Environmental NGOs and Institutional Dynamics in China*

Guobin Yang

ABSTRACT Environmental non-governmental organizations are becoming increasingly visible players in China's environmental politics. Adopting a field perspective, this article shows how the rise of environmental NGOs has taken place in interactions with four institutional fields. They not only respond to political conditions, but also to opportunities offered by the media, the internet and international NGOs. In this process, organizational entrepreneurs play a crucial role in mobilizing resources while other individuals participate in search of self-fulfilment or social experience. These arguments underscore the multi-institutional dynamics of civil society development without underestimating state-centred and market-centred explanations. In conclusion, the article discusses how environmental NGOs can serve as both sites and agents of democratic social change in China.

The founding of Friends of Nature (FON) in 1994 inaugurated a decade of vibrant growth of environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs) in urban China.[1] Since then, several hundred such organizations have cropped up. They are engaged in environmental education, nature conservation, species protection, policy advocacy and many other activities. Some groups have organized national campaigns. Others work to build green communities and one provides legal assistance to pollution victims. In 2000, two prestigious international awards, the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service and the Sophie Prize, went to the leaders of two environmental NGOs in China. In August 2002, a delegation of Chinese ENGOs attended the Earth Summit in Johannesburg. In short, despite the challenges they face, environmental NGOs have carved out a field of existence in China's changing social terrain.

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1. NGOs here refer to voluntary, non-profit and self-governing organizations. China's official regulations define them as social organizations (*shehui tuanti*) or private, non-profit work units (*minban fei qiye danwei*), yet the organizations themselves and Chinese researchers have adopted the language of NGOs. The founding of the NGO Research Centre at Tsinghua University in 1998 reflects this indigenous trend. For debates on definitional issues, see Susan H. Whiting, "The politics of NGO development in China," *Voluntas*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1991), pp. 16–48; and Qiusha Ma, "Defining Chinese nongovernmental organizations," *Voluntas*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2002), pp. 113–130.

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What kind of organizations are they? How have they grown within China's constraining political context? Do they contribute to the development of China's burgeoning civil society? This article addresses these questions through an integrated, field analysis of both social actors and organizations.[2] It argues that the emergence of ENGOs as a new institutional field is a response to conditions in the political field as well as opportunities in the fields of the mass media, the internet and international NGOs (INGOs). In this process, organizational entrepreneurs play a crucial role in mobilizing resources while other individuals participate in search of self-fulfilment or social experience. It is suggested that it is the conjunction of these conditions rather than any single factor that can best explain the rise of environmental NGOs. With its focus on institutional dynamics, this article extends state-centred and market-centred explanations of Chinese civil society without underestimating political and economic influences. The article concludes after discussing how China's environmental NGOs may contribute to democratic political change.

A Field Perspective

The state and the market are often identified as the two interlocking causal factors of civil society development in China. It is argued that the rise of a market economy has contributed to the separation between state and society, thus opening up new spaces for social organizations.[3] The state, on its part, has decentralized, resulting in the loosening of state control and the expansion of civil society.[4] State- and market-centred explanations show the structural conditions for the rise of civil society organizations, but cannot adequately account for the dynamics. They pay little attention to how social organizations seek growth by manoeuvring between party politics and market forces, or how institutional fields other than the state and the market shape these processes.

Alternatively, some scholars have explored the organizational dynamics of emerging social groups. For example, Edward Gu's study of

2. Field research for this study was conducted in Beijing in June and July 2002. The author attended meetings of environmental groups and interviewed environmentalists from 14 organizations. Follow-up interviews were conducted by email or telephone. The study is based on an analysis of these interview and ethnographic data, as well as newspaper reports, data collected from the web sites of environmental NGOs, and newsletters, annual reports and other documents produced by ENGOs.

3. Among the many studies of Chinese civil society, see Gordon White, Jude Howell and Shang Xiaoyuan, *In Search of Civil Society: Market Reform and Social Change in Contemporary China* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) and Tony Saich, "Negotiating the state: the development of social organizations in China," *The China Quarterly*, No. 161 (2000), pp. 124–141. For a recent overview, see Guobin Yang, "Civil society in China: a dynamic field of study." *China Review International*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Spring 2002), pp. 1–17.

4. Martin Whyte, "Urban China: a civil society in the making?" in Arthur Lewis Rosenbaum (ed.), *State and Society in China: The Consequences of Reform* (Boulder, CO: Westview), pp. 77–101. David Shambaugh, "The Chinese state in the post-Mao era," in David Shambaugh (ed.), *The Modern Chinese State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 161–187.

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intellectual groups in the 1980s stresses the role of organizational entrepreneurs in organizational building.[5] Tony Saich shows how social organizations "negotiate" the state to minimize state penetration and maximize the benefits of such symbiotic relationships.[6] In one of the few studies of Chinese ENGOs, Peter Ho emphasizes their growth as a function of the "greening" of the state, but also addresses their concrete struggles in meting out an existence in China's political context.[7]

A field perspective builds on these organization-level studies to capture the rise of environmental NGOs in their interactions with multiple institutional fields. The concept of field refers to "a patterned system of objective forces (much in the manner of a magnetic field), a relational configuration endowed with a specific gravity which it imposes on all the objects and agents which enter it."[8] More concretely, fields are "situations where organized groups of actors gather and frame their actions vis-à-vis one another."[9] Politics is a field, so are economy, art and literature, journalism, academia, religion and so forth.

The field perspective stresses inter-field relations. The relationships among different fields are unequal, reflecting differences in power and resources. The political field usually holds a dominant position to which all others are subordinate. Some fields are more independent of external forces than others, but none is absolutely autonomous. Those fields that are in structurally homologous positions vis-à-vis the dominant political field may build alliances in order to resist or influence the dominant field. Furthermore, actors in the dominant field may have different or conflicting interests, creating opportunities for actors in other fields.[10] The building of new fields and the maintenance of existing ones take place in relation to other fields.

A field approach also underscores the role of social actors, because it is actors who play the "games" of the field. The most influential players are organized groups and their leaders, sometimes called organizational entrepreneurs.[11] As an emerging field, environmental NGOs in China are

5. Edward X. Gu, "Plural institutionalism and the emergence of intellectual public spaces in China: a case study of four intellectual groups," in Suisheng Zhao (ed.), *China and Democracy: The Prospect for a Democratic China*, pp. 141–172.

6. Saich, "Negotiating the state."

7. Peter Ho, "Greening without conflict? Environmentalism, NGOs and civil society in China," *Development and Change*, Vol. 32, No. 5 (2001), pp. 893–921.

8. Pierre Bourdieu and Loïs Wacquant, *Invitation to a Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 17.

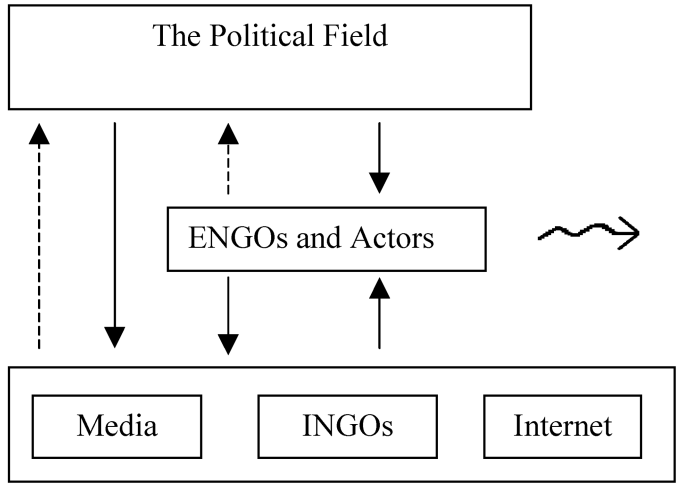
9. Neil Fligstein, "Social skill and the theory of fields," *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2001), p. 108.

10. For example, one recent study shows that environmental bureaus in local governments sometimes cannot pursue their goals because of conflicts with the pro-growth orientation of the government of which they are a part. See Shui-Yan Tang, Carlos Wing-Hung Lo, Kai-Chee Cheung and Jack Man-Keung Lo, "Institutional constraints on environmental management in urban China: environmental impact assessment in Guangzhou and Shanghai," *The China Quarterly*, No. 152 (December 1997), pp. 863–874. Another study reveals the clashes of interests among different government departments. See Peter Ho, "The clash over state and collective property: the making of the rangeland law," *The China Quarterly*, No. 161 (March 2000), pp. 240–263.

11. Paul J. DiMaggio, "Interest and agency in institutional theory," in L. Zucker (ed.), *Institutional Patterns and Organization* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Press, 1988), pp. 3–21.

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Figure 1: **Institutional Fields of Environmental NGOs**



largely subordinate to the political field, though influences are by no means unidirectional. They have allies in the mass media, international NGOs and the growing field of new media – the internet. In building these organizations, organizational entrepreneurs play a crucial role in mobilizing resources. Others, especially young college students, are drawn to these organizations and their activities in search of social experience and self-fulfilment. Figure 1 shows the main institutional fields and the field dynamics of environmental NGOs, where solid-line arrows indicate more dominant and broken-line arrows less dominant influences.

Organizational Types and Quantitative Growth

Environmental NGOs are diverse in organizational forms. Broadly speaking, they fall into seven types, as shown in Table 1. Among the seven types, government-organized NGOs (GONGOs) occupy a peculiar place. Conceptually, they constitute an institutional field in their own right.[12] Although they are related to the other six types of ENGOs in various ways and may evolve into more independent NGOs,[13] as a separate institutional field, they do not influence the growth of other types

12. They have their own history and characteristics and are sponsored by the government both financially and in personnel. Most were founded in the 1980s, while the more independent ENGOs began to appear only in the mid-1990s. For instance, a recent handbook lists 274 environmental organizations, all of them recognizably GONGOs. Of these, only 20 were established in 1991 and 1992, while all others were founded before 1990. See Chen Dongdong (ed.), *Zhongguo shehui tuanti daquan* (*A Compendium of Social Organizations in China*), 3 vols. (Beijing: Zhuanli wenxian chubanshe, 1998).

13. Fengshi Wu, "New partners or old brothers? GONGOs in transnational environmental advocacy in China," *China Environment Series*, Issue 5 (2002), pp. 45–58.

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Table 1: **Main Types of Environmental NGOs in China**

Organizational Type	*Registration status*	*Examples*
Registered NGOs	Registered as social organizations (*shehui tuanti*) or private, non-profit work units (*minban fei qiye danwei*)	Friends of Nature[a]; Green River
Non-profit enterprises	Registered as business enterprises but operate as non-profit organizations	Global Village of Beijing; Institute of Environment and Development
Unregistered voluntary groups	Unregistered organizations that function as NGOs	Green Earth Volunteers
Web-based groups	Unregistered groups that operate mainly through the internet	Green-Web; Greener Beijing
Student environmental associations	Registered with campus Youth Leagues yet function and perceived as NGOs[b]	Sichuan University Environmental Volunteer Association
University research centres/institutes	Affiliated with institutions of higher learning but operate as NGOs	Centre for Legal Assistance to Pollution Victims, China University of Political Science and Law
Government-organized NGOs (GONGOs)	Social organizations established by government agencies, also known as state-owned NGOs (SONGOs)[c]	China Environmental Science Association

Notes:

[a]Friends of Nature is registered as a secondary organization (*erji zuzhi*) yet operates as an independent NGO both administratively and financially.

[b]Zhao Xiumei, "Guanyu Beijing huanbao de diaocha fenxi" ("A survey and analysis of environmental NGOs in Beijing), in Wang Ming (ed.), *Zhongguo NGO yanjiu*, UNCRD Report Series No. 38 (Beijing: UNCRD and Qinghua University, 2000), pp. 37–50.

[c]Nick Young, "Introduction: searching for civil society," in China Development Brief (ed.), *250 Chinese NGOs: Civil Society in the Making* (Beijing, 2001), p. 13.

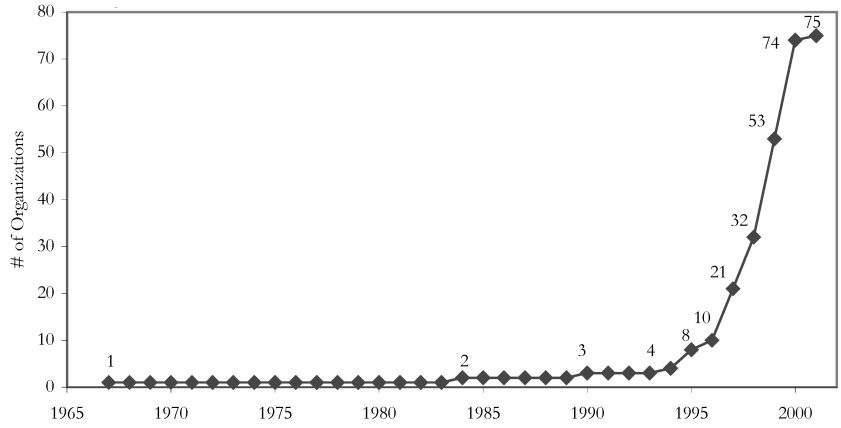
of ENGOs as much as the political field, the mass media, the internet and international NGOs.

The development of environmental NGOs took off in the mid-1990s and accelerated within a few years. In 1994, there were only nine ENGOs, including four student organizations. By 1996, the number had grown to 28, including ten student organizations. The number increased dramatically from 1997 to 1999, when at least 69 ENGOs were founded, 43 of which were student organizations. By April 2001, the total number of student environmental organizations had reached 184, and by 2002,

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non-student ENGOs had grown to 73.[14] Figure 2 shows the growth of university student environmental associations from 1967 to 2001 and Figure 3 the growth of non-student ENGOs from 1985 to 2002.

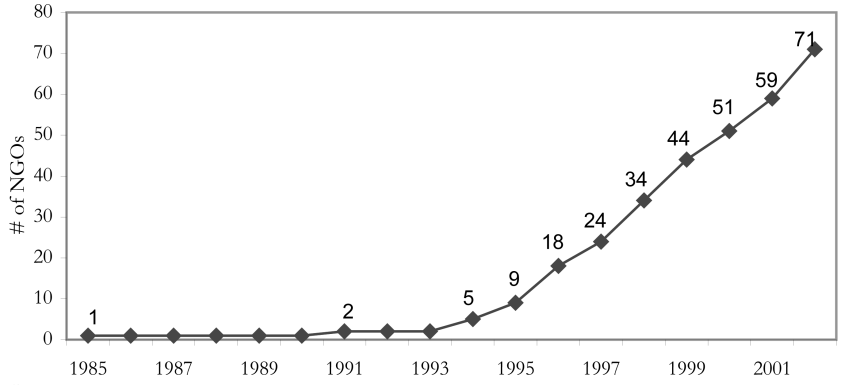
Figure 2: **Growth in Student Environmental Associations, 1967–2001**



Source:

Lu Hongyan, "Zhongguo gaoxiao huanbao shetuan xianzhuang diaocha" ("A survey of the current conditions of university environmental associations in China") (Chengdu: Sichuan University, 2001)

Figure 3: **Growth in (non-student) Environmental Associations, 1985–2002**



Sources:

Jennifer Turner (ed.), *China Environmental Series*, Issue 5 (2002); Tsinghua University NGO Research Centre (ed.), *500 NGOs in China*; China Development Brief (ed.), *250 Chinese NGOs*; Friends of Nature web site (http://www.fon.org.cn).

14. This figure does not include ENGOs founded in or after 2003, student environmental associations, or GONGOs. There are no fixed and objective criteria for judging which organization is or is not a GONGO, but as a rule, I have excluded the environmental organizations contained in Chen Dongdong, *A Compendium of Social Organizations*, which are all traditional GONGOs. The statistics on student environmental associations come from a survey conducted by Lu Hongyan and her associates in Sichuan University in April 2001. Note that my counting yields 73 non-student ENGOs, but because the founding dates of two of them are unknown, Figure 3 shows only 71. Lu's survey comes up with 184 student organizations, yet the dataset has information on the founding dates of 75 only, as reflected in Figure 2.

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Mixed Collective Action Repertoires

The diverse ENGOs in China all aim to promote environmental consciousness, sustainable development and public participation. To achieve these goals, they have adopted a mixture of traditional and new collective action repertoires.[15] Typically, they avoid confrontational methods and adopt approaches that encourage learning, co-operation and participation. Common practices include public lectures, workshops and conferences, salon discussions, field trips, publication of newsletters and multimedia documents, and new forms of "electronic action" such as online discussions, online mailing lists and internet petitions.[16] Although some organizations are edging their way into more contentious areas,[17] the general tendency has been to shy away from radical issues and tactics.

While avoiding confrontational tactics, ENGOs often resort to what Kevin O'Brien refers to as boundary-spanning contention. Located "near the boundary between official, prescribed politics and politics by other means,"[18] such contention takes advantage of political grey zones to advance contestable claims and extract concessions and often "employs the rhetoric and commitments of the powerful to curb political or economic power."[19] "Raised to an art form during the years of the Cultural Revolution," as Elizabeth Perry puts it,[20] the practice of using the regime's own words as a weapon of protest, resistance and collective action continues to be a common and effective strategy in China today. Thus, under the protective umbrella of the state policy of sustainable development,[21] ENGOs promote an environmental discourse of democratic values and citizen participation. Tang Xiyang, a leading environmentalist and founder of Green Camp, puts this forcefully when he writes that "without real democratic life, there will not be everlasting

15. Collective action repertoire refers to "the ways that people act together in pursuit of shared interests," such as strikes, demonstrations and sit-ins. See Charles Tilly, *Popular Contention in Great Britain: 1758–1834* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 41.

16. On electronic repertoire of collective action, see Peter J. Smith and Elizabeth Smythe, "Globalization, citizenship and technology: the MAI meets the internet," in Frank Webster (ed.), *Culture and Politics in the Information Age: A New Politics?* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 183–206 and Guobin Yang, "How does the internet change the dynamics of protest: a case from China," paper presented at the conference on "Authority in Contention," University of Notre Dame, 14–15 August 2002.

17. Guobin Yang, "Is there an environmental movement in China? Beware of the river of anger," paper presented at the forum on "Active Society in Formation: Environmentalism, Labor, and the Underworld in China," Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 18 May 2004.

18. Kevin J. O'Brien, "Neither transgressive nor contained: boundary-spanning contention in China," *Mobilization*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2003), p. 51.

19. *Ibid*. p. 53.

20. Elizabeth Perry, " 'To rebel is justified': Cultural Revolution influences on contemporary Chinese protest," in Kam-yee Law (ed.), *The Chinese Cultural Revolution Reconsidered: Beyond Purge and Holocaust* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), p. 274.

21. See *China's Agenda 21 – White Paper on China's Population, Environment, and Development in the 21st Century*, adopted by the State Council of the People's Republic of China on 25 March 1994.

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green rivers or mountains."[22] Under the same umbrella, ENGOs in minority regions have argued that sustainable development also means the protection of local cultures, communities, and lifestyles.[23]

A final form of repertoire is legal action. Legal action to protect pollution victims and fight polluting industries has been on the rise, owing to the efforts of organizations such as the Centre for Legal Assistance to Pollution Victims. This organization operates a telephone hotline that has received thousands of phone calls about environmental legal issues. It has taken more than 30 cases to court on behalf of pollution victims, winning about half.[24] Although the centre is one of a kind, its activities have symbolic importance. They reflect the growing rights consciousness in Chinese society and also help to promote it.[25] As its associate director Xu Kezhu notes, more and more people are beginning "to resort to legal weapons to protect their legitimate rights."[26]

The diverse forms of action repertoire represent some important new developments in political participation in China. Given significant continuities between earlier and contemporary forms of protest in China,[27] it is crucial to underscore the new features as exemplified in the activities of ENGOs. Closer to institutionalized than non-institutionalized politics, this repertoire aims more at publicity and participation than at protest and disruption.[28] It differs from the more radical forms of contention in the history of the PRC such as mass demonstrations, rallies and the posting of big-character wall posters and resembles the more moderate current of contemporary environmental movements as discussed by some Western social scientists.[29] As shown below, some ENGOs can effectively use a

22. Tang Xiyang, *Cuo! Cuo! Cuo!* (*Wrong! Wrong! Wrong!*) (unpublished book manuscript, n.d., personal collection). English translations of Chinese materials in this article are by the author.

23. Haxi Zhaxiduojie, "A call from the three-river source," in Friends of Nature (ed.), *Promoting Sustainable Development: What Can We Do – Documents of Chinese NGO Workshop on the second GEF Assembly* (Beijing, 2003), pp. 6–8.

24. Wan Xuezhong, "Rexian bangzhule wan ming shouhaizhe" ("Hotline gives help to ten thousand victims"), *Fazhi ribao* (*Legal Daily News*), 27 November 2002.

25. Of the growing literature on rights consciousness, see Minxin Pei, "Rights and resistance: the changing contexts of the dissident movement," in Elizabeth J. Perry and Mark Selden, *Chinese Society: Change, Conflict and Resistance* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 20–40; Kevin O'Brien, "Rightful resistance," *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (1996), pp. 31–55; and Deborah S. Davis, "Chinese homeowners as citizen-consumers," in Sheldon Garon and Patricia Maclachlan (eds.), *Consumer Culture and its Discontents*, forthcoming.

26. Cited in Lu Min, "Wuran shouhaizhe rang women lai bangzhu ni" ("Pollution victims: we can help"), *Jingji cankao bao* (*Economic Reference News*), 20 April 2002, p. 6.

27. Craig Calhoun and Jeffrey Wasserstrom, "The Cultural Revolution and the democracy movement of 1989: complexity in historical connections," in Kam-yee Law, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution Reconsidered*, pp. 241–261 and Perry, " 'To rebel is justified'."

28. Environmental protests by pollution victims, however, are on the rise. See Jun Jing, "Environmental protests in rural China," in Perry and Selden, *Chinese Society*, pp. 143–160. There have also been protest activities surrounding the Three Gorges Dam project. See International Rivers Network, "Human rights dammed off at Three Gorges," January 2003 (http://www.irn.org/programs/threeg/3gcolor.pdf). I thank an anonymous reviewer for directing me to the International Rivers Network.

29. See Russell Dalton, *The Green Rainbow: Environmental Groups in Western Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994) and Donatella della Porta and Dieter Rucht, "The dynamics of environmental campaigns," *Mobilization*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2002), pp. 1–14.

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mixture of traditional and new forms of collective action to influence policy.

Political Opportunities and Constraints

To explain the rise of Chinese ENGOs, I now turn to the field dynamics, starting with politics. China's changing political field presents both opportunities and constraints for ENGOs. A major facilitating condition is what Peter Ho refers to as the "greening" of the state, namely, the process whereby the state has developed environmental laws and policies and built state institutions for executing or monitoring them. Since promulgating China's first environmental law in 1979, the government has established environmental protection agencies at the national, provincial and local levels, thus institutionalizing environmental protection. China has also promulgated an extensive body of environmental laws.[30]

Secondly, in recent years, the Chinese government has encouraged the development of a "third force" for handling growing social problems. For example, in his closing speech at the Fourth National Environmental Protection Conference in 1996, State Councillor Song Jian commended "environmental mass organizations" such as Friends of Nature and called for support for the "healthy development of these organizations."[31] The Beijing Joint Declaration on Poverty Alleviation by Chinese NGOs, an official document of the International Conference on NGO Poverty Reduction Policy held in 2001, called on NGOs to act as a third force in providing assistance to marginalized groups.[32] Lastly, two regulations promulgated in 1998 provide the regulative framework for the registration and management of social organizations and non-profit organizations.[33] These regulations represent official recognition of the legal status of such organizations.

These same regulations, however, also contain very limiting articles. For instance, they require applicants to have a sponsoring institution, which presents a major hurdle to registration because an NGO is considered a liability not an asset to its sponsoring institution.[34] They further stipulate that in the same administrative area there should not be more than one organization for any specific area of work (such as

30. On problems in implementation, see William P. Alford and Yuanyuan Shen, "The limits of the law in addressing China's environmental dilemma," in Michael B. McElroy, Chris P. Nielsen and Peter Lydon (eds.), *Energizing China: Reconciling Environmental Protection and Economic Growth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Committee on Environment and Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 406.

31. Cited in *Friends of Nature Newsletter*, No. 3 (1996).

32. "Chinese NGOs to work with government for poverty reduction," *Renmin ribao* (*People's Daily*) Online, 28 October 2001.

33. For English translations of the two regulations, see China Development Brief, *250 Chinese NGOs*, pp. 290–98.

34. Jin Jiaman, "The growing importance of public participation in China's environmental movement," in Jennifer Turner and Fengshi Wu (eds.), *Green NGO and Environmental Journalist Forum: A Meeting of Environmentalists in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan* (Washington, DC: The Woodrow Wilson Center, 2001), pp. 5–8.

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environmental protection). In many cases, GONGOs have already filled that fixed quota.

The diverse organizational forms of ENGOs reflect the political opportunities and constraints. The restrictive regulative framework explains why some organizations are registered as NGOs and others as non-profit enterprises. The existence of the latter reflects organizational adaptation to this political condition.[35] The proliferation of student associations results from the relative ease of establishing them, as they are not required to follow the same registration procedures as social organizations. It is harder to explain the existence of some unregistered yet very active NGOs. Strictly speaking, unregistered organizations are illegal, yet, for example, Green Earth Volunteers and Han Hai Sha not only operate publicly but enjoy considerable limelight. This indicates the state's tolerance of voluntary organizing around environmental issues and the possibility for civil society organizations to negotiate political spaces.

The mixture of action repertoires also reflects the political opportunities and constraints. The use of non-confrontational methods is a strategic choice for organizations at a fledgling stage of growth, when radical challenges against the state are out of the question. Peter Ho cites Liao Xiaoyi, director of Global Village of Beijing, to interpret the adoption of non-confrontational strategies. When asked about the use of radical methods to challenge the government, Liao responded: "We still adhere to our principles: guide the public instead of blaming them and help the government instead of complaining about it. … I don't appreciate extremist methods. I'm engaged in environmental protection and don't want to use it for political aims."[36]

Environmental action without explicit political aims may still be political, however. It is politics by other means. Examples are the various forms of boundary-spanning contention and rights-based legal action discussed above. This kind of politics thrives on political ambiguities.

Homologous Relationship with the Media

The Chinese media have been strong supporters of ENGOs from the very beginning, partly due to the "greening" of the media.[37] This is evident in the extensive coverage of ENGOs[38] and in media profes-

35. As Jin Jiaman notes, the existence of non-profit enterprises reflects Chinese NGOs' strategic adaptation to restrictive government regulations. See Jin Jiaman, "The growing importance of public participation in China's environmental movement."

36. Cited in Ho, "Greening without conflict?" p. 916.

37. Wen Bo, "Greening the Chinese media," *China Environment Series*, Issue 2 (1998), pp. 39–44.

38. From April 1994 to July 1999, for example, Friends of Nature were featured in 75 newspapers and magazines in China and 29 in other countries. See *Friends of Nature Newsletter*, No. 3 (1998). Green Camp was covered in more than 100 newspaper and magazine articles from 1996 to 2000. See Green Camp (ed.), *Green Camp 2000* (unofficial publication, author's collection). Even an unregistered web-group such as Greener Beijing has been covered by national newspapers and television. See Greener Beijing, "Guanyu lüse Beijing" ("An introduction to Greener Beijing") (unpublished organizational document, 2002, author's collection).

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sionals' direct participation as ENGO organizers or members.[39] The close ties between the media and the environment once prompted Liang Congjie, president of Friends of Nature, to claim that "China has the greenest media in the world."[40]

World-wide, the media are generally sympathetic and supportive of environmental movements.[41] Thus the alliance between the media and ENGOs in China may well reflect an international pattern, indicating the news-making value of environmental issues. Such an alliance, however, also reflects deeper and more complex relations among different institutional fields in China. ENGOs and the media are influenced by the same changing political system. Chinese media professionals are in an awkward position, having to "please and serve two masters": the Party superiors who have political authority over the press and the market which puts economic constraints on it.[42] Sandwiched between these two forces, they have attempted to expand their professional autonomy since the 1980s.[43] Thus the media share structurally similar positions with ENGOs. Environmental issues are news-worthy, loaded with moral and political meanings and policy implications, yet politically safe because they fall in line with the state policy of sustainable development. Media reports about environmental problems can be critical – and thus assert some degree of media autonomy – without directly challenging state legitimacy.

Such structural homology fosters a reciprocal relationship between the media and ENGOs. Thus the editor of the *China Green Times* Hu Kanping, himself an active environmentalist, notes that by participating in environmental activities, his staff have enhanced his newspaper's reputation and attracted more readers, while the ENGOs with which they collaborated also benefited.[44] Such structural homology explains why ENGOs have found a close ally in the media, and vice versa.

International NGOs

The presence of international NGOs (INGOs) in China is relatively recent. Although several organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund

39. Green Camp, Green Earth Volunteers, Green Plateau, Tibetan Antelope Information Centre, Tianjin Friends of Green, Panjin Black-Beaked Gull Protection Association are all led by journalists or former journalists. Friends of Nature has some influential journalists in its membership.

40. *Friends of Nature Newsletter*, No. 3 (1998).

41. Russell Dalton, *The Green Rainbow*, pp. 166 and 185. Norman R. Eder, *Poisoned Prosperity: Development, Modernization, and the Environment in South Korea* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996).

42. Hong Liu, "Profit or ideology? The Chinese press between Party and market," *Media, Culture & Society*, No. 20 (1998), p. 37.

43. Judy Polumbaum, " 'Professionalism' in China's press corps," in Roger v. des Forges, Luo Ning and Wu Yen-bo (eds.), *Chinese Democracy and the Crisis of 1989* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993). pp. 295–311.

44. Hu Kanping, "Harmony in diversity: the relationship between environmental journalism and green NGOs in China," in Turner and Wu, *Green NGO and Environmental Journalist Forum*, pp. 30–31.

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(now the World Wide Fund for Nature) and the International Crane Foundation began operating in the mid-1980s, it was not until the late 1990s that many INGOs began to launch projects or offices in China. According to a recent source there are 33 INGOs with 91 environmental projects in China.[45] An inventory of ENGOs released in April 2003 lists seven environmental INGOs with offices or branches in Beijing, including the Jane Goodall Institute, the World Wide Fund for Nature, Friends of the Earth (Hong Kong) and Greenpeace.[46]

Chinese ENGOs are in a symbiotic relationship with INGOs. The latter generally have global agendas and often form partnerships with local NGOs.[47] They build such partnerships by providing material and non-material support, while local NGOs gain funding, prestige and expertise. For Chinese ENGOs, INGOs provide expertise and prestige by running conferences, workshops, seminars, lectures and the like. For example, the Institute of Environment and Development in Beijing runs the China Chapter of Leadership for Environment and Development, an international training programme based in New York. Public lectures given by well-known international environmentalists such as Jane Goodall draw large audiences. The "Earth Award" established by Friends of the Earth (Hong Kong) and the "Conservation and Environment Grants" by the Ford Motor Company exert wide influence by publicly honouring outstanding Chinese environmentalists.

Available data indicate that INGO funding of Chinese ENGOs is significant.[48] From 1996 to 1999, 85 per cent of the funding for the Global Village of Beijing came from INGOs and foreign governments while the domestic private sector contributed only 10 per cent.[49] In 2000, 52 per cent of the total revenue (RMB 2.5 million) of Friends of Nature came from foreign sources.[50] The Centre of Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge in Kunming received most of its project funding (US$203,000) for 2002 from INGOs.[51] Even many student environmental associations have received small amounts of international funding.[52] In

45. *China Environment Series,* Issue 5 (2002).

46. Yan Wenjie, Tanja Ploetz and Eva Sternfeld, "Environmental NGOs in the Beijing area." (Beijing: China Environment and Sustainable Development Reference and Research Centre, 2003) (unpublished document, courtesy of its authors).

47. Paul Wapner, *Environmental Activism and World Civic Politics* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996).

48. One estimate in 1999 puts the total funding China receives from INGOs at US$100 million each year, a sum roughly equivalent to the combined annual China budgets of IFAD, ILO, FAO, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, Unicef, UNIDO, WFP and WHO. Nick Young, "Introduction to *Directory of International NGOs Working in China*" (Beijing: China Development Brief, 1999) (http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.com/page.asp?sec = 4&sub = 4&pg = 0). Accessed 23 June 2003.

49. Feng Ling, "Beijing diqiucun huanjing wenhua zhongxin" ("The environmental culture centre of global village of Beijing"), in Wang Ming (ed.), *Zhongguo NGO yanjiu* (*Studies of NGOs in China*), p. 151.

50. Hu Wen'an, "Ziran zhiyou" ("Friends of Nature"), in *ibid.* p. 175.

51. Center of Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge, "Annual Report 2002" (http://www.cbik.ac.cn/cbik/about_us/download/Report2002.doc). Accessed 23 June 2003.

52. Lu Hongyan, "Bamboo sprouts after the rain: the history of university student environmental associations in China," *China Environment Series*, Issue 6 (2003), pp. 55–65.

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general, the bigger and more prestigious organizations have obtained more funding than the smaller ones. In some cases, bigger NGOs function as intermediary organizations to channel international funding into smaller, local groups. Thus Friends of Nature, the Centre of Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge and GreenSOS (a student organization in Chengdu, Sichuan) have all received international funding to provide small grants to local groups.

Political scientists have argued that transnational advocacy networks exert influences at various levels. As far as domestic NGOs are concerned, these networks may help to legitimate their values and norms and increase their capacity and resources.[53] As key actors in transnational advocacy networks, INGOs play such roles to varying degrees. It appears that the Chinese experience so far largely conforms to these patterns of influences. However it is too early to tell how such external influences may shape the long-term development of China's ENGOs.[54]

The Role of the Internet

The growth of ENGOs coincided with the development of the internet in China. Friends of Nature was founded in the same year that China was connected to the internet.[55] After 1998, the year when the internet became popularized in China, the number of users began to grow rapidly. There were 10,000 internet users in 1994, 620,000 in October 1997 and 2.1 million in December 1998.[56] At the same time, the increase in the number of environmental groups in 1998 and 1999 was bigger than any other two years combined. This trend is particularly clear for student groups. Figure 4 shows the growth of internet users from 1997 to 2002.

The internet matters to ENGOs in several ways. First, internet use has led to the birth of web-based organizations. With the diffusion of the internet, personal environmental websites and green virtual communities appeared. Some of these evolved into web-based NGOs. One example is Green-Web. Before Green-Web was set up in 1999, its main founder had spent two years as a volunteer web master for the online bulletin board "Green Forum" of Netease.com, an influential portal site. The idea of launching an independent web-based environmental group first arose from discussions in the "Green Forum." With about 4,000 registered

53. Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

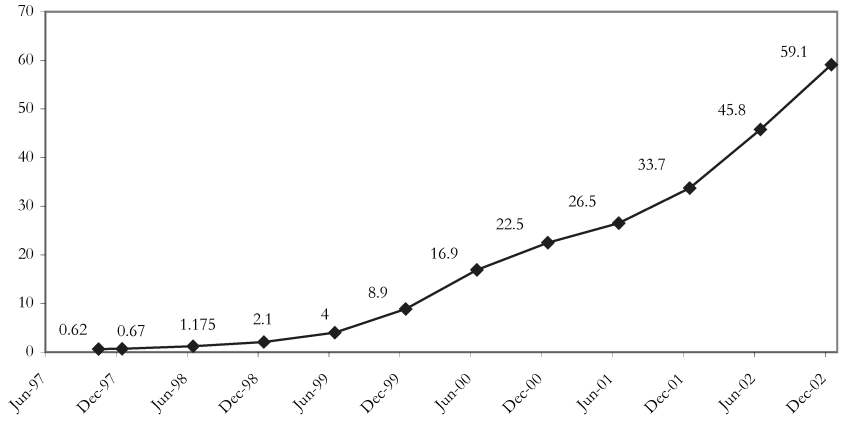
54. There has been much debate about the viability of external aid. For one influential critical analysis, see Michael Edwards and David Hulme, "Too close for comfort? The impact of official aid on non-governmental organizations," *World Development* Vol. 24, No. 6 (1996), pp. 961–973.

55. In 1994, the National Science Foundation in USA approved China's request to be linked to the internet, whereupon China achieved full-function internet linkage. For a chronology of internet development in China, see "Evolution of the Internet in China" (http://www.cnnic.net.cn/evolution.shtml). Retrieved 15 July 2003.

56. The China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) defines Chinese internet users as Chinese citizens who use the internet at least one hour per week.

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Figure 4: **Growth in Internet Users in China, 1997–2002 (millions of people)**



Source:
China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) (http://www.cnnic.net.cn/develst).

users, Green-Web currently functions as a space for online discussion and information exchange.[57]

Secondly, for web-based ENGOs, the internet makes up for their lack of resources and helps to overcome some political constraints. While the restrictive regulations create barriers to registering an NGO, web-based groups can stake out an existence on the internet. They publicize environmental information, debate environmental issues, organize activities and mobilize volunteers by email, mailing-lists, electronic newsletters and bulletin boards, as well as conventional means of communication. For example, Greener Beijing's online discussion forums have been catalysts for "offline" activism. In 1999, online discussions about recycling batteries inspired some middle school students in Xiamen city to organize a successful community battery recycling programme.[58]

All types of ENGOs, not just web-based groups, use the internet for various purposes. Of the 71 ENGOs covered in Figure 3, 38 have organizational web sites as of August 2003.[59] More than half of these have bulletin boards. Many web sites, such as Human & Nature in Harmony (www.enviroinfo.org.cn) run by the Institute for Environment and Development, are important tools for public environmental education. Similarly, bulletin boards are useful spaces for information,

57. Interview with a Green-Web leader, June 2002. For details about Green-Web and several other web-based groups, see Guobin Yang, "Weaving a green web: the internet and environmental activism in China," *China Environment Series*, Issue 6 (2003), pp. 89–92.
58. *Ibid.*
59. I first searched for web site information in print or electronic materials about these NGOs. For those with no such information in these sources, I conducted a search in August 2003 using the Chinese search engine baidu.com by typing in the Chinese names of the organizations. Many student environmental associations also have web sites but are not counted here.

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discussion and solidarity building. As of 18 March 2004, the bulletin board system run by Friends of Nature had 2,380 registered users and 14,151 postings. The first user was registered on 7 November 2000. This means that by March 2004, on average every registered user had posted six messages, and about a dozen messages were posted daily. This represents a high level of activity for a specialized bulletin board.

In many parts of the world, civil society actors were early adopters of the internet because of a high degree of affinity between NGO culture and internet culture.[60] This observation appears to apply to Chinese ENGOs. Nevertheless, Chinese ENGOs' embracing of the internet also reflects their adaptation to China's political conditions. Thus web-based groups are both products of the internet and responses to political constraints. The political field makes it difficult for voluntary groups to register[61] while the lack of a registered status puts limits on organizational development, yet the internet has provided some new opportunities.

Organizational Entrepreneurs

While ENGOs *in toto* are emerging as a new field of action, the development of individual organizations is uneven. A crucial factor is leadership.[62] ENGOs must mobilize resources through interactions with players in their own field as well as in other fields (such as journalists in the media). In this process, organizations with resourceful leaders have an advantage, because these entrepreneurs can mobilize their cultural prestige, social networks, economic capital, political positions and personal skills to boost organizational development. These forms of capital are not equally distributed. Some leaders have more political connections while others have more cultural capital or money. Both the volume and types of capital count in the resource mobilization process.

The organizational entrepreneurs in Chinese ENGOs fall into at least three types. One type combines cultural prestige with political capital. The exemplary case is Liang Congjie, the founder of Friends of Nature. Liang is a professor of history and vice-president of the influential Academy of Chinese Culture and a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. He is the grandson of Liang Qichao, an important political and cultural figure in modern Chinese history. Liang's positions and background may translate into political influence,

60. Patti Whaley, "Human rights NGOs: our love-hate relationship with the internet," in Steven Hick, Edward F. Halpin and Eric Hoskins (eds.), *Human Rights and the Internet* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2000), p. 34.

61. The political field also shapes the development of the internet, indicating that environmental NGOs may be in a homologous relationship with the internet vis-à-vis the political field.

62. On the role of leadership in building social organizations in China, see Edward X. Gu, "Plural institutionalism and the emergence of intellectual public spaces in China," and Mark Sidel, "Dissident and liberal legal scholars and organizations in Beijing and the Chinese state in the 1980s," in Deborah Davis, Richard Kraus, Barry Naughton, and Elizabeth Perry (eds.), *Urban Spaces in Contemporary China* (Washington, DC and New York: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 326–346.

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social connections and cultural prestige. He quickly became a representative figure of China's environmental movement, was selected to meet US President Bill Clinton and British Prime Minister Tony Blair during their respective visit to China in 1998, and received many international awards. These honours brought both prestige and resources to his organization.

A second type of organizational entrepreneur is strong in professional expertise and international connections. An example is Liao Xiaoyi, founder of Global Village of Beijing (GVB). She has an MA degree in philosophy and studied international environmental politics in North Carolina State University from 1992 to 1995. In March 1996, because of difficulties in registering an NGO, she registered GVB as a business entity but has run it as an NGO. Its growth has depended significantly on foreign funding. Liao's educational experience in the United States and personal ties with international organizations have helped in her fund-raising efforts.[63] Under Liao's leadership, GVB quickly developed a reputation. She was also among those invited to meet the visiting US President Bill Clinton in 1998. In 2000, Liao won the prestigious Sophie Prize, a major international environmental prize.

Entrepreneurs of a third type can hardly boast of the kind of capital possessed by the other two types. Usually of the younger generation, they build organizations under the influence of well-established NGOs, because of personal experience or out of concern with environmental issues. They tend to have more technical skills, such as in using computers. The founder of the web-based Greener Beijing, not surprisingly, had a passion for both the internet and environmental issues. His computer skills helped to win web design awards – and public recognition – for Greener Beijing.[64] The founders of the Tibetan Antelope Information Centre and several other organizations were veterans of Green Camp. Participating in Green Camp gave them the training and experience in running an organization.

All three types of leadership are important. They each mobilize the resources available to them to build different types of organizations. Yet in the environmental field as a whole, bigger organizations assume leadership roles while smaller ones tend to play a supportive role. Thus the long-term growth of the environmental field hinges on the flagship organizations. Paradoxically, the importance of charismatic organizational entrepreneurs in building some flagship organizations may be a constraining factor because of the excessive reliance on such leadership.[65] If charismatic leaders are essential for creating organizations, long-term organizational growth depends on a professional staff and new

63. Feng Ling, "The environmental culture centre of global village of Beijing."

64. Li Yanchun, "Wangju lüse liliang de ren: 'Lüse Beijing' wangzhan he ta de zhanzhu GBJ" ("The man who builds green power on the net: on 'Greener Beijing' and its webmaster GBJ"), *Beijing qingnian bao* (*Beijing Youth Daily*), 3 November 2000, p. 20.

65. Peter Ho also calls attention to this problem. See Ho, "Greening without conflict?" p. 914.

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generations of leaders.[66] This process will be crucial to the long-term sustainability of these organizations.

Social Experience and Self-Fulfilment

What about followers? Why do they join or participate? Studies of other types of social organizations in China suggest that they may have attracted members because they facilitate access to and extract resources from the state, defend members' interests and protect members against the anarchy of the market.[67] Insofar as ENGOs aim at protecting the environment (which is a public good), they do not just protect their own members' interests but the interests of society. How then do they attract participants?

Except for some GONGOs, all ENGOs have a very small professional staff – not more than 20 for even the largest organizations. As of July 2002, Global Village of Beijing had 11 staff members; Friends of Nature and the Institute of Environment and Development each had 12, although five of the 12 staff members in Friends of Nature were part-time. Because of their small staff size, ENGOs rely heavily on volunteers and in some cases due-paying members. These are predominantly college students or recent graduates. The membership base of university student associations is naturally the student body. About 60 per cent of the 1,500 individual members of Friends of Nature are below the age of 35 while its 24 group members are mostly student associations.[68] As of October 2002, the web-based group Tibetan Antelope Information Centre lists 15 principal volunteers on its web site, all below the age of 27. Other groups that depend significantly on college volunteers include Greener Beijing, Green River, Green-Web, Beijing Animal Protection and Education Base, and Green Volunteer League of Chongqing.

Individuals join ENGOs or participate in their activities for different reasons. Two are notable. First, participation in ENGOs offers social recognition and prestige through media visibility and ties with international organizations. When asked why students were such keen environmentalists, a student leader responded that one main reason was the public visibility offered by the media.[69] Secondly and more importantly, environmental activities offer meaningful and even fun experiences for self-exploration and socializing, including training in leadership, skills in interpersonal relations and exposure to new horizons of life.[70] Green

66. Charismatic authority is inherently unstable and impermanent. To achieve a degree of permanence, charisma often undergoes routinization, a process whereby "a unique, transitory gift of grace of extraordinary times and persons" is transformed into "a permanent possession of everyday life." See Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, 2 vols. edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (New York: Free Press, 1968), p. 1121.

67. White, Howell and Shang, *In Search of Civil Society*, pp. 122–24.

68. Email correspondence with FON staff, 13 November 2002.

69. Personal correspondence, 20 October 2002.

70. Socializing and having fun are important personal rewards of participating in volunteer activities. Their role in motivating public participation must not be underestimated. For an

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Camp is a case in point. Green Camp has attracted many university students since its inception in 1996. It enjoys much media visibility. With their adventures and group camaraderie, Green Camp journeys provide memorable and sometimes even transformative personal experiences. Many participants have written about their experiences. For example, one student wrote: "After a month's life in the green camp, I feel I've grown. My horizons are broadened. What I got is not only an understanding of China's environmental problems, but also what I learned from my communication and interaction with other campers."[71]

Three Illustrative Cases

To illustrate how environmental NGOs organize activities and interact with other institutional fields, three cases will be presented. The first is the campaign to protect the Tibetan antelope,[72] an endangered species on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. With the increase of illegal poaching, local governments began organizing anti-poaching patrols in 1992, yet their efforts suffered repeated setbacks. In early 1998, environmental NGOs began to mobilize public support for the anti-poaching efforts. In September 1998, together with *Zhongguo linye bao* (*China Forestry Daily*), Friends of Nature invited the leader of the local anti-poaching team to Beijing to give public presentations. In November 1998, his mysterious death galvanized China's ENGOs into further action. Within about a month, Friends of Nature and the International Fund for Animal Welfare raised CNY 400,000 (US$48,437) for the anti-poaching patrols. A web-based NGO, the Tibetan Antelope Information Centre, was established to disseminate information about the protection of the Tibetan antelope. Its work was supported with grants from the International Fund for Animal Welfare, the World Wide Fund for Nature and Global Greengrants. In April 1999, at the recommendation of Friends of Nature, the police force of Tibet, Qinghai and Xinjiang took inter-provincial anti-poaching action.

The second case concerns an online petition. In February 2002, Green-Web launched an online campaign to stop a local government in suburban

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footnote continued

influential theoretical discussion, see Albert O. Hirschman, *Shifting Involvements: Private Interest and Public Action* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982). For analyses of such motivations in environmental volunteering, see Herbert W. Schroeder, "The restoration experience: volunteers' motives, values, and concepts of nature," in Paul H. Gobster and R. Bruce Hull (eds.), *Restoring Nature: Perspectives from the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2000), pp. 247–264 and Robert E. Grese, Rachel Kaplan, Robert L. Ryan and Jane Buxton, "Psychological benefits of volunteering in stewardship programs," in Gobster and Hull, *Restoring Nature*, pp. 265–280.

71. Zeng Liwen, "Lüse zhi lu" ("My green road"), in *Baqian li lu yun he yue: 2000 Zhongguo daxuesheng lüseying wenji* (*Eight Thousand Miles of Clouds and Moon: Essays from the 2000 Chinese University Students Green Camp*) (Beijing, 2000), p. 61 (unofficial publication, author's collection).

72. My discussion of this case is based on an interview with an activist in the campaign and on Liang Congjie, "Many successes – but much more still needs to be done," *Friends of Nature Newsletter*, No. 2 (1999).

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Beijing from building an entertainment complex, a project that threatened to destroy the neighbouring wetlands, a bird habitat. This project was exposed in the media in October 2001. Joining a rising campaign, Green-Web organized an online petition from 2 February to 12 April 2002. The campaign collected hundreds of online signatures and sent petition letters to about ten government agencies. Under this pressure, the local government suspended the plan.[73]

The third case is a successful policy advocacy effort by Green River. In June 2002, volunteers at Green River's ecological monitoring station on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau found that thousands of migrating Tibetan antelopes were blocked by the construction of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway. The volunteers studied the animals' migrating patterns and found out where and when they were most likely to cross the road. They also counted the passing vehicles and found that each hour more than 100 vehicles would pass through. Based on their research, the volunteers drafted a policy brief recommending that every day from 6.30am to 7.30am and from 7.30pm to 8.30pm from 8 August to 18 August 2002, all vehicles should stop at both ends of a designated section of the road (about 120 km long) to make way for the migrating antelopes. This policy was adopted and implemented by the construction headquarters.[74]

Brief as they are, these cases illustrate the inter-field dynamics and show Chinese ENGOs in action. The three main organizations involved are quite different in size and resources. Friends of Nature is the oldest, the best known and the most influential. Green River is a younger organization but its leader Yang Xin is a well-known environmentalist. It is the only ENGO in China with its own ecological monitoring station. Green-Web is both the smallest and the largest of the three organizations. It is not registered and doesn't even have its own office space, yet it has about 4,000 registered internet users.[75] All three campaigns relied on the mobilization of the media. Two of them made effective use of the internet. One campaign drew significant financial support from international NGOs. The action repertoire used in the campaigns were non-confrontational but diverse, including both more conventional forms such as collecting signatures and writing petition letters and newer tactics such as public presentations, field trips, online petitions and setting up web sites for information dissemination. These NGO campaigns produced positive results.

Conclusion: Environmental NGOs and Democratization

Comparative studies suggest that environmental movements may produce democratic change.[76] This study suggests that Chinese environmen-

73. For details about the petition, see http://www.green-web.org/zt/wetland/.

74. For more details about this case, see Friends of Nature, *Promoting Sustainable Development: What Can We Do,* pp. 56–57.

75. Interview with a leader of Green-Web, June 2002.

76. Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao, "Environmental movements in Taiwan," in Yok-shiu F. Lee and Alvin Y. So (eds.), *Asia's Environmental Movements: Comparative Perspectives*

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tal NGOs may function as both *sites* and *agents* of political change. Emerging from interactions with politics and other fields, ENGOs constitute a new field where citizens may practise political skills, organize and participate in civic action, and test political limits. This new field of action sometimes assumes the form of onsite "schools," offering organizational channels for citizen participation and providing experience and training to a new generation of activists.[77] This new generation, the reform cohort, differs from earlier generations (such as the Cultural Revolution generation) in that they have not been involved in radical social activism. Environmentalism gives them an opportunity to participate in social causes, albeit through less radical means. ENGOs are also "laboratories" of political action. They test the limits of Chinese politics by operating without formal registration, organizing activities without prior official approval, engaging in various forms of boundary-spanning contention and building strategic alliances with other fields.

As agents of change, ENGOs help to open up the political field and expand civil society. This comes out in three ways. First, the rise of ENGOs has a discursive outcome: it launches public debates and media campaigns about environmental issues, thus introducing a new environmental discourse into the public sphere. As I noted earlier, this environmental discourse affirms democratic values of civic participation, mutual respect, and personal responsibility. Secondly, the development of ENGOs contributes to the larger current of civil society development in China. This larger current includes the emergence of other types of NGOs, such as social welfare organizations, women's organizations and organizations for people with disabilities, rural development, and poverty alleviation. Jointly, they may provide the necessary organizational basis for a vibrant civil society, which itself is often considered as a foundation for democracy.[78] Finally, the development of ENGOs may shape Chinese politics in the long run. Their efforts to deal with environmental problems through the use of non-confrontational, boundary-spanning or legal action may gradually push back political boundaries and induce changes in the relationship between state and citizens and between state and

footnote continued

(Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1999), pp. 31–54.; Barbara Jancar-Webster, "Environmental politics in Eastern Europe in the 1980s," in Joan DeBardeleben (ed.), *To Breathe Free* (Washington, DC and Baltimore, MD: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. 25–55; and Bernd Baumgartl, "Environmental protest as a vehicle for transition: the case of Ekoglasnost in Bulgaria," in Anna Vari and Pal Tamas (eds.), *Environment and Democratic Transition: Policy and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe* (New York: Kluwer, 1992), pp. 157–175.

77. I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for this point.

78. While some scholars are doubtful about whether there exists a *necessary* link between civil society and democratization, a vigorous civil society is often taken to be foundational to democratic politics. On how Chinese intellectuals perceive civil society to be a basis for democratization, see Yijiang Ding, "The conceptual evolution of democracy in intellectual circles' rethinking of state and society," in Suisheng Zhao, *China and Democracy*, pp. 111–140.

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non-state organizations. They open up channels (albeit limited) for citizens to participate directly in political processes.

Intermeshed with other fields in China's institutional context, the emerging environmental NGO field is not fully independent, nor will it ever be. Chinese ENGOs continue to face serious challenges from the political field. The regulative framework still constrains the creation and growth of such organizations. At the same time, their intertwined relationships with other fields may put some limits on the power of the political field by adding to the difficulty and complexity of political control. The homologous relationship between ENGOs and media may well persist. In an age of globalization, the expansion of an international regime of non-government actors will continue to influence the growth of Chinese ENGOs. Further developments of the internet and other new information and communication technologies may improve the infrastructures for communication with actors in other fields, thus facilitating strategic networking and collaboration among some fields. These other fields undoubtedly have their own challenges. Media professionals still have to negotiate their relations with the Party and the market. International NGOs must constantly redefine their roles and relationships with local NGOs in order to build sustainable relationships. China's digital divide and the evolution of an internet regulatory regime present barriers to the democratic and equitable use of new information technologies. Lastly, organizational entrepreneurs will need to overcome barriers to long-term organizational development by building organizational identities and resources to widen public support and attract and retain staff and volunteers. The interactions of these dynamic yet complex fields will continue to shape environmental NGOs in their next stage of development.

For the empirical study of contemporary Chinese politics and society, this article illustrates the analytic uses of a field approach. With its emphasis on the interactions, alliances and conflicts among multiple institutional fields and the role of organizational entrepreneurs in these dynamics, the field approach has the unique advantage of capturing the complex and nuanced relations and the possibilities of creative agency in an increasingly pluralistic Chinese society.[79] The field approach by no means underestimates the dominant power of the state and the market. A relational rather than a deterministic approach, it examines both how state and market penetrate other social fields and how those other fields, to achieve their own strategic goals, may sometimes rely on, collaborate with, negotiate and challenge market or state power.

79. On growing pluralism in China, see Harry Harding, "The halting advance of pluralism." *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 9, No. 1 (1998), pp. 11–17.

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