.

Yet, the current director reports that in the last few years these patterns of success have yielded to some discouraging realities. Notably, as I insinuated at the beginning of this case study, the founder of Law One is no longer involved in the organization's daily operations. Until a couple years ago, he was involved in nearly every aspect of the programs he started. The organization never paid him more than a small stipend for his work. In fact, until a couple years ago, he worked at the same factory at which he originally developed the idea for Law One. In addition to his work on the factory floor, he also served as a liaison between the workers and management. During a particularly heated workers' strike, which the founder helped organize, he was beaten by security guards hired by the factory owner. He was subsequently fired from his job, and never received compensation for his injuries.

In the aftermath of the strike, the local government cracked down on Law One. The brochures they hand out are now deemed illegal. They still have a few copies in the community center for workers that come in, but they are no longer allowed to publish them. In addition, they have to move offices almost every year, because the government routinely marks the buildings they rent for demolition. This is common in migrant neighborhoods (see *Figure 15*). Yet, the demolition of their specific building has formed an obvious pattern in the years since that fateful strike. In short, the local government appears to be taking purposeful steps to limit the size and scope of Law One's programs. This is likely due to government fears of worker strikes that grow beyond its ability to control them.



*Figure 15: Marked for demolition with a 拆*

Law One is the longest running organization in the “legal” category of my sample by at least five years. Yet, its programs and operations are categorically similar to at least fifty percent of the organizations I surveyed. It follows that the experiences of Law One may be shared by other similar organizations when they have been in existence for as long. Notably, it is likely that they will experience comparable economic, legal, and political opposition, and that these will have similar impacts on their management and operations. This is supported by survey data that suggests a strong correlation between years in existence and opposition faced. In fact, organizations that have been in existence for nine or more years are approximately two-thirds more likely to face opposition than those that have been in existence for less than nine years.

In *Chapter 6*, I discuss ‘years in existence’ as a key variable determining whether the founders/directors decide to accept (or are even offered) government funds. In the following section, I detail the types of opposition faced by the organizations in my sample and the ways that these likely inform the decision-making of the founders/directors.

### **Determinants and Types of Opposition**

A United Nations NGO questionnaire (Hanfstaengl 2009) informed the survey I developed for this study, particularly questions related to opposition faced by organizations, partnerships with other organizations, and key factors contributing to the success of programs. However, I did not simply translate this (or any other) survey into Chinese. The biggest weakness of the UN survey (and many others) is that it only asks for each type of information once. For example, to understand opposition faced by each organization, I asked questions about this directly (questions 23-23d), as well as asking questions about significant changes in the organization over the past five years (questions 26-27).

The results of cross-referencing the answers to these two groups of related questions reveals interesting discrepancies in the data. More than half of the founders/directors reported that their organizations have or continue to face opposition. This was true for less than twenty percent of the Beijing organizations. However, all of the Shenzhen organizations reported opposition to their programs. This difference between the field sites appears to contradict my hypothesis that the organizations in Shenzhen come under less scrutiny than those in Beijing. It is also possible that due to less scrutiny, the Shenzhen founders/directors feel less constrained in discussing opposition.

While plausible, these conclusions are difficult, if not impossible to verify. The survey data suggests an alternative explanation. More than eighty percent of the founders/directors in



Beijing reported facing no opposition. Yet, all of the Beijing sample reported that increased government regulations over the past five years have decreased their sources of funding and donations. In fact, one hundred percent of my total sample reported this. Indeed, recent changes to the laws governing NGOs and their capacity to raise funds have likely negatively affected every nongovernmental organization in China. The fact that my Beijing sample does not view this as opposition may actually support my original hypothesis about the differences between field sites. Not only are the Beijing organizations likely under more scrutiny, they have also become somewhat desensitized to it. This sentiment was echoed in numerous interviews. As one informant in Beijing put it, “There’s nothing nongovernmental about this NGO.” In other words, while her organization is not part of the government, it is also not entirely separate from the government.

As I mentioned above, all of the organizations in Shenzhen report facing opposition, in contrast to only a few in Beijing. In China’s one-party system, government interference is a reality of doing business. This seems as true for corporate industries as it is for the nongovernmental sector. Nowhere is this more tangible than in the national capital. Thus, it makes sense that NGOs in Beijing, more than those in Shenzhen, do not view government interference in their programs as opposition.

The situation for organizations in Beijing is further underscored by survey data related to partnerships. Every organization in my sample has partnered with at least one other entity. These include local, national, and multinational businesses, other NGOs, community groups, local governments, the national government, and even media outlets. Interestingly, nearly seventy percent of the organizations in Beijing have partnered with either the local or national

government, or both. In contrast, none of the organizations in Shenzhen report having partnerships with either the local or national government.

As I discussed in *Chapter 2*, the state has looked to nongovernmental organizations to share its burden of dealing with social issues related to rapid development. In a variety of ways, Chinese NGOs benefit migrant workers by mobilizing local resources not available to the government. However, since the 1989 pro-democracy rally in Tiananmen Square, the central government has sought to minimize the ways that civil society can act independently of the state (Lee 2015:130). The government's role in civil society will likely become more intrusive now that Xi Jinping has eliminated term limits for the presidency.

Herein lies the power of the government to affect the construction of institutions and how even the most well-intentioned people perceive those institutions. I will discuss the theoretical implications of this in *Chapter 8*. However, this explanation does not account for the individual agency of the founders/directors. The main purpose of this research is to understand how the founders/directors view the work of their organizations and how these views affect their decision-making. One way I operationalized their views is in terms of the factors that they believe have led to the success of their programs.<sup>61</sup>

I used ranking scale questions to collect data on these factors. Based on my previous experience using these types of questions, and on the strong results produced with them by Wutich et al. (2014), I have confidence in their ability to capture how respondents rank various factors that contribute to a certain outcome – in this case, the success of their organizations. In the final series of questions in the survey (questions #28.1-28.14), I asked respondents to rank

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<sup>61</sup> Despite various forms of opposition, all the founders/directors in my sample think their programs are succeeding.

various factors on a scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (most important). The English language version of this series of questions is in *Figure 16*. The Chinese language version can be found in *Appendix 4*.

| 28) How do the following factors contribute to the success of your organization? |               |                    |           |                |                |
|--|---------------|--------------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|
|  | Not Important | A Little Important | Important | Very Important | Most Important |
| Previous professional experience   | 1             | 2                  | 3         | 4              | 5              |
| Salary/Earning potential   | 1             | 2                  | 3         | 4              | 5              |
| Access to funding/investment   | 1             | 2                  | 3         | 4              | 5              |
| Fulfilling work  | 1             | 2                  | 3         | 4              | 5              |
| Benefits to the community  | 1             | 2                  | 3         | 4              | 5              |
| Benefits to society  | 1             | 2                  | 3         | 4              | 5              |
| Opportunities for advancement  | 1             | 2                  | 3         | 4              | 5              |
| Status of doing this kind of work  | 1             | 2                  | 3         | 4              | 5              |
| Support of prominent businesses  | 1             | 2                  | 3         | 4              | 5              |
| Government support   | 1             | 2                  | 3         | 4              | 5              |
| Support from family/friends  | 1             | 2                  | 3         | 4              | 5              |
| Support from the community   | 1             | 2                  | 3         | 4              | 5              |
| A book I read/ Idea I heard  | 1             | 2                  | 3         | 4              | 5              |
| Other:   | 1             | 2                  | 3         | 4              | 5              |

*Figure 16: Success of Organizations*

Across both field sites, “benefits to society” had the highest overall ranking, with a mean score of 4.27. In this category, no respondents selected 1 or 2. Twenty-two percent selected 3, and the other seventy-five percent selected 4 or 5. See *Figure 17* for a breakdown of these results. For this question, there was no significant difference between the means or ranges of the

two field sites.<sup>62</sup> This indicates that, regardless of government interference or other forms of opposition, the founders/directors universally view “benefits to society” as the most important factor leading to the success of their organizations. During interviews, respondents frequently attributed the success of their programs to the multitude of ways they were not only helping migrants but also generally improving Chinese society.

| Response Value | Percent Selected |
|----------------|------------------|
| 1              | 0%               |
| 2              | 0%               |
| 3              | 22%              |
| 4              | 42%              |
| 5              | 36%              |

*Figure 17: Survey Response Percentages*

When compared using a T-test assuming unequal variances and  $p < .05$ , there were three other factors in the total sample whose means were not significantly different than “benefits to society”: (1) “fulfilling work”; (2) “benefits to community”<sup>63</sup>; and (3) “support of

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<sup>62</sup> “Government support” is the only factor that produced significantly different means between the two field sites ( $p = .04$ ). Unsurprisingly, the sample from Beijing had a mean of 3.67, whereas the sample from Shenzhen had a mean of 2.0. This further supports the hypothesis that NGOs in Beijing are not only under greater government scrutiny but also rely more heavily on government support for the success of their programs.

<sup>63</sup> For this survey, I define “community” in terms of the specific localities in which NGOs operate. These may be neighborhoods, series of neighborhoods, or districts in the cities. In contrast, I use “society” to refer to the cultural, political, and economic context in which NGOs view their localized work in broader terms.

family/friends”. Supported by interview data, the relative importance of these factors highlights the main motivations of the founders/directors. Preliminary research and evidence from the sample in this study do not imply a diminished importance for financial factors, such as “access to funding” and “earning potential”. Echoing a sentiment from the discussion of measures of success, the financial factors enable the motivations that are most important to the founders/directors.

Earlier in the survey (questions 20.1-20.14), I asked respondents to rank factors that contributed to their decision to start/work for their organizations. I included the same factors in the same order as the questions in #28 (Figure 17 above). I compared mean responses to these two groups of questions to understand the relationship between the original motivations of the founders/directors and how these continue to inform their current views of their organizations’ success.

**Question 20:** How did the following factors contribute to your decision to start/work for this organization?

**Question 28:** How do the following factors contribute to the success of your organization?

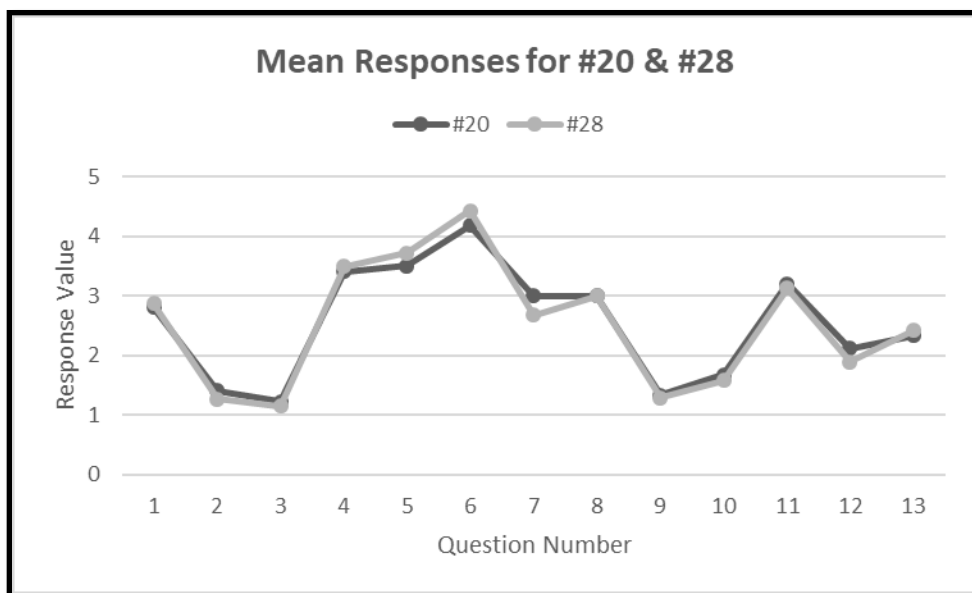


Figure 18: Comparison of Survey Questions

As the graph in *Figure 18* illustrates, each corresponding question in these two groups produced nearly identical means. In fact, not one question pairing had a statistically significant difference. “Benefits to society” (#6), “benefits to community” (#5), and “fulfilling work” (#4) are viewed as the most important factors in both question groupings. In contrast, the financial factors, such as “access to funding” (#3), “earning potential” (#2), and “corporate support” are viewed as the least important, both in terms of deciding to start/work for an organization and in terms of the success of programs.

Tempting as it is, I dare not extrapolate too much from the synergy between these two sets of questions. This dissertation is not based on a restudy of organizations that I surveyed five or ten years ago. Thus, I do not have longitudinal data to compare the viewpoints of the founders/directors now with those when they first started or started working for their organizations.<sup>64</sup>

The parallels between #20 and #28 do seem to indicate that the founders/directors have a strong sense of purpose, and that they take enormous pride in what they see as the value of their work. This could certainly be a case of presenting oneself in a favorable light. Yet, as the example of Law One reveals, the founders/directors are in many ways immersed in their programs. Their lives, and often personal safety, are intertwined with the successes and failures of their organizations. Thus, their decision-making is perhaps less a function of practical matters, such as funding, than it is of deep beliefs in the importance of their work.

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<sup>64</sup> I took steps to minimize the chances of respondents copying their responses from question-set #20 into #28. Notably, I separated these two question-sets by fifteen questions and four pages. In addition, I printed #28 on the back cover of the survey, so that the booklet would be closed when they filled it out. I did not witness any respondents open the booklet while filling out #28.

Handy, Kassam, and Renade (2002) found that among the female founders of female-focused NGOs in India, self-actualization is one of the key factors affecting decision-making. The informants view their organizations as vehicles to promote their core beliefs. One respondent asserts, “only women can create a platform and empathize with other [women] at a grassroots level” (Handy, Kassam, and Renade 2002, 146). This appears readily transferable to migrants in China who found and/or direct migrant-focused NGOs. As I discussed above, this accounts for the majority of respondents in my sample.

Light (2002) found that more than half of people in the nongovernmental sector in the United States know that jobs in other sectors would pay better. They are significantly more likely than people employed in the public and private sectors to report that they sought their current positions in order to make a difference or do something worthwhile, rather than seeking job security, salary, or benefits. Onyx and Maclean (1996) found a similar situation in Australia, where strong personal conviction to an organization’s mission is the strongest factor determining the decision to work in the nongovernmental sector. Based on a comparison of NGO workers in the developing world, Flanigan (2010) concludes that personal convictions are an equally strong factor in decision-making across contexts.

Self-actualization, i.e., putting one’s core beliefs into action, clearly contributes to the decision to found an NGO. This was true of all the founders/directors in my sample. From the existing literature, what remains unclear is how commitment to such self-actualization affects subsequent decision-making related to running NGO programs. To remedy this knowledge gap, I investigated how the founders/directors in my sample prioritize various aspects of their organizations and the ways that these priorities affect their decision-making. I discuss the results of this analysis in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5: PRIORITIES IN PRACTICE

In this chapter, I analyze data from pile sorting exercises and semi-structured interviews to understand how the founders/directors prioritize various aspects of their work. I use the metrics of relative importance, relative frequency, and the relative importance assigned to the hypothetical situation of reduced government oversight to triangulate their decision criteria and gain insights into their decision-making processes.

The results of the first pile sort reveal what relative importance the founders/directors assign to each aspect of their organizations. *Figure 19* (below) depicts the mean scores for the samples in Beijing and Shenzhen. The general trend of these scores is roughly the same for both samples. For example, on average the founders/directors reported that “generating revenue” and “beneficiary recruitment and training” are the most important aspects of their organizations. The beneficiaries of the NGOs in my study, i.e., migrant workers, are at the core of the organizations’ self-professed mission statements. It is thus reassuring to see that the founders/directors place such high importance on beneficiary recruitment and training. This is of course a common (and prerequisite) concern of NGOs across contexts. Nonetheless, it is significant to find this level of concern for the plight of others in an emergent capitalist system where individualism and materialism have come to permeate nearly all aspects of society.



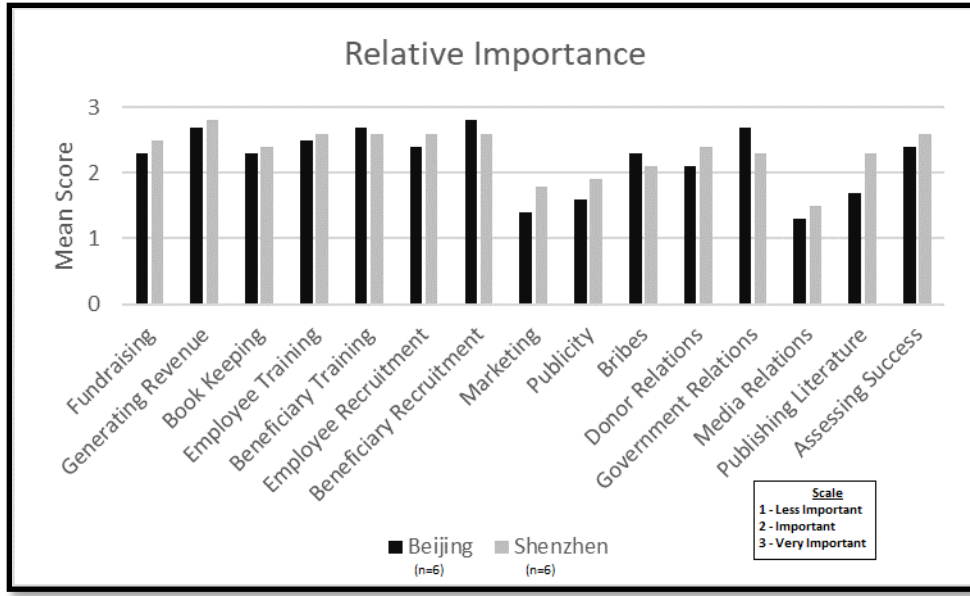


Figure 19: Pile Sorts - Relative Importance

The results of the second pile sort reveal the relative frequency that the founders/directors conduct each aspect of their organizations. *Figure 20* (below) depicts the mean scores for the samples in Beijing and Shenzhen. Like the first pile sort, the general trend of these scores is roughly the same for both samples. Notably, both groups of founders/directors devote the most time to generating revenue and to beneficiary recruitment and training. They spend the least time on marketing, publicity, and media relations. These correlate with the relative importance assigned to these tasks in the first pile sort (see *Figure 19* above). My participant observation corroborates these findings.

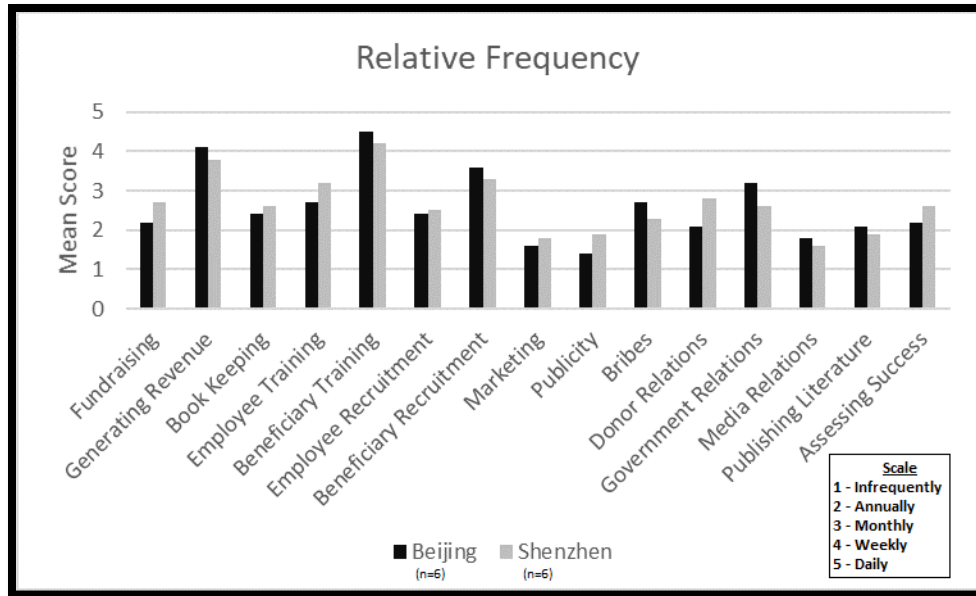


Figure 20: Pile Sorts - Relative Frequency

The first pile sort illustrates the significant differences between the relative importance assigned by the founders/directors in the two field sites. These relative differences remain for the frequency data produced by the second pile sort exercise. However, several factors that were assigned relatively high importance by both groups were assigned relatively low frequency. Thus, beyond a comparison of the two field sites, comparing data trends from the first and second pile sorts for the whole sample reveals some important insights into how the founders/directors are making decisions.

It is important to note that data from the first and second pile sorts are not on the same scale. The first uses a three-point scale: (1) less important, (2) important, and (3) very important. The second uses a five-point scale: (1) infrequently, (2) annually, (3) monthly, (4) weekly, and (5) daily. As I discussed in *Chapter 3*, I used these to present informants with an appropriate range of responses for the specific pile sorting exercise. To normalize the data for comparison, I converted responses to a percentage of the maximum score, 3 in the case of the first exercise and

5 for the second. This generated normalized mean responses for both datasets that are normally distributed and have equal variances. Thus, to compare various criteria from the two exercises, I ran an Independent Group t-test.

The results of the third pile sort reveal the relative importance the founders/directors assign to each aspect of their organizations under the hypothetical situation of reduced government oversight. For this exercise, I used the prompt: “How would you respond to these questions if there were fewer government regulations [of NGOs]?”<sup>65</sup> Figure 21 (below) depicts the mean scores for the samples in Beijing and Shenzhen. Like the other two pile sorts, the general trend of these scores is roughly the same for both samples. Similar to the first exercise, the organizations in Shenzhen have slightly higher scores for marketing, publicity, and publishing literature. However, unlike the first exercise, these differences are not statistically significant.

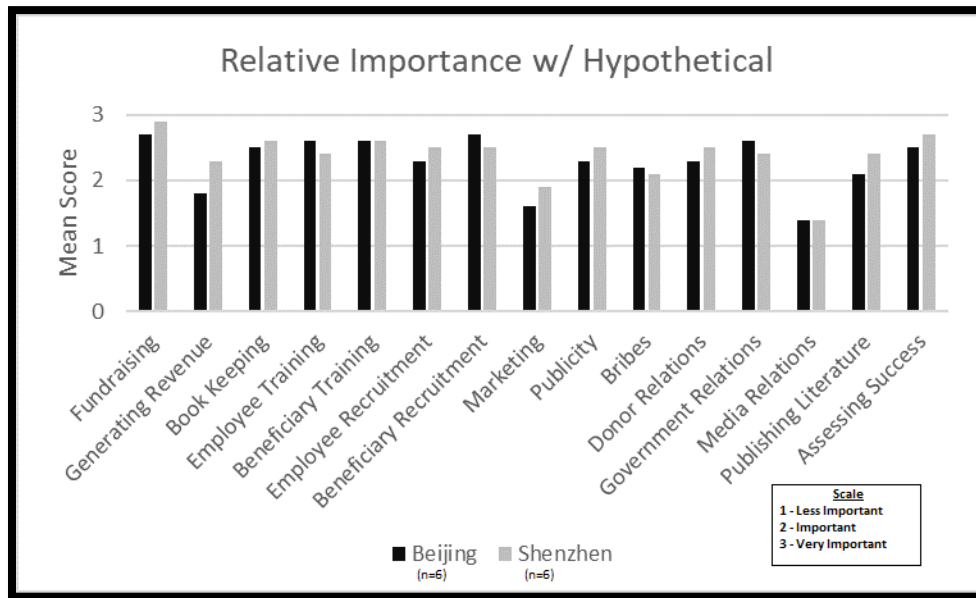


Figure 21: Pile Sorts - Relative Importance w/ Hypothetical

<sup>65</sup> 如果有更少的政府管制，你会怎么回答这些问题？

In the following topical sections, I discuss how data from the three pile sorting exercises in sum reveals the complexity of how the founders/directors prioritize various aspects of their organizations. These include generating revenue, fundraising, government relations, and marketing, publicity, and media relations. I also situate the analysis of these priorities within broader issues related to factors affecting decision-making within nongovernmental sectors across contexts.

### **Revenue and Fundraising**

Given the laws restricting the formation and fundraising of NGOs in China, it is not surprising that generating revenue is seen as so important. As discussed in *Chapter 1*, such profit-making activities are common for social entrepreneurs across contexts. However, Hildebrandt (2013, 95) notes that in authoritarian regimes, like China's, charitable fundraising is far more intertwined with political concerns than is common in democracies. This constrains funding options and necessitates a greater reliance on alternative funding sources.

Comparing data from the first and second pile sorts reveals that the founders/directors assign significantly higher importance than frequency to fundraising ( $p=.03$ ). This is not particularly surprising. As I discussed earlier, fundraising is an integral part of running any NGO. However, it is not an activity that has to occur daily. All of the organizations in my sample raised funds either at designated events or at meetings with individual donors. This is not an activity that was regularly scheduled into daily operations. In fact, I was present for a donor meeting at only three of the organizations in my sample. I did not witness any fundraising events during my participant observation.

As I discussed in *Chapter 2*, the laws governing charitable donations in China have become stricter over the past decade. Yet, my data do not suggest that these laws have a

significant effect on the frequency of fundraising. They have likely increased both the importance and frequency of NGOs generating revenue. However, the founders/directors in my sample still view fundraising as one of the most important aspects of their organizations' sustainability. Regardless of specific funding sources, all of the organizations in my sample receive significant proportions of their annual operating budgets from charitable donations. Thus, the infrequency of fundraising appears to reflect a prioritizing of daily operations over long-term planning. This is supported by the high relative importance and frequency assigned to beneficiary training, i.e., serving the needs of migrant workers. I discuss this in the following section.

Introducing the hypothetical prompt in the third pile sort caused the founders/directors to assign significantly less importance to generating revenue ( $p=.05$ ). In the first exercise, the founders/directors from both samples assign similarly high importance to generating revenue. In fact, nearly tied with beneficiary training, generating revenue produces the overall highest score of any criteria. The Beijing sample has a mean score of 2.7/3.0, and Shenzhen has 2.8/3.0. This indicates a very high relative importance assigned to this activity. In contrast, the third exercise produces a 1.8/3.0 in Beijing and a 2.3/3.0 in Shenzhen.

The effect of the hypothetical prompt is particularly pronounced for the Beijing sample. Whereas the founders/directors in Shenzhen still assign relative importance to generating revenue, the scores from the Beijing sample are mostly clustered in the "less important" category. Notably, there are two outliers in Beijing that skewed the mean upward. Removing these generates a mean of 1.5, indicating that the modal number of founders/directors in Beijing view generating revenue as one of the least important activities under the hypothetical situation.

This outcome is not particularly surprising. As the first pile sort reveals, government regulations tend to have a significantly stronger effect on the decision-making of the Beijing sample. While conducting the third exercise, I asked the founders/directors what specific regulations they would like removed. Some said all regulations. Other were more specific. The most common answer, and one given nearly unanimously in Beijing, was the laws limiting donations to NGOs. These affect all the organizations, but appear to be more strictly enforced in Beijing. By removing them, the founders/directors would not have to rely as heavily on revenue generating activities.

My conversations with the founders/directors about this hypothetical situation typically became far more complex than a single issue. Even donations are governed by more than the laws that specifically regulate them. As I discussed in *Chapter 2*, most NGOs in China are not officially registered with the government. This is true for the majority of organizations in my sample. Thus, they do not have the legal structures to accept charitable donations, at least domestically. Growing societal skepticism of the nongovernmental sector further limits the potential donor pool. This complexity underscores the limits of the data from the third pile sorting exercise. Following Straughan (1975), it becomes clear that the main limitation of hypothetical prompts is that they lack the situational features of real-world circumstances.

### **Government Relations**

Comparing data from the first and second pile sorts reveals that the founders/directors assign significantly higher importance than frequency to bribes ( $p=.05$ ) and government relations ( $p=.04$ ). During my participant observation, I most often accompanied the founders/directors in either managing logistics of a current program or in dealing with an immediate crisis. Examples of the latter include finding housing for a woman unexpectedly fired from her job late at night,

bailing three young men out of jail for shoplifting, and rushing a mother to the hospital after her toddler became violently ill. Each of these cases exemplifies the ways that the founders/directors become intertwined in the precarity of migrants' lives.

The founder of one organization was up all night helping the woman in the first case find a place to sleep. He eventually also found her a new job. I discuss this case in greater detail in *Chapter 6*. I went with another founder to bail the guys out of jail. As it turned out, there was no evidence that they had stolen anything. The three of them had entered into a heated argument with a shop owner over the price of a pair of sneakers. They eventually walked away without buying them. Apparently out of spite, the shop owner called the police who arrested the boys further down the block. Not surprisingly, the officers believed the report of the shop owner and his neighbors who had witnessed the episode. The boys were dressed in typical migrant clothing, similar to what I described in *Chapter 3*. This likely contributed to the obvious prejudice of their arrest. In the third case, the director of the organization had to pay out of pocket for the child's medical care. The mother lacked insurance and did not have enough cash to pay the bill, which the hospital demanded up front. As I discussed in *Chapter 2*, poor access to affordable healthcare is a common problem for migrants.

With so many immediate concerns, the founders/directors have little time to devote to issues which objectively have enormous importance to the long-term success of their programs. Other than fundraising, these largely involve fostering strong relationships with local and national government officials. This process ranges from tapping into personal networks to bribery, which in China are really two sides of the same coin.

The exchange of gifts or money for favors is commonplace in China. Recently, the national government has cracked down on this practice as a form of corruption, punishable by

increasing draconian measures (e.g., Baculinao 2018). However, more broadly in Chinese society, such exchanges are utilitarian and central to the production and maintenance of *guanxi* networks (discussed in *Chapter 2*). Though China has a long-established gift economy, Smart (1999, 130) points out that *guanxi* has proven critical to conducting business under the current system of market socialism with its ambiguous and often-changing bureaucratic rules. This is as true in the business sector as it is in the nongovernmental sector.

Universally, the founders/directors in my sample recognize the importance of fostering strong relationships with government officials. The relative infrequency that they engage in such networking conceals several complexities of their decision-making process. On the one hand, they all understand that government approval (or at least lack of disapproval) is an unavoidable component of creating a sustainable and impactful NGO program in China. I discuss this in detail in the next chapter. While they engage in requisite network building activities, they do not appear to prioritize it in their daily decision-making. This is a behavioral trend revealed by the pile sort data and supported by my participant observation at their organizations.

On a daily basis, the founders/directors in my sample engage in a variety of activities that directly or indirectly contradict government policies. It follows that they also serve to weaken relationships with government officials. In a general sense, the founders/directors prioritize the well-being of the migrants over most other considerations, even the viability of their own programs. More specifically, the founders/directors are making the cities more hospitable to migrants, something which the government increasingly opposes (see *Field Sites* above). By doing so, the founders/directors often endanger not only their programs but also their own well-being. This is exemplified by the case of the founder I discussed in *Reflexivity and Research Realities* who was being actively spied on by the government. Though an extreme example, it is



representative of the conflicting priorities underlying much of the decision-making of the founders/directors.

Is this self-destructive behavior? Or is it a form of protest? Does it strengthen the impact of the programs? Does it improve migrants' lives? My data do not provide consensus answers to these questions. The behavior of the founder discussed above seems to lie somewhere between self-destruction and civil disobedience. Though most of the founders/directors in my sample do not act as brazenly, all their programs are by nature at odds with the prevailing government attitudes toward migrant workers. As I discussed in *Chapter 2*, the government seems to be doing everything in its power to discourage migrants from settling long-term in the cities. Thus, creating programs to improve migrants' lives requires opposition to the national government, even if at times it also requires working in conjunction with local governments. As I discuss in the next chapter, government support is essential for creating successful programs.

This dizzying paradox makes clear why most of the founders/directors in my sample prioritize the activities over which they can exert immediate and identifiable influence. Too much focus on larger issues quickly becomes overwhelming. The director of one organization summed up the situation brusquely: "I don't understand them [government officials] and I don't want to."<sup>66</sup> In fact, as the pile sort data reveal, the founders/directors do not even devote much time to assessing the success of their programs, something they unanimously view as very important. This speaks volumes to the enormous impact of China's political economy on their decision-making. I will delve into the theoretical implications of this in *Chapter 8*.

For now, it is important to note that under ideal circumstances the lack of large-scale planning and development likely limits the overall impacts of the NGO programs in my sample. However,

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<sup>66</sup> 我听不懂他们在讲什么，我也不想听懂。

the founders/directors are making the best of suboptimal conditions. At this point, there is no one else working to improve migrants' lives. It seems safe to conclude that their priorities, and in turn their decision-making, are resulting in the greatest possible impact on migrants' lives.

### **Marketing and Publicity**

Both samples report that the least important aspects of their organizations are marketing, publicity, and media relations. As I discussed above, the organizations in both field sites try not to attract much attention to their programs, largely because the migrant workers have such tenuous legal status in the cities. This is also a function of intense government scrutiny of their programs, particularly those concerned with labor relations and workers' rights. Interestingly, Ebrahim (2003) points to publicity as one of the main ways NGOs reassure donors of their accountability for the outcomes of their programs. His paper is a meta study of research on NGOs globally, and like most academic work on NGOs, it covers the behaviors of organizations in democratic societies.

The Chinese organizations would probably benefit from increased publicity. Even though new laws restrict their ability to fundraise, they are still using other ways to generate revenue. They rely on word-of-mouth to market and publicize both their programs and their goods and services. In a study of private sector businesses, Bughin, Doogan, and Vetvik (2010) argue for the effectiveness of word-of-mouth advertising, noting that it is the primary factor behind twenty to fifty percent of consumer spending. This is transferable to social entrepreneurs who also rely on profit-making activities to generate revenue. Yet, this implies that at least half of people's awareness of products and services comes from other forms of marketing and publicity, which the Chinese NGOs in my study do not seem to be using. Based on the other data in this study, it

is not surprising to find that government regulations are both shaping and limiting the ways NGOs in China are publicizing their programs.

What is somewhat unsettling is that the founders/directors do not view marketing and publicity as important to the success of their organizations. Other than government regulations, the lack of marketing and publicity seems to be one of the main limitations on the scale and scope of their organizations' programs. Herein lies the power of the authoritarian state to affect the construction of both institutions and how even the most well-intentioned people perceive those institutions. It is important to note that government regulations appear to be influencing the founders/directors to apply self-imposed limitations on their own organizations.

As a counterpoint to the above argument, even though the government severely limits fundraising, data from the first pile sort exercise suggests that the founders/directors still view it as a relatively important part of their organizations. As revealed by the survey data, regardless of their organizations' official legal structure, the founders/directors typically perceive their organizations within "normal" definitions of NGOs. In fact, many foreign donors disregard the lack of official designations and donate to the Chinese NGOs as if they were registered as nonprofit organizations. Thus, government regulations can limit how the founders/directors assign importance to certain aspects of their organizations but not how they view their core missions. In this way, they are working within the limits of the system to rebel against it, notably against the codified and institutionalized mistreatment of migrant workers.

T-tests for the means of the first pile sort exercise reveal significant differences between the two field sites for publicity ( $p=.04$ ) and marketing ( $p=.03$ ). In both cases, the founders/directors in Shenzhen view these factors as being more important to their organizations. This may have to do with less government regulation. It may also be a factor of less government

management of and support for their programs. However, as noted above, the founders/directors from both field sites assign relatively low importance to these factors. Thus, despite statistical significance, this may simply represent a significant difference in degree not in kind, as well as the importance of context.

Not surprisingly, the founders/directors in Beijing put more importance on government relations ( $p=.02$ ). Yet, it should be noted that the mean score for both field sites is greater than 2, indicating that government relations factor heavily into the decision-making of all the founders/directors – just more heavily for those in Beijing. This offers further evidence for the preeminence of the authoritarian state in determining decision-making within the nongovernmental sector.

Organizations in Beijing certainly appear to come under greater government scrutiny than those in Shenzhen. Further supporting this conclusion, though admittedly tangentially, is the significantly lower importance assigned by respondents in Beijing to publishing literature ( $p=.02$ ). Interviews reveal that they experience much greater censorship than the founders/directors in Shenzhen. Again, this is objectively a very important part of most NGO programs. The articles and pamphlets published by NGOs educate beneficiaries as well as publicize programs to donors and other interested parties.

The literature published by one organization in Shenzhen stands out both because of its originality and because it represents the pride and thoughtfulness with which all the founders/directors in my sample approach their work. I will call this organization *Women Work*. It helps female domestic workers understand their legal rights and deal with a variety of problems and hazards common in their profession. These include discrimination by both their employers and the general population. Not only are these women migrant workers, a second-tier

social class at best, but they also typically lack labor contracts and are thus not covered by existing (and limited) labor laws. *Figure 22* and *Figure 23* depict a sampling of the literature published by *Women Work*.



*Figure 22: Surveillance of Domestic Workers*



*Figure 23: Harassment of Domestic Workers by “employers”*

The illustrations above come from pamphlets in the *Women Work* community center. *Figure 22* depicts one of the most common forms of harassment faced by domestic workers. Wealthy homeowners often subject the women to overt (and hidden) surveillance. It is surprisingly common for the homeowners to use embellished video “evidence” to withhold pay from the women, accusing them of a variety of minor and major infractions. To make matters worse, many of the women are listed on websites for domestic workers. Even a single negative review can lead to a woman being blacklisted, or at least cause a dramatic decrease in her earning potential. Like migrants in China, this precarity is experienced by domestic workers worldwide, in contexts as diverse as Hong Kong (Constable 2007), South Africa (Ally 2011), Italy (Näre 2011), and Saudi Arabia (Johnson 2010).

The founder of *Women Work* was a migrant herself. She actually came to the city to attend college. She has been able to ascend the socioeconomic ladder far more easily than less educated migrants. Because of this, she has had many opportunities to interact with the city’s economic elites. On several occasions, while attending dinner parties or other events at the homes of wealthy friends, she was appalled at the way they treated the domestic workers. In a particularly candid interview, she likened the experiences to those of a freed slave, watching people still in slavery being whipped on a pole – and for little more than spilling tea on the carpet. Of course, the abuse was seldom physical. But, for her, the mental toll was palpable. “I’ve been fortunate, never having to do this kind of work. But it was like I was in their uniform.<sup>67</sup> I had to do something.”

This is an interesting variation on the idea of walking in someone else’s shoes. It conveys a strong occupational imagery. Interestingly, the word for uniform 制服 can also mean

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<sup>67</sup> 像我也穿一样的制服: “It was like I was also wearing the same uniform.”

“to subdue” or “to bring under control”. Although domestic workers typically do not have prescribed attire, the precarity and hostility of their employment situations share many qualities with the abrasive and restrictive fabrics used in most uniforms.

In response to her experiences, she started the *Women Work* community center. It offers the domestic workers a safe place to vent their frustrations. It also offers the founder and her staff a place to learn the intricacies of the workers’ situations. Previously, the women had no forum to openly share knowledge. The community center began to remedy this problem. The founder published brochures, similar to the ones above. She immediately began hearing from the women that they were more easily able to avoid bad situations, such as “getting caught” on camera<sup>68</sup> or being harassed by husbands (see *Figure 23* above). Simply knowing the experiences of other women had a positive effect on their situations. If nothing else, both the literature and the community center gave them a way to make fun of the often-ridiculous behavior of their employers.

As with most NGOs, the literature published by *Women Work* adds a lot of value to its programs. The founder clearly wants to do everything in her power to help the beneficiaries of her organization. To support this goal, she has decided to put a lot of resources and time into publishing literature. I was not able to gather comprehensive financial data from the organizations in this study. Many declined my requests, while others only granted me partial

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<sup>68</sup> The founder admits that some of the women actually do commit small crimes, such as theft and occasionally vandalism. In her opinion, the abuse they endure instigates these crimes, and in some ways justifies them. I remain objective on this issue. Clearly, her support for the domestic workers is unapologetic and unwavering.

access to their financial reports.<sup>69</sup> However, I was able to gather data on the frequencies with which decisions are made and the resulting actions.

Assuming the removal of government regulations, the founders/directors assigned significantly higher importance to publicity ( $p=.05$ ). Letting her imagination run wild, one founder in Beijing envisioned taking out advertisements on state-run television. Another imagined his program being featured on the nightly news. Yet, these fantasies would require changes to not only the laws and attitudes governing NGOs but also far-reaching policies toward the migrants themselves, for example relaxing residency laws and improving labor protects. Most of my informants acknowledged this complexity. In fact, other than generating revenue and publicity, the hypothetical situation in the third pile sort did not produce a significant effect on any other criteria.

The limited effect of my hypothetical prompt suggests that the reach of the Chinese-state extends beyond regulating institutional behavior. It appears to exert a significant influence on the way even the most well-intentioned people view institutions. This represents a natural extension of Foucault's (1991, 105) notion that the state wields authority by obscuring power structures behind complex legal mechanisms. In this framework, the laws governing NGOs in China manufacture perceptions that extend throughout society. These have led the founders/directors to engage in a form of self-discipline, whereby state policies not only shape their operational decision-making but also limit the ways they imagine the possibilities of their institutions.

Spires (2011) found this type of self-regulating behavior to be a common feature of across the Chinese nongovernmental sector. In Gugerty's (2010) study of NGOs in twenty-two

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<sup>69</sup> After a handful of rejections, I stopped asking for access to financial information. I found it had a negative impact on rapport. Since I lacked financial data from some organizations, I could not make comparisons across my entire sample.



African nations, national political structure plays the most significant role in determining the degree of self-regulation in NGOs. In more democratic countries, such as Ethiopia, self-regulation takes the form of performance assessments and donor reviews. These have a strong effect on organizational decision-making, but are easily amendable and consistently enforced. In contrast, for NGOs in more authoritarian countries, such as Kenya, self-regulation occurs in response to perceived and actual threats of government interference. Like the organizations in China, these tenuous relationship with the state often result in NGOs over-regulating their own programs and thus limiting their effectiveness.

As I discussed in *Chapter 1*, previous research spotlights the influence of political systems on nongovernmental activity. Certainly, democratic systems are the ideal. Yet, the organizations in my sample reveal that through self-regulation they can operate effective programs in even the most limiting of authoritarian systems. What remains unclear is how this state-driven self-regulation affects specific decisions. In the next chapter, I discuss the implications of the asymmetrical relationship between the state and civil society in terms of the factors contributing to and the outcomes of the decision-making of the founders/directors in my sample.

## CHAPTER 6: GOVERNING THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL

The term “governing” in the title of this chapter has a double meaning. First, it references the economic controls employed by the Chinese state to govern the nongovernmental sector. At minimum, the state uses funding to exert influence over non-governmental programs. However, it often outright usurps programs begun by NGOs. The second meaning of “governing” relates to the ways state interference governs the decision-making of the founders/directors of NGOs. In this way, the founders/directors are both shaped by and find space to work within government control frameworks. I will discuss the theoretical implications of this in *Chapter 8*. In this chapter, I analyze data from decision modelling to understand how this process affects the decision of the founders/directors to accept or not accept government funds and how this decision affects subsequent decision-making.

### **Accepting Government Funds**

Forty percent of the organizations in my sample accept at least some funding from the government. It is a misconception that these organizations are forced to take government money. The Chinese state is certainly overbearing. Yet, if this dissertation proves nothing else, my data strongly suggest that Chinese citizens have many ways to exert their agency, particularly in civil society organizations. These are not “weapons of the weak” in the traditional sense of tactics used to resist or overthrow a “bad” regime (see Ginzberg 2017). Such an outcome is unlikely, especially given that so many Chinese have benefited from China’s strong central government. I got no sense from my informants that regime change was even on their radar. They take

enormous pride in their country and are seeking ways to work within the system to improve it. When faced with government pressure, a founder/director can simply shut down the current program and begin a new one under a different organizational structure. In fact, several founders/directors in my sample reported that their current programs resulted from just such a process.

I also found several cases of founders/directors choosing not to accept government money and still able to maintain their programs. I will discuss specific examples later in this chapter. The point is that the founders/directors have a choice whether or not to accept government funding. As I discussed in *Chapter 4*, the founders/directors in my sample feel passionately about their work. They are typically not willing to walk away from their programs simply because they face obstacles, even from the state. In the following chapter, I will discuss this topic more broadly.

For these reasons, I wanted to understand the criteria used by the founders/directors to decide whether or not to accept government funding. While forty percent of the organizations in my sample received government money, over eighty percent of the founders/directors report being faced with this decision. *Figure 24* depicts the decision tree I created from interviewing the founders/directors about this decision.

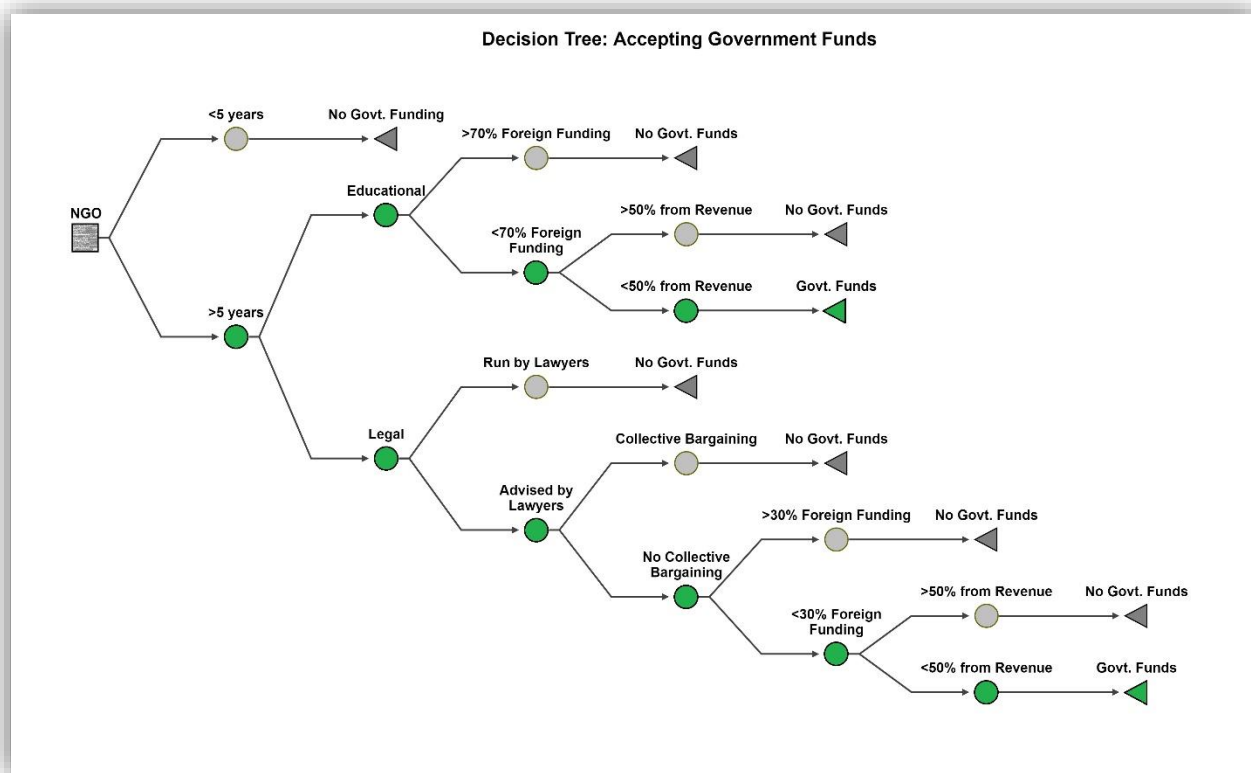


Figure 24: Accepting Government Funds

This decision tree reveals only two pathways by which the founders/directors decide to accept government funds (shown in green). However, as I mentioned above, this represents the experiences of forty percent of the organizations in my sample. Moreover, it points to some significant factors affecting the decision-making of the founders/directors, regardless of whether they accept government money.

None of the organizations that have been in existence less than five years accepted government funding. In my sample, none of them were offered government funding. This correlates with survey data that found a similar relationship between years in existence and obstacles faced (see *Chapter 4*). It also suggests that the government is more discerning than we

might want to give it credit for, and is likely looking for programs with at least a five-year track record to share its burden of dealing with migrant issues.

Of those in existence longer than five years, roughly sixty percent are “educational” and forty percent are “legal” organizations. For both categories of organization, the decision to accept government funds is largely a function of the availability of other funding sources. Notably, only organizations that bring in less than fifty percent of their operating budgets from commercial revenue accept government funds. The availability of foreign funding also contributes to the decision to accept or not accept government money. Interestingly, this is a significantly more important factor for the educational organizations. They must receive at least seventy percent of their funding from foreign donors in order not to take government money – as compared to a thirty percent threshold for the legal organizations.

Bolstering survey and interview data, this discrepancy further suggests government preferences for certain NGO programs over others. The decision tree in *Figure 24* underscores how these preferences affect the decision-making of the founders/directors. Within the “educational” category, all of the decision-criteria relate to the availability of funding. However, in the “legal” category, in addition to funding criteria, the types of programs and their structures strongly influence the final decision. Notably, programs run by lawyers and those that promote collective bargaining do not receive government money.

Some founders/directors who are lawyers report being offered funding from the government. None of them decided to accept it. In most cases, this has to do with their greater access to personal and network wealth than other founders/directors. In China, as in many countries, even lawyers who engage in nonprofit work are top-earners. Several of these lawyers also cited fiduciary duty as an important decision criterion. As attorneys, they have a

professional obligation to represent the interests of their clients and avoid conflicts of interest. Lawyers who take on migrant clients are often defending them against government policies related to labor rights and collective bargaining. The government tends to favor business interests in both of these areas. As one informant commented, “Money from the government is a payment not to oppose the government.”<sup>70</sup>

The above analysis of *Figure 24* provides insights into what personal, organizational, and political factors lead some founders/directors to accept government funds. However, it reveals little about how this important decision affects subsequent decision-making. In theory, by accepting government funds, an NGO loses one of its defining characteristics, namely being non-governmental. Yet, with such an overbearing central government, China creates a much less distinct nongovernmental sector than is common in democratic societies. In the next section, I will explore how using (or not using) government money plays out in the Chinese context.

### **Using Government Funds**

*Figure 25* shows the decision tree I created to model the ways the decisions to accept or not accept government money affect subsequent decision-making. All of the organizations in this model were offered government funds. Thus, they made a decision to accept or not accept them.

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<sup>70</sup> 政府给你的钱是为了让你不反对政府的一种费用。

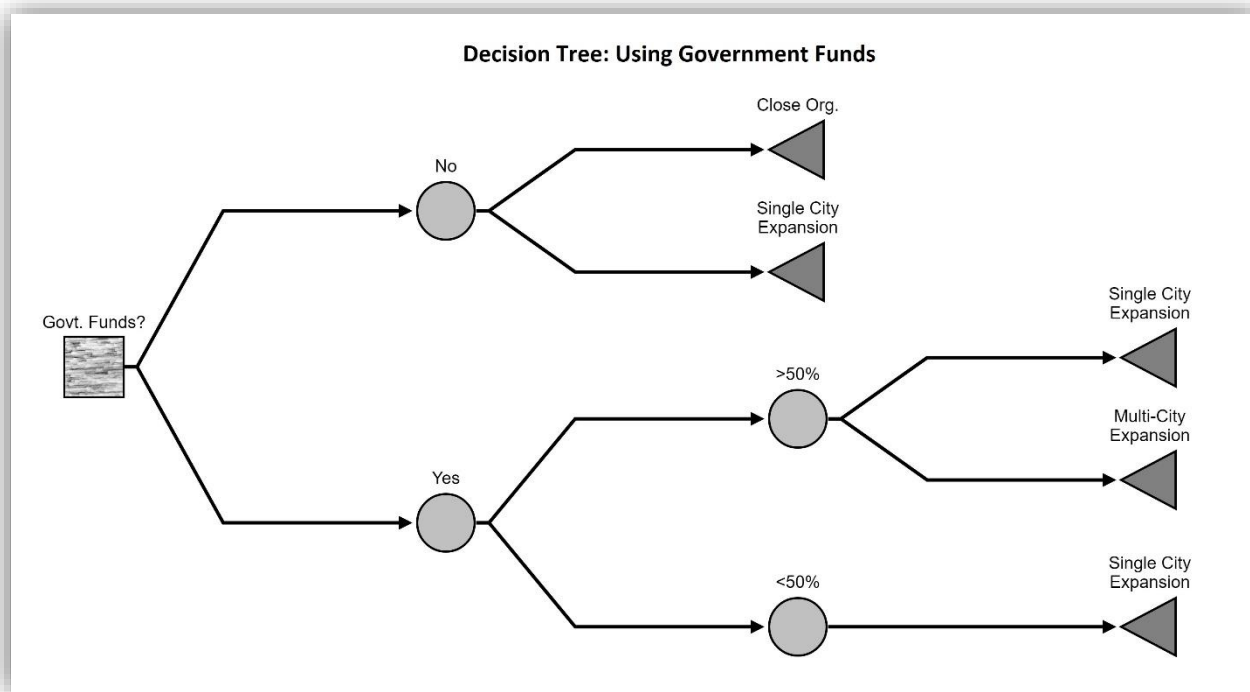


Figure 25: Using Government Funds

To honor the late Robert Van Kemper, I made the above diagram clean and straightforward.<sup>71</sup> Yet, the simple layout conceals underlying complexity. Indeed, the ‘yes’ and ‘no’ branches yield only three possible outcomes: (1) closing an organization, (2) single city expansion, and (3) multi-city expansion. However, survey data reveals that individual founders/directors have a range of experiences with these possibilities. In this section, I will explore how these experiences give insights into their decision-making processes and the resulting outcomes.

Despite the heavy-handed policies of the Chinese state, the decision not to accept government money does not inevitably doom an NGO. After declining government money,

<sup>71</sup> Professor Kemper was a strong proponent of Tufte’s (1983) approach to precise and uncluttered data visualizations. I hope this dissertation lives up to his high standards.

several organizations in my sample managed to expand their operations within the city where they started. Later in this section, I will compare specific case studies of this occurrence with the experiences of NGOs that expand their programs with government funds. To start, however, it is important to note that the ‘no’ branch does yield the possibility of an organization closing down. At the time of field research, all of the organizations in my sample were still in operation. Yet, some informants reported that organizations they had previously founded or directed were forced to shut down after the decision not to accept government money. One case stands out as representative of this experience.

Daisy Li (pseudonym) founded and now directs a program that provides job training and placement for secretaries, most of whom are women. This is the second female-focused organization she has started. Prior to starting her current program, she ran an organization that offered skills training to female factory workers. She had worked in a factory for fifteen years herself and was able to develop a very effective curriculum to help her former co-workers advance to higher-paying jobs within their company. In fact, that company hired her to conduct onsite classes for its employees. Other factories in the area soon hired her to do the same for their employees. Daisy believes that the factories thought her program helped increase worker productivity. So, it was a win-win, because many of the participants in her courses also wound up getting promoted.

Within six years, Daisy was contracted at half a dozen factories to conduct monthly training classes. She had fifteen fulltime employees and at least that many volunteers helping her with logistics, program development, and fund raising. She had two large corporate sponsors and a number of small donors. At that point, her program was sustainable, both financially and in terms of impact. Shortly thereafter, a local government official approached her with an offer of



substantial funds to help her improve and expand the program. In fact, he offered her more money than she was getting from all other funding sources combined. As a stipulation of the money, he would serve as an official advisor to her organization. This requirement made her wary. Based on her experiences, and echoing the problems faced by “legal” organizations in the previous section, she knew that the government often undermined any attempts to organize factory workers. Thus, she politely but firmly declined the offer.

Within a couple months, one of her corporate sponsors unceremoniously ceased its donations. The other soon followed suit. She suspected that this was retribution by the government official, but of course she would never know conclusively. With increased funding from small donors, she was able to maintain a scaled-down version of her program. Yet, within another few months the money ran out, and she had to let go all of her employees and shutter the organization. It was not for another three years that she was able to start her current program.

The Chinese government is often heavy-handed, yet seldom overt in its restrictions of civil society activities. Several other informants had experiences similar to Daisy’s. The government’s handling of unwanted civil society activity seems most analogous to its censoring of online content. When someone types a sensitive term into a Chinese internet search engine, one of two things happens. Either the search halts to a crawl and eventually times out, or clicking on the linked search results causes a similar slowdown and stall. For example, in the Fall of 2017, I typed “June 4”<sup>72</sup> into Baidu, the largest Chinese search engine. This is the date of the infamous Tiananmen massacre, one of the most highly censored incidents on the Chinese internet. To my surprise, this search term returned nearly two million hits. None of the results were related to Tiananmen, but instead referenced supposed events in other years on June 4. I

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<sup>72</sup> 6月4日

clicked every link on the first five pages of search results. In each case, I eventually received an error message.

These types of misdirection and misrepresentation are commonly employed by the Chinese authorities. Akin to sensitive search terms, the government is also suspicious of nongovernmental activities. As I discussed in the previous section, this applies to some NGO programs more than others. However, several of my informants report experiences similar to Daisy's, in which their programs were abruptly undermined after turning down government support, or even disagreeing with unsolicited advice from government officials. This is perhaps the clearest evidence that, in the long run, few NGOs in China are ever truly non-governmental. I will discuss the theoretical implications of the next chapter.

As I hinted above, some NGOs are able to maintain and even expand their programs after refusing government funds. In other words, declining state money is not necessarily the kiss of death. However, the decision tree above makes clear that without government funds, organizations are unable to expand beyond a single city. In fact, the government has instated laws prohibiting civil society organizations from having offices in more than one city. This is in line with its efforts to minimize the influence of the nongovernmental sector, as well as any institutions or collectivity of people becoming too large and influential. This, of course, limits the scope and impact of effective programs. Yet, it also localizes programs, allowing them to tailor their efforts to the needs of specific groups of migrants. This has important implications for the decision making of the founders/directors. Later in this section, I will discuss how the decision to accept government funds affects program expansion.

The government restrictions on expansion have significant effects on strategic planning. Not surprisingly, the founders/directors who decline state money do not spend a lot of time

considering how to expand their programs beyond a single city. In one sense, this is another example of how government intervention suffocates civil society. However, most of my informants take a more glass-half-full view. They are aware of the benefits of expanding to other cities, but they appreciate the ability to focus on their local programs. This is particularly important for creating a sense of community. As I discussed earlier, migrants lack traditional support networks, i.e., family, friends, and neighbors in their hometowns. Thus, some of the most beneficial work of the organizations in my study involves fostering a sense of community among the migrants in a particular neighborhood. In general, they achieve this by offering migrants a safe space to share their frustrations, learn from the experiences of other migrants in their area, and engage in group activities. As we have seen in several case studies in the preceding chapters, sometimes this involves serious issues, for example how to apply for compensation after a workplace injury or how to navigate a discriminatory labor market. Many times, however, it is more about bringing migrants together for communal activities, such as game nights, concerts, and movie screenings. After all, shared leisure time, as much as hardship, is what unites a community.

This is the mission of the Temple of Migrant Workers, an NGO founded by one of my informants, Wu Wei (pseudonym). The organization's name (also a pseudonym) reflects Mr. Wu's belief in the need for migrants to have a refuge from the often-hostile policies of the government and hostile attitudes of society-at-large. In fact, Mr. Wu thinks that the government mistrusts NGOs because they focus too much on the hardships of migrants. The government promotes a narrative that life for migrants is actually pretty good. Such a view is strangely optimistic, and fairly delusional, but goes a long way to underscore what it clearly views as acceptable collateral damage in the process of economic development. The reality, of course, is

that migrants lack access to basic social services, education for their children, and most legal protections. Despite the official rhetoric, these factors have the effect of making migrants feel very unwelcome in their new homes. In fact, Wong and Leung (2008) point to social support as one of the key factors affecting the mental health of migrant workers in China.

Mr. Wu knows this feeling well. Twenty years ago, he came to the city as a migrant worker. He was fortunate to have worked as a mechanic in his hometown. He got a good-paying job in the city. He fixed factory equipment, a skill that was in high enough demand that he received frequent raises. He stresses that he has enjoyed a life far better than most migrants. It is important to note, however, that he and his family still live in the same urban village to which he originally migrated. His humility is admirable. Yet, his standard of living is remarkably lower than the urban middle class. Nonetheless, he has devoted a lot of his time and personal resources to make life better for his fellow migrants.

He saved up his money, and with the help of several small donors, he rented a courtyard near his house. Over several years, he and his friends renovated the buildings to create a sanctuary for people in the neighborhood. The four single-story structures that line the courtyard house a small lending library, a game room, a community kitchen, and a thrift store. He uses money from the sale of donated clothing to fund other activities. At the back of the courtyard is a larger, two-story building that he turned into an auditorium where he holds regular performances free-of-charge. Sometimes there are plays. At holidays there are elaborate performances, for example a dragon dance for the new year. I even saw him give a guitar performance with a trio of him and two of his friends. They were really good!

During my three weeks with Mr. Wu, the center was very well used. During the day, older people used the gaming rooms to play mahjong and talk for hours over tea. In the evenings,

the center bustled with lively conversations, children darting here and there, and plenty of traffic in the thrift store. On the weekends, performances in the auditorium usually played to a full house, even more so during the holidays.

Not surprisingly, Mr. Wu is quite popular in the community. A couple years ago, he was approached by a government official. Unlike the experiences of many other founders/directors in my study, the official did not offer Mr. Wu money for his community center. In fact, the official complimented Mr. Wu's ingenuity and ability to run his organization without government assistance. He offered Mr. Wu enough money and resources to open a second center in another migrant neighborhood on the other side of the city. The official would find another manager to run the current center, so that Mr. Wu could focus on the new center. The plan was to open several of these centers across the city, and eventually expand to other cities. As I discussed in *Chapter 2*, this is in line with the government's practice of using grassroots NGOs to develop effective programs that it then takes over (and takes credit for).

After much deliberation and soul-searching, Mr. Wu declined the offer. He thought a lot about why he had originally started his organization. He realized he had no interest in helping all migrants. He told me, "It's a problem bigger than me."<sup>73</sup> He has formed bonds with the people in his neighborhood. In many respects, they are his adoptive hometown. His organization is merely a vehicle to help them. He stresses that his organization would not exist without them. In this way, he defines his role as a good person in terms of his role within a local community, not on a larger scale. I will discuss the broader implications of this in the next chapter.

Admittedly, less than five percent of the organizations in my sample run programs in more than one city. As the decision tree above indicates, all of these receive greater than fifty

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<sup>73</sup> 比我大问题

percent of their funding from the government. Interestingly, of the organizations that receive greater than half of their funding from the government, more than eighty percent operate in multiple cities. This indicates that the government recognizes the benefits of scaling up effective programs. Thus, it seems likely that more and more GONGOs will begin to operate in multiple cities. It follows that more and more NGOs will relinquish both financial and managerial autonomy to the government. So, how do the founders/directors of such organizations factor into their programs once they are effectively taken over by the government?

The simplest answer is that it is largely up to them. Given the small number of such organizations in my sample, I can only make limited conclusions. Yet, my data suggest some significant factors that influence how the founders/directors make decisions regarding this situation. For all of the founders/directors in my study, their programs are more than simply a job. At one point or another in my interactions with everyone in my sample, I heard them say, “This is my life’s work.”<sup>74</sup> For some, like Mr. Wu, this statement signifies a parent-child relationship. Mr. Wu gave birth to his organization, continues to nurture it, and is unwilling to hand over control simply out of convenience. In many ways, his life has come to be defined by his role in the organization and the ways it situates him within the community. Others, however, prioritize the success of their programs over their roles within them.

Objectively, both of these approaches can result in effective programs. In this type of situation, the temperament and preferences of the founders/directors appear to have the greatest impact. While some founders/directors decide to reject government funding or leave their organizations if they cannot retain control, others remain at their organizations even after the government takes them over. The latter perspective, i.e., prioritizing the program above all else,

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<sup>74</sup> 这是我终身事业。

is less easily analogized than a situation like Mr. Wu's. Are these founders/directors akin to helicopter parents, micromanaging their children even after they go off to college? Are they really just empty-nesters who are struggling to accept that their little babies are all grown up? More accurately, this decision seems rooted in an entrepreneurial spirit, defined not only in terms of founding an organization but also in terms Schumpeter's (1934) notion of entrepreneurs as innovators who respond to needs in society (see also Cohen and Levinthal 1990). This innovation is not a one-time action but an ongoing process of improving societal problems. The impact of such motivations on decision-making is well exemplified by the case of Du Xin (pseudonym).

Mr. Du (pun intended) was, like many founders/directors, a migrant himself. In his early twenties, his favorite band went to university in Beijing. On a whim, he decided to move hundreds of miles from his hometown to be closer to them. He got a job washing dishes at the cafeteria and was able to go to all their concerts. His impulsiveness was well-tempered by an innate desire to improve himself. These character traits have defined much his professional life. He soon learned about the adult *gaokao* and decided to take it. The *gaokao* is a college entrance exam taken by high school students. The adult version is somewhat less rigorous, but still enables people with a passing score to attend university.<sup>75</sup>

He passed the test and was accepted into a computer engineering program at another university in the city. After graduation, he secured a good job in the tech industry. Within a few years, he became a VP. After a successful career, he wanted to help other migrants do what he

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<sup>75</sup> Mr. Du thinks that the assumption of the adult test is that life experience can compensate for lower academic aptitude. As usual, it is impossible to know the exact thinking of the Chinese officials who administer the test, but Mr. Du's theory seems reasonable.

had done. So, he started a program to get university students to volunteer to teach migrants prep courses for the adult *gaokao*. In fact, one of the members of his favorite band became a major donor to the program, and even attended events to talk with migrants.

Mr. Du estimates that more than ninety percent of the migrants in his program passed the adult *gaokao*. This enabled them to receive professional training and get significantly better jobs than they could before attending his program. Not surprisingly, after a few years, the government offered to take over his program. Without hesitation, he accepted their offer. He remained on as an advisor and helped them expand the program to several other eastern cities. Though he dislikes the inefficiency of government bureaucracy, he acknowledges that state funding has allowed his program to help far more migrants than he could on his own. Moreover, he has come to realize that his time and effort can be better spent on establishing new programs. It is here that his entrepreneurial spirit shines through.

In the course of running the adult *gaokao* program, his thinking on the migrant situation evolved. He has come to understand that the root of the problem is not finding migrants better jobs in the city, but rather giving them ways to make money in their hometowns so they can avoid coming to the cities in the first place. In this vein, he started an online marketplace to help local farmers sell their products.<sup>76</sup> Unlike the experiences of the organization I discussed in *Chapter 3*, Mr. Du has found that Chinese consumers care that they are helping local farmers, and he advertises this by telling the stories behind each of the products he sells online. He buys direct from farmers, paying them on average eighty percent of the final retail price. He uses the

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<sup>76</sup> He gave me permission to publish a link to his website, but to protect his identity I have opted not to. Anyone interested in checking out his online store, can email me directly at: [ijdorfman\(at\)protonmail.com](mailto:ijdorfman(at)protonmail.com)



net profit to maintain the online store and subsidize shipping costs. He has also raised significant funding from venture capital<sup>77</sup> and has plans to expand his program to several more provinces.

He has already received support from local governments and expects to hear from national officials in the next few years. After all, his program is right in line with their goals of keeping people in the inner provinces. This is the type of thinking China needs. If the central government is going to disincentivize migrants to stay in the cities, then it needs to instate more programs that give them money-making opportunities in their native provinces. It will be interesting to follow up in a few years to see where this program has progressed, whether the government has continued to support it (if not take it over), and how Mr. Du's thinking about the migrant problem has evolved.

Despite the theoretical implications of an NGO accepting government money, my data suggest that in China this is not an inherently bad decision. Just as in China, NGOs in other authoritarian countries, such as Kenya, become integrated into the system of governance (Brass 2012). In this way, they are serving the core purpose of civil society, namely to mediate between government priorities and the needs of society at large. In the end, the limiting factor in the effectiveness of accomplishing this goal comes down the decision-making of the founder/director and his or her skill in negotiating between often competing interests. Naturally, asymmetrical information and political headwinds factor heavily. Yet, even in such a top-heavy political and economic environment such as China's, the decisions made by individuals remain central to civil society organizations.

In the end, the decisions of the founders/directors in my sample boil down to an issue of scale. They can only expand their programs beyond a single city if they accept government

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<sup>77</sup> 风险投资

support. For some, this is an acceptable compromise. The increased impact of scaling up outweighs the loss of autonomy. For others, the government is the primary cause of migrant issues in China. As one informant stated, “I’m fixing the problems that the government created.”<sup>78</sup> State interference is not reconcilable with the effectiveness of their programs. Thus, they sacrifice scale for the purity of a local impact.

Across contexts, scalability is one of the biggest challenges for NGOs. Many nongovernmental programs become less effective because of issues with replicability, i.e., the effectiveness with which an organization can reproduce the programs that it initiates (Bloom and Smith 2010, 134). In fact, Weber, Kroeger, and Lambrich (2014, 115) note that effectively replicating an NGO program is rare because local knowledge is not readily transferable to a new location, even within the same country.

This speaks to the wisdom of the informants in my sample who shirk scalability that piggybacks on government interference. Political headwinds often hobble NGO programs. An unfortunate example of this is that due to a recent wave of populism in the United States, the government has drastically cut support for NGOs that run environmental programs (see Tabuchi 2017). This effect is even more pronounced in authoritarian systems. For example, in Jordan the monarchy prioritizes regime survival even in the midst of an economic crisis, a situation that NGOs are uniquely situated to ameliorate (Wiktorowicz 2002).

Much like Jordan, the Chinese state seeks to control its nongovernmental sector through repression and oversight. However, as my informants reveal, even in the most repressive political systems, the founders/directors of NGOs are ultimately responsible for defining the effectiveness

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<sup>78</sup> 我在解决政府产生的问题。

of their programs. For everyone in my sample, this definition is exclusively about improving migrants' lives. Regardless of whether they accept government money, none of them appear to be compromising on their own interpretations of this prime directive. The personal motivations of the founders/directors of NGOs is largely absent from existing anthropological literature. As discussed in *Chapter 1*, it tends to prize considerations of state malfeasance over the ways individuals exert their own agency to correct government wrongdoings. In the next chapter, I explore how, in sum, my dataset contributes to alleviating this knowledge gap.

## CHAPTER 7: DATASET CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I explore how my dataset contributes to empirical generalizations, i.e., what Lund (2014, 226) defines as claiming that localized events are valid for a larger context. Toward this end, I discuss how my dataset provides answers to my core research questions: What obstacles have the founders/directors encountered, and what are their successes and failures in dealing with these? What motivates them and how does their decision-making reflect their perceptions of what it means to be a good citizen and a good person in twenty-first century China? How do migrant issues ripple through the rest of society? What do the perspectives and experiences of the founders/directors reveal about state-society relations in the Chinese development model? Finally, what progress do the founders/directors see, and what societal and political changes do they view as necessary for lasting change to occur? In the concluding section, I discuss the limitations of my dataset and propose future research to answers questions for which this study did not provide satisfactory evidence.

### **Failing Forward**

Peters' (1991, 261) notion of "failing forward" informs my assessment of how the founders/directors have dealt with obstacles faced by their organizations. However, the realities of Chinese civil society complicate this process of learning from past challenges and failures. I hypothesized that government interference is one of the main obstacles faced by Chinese NGOs. My data suggest that this is not so clear cut. The vital question becomes: What is the end goal of a migrant-focused NGO?

I posed this question to all the founders/directors in my sample. The unanimous response was some version of “to improve migrants’ lives”. Yet, this straightforward answer conceals a lot of room for interpretation. The variations in meaning are largely a function of how the founders/directors view their own roles. For some, developing their vision is secondary to the eventual impact of their programs. For people in this category, government support is not only a means to this end but is often built into their strategies from the start. One informant who eventually accepted government money bluntly stated, “I was just waiting for them [government officials] to notice me.”<sup>79</sup>

My data suggest that accepting government money tends to help NGO programs expand, either within a single city or into multiple cities. The founders/directors who reject offers of government assistance tend to do so not based on a lack of necessity but rather on philosophical grounds. This ideological resolve may resonate with outside observers. Yet, does it actually help the founders/directors realize the stated purpose of their programs, namely to improve migrants’ lives?

Again, experiences vary. Some founders/directors create sustainable, impactful programs without government support. While their organizations are limited in scope, they have deep impacts on local communities. Other founders/directors want to expand their programs to improve as many migrants’ lives as possible. My data, in support of previous studies, suggests that in China this requires government support. Based on my research, I would advise any NGO in China to consider government intervention in terms of benefits to their mission statement and not philosophical opposition.

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<sup>79</sup> 我在等着他们注意到我。

It is well beyond the data from this research to wade into a debate on human nature and innate philanthropy. Yet, as I have discussed throughout this dissertation, nearly every person I interviewed during the course of fieldwork mentioned strong philosophical motivations undergirding their charitable work. The frequency of these deep conversations speaks to their sincerity. It also seems safe to say that a well-defined personal philosophy is necessary, yet not sufficient for founding and directing an impactful NGO program. Such an endeavor requires many of the same accounting, strategy, and marketing tactics involved with running any business. These are made all the more challenging for the nongovernmental sector in China which is undoubtedly more regulated than the business sector.

The fact is that NGOs rarely succeed without incorporating strong business strategies into their philosophical motivations. Like it or not, NGOs in China cannot fully take advantage of such strategies without government support. Most of the founders/directors in my sample expressed concern about how government intervention would change (and worsen) their programs. However, my research suggests that, beyond philosophical principles, these fears are neither straightforward nor entirely founded.

This stems from the government's paradoxical approach to migrants. Outwardly, the state seeks to minimize the hardships faced by migrant workers. Many of the policies that result from this stance are cruel, for example bulldozing migrant neighborhoods or preventing migrants' children from attending school. Conversely, the state seems fixated on the migrants as a potential (and actual) cause of widespread civil unrest. It is desperate for solutions that do not contradict the former and minimize the latter. It is thus no surprise that the government supports an NGO like Mr. Du's adult *gaokao* initiative (discussed in the previous chapter). This type of program shows that migrants can have real opportunities for upward mobility.

I am not suggesting that the founders/directors should abandon their principles. Moral outrage from civil society is likely one of the main factors motivating government interest in helping migrants. Yet, the Chinese state is unlikely to relinquish control of such a major social issue. As discussed in *Chapter 2*, historical precedent suggests that the government will continue to exert enormous influence over the narrative and policies regarding migrant workers. Given the increasingly strict governance of the nongovernmental sector, NGOs in China that want to honor their mission statements must, like trees in a storm, bend but not break to the state's will.<sup>80</sup> This is a practical matter of institutional survival. NGOs must increasingly find balance between their moral foundations and the reality of what the government will tolerate. This appears to be the most likely path to improving migrant's lives.

### **More than Morality**

Both Aristotle and Kant argue that the moral value of an action is a function of the way in which it is chosen (discussed by Korsgaard 2014). Why people are doing things often tells us as much about who they are as what they are doing. For this reason, I studied decision-making to understand what if any moral values motivate the founders/directors. In general, they are all defining what it means to be a good person and a good citizen in terms of helping migrants. Most attribute their motivations to Confucian ideals or other philosophical traditions that promote service to the community. One informant cited Gandhi as her inspiration for wanting to improve society. Several others were inspired by Muhammad Yunus, who won the Nobel Peace Prize for developing micro-lending which has economically empowered poor populations who were ignored or discriminated against by traditional banks. This supports Kleinman's (2007, 3) notion

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<sup>80</sup> I have heard this sentiment expressed in a variety of different ways. One of the most common is: 树欲静而风不止。 This translates literally as: "The trees long for peace, but the wind will never cease."

that people who seek a moral life take action when something in their local moral environment seems wrong.

This appears to be true for the founders/directors in my sample. It goes a long way to support Payton and Moody's (2008, 96) assertion that philanthropic work is one of the primary ways by which people manifest their moral imaginations. Yet, such grandiose statements do not accurately reflect the underpinnings of day-to-day decision-making for the founders/directors in my sample. In fact, most of them only mention their moral outlook when I ask them specific questions about it. Kleinman (2007, 26) notes that moral decisions are not a result of prolonged self-reflection or adherence to a universal moral code, but more typically a response to pressing local circumstances. Of the existing literature, this comes closest to explaining the initial decision to start an NGO for the people in my sample. Yet, even it skims the surface of the root decision-criteria, namely the connections of the founders/directors to specific individuals and groups of people.

Either in word or action, no one in my sample thinks they can help every migrant worker in China. Some accept money from the government and expand their programs to more than one neighborhood. Yet, most operate in a single community, serving the needs of people to whom they make or already have strong personal connections. In a sense, this is a form of moral favoritism. However, it also speaks to the localization of good deeds. More than anything, though, it moderates recent claims that Chinese society is undergoing a fundamental shift, driven as much by moral change as by government policies and programs (e.g. Kleinman 2011, 25).

Supporting Rolandsen (2008), my research found that the people in China who are highly committed to helping others exist on the fringes of society. Unlike Rolandsen's research population, mine are not simply part-time volunteers. The founders/directors in my sample have



committed to full-time endeavors. Measured by level of commitment, they represent the upper echelon of moral action in their society. Yet, even accounting for everyone in China who makes any level of commitment to helping people outside of their normal social networks, including volunteer work or making small charitable donations, we still wind up with a minuscule proportion of the overall population. Thus, it is difficult to argue that Chinese society is undergoing a fundamental shift in morality.

I admire the optimism of Kleinman and his colleagues. Yet, they seem to have conflated localized and isolated behavior with widespread phenomena. For example, the uptick in charitable donations and volunteerism following the 2008 earthquake has been inconsistent at best over the past decade. It is typically correlated more with viral social media content than broad interest in social issues. Furthermore, while there are more and more NGOs in China, there are also increasingly skeptical societal attitudes toward their operations and allocation of funds. Of course, NGOs do not represent the only moral outlet for civil society. Yet, Payton and Moody (2008) definitely have a point about their preeminence in this role.

Thus, the question becomes: What exactly does the behavior of the founders/directors in my study represent? In the next chapter, I explore the broader impacts of my research, answering Lund's (2014) all important question: Of what is this a case?

### **The Promise of Progress**

The founders/directors in my sample face mundane obstacles, common for running any business or organization. These include managing revenue streams, addressing staffing issues, reassuring investors and donors, and dealing with public relations. Navigating each of these is complicated by strict government oversight. I have discussed this in detail in the previous

chapters. Yet, the stresses on the founders/directors extend beyond the workplace. Their career choices are at odds with prevailing societal norms regarding professional and financial success.

Aside from the attorneys in my sample, none of the founders/directors have much personal wealth (self-reported). They live humbly, take public transportation, and lack many of the material trappings common among the urban middle class. Most of my informants report being regularly asked some version of the question, “Why don’t you want to make more money?”<sup>81</sup> Such judgmental inquiries come from family, friends, and sometimes even the migrants themselves. After all, the migrants aspire to the education level and personal connections enjoyed by most of the founders/directors. They could likely have much higher paying jobs and still have time to help migrant workers, a fact several informants pointed out themselves.

Yet, the progress needed to improve migrants’ lives requires a full-time commitment. None of my informants actually said this, but it is clear from observing and participating in the daily operations of their organizations. As I have discussed throughout this dissertation, migrants’ circumstances are quite precarious. At any time of day (or night), they can face crises which threaten to throw their lives into turmoil. One morning, for example, I awoke to a long string of text messages from the founder of the organization at which I was currently conducting participant observation. They began at just after two o’clock in the morning and ended around six. He was keeping me up to speed on a crisis facing one of the migrants that frequented the community center he had started. She was a worker at a factory on the other side of the city. After a long day of overtime, she got into an argument with her manager. At around ten o’clock in the evening, he fired her. She was told to pack her things and vacate the room she shared with

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<sup>81</sup> A common phrasing: 我不想挣更多的钱了

four other workers on the factory campus. Having nowhere else to turn, she contacted the founder.

By that point, public transportation in the city had ceased service until morning. Using a ride sharing app, the founder had a driver pick up the woman in front of her factory and bring her to his home. His wife cooked her a hot meal and they made her a bed on the floor of the living room in their small house. After interviewing the founder later that day, I realized that by eight o'clock in the morning, when I was caught up on the situation, he had already found her a shared room with several other migrants in the area. Within a week, he was able to tap a connection at a nearby factory to secure her another job without needing a reference from her previous manager.

This incident made it abundantly clear that my commitment to migrant issues is nothing compared with the devotion of the founders/directors in my sample. They not only believe that their work is helping but, more importantly, that the migrant situation must be improved. All of them are proud to be Chinese and admire the progress China has made in the past forty years. Yet, they are unanimously ashamed of the migrant situation and believe that without improving it China can never truly be proud of its accomplishments. I do not have a direct quotation to represent this sentiment, but countless examples like the case above speak far louder than words.

Durkheim (2005) would frame this in terms of the divided self, whereby there is an ongoing conflict between self-interest and the duty to serve others. He claims that “there is no moral act that does not imply a sacrifice” (Durkheim 2005, 37). Echoing Kant, he goes on to argue that this sacrifice inevitably humiliates individuals, even if they, like the founders/directors, accept it with enthusiasm. However, this perspective removes agency from the process of helping others. None of my informants view their work as a sacrifice. I found no evidence of them being humiliated, even by insulting questions. They view their work as

necessary and make their decisions accordingly. Their work has value for them (and certainly for Chinese society) because of the promise of progress.

This does not adhere to materialistic measures of success, which have come to permeate Chinese society. It represents an interesting incarnation of Deng Xiaoping's famous proclamation: Some who could (but chose not to) get rich are beginning to help those who cannot.<sup>82</sup> This is clearly not the widespread phenomenon that other researchers have prematurely heralded. It signifies that China, like all countries, can give birth to certain people who commit to taking action on their moral outrage. This goes beyond the casual interest in social issues from which other researchers extrapolate larger trends.

In the modern era, China has yet to produce figures such as Gandhi and Muhammad Yunus, both of whom took action on their outrage to bring about lasting change. This is likely due to the strongarm tendencies of the government. In a variety of ways, the Chinese state is even more paternalistic than the British Empire was in India. Anyone who begins to exert significant influence over social issues, for example the Dali Lama or Ai Weiwei, are summarily persecuted.<sup>83</sup> Thus, while they may be inspirational, they are not particularly effective in bringing about lasting social change.

China's development model has diverged in significant ways from the development process in Western countries. Notably, capitalism has not coincided with democracy. Thus, it is unwise to assume that public concern for social issues will take on the democratic qualities of

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<sup>82</sup> As I discussed in *Chapter 2*, the original statement was: 一部分先富起来 (“Some must get rich first”).

<sup>83</sup> As the spiritual leader of Tibet, a region China views as its own, the Dali Lama has been forced into exile in India. Ai Weiwei was once an architect coveted by the government. He was even commissioned to design buildings for the Beijing Olympics. After criticizing the government's record on human rights and disaster management, he was jailed and eventually forced into exile in Germany.

civil discourse and collective action that it has in the West. For this reason, the founders/directors in my study do not embody a society-wide shift in morality. Rather they represent what I call a “promise of progress”. The impacts of their programs are not far-reaching. They do not receive widespread support, either from the government or society at large. Yet, their commitment each and every day sets an example of how to solve social issues that affect at least a quarter of China’s population. They have learned to work within and quietly subvert the official mechanisms that continue to disenfranchise their fellow Chinese citizens.

The long-term impacts of this grassroots movement will determine what (if any) societal shift comes next in China. In the following section, I propose a strategy to gather evidence on these impacts and to answer unanticipated questions that came up in the course of fieldwork.

### **Future Directions**

I gathered a lot of data during fieldwork. I wound up with more than fifty typed, single-spaced pages of notes on my observations alone. I also produced hundreds of pages from interviews and data I collected from my other methods. As detailed in the preceding chapters, analyzing these data have provided a broad perspective on the experiences and decision-making of the founders/directors of migrant-focused NGOs in China. In turn, this analysis suggests that recent trends in Chinese society may not be as clear cut as previously thought.

Despite the breadth and depth of my dataset, the analysis for this research would benefit from two categories of additional data. Both are related to understanding how the founders/directors help migrants create new economic relationships. First, I would like to collect data on the social networks of migrants, with a focus on the economic components of their connections. Second, I would like to conduct a five-year restudy to assess what (if any) impacts the NGO programs have on migrants’ lives.

The focus of this dissertation is on the founders/directors themselves. For this reason, most of the data I gathered was on their experiences and perspectives. Other than a brief survey and informal conversations, I relied on the extensive body of previous research to frame the migrant situation in China. However, analyzing my data made clear that existing research does not adequately (or at all) explain how the migrant situation is changing. Previous studies thoroughly detail the hardships faced by migrants, but largely create a static snapshot of these circumstances.

To remedy this knowledge gap, first I would construct egocentric social networks for a sample of migrants from both of my field sites. I would stratify this sample to represent migrants from provinces that neighbor the cities, who are likely native speakers of standard mandarin, and those from more distant provinces, who are more likely to be native speakers of local dialects with standard Mandarin as a second language. This sampling choice derives from Dong (2011) who points to language barriers as a significant factor affecting the experiences of migrant workers in Chinese cities. I would also use quota sampling to include representative numbers of men and women. Within each of these gender categories, I would seek to include migrants who have worked in the cities less than five years and more than five years. Based on the research for this dissertation, the method described above would produce a sample representative of the range of migrant demographics and experiences.

In order to operationalize potentially new economic relationships created by NGO programs, I would use structured interviews to gather data from each informant in my sample on (1) their relatedness to individuals they interact with over a four-day period (three weekdays and one weekend day), (2) the multiplexity of these relationships, i.e., whether they have more than one type of relationship with each person (e.g., coworkers, neighbors, or the founders/directors

of NGOs), (3) what is being exchanged in each interaction (e.g., money, a service, or information), and (4) any demographic information the informant knows about individuals in his or her network.

I would analyze these relational data to create *sociomatrices* which give insights into the nature of connections within the egocentric networks (Wasserman and Faust 1994, 77). I would pay particular attention to the homophily in the networks, that is the extent to which individuals form ties with people similar to themselves (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001). I would define “similarity” in terms of gender, legal residency (either urban or rural), and socioeconomic level, as well as culturally specific categories of relatedness (e.g., native village or university classmates).

I would also seek to understand how the founders/directors of NGOs are situated in the migrant networks within structural holes, i.e., the absence of ties between two parts of a network. Are they able to function like Granovetter’s (1977) “weak ties” as a means of connecting otherwise separate parts of a network? Such a circumstance is exemplified by the case of the founder who secured a new job for the migrant woman without the need for a reference from her former employer (discussed earlier in this chapter). Avenarius (2003) stresses the importance of such connections for migrants seeking employment outside of homogenous social networks. Applying this metric to migrant networks will offer insights into how their connections to the founders/directors of NGOs create and redefine economic relationships.

The research for this dissertation already supplies evidence that these relationships exist and gives insights into their nature. The social network analysis proposed above would strengthen (and likely complicate) their structures and influence on migrants’ lives. Toward this end, I would also like to conduct a follow-up impact assessment in five years. It would be

particularly interesting to see how the nongovernmental landscape changes over this period. Which of the founders/directors in my sample still run their original organizations? Have the number of organizations increased? Is there a difference in the relative change in number between my two field sites?

I would of course like to restudy the informants in my original sample. I would re-administer the survey I used in this study and conduct follow-up interviews to understand how their perspectives and experiences have changed (or remained the same). Yet, I would also like to answer the questions above more from the migrants' perspective than I did in this dissertation. I would use the brief migrant survey I employed for this study as a baseline but dive deeper into the interconnectedness between the circumstances migrants experience in their communities and the programs offered by NGOs.

Due to neighborhood stigmatization, a strong relationship often exists between living in an impoverished neighborhood and having poor access to social services (e.g., Airey 2003, Davidson, Mitchell, and Hunt 2008, Kelaher et al. 2010). This is particularly significant for migrants in China who face not only the stress of adapting to new living and working conditions, but also tenuous legal status. Thus, to understand the migrants' perspective on the availability of social services in their neighborhood and their perceived benefits (as compared to how the founders/directors perceive the situation), I would create a Chinese language neighborhood stigma survey, combining elements from the research instrument employed by Wutich et al. (2014) as well as the World Bank (2011) social capital assessment tool (SOCAT). Combined with the data from this dissertation, the network analysis and impact assessment described above would create a more comprehensive perspective on the interrelatedness of migrant issues and Chinese society at large.



## CHAPTER 8: BROADER IMPACTS

In this chapter, I delve into analytical generalizations. Lund (2014, 226) defines these as the “identification of fundamental or constituent properties in an event or phenomenon.” While I do not assume external validity, this form of abstraction situates the results of my research within ongoing theoretical debates about the role of the state in shaping civil society. China represents a case of this occurring in an alternative to the Western model of economic development, one of capitalism in the absence of democracy.

### **Associational Life**

The NGOs in my study operate at the intersection of changing state-society relations. The ways their founders/directors make decisions reflect the interaction of government priorities with societal needs. As discussed in the *Introduction*, existing literature positions this nongovernmental activity within considerations of the state’s role in shaping the organizational structures of NGOs as well as the goals of their programs (notably, Cheng, Ngok, and Zhuang 2010, Hsu, Hsu, and Hasmath 2017, Lu 2009, Yu 2011).

Absent from this framework are the ways that the founders/directors create “associational life” for both themselves and the migrants they serve. Previous studies highlight the benefits for migrants of being part of non-state associations, particularly in terms of insulating such vulnerable and politically underrepresented populations from malicious government policies (e.g., Darkwah and Mavis 2017). This is part of the shared experience of migrant communities worldwide.

As discussed in the previous chapter, this study did not produce data to evaluate the effectiveness of NGO programs. Several of the case studies make clear that the founders/directors appear to have the migrants' best interests in mind. Yet, given the government's prioritizing of business interests over the problems faced by migrants, the tangible gains made by NGO programs are likely minimal. For example, despite legal aid to seek compensation for workplace injuries, I did not find any examples of the migrants receiving significant payouts from their companies. As noted in *Chapter 1*, such limits on nongovernmental programs are particularly pronounced in state-dominated societies such as China's.

The other universal characteristic of migrant workers is that they leave their homes in pursuit of economic opportunities. Thus, they lack the sense of community inherent in their place of origin. This is the problem for which NGO programs are perhaps most effective. The case studies discussed throughout this dissertation make clear that NGOs create symbolic and often physical homes for the migrants. They often serve this purpose for the founders/directors as well, who were typically migrant workers themselves. Despite being relatively better off in comparison to other migrants, the founders/directors frequently report continued feelings of being outsiders in the cities. This is exemplified by the founder of Women Work, who describes being very unsettled seeing the poor treatment of domestic workers at social functions (discussed in *Chapter 5*).

In this way, my research supports existing literature on the ways migrants' associational lives improve their access to social capital (e.g., Morales and Giugni 2011), employment opportunities (e.g., Beall 2014), and a sense of community (e.g., Moya 2005). Much of this same literature also points to political integration as an additional benefit of being associated with

migrant-focused organizations. This appears to be true in democratic societies, such as Switzerland (Eggert and Giugni 2010) and Sweden (Myrberg 2011). Yet, in non-democratic societies, such as Nigeria (Meagher 2010), being associated with non-state organizations often ensnares migrants in a web of double discrimination. Their vulnerability as migrant workers is compounded by the government's mistrust of NGOs. This is of course also true in China. Several case studies in this dissertation illustrate that NGO involvement in labor disputes often draws the ire of local governments, and can even lead to violent conflict.

Despite differing perspectives, the consensus of existing literature seems to be that the benefits of associational life for migrants is highly contextual. Yet, regardless of context, there are typically benefits for migrants. As my research shows, there are also benefits for the founders/directors in terms of their identities as former migrants, as well as providing them with an outlet for their moral outlook. One of the main deficiencies of previous studies is that they present non-state associations as self-realized entities. The benefits (or lack thereof) for migrants emanate from the institutional level. These studies attribute agency to the associations themselves, using phrasing such as “the organizations provide” or “NGOs struggle with”. My research, however, points to the centrality of individual decision-making in the formation and maintenance of associational life.

Empirical evidence from this dissertation suggests that I am not simply engaging in semantic nitpicking. The organizations in my study are vehicles for social change. Their programs, however, are driven by the founders/directors. It stands to reason that this is true for all NGOs across contexts. Yet, this self-evident reality is rarely mentioned in the literature. The significance of this becomes most apparent in light of the above discussion about the actual benefits of NGO programs for migrants. These only tangentially have to do with measurable

improvements to employment situations and legal status, particularly in nondemocratic systems. The most direct benefit involves an improved sense of community.

In a practical sense, the founders/directors make decisions to create and sustain “communities of practice”. I do not use this term in the sense of a group of professionals engaging in situated learning (see Wenger 1999), even as it pertains to NGO professionals (Hasmath and Hsu 2016). More than anything, the founders/directors in my sample build spaces for sharing the knowledge they gained as migrants themselves, dealing with many of the same problems faced by the migrants they now seek to help. This is not general knowledge. It is specific to each individual founder/director. I did not gather data to assess the effectiveness of individual programs. Yet, it stands to reason that any measurable success is a direct function of the value of knowledge imparted, i.e., how well it can be applied to the specific problems facing the current cohort of migrant workers.

Naturally, the value of knowledge does not remain static. As government policies change and economic circumstances evolve, the applicability of experiential knowledge is likely to fluctuate. Yet, regardless of outcomes, the efforts of the founders/directors to share their knowledge have enormous value in and of themselves. In China’s cities, migrant workers experience daily microaggressions from their employers and society-at-large, not to mention the structural violence they face from hostile government policies. These are common experiences for migrants worldwide. More than knowledge, the founders/directors in my sample offer a sympathetic ear and a safe space for migrants to relax and regroup. Given the hostility of their environments, having access to such a refuge is perhaps of the greatest value. The founder of

*Women Work* reiterates the importance of this for migrant workers: “I wish there had been someone to do this for me.”<sup>84</sup>

It seems safe to assume that the founders/directors of migrant-focused NGOs across contexts provide similar non-tangible benefits. Much like their Chinese counterparts, their organizations are likely imbued with their own experiences and personalities. Thus, the literature on migrants’ associational life would benefit greatly from more considerations of the individuals at the heart of non-state associations. As the Chinese case makes clear, migrants are not simply a disenfranchised population in need of outside assistance. At least some of them, like the founders/directors in my sample, employ their own success to take ownership of problems faced by the larger group. In the following section, I discuss the implications of this for societal changes in twenty-first century China.

### **The Ends of Individualism**

Beyond cross-contextual comparisons, my research most strongly contributes to the literature on changing state-society relations in China. As I discussed in *Chapter 2*, scholars across disciplines agree that in the new millennium the Chinese state has significantly reduced the social safety net. This continues a trend originating from the onset of Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms. He ended the Mao-era policy of “the iron rice bowl”<sup>85</sup>, a system under which millions of people were given guaranteed lifetime employment at state-owned enterprises. Deng all but removed communist ideology from economic policy-making, arguing that socialism should not equate to shared poverty and that there is gloriousness in getting rich.<sup>86</sup> His policies encouraged private enterprise and personal wealth accumulation. This new economic

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<sup>84</sup> 我希望有人为我做这个事情。

<sup>85</sup> 铁饭碗

<sup>86</sup> This is what Deng referred to as “socialism with Chinese characteristics”: 中国特色社会主义

environment promoted individual initiative, and naturally led to a dramatic increase in the standard of living for millions of Chinese citizens.<sup>87</sup>

Due to the state's reduced role in ensuring economic outcomes, individualism has come to permeate many aspects of twenty-first century Chinese society. On this point, most China scholars are in agreement. Where they diverge is on the consequences of this individualism. On the one hand, there appears to be pervasive self-interest – a “me first” mentality – that prizes personal gain over benefits to society-at-large. This is of course a common critique of capitalism. Lazzarato (2009, 129) argues that “the proliferation of profit is motivated by selfish impulses, so that there is no space in the totalizing space of the market for...the invention of unique collectivities” (see also Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, 175, Hilgers 2010, 354).

Adam Smith (1976, 7) conceived of the butcher, the brewer, and the baker all working in their own self-interest to put food on the rest of our dinner tables. In this holy grail of capitalist production, society benefits from individual selfish acts. However, as Smith himself notes, it is not out of benevolence that these business people provide us with sustenance; they are motivated by profit. This is a weak guarantee that the food they produce is either healthy or safe to consume.

In 2008, the Chinese experienced this in the worst possible way. In order to increase the perceived protein content of infant formula, more than twenty companies in China diluted their products with melamine, an industrial chemical typically used as a fire retardant in plastics. This resulted in more than fifty thousand hospitalizations, and several babies died from complications (e.g., Branigan 2008).

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<sup>87</sup> In the next chapter, I discuss the billion Chinese citizens who have not shared equally in this prosperity.

This kind of cost-cutting measure clearly does not benefit society-at-large. It is unfortunately common around the world. For example, in the 1980s a U.S. company produced apple juice for children that contained no apples (e.g., Buder 1987). In the long term, these deceptions rarely benefit the companies. In the wake of revelations of their malfeasance, both the Chinese and American companies faced enormous public and political backlash. This serves as a stark reminder of the potential costs of an unchecked profit-motive.

As in all capitalist systems, heightened individualism naturally leads to varying degrees of selfishness. This is less of a moral judgement than a reality of people needing to fend for themselves. Ma and Adams (2014) posit that in China this effect is particularly pronounced due to the scarcity of nearly every resource. More than a billion people in China must compete not only for food and social services, but also for housing, university enrollment, employment, and even license plates.<sup>88</sup> Given such limited resources and such a rapidly growing middle class, it comes as little surprise that competition is fierce. People even go to such lengths as using fake fingerprints to cheat on the *gaokao*, China's college entrance exam (e.g., Campbell 2016).

In this socioeconomic environment, a person's value is largely determined by material possessions and individual accomplishments. The Chinese use the word *suzhi* to refer to a person's quality.<sup>89</sup> This term has increasingly entered into popular discourse in the twenty-first century. Hsu (2007, 189) asserts that the prevalence of this conceptualization implies a prevailing societal view that a person's overall quality can be determined by superficial

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<sup>88</sup> In China's largest cities, there are now lotteries for license plates. In Beijing, for example, there is an estimated one-in-725 chance of getting a license plate in any given lottery (Guo 2016).

<sup>89</sup> 素质

characteristics such as dress, speech, and educational and professional credentials. Kipnis (2006) directly attributes the pervasive use of *suzhi* to increased competition for limited resources.

As with the generalized selfishness discussed above, it is understandable that people come to value the traits required to succeed in the market economy. Yet, as Jankowiak (2004) points out, increased individualism also leads to increased individual responsibility, not only for oneself but also for others. Kleinman et al. (2011) supply ample evidence for this in China in terms of increased volunteerism and expanded awareness for the plights of others (see also Rolandsen 2008, Yan 2009). I discussed this in detail in *Chapter 2*.

It becomes clear that twenty-first century China is shaped by varying manifestations of individualism, ranging from opportunism to altruism. Thus, the founders/directors of migrant-focused NGOs represent a convergence of the individualism and market economics that have come to define Chinese society. Indeed, they imbue deep empathy into their work. Yet, their decision-making is also significantly influenced by political and economic realities. They are entrepreneurs, competing for the same limited financial resources as so many others.

Typically, the founders/directors of NGOs are not as unscrupulous as people in the private sector. Yet, such a characterization is also highly subjective. Both the Chinese government and public remain skeptical of nongovernmental programs. Thus, from their perspectives, the motivations of the nongovernmental sector can appear as self-serving as even the most illicit private sector activities, for example the burgeoning underground license plate counterfeiting industry (again see Guo 2016). This comparison is perhaps more precise than it first appears. Much like quotas for license plates, the government seeks to limit the number of migrants in cities. Much like the counterfeiters, the founders/directors in my sample find ways around official policy to respond to societal demands – in their case, the needs of migrants.



From an anthropological perspective, this is a highly flawed comparison. Relative to the counterfeiters, the moral value of migrant-focused NGO programs is irrefutable. Yet, in some cases, middle class Chinese will even get married for the purpose of securing a license plate (e.g., Carlson 2017). It seems safe to assume that, from their perspective, the counterfeiters are bringing a lot more value to society than the founders/directors of NGOs whose motivations remain opaque and removed from common experience.

This dissertation reveals a variety of shared motivations among the founders/directors. These include influential past experiences, being a migrant themselves, and a generalized dissatisfaction with the status quo, particularly in local settings. As mentioned in *Chapter 3*, my single biggest bias is that I admire my research participants. I think their work is impactful and much needed in China. Yet, my subjectivity is largely inconsequential for framing their place in the trajectory of Chinese society. As discussed in the *Introduction*, there are simply too few migrant-focused NGOs to situate them within a larger moral awakening. Moreover, the amounts of time and resources committed by the founders/directors suggest that they do not fit neatly within the “part-time” charity described in the literature as evidence of increased morality (e.g., Rolandsen 2008).

In the end, the NGO response to China’s enormous migrant problem complicates the two prevailing explanations for the outcomes of individualism. Yet, it also reveals a lot about how the Chinese state sets priorities. Anagnost (1997, 75) suggests that just as Chinese society-at-large has become preoccupied with personal quality, so too has the government become fixated on the quality of the population as a whole.<sup>90</sup> In one sense, this has to do with Deng Xiaoping’s

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<sup>90</sup> 人民的素质

directive that some people must get rich first in order for everyone to benefit. Toward this end, the government has placed a high value on industrialization and private enterprise.

Yet, Anagnost (1997, 76) also points out that the government's view on the quality of its people is "a discourse of lack, referring to the failure of the Chinese people to embody international standards of modernity, civility, and discipline." In this way, its support of the founders/directors in my sample, though often tangential, is perhaps the strongest evidence to date that the state, and not just a few Chinese people, seeks to evaluate societal quality beyond mere materialistic ends.

Twenty-first century Chinese society is defined both by selfishness and selflessness, albeit in unequal proportions. Many Chinese chase middleclass materialism; most of the population is as of yet unable to; and a few seek to remedy this inequality. As part of the last category, the experiences and decision-making of the founders/directors in my sample spotlight a small but significant positivity in the all-too-often bleak narratives coming out of China. I devote the concluding chapter to this contribution of my research.

## CHAPTER 9: FINAL REMARKS

Since 2012 I have devoted myself to understanding China. I have delved into the literature on its history, politics, and culture. Armed with the insights I gained from previous research, many of which I have discussed in the preceding chapters, I have spent nearly two years in country, exploring a variety of aspects of twenty-first century Chinese society. I have investigated how expat entrepreneurs learn to bribe and apply this knowledge to enter the often-restricted social networks of Chinese business associates. I have looked at emic perspectives on parents and grandparents allowing children to urinate on busy urban streets. A national poll found that only eleven percent of Chinese find fault with this practice (Chen 2014). It is a poignant reminder of China's rapid transition from a predominantly rural society to one in which nearly half the population now lives in cities (Wines 2012).

Both of these topics are intricately woven into the fabric of twenty-first century Chinese society. Either of them offers enough depth and breadth for an engaging dissertation. Yet, my late mentor, Victoria Lockwood, “gently” suggested that I dig deeper into the social soul of China. “Are there people doing good there?” she once asked me. This simple question conceals a nearly all-encompassing reality of doing research on China: almost every topic that gets attention portrays one or several negative aspects of the country, its government, and even its people. The most common tropes are corruption, both at the governmental and interpersonal levels, pollution – air, water, and food – low quality manufacturing, and of course military aggression. The list could go on. More than any other context, China strains the limits of cultural relativism.

Yet, Dr. Lockwood and I shared a belief in the potential of local-level development programs to produce quantifiable improvements to people's lives. Together we discussed countless case studies of such programs around the world. One of the most common threads in these cases are the characteristics of the people who founded and direct them. They are, for a variety of reasons, imbued with a deep social conscience, i.e., a desire to improve the lives of others.

The negative accounts of China, from both the news media and academia, had to be missing a major piece of what was going on in China. One day while perusing the aisles of an upscale grocery store in Beijing, I noticed that many of the prepackaged fruits and vegetables had the characters 有机 in bold type on the label. I looked them up in the dictionary on my phone and found that the main definition is organic. After some internet research, and asking a few knowledgeable connections in China, I learned that 有机 was not an official measure of quality. There was seemingly no certification board, and the use of these characters on food packaging appeared to be more of a marketing tool than a guarantee of organic farming practices.

However, it was noteworthy to find these characters so ubiquitously used in high-end food stores in China. Based on frequent concerns of food safety, it seemed fair to assume that middleclass consumers were increasingly willing to pay more for foods labeled organic. Aside from misleading advertising, I began to wonder if there actually were organic farms in China. Not surprisingly, with 1.4 billion people to feed, most farming in China is largescale, and uses any and all means to maximize agricultural output. This includes pesticides, chemical fertilizers, and growth hormones of every variety.

While attending a presentation on environmentalism one night in Beijing, a few of the attendees told me about an organic food delivery service they had just subscribed to. This type of

community supported agriculture (CSA) has become quite popular in US cities, but I was surprised to find in China. I did another internet search and found a half dozen or so similar businesses serving Beijing (and another dozen in other east coast cities). Over the next couple weeks, I visited the farms that supplied these CSAs. In each case, they were actively employing organic farming techniques equal to any I have encountered in the rest of the world.<sup>91</sup> None of the operations had more than a couple hundred customers, but these customers were very loyal. It became clear that, following Hathaway's (2013) investigation of environmentalism in China, these few CSAs were the seeds of an organic movement with the potential for enormous growth.

This topic, like the expat entrepreneurs and kids urinating in the street, had the breadth, depth, and cultural relevance to warrant doctoral research. After a lot of consideration, I realized that studying organic farming in China, much like in most countries, would be largely about middle- and upper-class consumers. Admittedly, there is a lot of value (and money) in understanding evolving consumer habits, especially in a country as populous as China. Yet, I wanted to honor the guidance of my committee chair (a decision which gained even more weight after her untimely passing).

The fact of the matter is that a billion people in China are NOT in the middle class. Typically, we hear about the roughly 300 million people that make up China's middle class. This figure makes marketers drool and is the cause for much self-congratulation by the central government. Even the most cynical China watchers concede a hearty applause. Indeed, over the

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<sup>91</sup> During two years at the Norman Borlaug Institute for International Agriculture at Texas A&M, I was involved in assessing the impacts of several organic farming projects throughout Asia. Though I am not a crop scientist, I am quite familiar with international standards for organic farming.

past generation, improvements to the lifestyles of this rising middle class are nothing short of amazing.

Of course, in China having 300 million people in the middle class means that approximately one billion people have yet to reach this socioeconomic level. This group includes marginalized rural populations, the urban poor, and nearly 300 million migrant workers. While the business opportunities and economic success stories typically come from the middle class, I knew in my heart that my research topic would be among the one billion people forgotten or left behind by China's breakneck development trajectory.

As in so many cases, the ideal topic was right under my nose the whole time. Migrant workers are the central characters in so many chapters of China's economic development. As I discussed in the *Introduction*, China has been made by migrants. Much like the United States, Chinese economic development has been driven by hard-working men and women who leave their homes to seek better opportunities.

At a time when China and the United States frequently clash over trade agreements (e.g., Hsu 2015), military agendas (e.g., Glaser 2012), and even international aid projects (e.g., Sun 2015), Americans tend to be presented with a narrative of the Chinese as a calculating competitor (e.g., Pew 2012), even a growing threat (e.g., Navarro 2015). At the nation-state level, these concerns may be justified. Yet, the most populous country in the world is not simply defined by its government's policies. It is comprised, like our own country, of individuals striving to create meaningful lives for themselves. They are not simply passive actors in a domineering political economy. The perspectives and experiences of Chinese citizens working to improve their own lives and the lives of their fellow citizens should resonate with Americans and humanize a proud people whose aspirations are not so foreign from our own.

## APPENDIX 1: MIGRANT SURVEY

1) How old are you?

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 65+

2) What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

3) Do you have children?

- Yes
- No

4) If so, how many?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- More than 4

5) In what province/city were you born?

\_\_\_\_\_

6) What ethnicity are you?

\_\_\_\_\_

7) How long have you lived in Beijing/Shenzhen?

- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-9 years
- More than 9 years (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

8) If you could live anywhere, would you...?

- Stay where you are
- Move to a different part of Beijing/Shenzhen
- Return to your home province
- Move somewhere else (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

9) Please indicate if the following services are available to you in Beijing/Shenzhen.

|   | None | Very Little | Some, but not enough | Enough, but difficult to access | Enough, and easy to access |
|---|------|-------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Financial Services (Banking, Loans, etc.) | 1    | 2           | 3                    | 4                               | 5                          |
| Healthcare                                | 1    | 2           | 3                    | 4                               | 5                          |
| Professional Training                     | 1    | 2           | 3                    | 4                               | 5                          |
| Education/Daycare for Children            | 1    | 2           | 3                    | 4                               | 5                          |
| Subsidized Housing                        | 1    | 2           | 3                    | 4                               | 5                          |
| Other:                                    | 1    | 2           | 3                    | 4                               | 5                          |

10) Who offers the services that are available to you? (Check all that apply.) If a service is not available to you, please leave it blank.

|   | Government               | NGOs                     | Charities                | Businesses               | Family/Friends           | Other                    |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Financial Services (Banking, Loans, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Healthcare                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Professional Training                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Education for Children                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Subsidized Housing                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other:                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

11) What services do you need that are not available to you? (If there is more than one, please list the top three, in order of importance to you.)

Most important: \_\_\_\_\_  
 2<sup>nd</sup> most important: \_\_\_\_\_  
 3<sup>rd</sup> most important: \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX 2: MIGRANT SURVEY (移居者调查)

1) 您多大了?

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 65+

2) 您的性别是?

- 男性
- 女性

3) 您有小孩么?

- 有
- 没有

4) 如果有的话, 您有几个小孩?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 4 以上

5) 您出身于哪个省份/城市？

\_\_\_\_\_

6) 您是什么民族的？

\_\_\_\_\_

7) 您住在北京/深圳多久了？

- 1-3 年
- 4-6 年
- 7-9 年
- 超过 9 年 (请详细说明): \_\_\_\_\_

8) 如果您可以住在任何地方，您会...？

- 呆在现在您在的地方
- 搬去北京/深圳的另一个地方
- 返回您出生的省份
- 搬去其他地方(请详细说明): \_\_\_\_\_

9) 请说明下面的哪些服务是您在北京/深圳可以找到的?

|                     | 没有                       | 很少                       | 有一些, 但是不是很多              | 足够, 但是很难找到               | 足够, 而且容易找到               |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 金融服务 (银行业务, 贷款, 等等) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 医疗保健                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 职业培训                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 小孩子的教育/日间护理         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 建房补贴                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 其他:                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

10) 谁提供了这些您能找到的服务? (勾选所有适用的选项) 如果这项服务是您在这个城市找不到的, 请留空白。

|                     | 政府                       | 非政府组织                    | 慈善机构                     | 企业                       | 家人/朋友                    | 其他                       |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 金融服务 (银行服务, 贷款, 等等) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 医疗保健                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 职业培训                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 小孩子的教育              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 建房补贴                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 其他:                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

11) 哪些您想要的服务您在这个城市找不到? (如果有的话, 请按照对您的重要性排列出来。)

最重要的: \_\_\_\_\_

第二重要的: \_\_\_\_\_

第三重要的: \_\_\_\_\_

### APPENDIX 3: NGO SURVEY

1) How long ago was this organization started?

- 0-3 years
- 3-6 years
- 6-9 years
- 9-12 years
- 12+ years

2) How long have you worked for this organization?

- 0-3 years
- 3-6 years
- 6-9 years
- 9-12 years
- 12+ years

3) Are you the founder of this organization?

- Yes
- No

4) What is your primary role in this organization?

- Director
- Manager
- Employee
- Board Member
- Volunteer
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5) Why do you work here? (Please check all that apply.)

- Good salary
- Helping others
- Good benefits
- Good work environment
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6) Do you have another job?

- Yes
- No

7) What is your highest level of education?

- High School
- Bachelors
- Masters
- Doctorate

7a) If you attended university, what was your major?

- Business
- Finance
- Social Science (e.g., sociology, history, etc.)
- Literature
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7b) If you earned a postgraduate degree, what was your major and what was the topic of your dissertation?

\_\_\_\_\_

8) Have you studied abroad?

- Yes
- No

8a) If so, where? \_\_\_\_\_

8b) If so, for how long?

- A semester
- An academic year
- 1-4 years
- More than 4 years

9) How old are you?

- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70+

10) What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

11) What word best describes your organization?

- 企业
- 社会企业
- 社会创业
- 公益创业
- Non-profit
- NGO
- Charity
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

12) How many people work for your organization?

- <10
- <20
- <30
- 30+

13) For each category of employee, approximately how many work at your organization?

|                       | None | A few | Several | Most | All |
|-----------------------|------|-------|---------|------|-----|
| Full-time             | 1    | 2     | 3       | 4    | 5   |
| Part-time             | 1    | 2     | 3       | 4    | 5   |
| Volunteer             | 1    | 2     | 3       | 4    | 5   |
| Have a college degree | 1    | 2     | 3       | 4    | 5   |
| Below 30 years old    | 1    | 2     | 3       | 4    | 5   |
| Male                  | 1    | 2     | 3       | 4    | 5   |
| Female                | 1    | 2     | 3       | 4    | 5   |

14) What goods and/or services does your organization offer? Please list no more than three core types of goods/services in order of importance to your business.

Good/Service

|                                 |
|---------------------------------|
| Most Important:                 |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Most Important: |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> Most Important: |

14a) Why is the most important good/service important to your organization? (Please check all that apply.)

- It is profitable
- More and more people want it
- It is affordable to our customers
- It helps our customers have better lives
- It is higher quality than the goods/services offered by other organizations
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

14b) Why is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important good/service is important to your organization? (Please check all that apply.)

- It is profitable
- More and more people want it
- It is affordable to our customers
- It helps our customers have better lives
- It is higher quality than the goods/services offered by other organizations
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

14c) Why is the 3<sup>rd</sup> most important good/service is important to your organization? (Please check all that apply.)

- It is profitable
- More and more people want it
- It is affordable to our customers
- It helps our customers have better lives
- It is higher quality than the goods/services offered by other organizations
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_



15) Who are the main beneficiaries of your organization's goods/services? If your organization has several groups of clients/recipients, please list the top three in order of importance:

1<sup>st</sup> group of beneficiaries \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>nd</sup> group of beneficiaries \_\_\_\_\_

3<sup>rd</sup> group of beneficiaries \_\_\_\_\_

16) What are the main problems your organization's good/services help to solve? If your organization is trying to solve more than one problem, please list the top three in order of importance.

1<sup>st</sup> in terms of importance \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>nd</sup> in terms of importance \_\_\_\_\_

3<sup>rd</sup> in terms of importance \_\_\_\_\_

16a) What are the main reasons you think these problems are important to solve? If there are several reasons, please list the top three in order of importance.

1<sup>st</sup> in terms of importance \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>nd</sup> in terms of importance \_\_\_\_\_

3<sup>rd</sup> in terms of importance \_\_\_\_\_

17) What is the main goal of your organization?

\_\_\_\_\_

17a) Is your organization accomplishing this goal?

- Yes
- Yes, but not entirely
- No, but it can/will
- No

17b) What criteria does your organization use to determine the success of its goods/services?  
Please rate the following factors on a scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (most important).

|                       | Not<br>Important | A Little<br>Important | Important | Very<br>Important | Most<br>Important |
|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Profits               | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| # of Customers        | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Market Share          | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Community Improvement | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Reducing Costs        | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Reducing Price        | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Publicity             | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Awards                | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |

17c) How does your organization measure these criteria? (Please check all that apply.)

- Financial Reports
- Customer Surveys
- Assessment by independent consultant
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

18) What are your organization's main sources of income? (Please give the approximate percentage for each.)

| Source of Income              | Percentage  |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| Sale of goods and/or services | %           |
| Membership Fees               | %           |
| Investor Funds                | %           |
| Government subsidies/grants   | %           |
| Grants/donations from NGOs    | %           |
| Donations from individuals    | %           |
| Donations from companies      | %           |
| Contributions from founders   | %           |
| Other:                        | %           |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>100%</b> |

18a) How have your organization's sources of income changed over the past 3 years?

| Source of Income              | Increased                | Decreased                | Unchanged                |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Sale of goods and/or services | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Membership Fees               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Investor Funds                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Government subsidies/grants   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Grants/donations from NGOs    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Donations from individuals    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Donations from companies      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Contributions from founders   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other:                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

19) How many beneficiaries of services does your organization currently have?

- <100
- <200
- <300
- <400
- 400+

19a) How has this number changed over the past 3 years?

- Increased
- Decreased
- Unchanged

20) How did the following factors contribute to your decision to start/work for this organization?

|                                   | Not<br>Important | A Little<br>Important | Important | Very<br>Important | Most<br>Important |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Previous professional experience  | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Salary/Earning potential          | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Access to funding/investment      | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Fulfilling work                   | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Benefits to the community         | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Benefits to society               | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Opportunities for advancement     | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Status of doing this kind of work | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Support of prominent businesses   | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Government support                | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Support from family/friends       | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Support from the community        | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| A book I read/Idea I heard        | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Other:                            | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |

21) Does your organization have partnerships with other businesses/organizations?

- Yes
- No

21a) If so, with what other businesses/organizations does your organization partner? (Please check all that apply.)

- Another local business
- A large national/international business
- An NGO
- Local government
- National government
- The media
- A local community group
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

22) Are there other organizations in your area similar to yours?

- Yes
- No

22a) If yes, approximately how many?

- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 20+

22b) If yes, what makes them similar to your organization? (Please check all that apply.)

- Offer similar goods/services
- Serve a similar group of people
- Trying to solve a similar problem
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

23) Has your organization faced opposition?

- Yes
- No

23a) If so, from whom or what entity? (Please check all that apply.)

- Another business
- An NGO
- Local government
- National government
- The media
- Social Media
- An individual (not part of a business or the government)
- The local community
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

23b) If so, what kind of opposition? (Please check all that apply.)

- Financial
- Legal
- Bad publicity
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

23c) If so, do you feel that the opposition was justified? Were the criticisms fair?

- Yes
- No

23d) What action did you take to address the opposition? (Please check all that apply.)

- None
- Legal
- Public relations
- Adjusted business practices
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

24) Does/did your organization receive help from a business incubator?

- Yes
- No

24a) If yes, which one(s)? And what kind of support? (Please check all that apply.)

| Incubator Name | Financial Support        | Legal Support            | Business Planning        | Operational Support      | Other (specify) |
|----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
|                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                 |
|                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                 |
|                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                 |
|                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                 |
|                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                 |

25) Do you think the goods/services offered by your organization are affordable to your customers?

- Yes
- No

25a) Do you subsidize the price of your organization's goods/services so that your customers can afford them?

- Yes
- No

26) What changes has your business experienced in the last 5 years? (Please check all that apply.)

- Greater competition from other businesses
- Increased funding/investment
- Decreased funding/investment
- New management
- Expansion of the business within this city/to other cities?
- Increased cost of producing goods/services
- Increased price of good/services to customers
- Increased number of customers
- Increased government regulation of your business
- Greater public interest in your business

27) If your organization has experienced greater government regulation, what areas of your organization has this affected? (Please check all that apply.)

- Sources of funding/investment
- Taxes
- The production of good/services
- Revenue/Profitability
- Affordability of good/services
- Partnerships
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_



28) How do the following factors contribute to the success of your organization?

|                                   | Not<br>Important | A Little<br>Important | Important | Very<br>Important | Most<br>Important |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Previous professional experience  | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Salary/Earning potential          | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Access to funding/investment      | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Fulfilling work                   | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Benefits to the community         | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Benefits to society               | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Opportunities for advancement     | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Status of doing this kind of work | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Support of prominent businesses   | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Government support                | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Support from family/friends       | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Support from the community        | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| A book I read/ Idea I heard       | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |
| Other:                            | 1                | 2                     | 3         | 4                 | 5                 |

## APPENDIX 4: NGO SURVEY (机构问卷)

1) 这个机构成立有多久了?

- 0-3 年
- 3-6 年
- 6-9 年
- 9-12 年
- 12+ 年

2) 您为这个机构工作几年了?

- 0-3 年
- 3-6 年
- 6-9 年
- 9-12 年
- 12+ 年

3) 您是这个机构的创办人么?

- 是的
- 不是

4) 您在这个机构中的主要角色是什么?

- 主管
- 经理
- 雇员
- 董事会成员
- 志愿者
- 其他: \_\_\_\_\_

5) 您为什么要在这里工作? (勾选所有适用的选项)

- 好的工资
- 帮助其他人
- 好的利益
- 好的工作环境
- 其他: \_\_\_\_\_

6) 您有另外的工作么?

- 是的
- 不是

7) 您的最高的学历是什么？

- 高中学历
- 大学学历
- 硕士学历
- 博士学历

7a) 如果您上了大学，您在大学的学位是什么？

- 商学
- 金融
- 社会科学（比如社会学，历史和其他）
- 文学
- 其他: \_\_\_\_\_

7b) 如果您有一个研究生或者博士生学位，您的专业是什么，您的论文题目是什么？

\_\_\_\_\_

8) 您出国留学过么？

- 是的
- 不是

8a) 如果是的，去过哪里留学？ \_\_\_\_\_

8b) 如果是的，去了多久？

- 一个学期
- 一个学年
- 1-4 年
- 超过 4 年

9) 您几岁了？

- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70+

10) 您的性别是？

- 男性
- 女性

11) 一下哪个词能最准确地描述您的机构?

- 企业
- 社会企业
- 社会创业
- 公益创业
- 非营利组织
- 非政府组织
- 慈善组织
- 其他: \_\_\_\_\_

12) 有多少人在您的机构工作?

- <10
- <20
- <30
- 30+

13) 在每种员工中, 有大概多少在您的机构工作?

|          | 没有 | 几个 | 少数 | 大部分 | 全部 |
|----------|----|----|----|-----|----|
| 全职       | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4   | 5  |
| 兼职       | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4   | 5  |
| 志愿者      | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4   | 5  |
| 有一个大学学位  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4   | 5  |
| 在 30 岁以下 | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4   | 5  |
| 男性       | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4   | 5  |
| 女性       | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4   | 5  |

14) 您的机构提供什么样的产品或者服务？请根据您的机构的重要性写出不超过三种的核心产品和服务。

产品或者服务

最重要的:

第二最重要的:

第三最重要的:

14a) 为什么您上面写的最重要的产品或者服务对您的机构来说很重要？（勾选所有适用的选项）

- 因为它可以产生利益
- 因为有更多更多的人想要它
- 因为受益人可以承担这个产品
- 因为它能帮助我们的受益人过上更好的生活
- 因为它有比其他机构提供的产品更好的质量
- 其他: \_\_\_\_\_

14b) 为什么您上面写的第二最重要的产品或者服务对您的机构很重要？（勾选所有适用的选项）

- 因为它可以产生利益
- 因为有更多更多的人想要它
- 因为受益人可以承担这个产品
- 因为它能帮助我们的受益人过上更好的生活
- 因为它有比其他机构提供的产品更好的质量
- 其他: \_\_\_\_\_

14c) 为什么您上面写的第三最重要的产品或者服务对您的机构很重要？（勾选所有适用的选项）

- 因为它可以产生利益
- 因为有更多更多的人想要它
- 因为受益人可以承担这个产品
- 因为它能帮助我们的受益人过上更好的生活
- 因为它有比其他企业提供的产品更好的质量
- 其他: \_\_\_\_\_

15) 您的机构的商品和服务最重要的受益人是谁？如果您的机构有各种不同的受益人，请根据重要性写出前三个：

第一组受益人 \_\_\_\_\_

第二组受益人 \_\_\_\_\_

第三组受益人 \_\_\_\_\_

16) 那些主要问题您的机构的产品或服务帮助解决的？如果您的机构在努力解决超过一个问题，请根据重要性写出前三。

第一重要 \_\_\_\_\_

第二重要 \_\_\_\_\_

第三重要 \_\_\_\_\_

16a) 有什么主要的原因让你觉得解决这些问题是很重要的么？如果有这样的原因，请根据重要性举出前三。

第一重要 \_\_\_\_\_

第二重要 \_\_\_\_\_

第三重要 \_\_\_\_\_

17) 您的机构的主要目标是什么？

---

17a) 您的机构在完成这个目标么？

- 是的
- 是的，但是不完全
- 不是，但是它可以/会实现
- 不是

17b) 您的机构是用什么样的标准来判断产品或者服务的成功？请用 1（不重要）到 5（最重要）的标准来评价。

|        | 不重要 | 有些重要 | 重要 | 非常重要 | 最重要 |
|--------|-----|------|----|------|-----|
| 利益     | 1   | 2    | 3  | 4    | 5   |
| 受益人的数量 | 1   | 2    | 3  | 4    | 5   |
| 市场占有率  | 1   | 2    | 3  | 4    | 5   |
| 对社区的改善 | 1   | 2    | 3  | 4    | 5   |
| 降低成本   | 1   | 2    | 3  | 4    | 5   |
| 降低价格   | 1   | 2    | 3  | 4    | 5   |
| 宣传     | 1   | 2    | 3  | 4    | 5   |
| 奖品     | 1   | 2    | 3  | 4    | 5   |

17c) 您的机构是怎么测量这些标准的？（勾选所有适用的选项）

- 财务报告
- 客户问卷
- 独立顾问的评估
- 其他: \_\_\_\_\_

18) 您的机构的主要的资金来源是什么？（请写出每项大约的百分比）

| 资金来源             | 百分比         |
|------------------|-------------|
| 商品和服务的销售         | %           |
| 成员费用             | %           |
| 投资者资金            | %           |
| 政府补助/奖金          | %           |
| 从其他非政府组织得来的奖金/捐款 | %           |
| 从个人得来的捐款         | %           |
| 从公司得来的捐款         | %           |
| 从创建人得来的捐赠        | %           |
| 其他:              | %           |
| <b>总共</b>        | <b>100%</b> |



18a) 您的机构的资金来源在过去的三年之内有什么样的改变?

| 资金来源             | 增加                       | 减少                       | 不改变                      |
|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 产品或者服务的销售        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 成员费用             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 投资者资金            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 政府的补助/资金         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 从其他非营利组织得来的奖金/捐款 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 从个人得来的捐款         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 从公司得来的捐款         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 从创建人得来的捐赠        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 其他:              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

19) 您的机构有多少受益人?

- <100
- <200
- <300
- <400
- 400+

19a) 这个数目在过去的三年有怎样的改变?

- 增加
- 减少
- 不改变

20) 以下这些因素是怎么影响您决定为这家机构工作的?

|                 | 不是很<br>重要 | 有点重<br>要 | 重要 | 非常重<br>要 | 最重要 |
|-----------------|-----------|----------|----|----------|-----|
| 之前的职业经历         | 1         | 2        | 3  | 4        | 5   |
| 薪水/挣钱的潜力        | 1         | 2        | 3  | 4        | 5   |
| 有权使用资金/投资的机会    | 1         | 2        | 3  | 4        | 5   |
| 令人开心满足的工作       | 1         | 2        | 3  | 4        | 5   |
| 对社区的好处          | 1         | 2        | 3  | 4        | 5   |
| 对社会的好处          | 1         | 2        | 3  | 4        | 5   |
| 提升的机会           | 1         | 2        | 3  | 4        | 5   |
| 做这种工作的身份        | 1         | 2        | 3  | 4        | 5   |
| 著名企业的支持         | 1         | 2        | 3  | 4        | 5   |
| 政府的支持           | 1         | 2        | 3  | 4        | 5   |
| 家庭/朋友的支持        | 1         | 2        | 3  | 4        | 5   |
| 社区的支持           | 1         | 2        | 3  | 4        | 5   |
| 我读过的一本书/听到的一个主意 | 1         | 2        | 3  | 4        | 5   |
| 其他:             | 1         | 2        | 3  | 4        | 5   |

21) 您的机构跟其他的机构或者组织有合作关系么?

- 是的
- 不是

21a) 如果是的话，您和什么样的机构或者组织是商业伙伴？（勾选所有适用的选项）

- 另外一个本地机构
- 一个大的国家性的/国际性的机构
- 一个非营利组织
- 本地政府
- 全国性政府
- 媒体
- 一个本地的社区组织
- 其他: \_\_\_\_\_

22) 在您的区域有机构跟您的机构是类似的？

- 是的
- 不是的

22a) 如果是的话，大约有多少？

- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 20+

22b) 如果是的话，是什么让他们跟您的机构很相似？（勾选所有适用的选项）

- 提供相似的产品/服务
- 为相似的群体提供服务
- 尝试在解决一个相似的问题
- 其他: \_\_\_\_\_

23) 您的机构有面临过反对或者敌对么？

- 是的
- 不是

23a) 如果是这样的话，从哪一方或者是哪个实体？（勾选所有适用的选项）

- 另外一个机构
- 一家非营利组织
- 本地政府
- 全国性政府
- 媒体
- 社交媒体
- 一个人（并不是一个企业或者一个政府的一部分）
- 本地社区
- 其他: \_\_\_\_\_

23b) 如果是的话, 是以什么样的反对形式? (勾选所有适用的选项)

- 经济上的
- 法律上的
- 不好的宣传
- 其他: \_\_\_\_\_

23c) 如果是的话, 您觉得反对是有正当理由的? 批评都是公正的?

- 是的
- 不是

23d) 您通过什么样的行动来应对反对派? (勾选所有适用的选项)

- 没有
- 法律上的
- 公共关系
- 调整的商业模式
- 其他: \_\_\_\_\_

24) 您的机构从一个商业孵化器接受帮助或者接受过帮助么?

- 是的
- 不是

24a) 如果是的话, 是那些呢? 接受过什么样的帮助? (勾选所有适用的选项)

| 孵化器的名字 | 经济支持                     | 法律支持                     | 商业计划                     | 工程帮助                     | 其他 (请说明) |
|--------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
|        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |          |
|        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |          |
|        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |          |
|        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |          |
|        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |          |

25) 您觉得您的机构提供的产品/服务能让您的受益人负担得起?

- 是的
- 不是

25a) 您向您的机构的商品或者服务提供补助让您的受益人能负担得起它们么？

- 是的
- 不是

26) 您的机构在过去的五年内经历了什么改变？（勾选所有适用的选项）

- 跟其他机构更大的竞争
- 增加的资金/投资
- 减少的资金/投资
- 新的管理
- 在这个城市或者其他城市对您机构的扩张
- 生产产品或者服务增加的成品
- 对受益人来说增加的产品/服务的价格
- 增加的受益人数量
- 政府对您的机构增加的管制
- 公众对您的机构增加的兴趣

27) 如果政府对您的机构增加了管制，您的机构的什么方面受到了影响？（勾选所有适用的选项）

- 资金或者投资的来源
- 税收
- 产品或者服务的生产
- 收益/收益性
- 产品/服务的可承担性
- 合伙企业
- 其他: \_\_\_\_\_

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