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PRO GRADU THESIS

Dependent Autonomy

A Study of Chinese Environmental Social Organisations' Operational Autonomy

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Abstract

Whether Chinese social organisations have autonomy has been much debated topic from the beginning of 90s. The Western scholars have mainly argued from two opposing viewpoints. Civil society approach has emphasised civil society's autonomous nature while corporatist approach has stressed state control and repression. Both approaches grasp some features of the Chinese civil society, but they fail to explain how Chinese social organisations achieve autonomy. More recent developments in this area have paid attention to special characters of the Chinese system and have helped to understand this process more clearly. Chinese scholars have taken different route to understanding of the Chinese civil society. They have emphasised the dual nature of Chinese social organisations. My aim is to combine these different approaches to the more comprehensive understanding of the Chinese social organisations autonomy. This Pro Gradu thesis questions prevailing western conception of nongovernmental organisations' autonomy which regards autonomy as independence from the state. Instead it proposes a concept of operational autonomy which links organisation's autonomy to its actual performance. This is especially fruitful approach to Chinese social organisations which gain autonomy through participating and cooperating with governmental organisations, resulting in autonomy which can be conceptualised as dependent autonomy. This relation can be best understood through a mass line model which encourages social organisations to voluntarily form vertical relations to state and party organisations and officials. Participating in mass line style of relationship is also essential for social organisations' private funding. Thus, dependent autonomy is a complex mix of operational autonomy, administrative legitimacy and financial independence.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Ever since Deng Xiaoping launched the economic reforms in 1978, the liberalization has been main tenet of the Chinese policy. Even though the path to the destination has sometimes been winding and troubled, the overall direction toward greater liberalisation of society, institutions, and the economy has been inevitable. These reforms have affected Chinese society in remarkable way. Perhaps one of the most notable features has been the emancipation of the social space where people have been able to associate more spontaneously. At the same time a quite different tendency has structured Chinese society. The state has come more reluctant and/or incapable of carrying out the services it used to carry out before the reforms, creating room for voluntary organisations to operate in various spheres of society. Due to these tendencies, Chinese society has witnessed enormous boom in the number of associations ranging from charities to environmental organisations, legal advocacy groups, scientific associations, foundations and many more. The most recent available data shows that there is about 600000 officially registered social organisations (SO) and foundations in China. The number of unregistered associations is harder to estimate, but it obviously is multiple to that of registered ones.[1]

China's government certainly has acknowledged SOs' enormous contribution to China's development during the past forty years, and their role in maintaining social harmony now and in the future. Educational, developmental, environmental organisations and philanthropic foundations have shared their expertise and knowledge helping to ease social discontent and distrust. At the same time, the government is fully aware of civil society's potential to challenge its authority. This conflict of interests leading to opposite directions makes Chinese administration's attitude toward associations ostensibly incoherent and erratic. On the one hand it open-handedly supports associations' operations and activity, on the other hand it restricts their autonomy and development and sometimes even cracks down on them and abolishes them.

The idea to the topic of my thesis came when I was in my first interview trip in China. I was going to write a thesis about cooperation between Chinese SOs and private companies. I was expecting that Chinese SOs lacked autonomy and their operations would be wholly co-operational. To my surprise, I found that some SOs seemed to have

[1] China Development Brief Newsletter, May 2016

ability to decide their own goals and they acted even against local government's interests, so I became interested how these organisations managed to act autonomously even though institutional environment is very restrictive. General misconception with regard to Chinese governance is to think it as one colossal unity where different departments are pursuing common goals. On the contrary, different state agencies often have contradictory goals and they are competing with each other for resources. Kenneth Lieberthal has famously labelled this phenomenon as fragmented authoritarianism[2]. Under fragmented authoritarianism SOs have an opportunity to ally with one government organisation and get protection from other government organisations' pressure. The main hypothesis of my study is that through cooperation social organisations are recognized by the government officials and thus gain administrative legitimacy. With administrative legitimacy social organisations are able to escape the full impact of state control and even gain, at least, limited autonomy. Thus, autonomy is dependent on government's recognition.

This concept contradicts dominant liberal theories where autonomy is seen as organisational autonomy, that is, autonomy as independence from the state. In my thesis I suggest a more plausible way of understanding autonomy as operational autonomy, which is related to organisations' performance and how much they are actually able to decide their own goals and operations. Operational autonomy is also compatible with the idea that Chinese SOs can gain autonomy through cooperation with the state. I have borrowed the concept of dependent autonomy from Lu Yiyi[3] and in this study I understand it as operational autonomy which is gained through actively participating and cooperating with governmental agencies and thus gaining recognition and support from them. However, social organisations cannot be too dependent on governmental resources. They need resources from private citizens and companies to make themselves more valuable ally for the government and to be able to negotiate more operating space from it. Otherwise, they would fall in danger of being fully co-opted by the governmental organisation. Thus, dependent autonomy is a complex mix of operational autonomy, administrative legitimacy and financial independence.

In the first chapter I will describe the institutional environment for SOs in the PRC starting from the historical account. Some unique characters of Chinese civil society have already existed in imperial period. Then I will proceed to cultural, legal and

[2] Lieberthal 1992
[3] Lu 2009

political framework in which Chinese SOs have to currently operate. Regulations concerning the SOs have gone through several steps in the reform era, the most notable being 1989 and 1998 legislations. Moreover, the Charity Law and Overseas NGO Law were passed in 2016 but their full implication is yet to be seen.

In the second chapter I will widely examine different civil society models for China. Analysing the state-society relationship has proven to be a complicated task. All of the models have grasped some essential features of this relationship but, given the complexity of Chinese system, it has been difficult to define adequate concepts and to form a satisfactory model. I start with civil society and corporatism models. Proponents of the civil society approach and Corporatist approach have studied this problem from two opposite perspectives. The former has seen the emerging civil society and its autonomous and voluntary organisations as determining feature of the Chinese nongovernmental sector. The latter have emphasised the top-down control of the state over organisations and their activities. Problem of these approaches is that they are based on the state-society dichotomy and hence to the concept of organisational autonomy. At worst these models make completely contradictory predictions to the evidence. To understand the Chinese civil society and how social organisations pursue autonomy, we need to develop a model which takes into account the special features of Chinese society and politics, a model which is more responsive to the historical and cultural characteristics of China.

Then I proceed to the institutional approach sketched by Christopher Nevitt.[4] Institutional approach elaborates how changing incentives can explain how different attitudes of the officials can influence the organisations autonomy. Consultative authoritarianism model pays attention to the changing political economy and how it has created opportunities for social organisations. Mass line model gives comprehensive model how engaging in vertical cooperation with the state organisations will strengthen SOs legitimacy and autonomy. At the end of chapter I will examine Chinese scholars' approaches. Sun Taiyi[5] has recently sketched an approach, which I call dynamic adaptation model. It emphasises the dynamic nature of changing state-society relations over time. Equally fruitful notion is the dual nature of Chinese SOs proposed by Sun

[4] Nevitt 1996
[5] Sun 2017

Liping[6]. Chinese SOs cannot depend only on governmental resources but they need also private resources from citizens and companies.

In the third chapter I will present my empirical findings and evidence supporting my hypothesis. Administrative legitimacy and financial independence have strong correlation with operational autonomy which strongly supports my hypothesis that connections to the government and private funding are essential resources for SOs pursuing autonomy. Moreover, financial independence is highly dependent on administrative legitimacy which suggests that administrative legitimacy is primary resource and needs to be acquired before social organisations are able to attract private donations and gain financial independence.

Institutional Environment

Institutional environment determines the boundaries where SOs are able to operate. It includes formal rules such as laws and regulations but also informal customs and conventions. In China determining the institutional environment is challenging because often there is no articulated rules what is allowed and what is forbidden. Moreover, different SOs are treated differently according to how useful they are for the government and how much authority challenging potential they have.
China is said to be culturally unique and cultural features determine partly which kind of institutions emerge in the society. I will briefly elaborate some features and concepts which have relation to my study.

There is much discussion how much this cultural uniqueness affects the way how the relation between people and the state is understood in China. According to Ma Qiusha, much of the attention has been paid to the classical teachings and their conceptions of this relationship. It has been pointed out that in Chinese classical teachings and culture there is no such sharp distinction between the state and society or public and private as there is in Western thinking. In Chinese culture people are seen as the source of legitimacy of the state and at the same time subjected to it. According to Ma this classical understanding of people and their relationship to the state has strongly affected how Chinese people see this relationship even today. Some scholars have suggested that civil society is not possible in countries with strong Confucian influence. However, Ma points out that, these viewpoints overemphasise Confucianism's influence on Chinese

[6] Lu 2009, 19

society and politics and do not take into account social and political development in modern China.[7]

Another concept which is often said to be unique to China is the concept of *guanxi*, which can be depicted as social network of influence. *Guanxi* is based on reciprocal exchange of favours or services and trust and it is essential part of any social, financial or political intercourse in China. Closely related concept is *mianzi* (面子), "face", which refers to social status or prestige. Face can be given to others and it is important aspect of creating and maintaining guanxi. Below, I will introduce a concept of political credit which is equivalent of face in the political context and it is essential part of social organisations which want to pursue and maintain connections to officials.

Dependent legitimacy: Chinese SOs in Pre-Revolutionary Era

According to Gordon White's studies there were more than 26,125 civil organisations with more than 5.5 million members in Nationalist-controlled areas of China in 1944.8 Although scholars might disagree whether we can call it a genuine civil society, it is undisputed fact that there were organisations run by citizens which enjoyed at least partial autonomy from the state and that civil society was at least emerging and it had certain qualities which are essential for it to exist.

For example, Pearson states that the Late Qing and early Republic era urban community was characterised by lively associational life which was composed of professional guilds, trade associations, chambers of commerce and study societies which were financially independent and relatively autonomous in their area of profession. For example, guilds could freely organise production and marketing of commodities and decide who could carry on business in the area of their operation[9]. According to Ma Qiusha, especially chambers of commerce (from 1904 onwards) and study societies played an important role in China's economic and political life and presented similar characteristics to that of modern Chinese SOs in many ways. They were formally established, they had well-defined organisational missions and membership requirements, and they were run according to managerial principles. Contrary to

[7] Ma 2006, 27-28
[8] White 1996, 19
[9] Ma 2006, 37-38

traditional professional guilds and trade associations, their membership was voluntary and not limited to any profession, locality or trade. Thus, these associations presented more broadly social interests than the old associations. Many of these new associations were also run democratically. Board of trustees were responsible for ensuring the fulfilment of organisations' missions and all the leaders were elected. Moreover, every member over 20 years was authorised to vote in elections.[10]

However, associations and guilds were dependent on state for their legitimacy. According to Pearson, business and especially trade was considered as morally inferior and illegitimate in late Qing period. To gain legitimacy, guilds provided public services on behalf of the state such as firefighting and maintenance of communal infrastructure. Thus, state and associations were in symbiotic relationship. Associations took care of state's responsibilities and state reciprocally conveyed legitimacy to the organisations.[11]

Even though there were growing conflicts of interests between weak government and the bourgeoise which reflected to the relationship of the state and civil society, their relationship was not confrontational in essence. A Chinese historian, Ma Min has pointed out that "The purpose of early Chinese civil society was not to confront the government, but rather to harmonize the relations between society and the government. This point was mutually accepted by both the government and society."[12]

According to Ma Qiusha this intimate and interdependent relation to the state is the most striking and controversial feature of Chinese associations then and today. Some historians call this relation constructively interactive because it is based on mutual interests and interdependence.[13] From another point of view, Pearson thinks that Chinese associations were and are best characterised as having dualist, or as she puts it, Janus-faced nature. Associations are directed toward the state and society at the same time.[14]

Despite these differences, the circumstances in the first half of the twentieth century were different than today. Chinese associations today confront relatively strong state which controls effectively many aspects of the society. Late Qing and Republican era governments were weak and their ability to control civil society was remarkably weaker than the party-state today. It is also notable that associations in early twentieth century

[10] Ma 2006, 37-38
[11] Pearson 1994, 26-28
[12] Ma 2006, 46
[13] Ma 2006, 40,41
[14] Pearson 1994, 26-28

were politically extremely active in struggling against imperialism and “building new China”. Modern Chinese NGOs, on the contrary, avoid politically sensitive issues and declare themselves to be apolitical. State also discourages actions which could be interpreted as political. From the governments perspective civil society’s role in building new China should be restricted to maintaining social harmony and thus contributing to economic growth and international leverage.[15]

After the Communist victory, the associational situation was changed dramatically. Communist Party rapidly abolished or merged almost all the social organisations to the party-state system and the few remaining independent organisations were tightly controlled by the Communist Party.[16]

Distinctive feature of the system was that society and its relation to the state was arranged vertically. All the members of society were hierarchically incorporated into the state system through work units *danwei* (单位) in the cities and agricultural collectives *jiti* (集体) in the countryside. These organisations controlled almost every aspect of human life from organising health and child care, housing, schools, shops, post offices to giving permission to travelling, marriage and having children. This system restricted individuals and groups to one system and discouraged horizontal organisation between different social groups.[17] In other words, this so-called mass line tactics was a form of vertical communication system designed for implementing and enforcing party politics to the masses. On the other hand, it also created an instrument for bottom-up information flow, "transmission belt" from the grass-roots level to the central agencies.

As I will argue later in this thesis, this vertical structure of state-society relationship is still encouraged by the state even though it is not enforced. State considers civil organisations as illegitimate but through cooperation and being good partner for government agencies organisations are able to gain legitimacy. The survival and development of organisations are essentially dependent on how they are able to gain legitimacy from government agencies. Thus, civil associations do not consider them as opponents of the government but rather an ally.

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[15] Ma 2006, 40-46
[16] Heurlin 2010, 232; White 1996, 19
[17] White 1996, 22

Civil Society

In general, civil society is regarded as composed of all civil relations which lie outside of the government, or commercial system. It might also be called third sector because of its intermediary role between the government (first sector) and economy (second sector.) Dictionary definition states that civil society is the ”aggregate of non-governmental organisations and institutions that manifest interests and will of citizens”

Whether there is true civil society in China is naturally dependent on the definition of civil society. According to Jonathan Unger, there are there three current definitions of civil society. Some neo-liberal scholars have equated civil society with market economy. Market economy provides a safeguard for society where individual freedoms are respected. Consequently, civil society is protected best by defending market capitalism against state intervention.[18]

Another definition emphasises civil society's connection to the liberal democracy. Proponents of this conception claims that civil society is a prerequisite for democracy. According to Unger these scholars usually list some properties which they consider essential for democratization and then equates it with the civil society. At best, this argument seems to beg the question.[19]

Third definition emphasises autonomous organisations and their role in creating vibrant civil society. This conception shares with the two previously mentioned conceptions the idea that more open society is desirable, but it does not presuppose liberal democracy or market capitalism. This conception is compatible even with the authoritarian regime and planned economy as long it allows autonomous social organisations to exist.[20]

In mainland China there is no established way to talk about civil society. It is mainly referred by three different but overlapping concepts: *shimin shehui*（市民社会）, *gongmin shehui*（公民社会), and *minjian shehui*（民间社会). Each of them has slightly different connotation. According to Yu Keping *shimin shehui* is widely used and it derives its traditional meaning from the Chinese translations of classical Marxist texts. From this traditional meaning it might derive also some negative connotation. Some people might equate it with the term ”bourgeois society.” Further confusion is possible

[18] Unger 2008, 3
[19] Unger 2008, 3
[20] Unger 2008, 3-4

as the primary meaning of *shimin* is city resident and some people may identify it with urban residents only.[21]

Minjian shehui has moreneutral connotation and it has been widely used by researchers studying Chinese civil society in a Modern China. *Gongmin shehui* has been adopted after the reform and opening up. Direct translation is citizen society and it has positive connotation. It emphasises political aspect of the term, that is citizens' participation and citizens' restrains on state power. According to Yu Keping, *gongmin shehui* has been adopted more and more often especially by young researchers.[22] This could be sign of Chinese civil society being gradually politicised.

Both latter concepts can be translated as civil society as long as it is remembered that Chinese civil society has its own characteristics and cannot be equated with Western civil society as discussed further below.

Terminology of Chinese Civil Society Organisations

There are many overlapping names for organisations operating in public sphere which emphasise different aspects of them such as non-governmental organisations (NGO), non-profit organisations (NPO), intermediary organisations, third-sector organisations, voluntary organisations, or mass organisations.

The term non-profit organisation *feiyingli zuzhi* (非营利组织) emphasises organisation's non-commercial nature. It distinguishes them from enterprises and companies which operate in the markets.[23] However, there is a possible source of ambiguity. Many organisations which do not receive funding from government or from the private persons may have to charge from the services they provide in order to survive and develop. What distinguishes non-profit organisations from companies is that they do not return the profits to their directors or owners. NPOs must return the profits back to the basic mission of the organisation.

Intermediary organisation *zhongjie zuzhi* (中介组织) is the most favoured term used by government organisations and it is commonly used in administrative regulations. It makes explicit that civil society organisations occupy the intermediary position between

[21] Yu 2011, 64-65
[22] Yu 2011, 65
[23] Yu 2011, 66

the markets and government but leaves organisation's non-profit nature unclear. Yu Keping has pointed out that, many of the organisations which are viewed by administrative agencies as intermediary organisations, are actually profit-making bodies and are more closely related to the markets than the civil society.[24]

The terms mass organisation *qunzhong tuanti* (群众团体) and the people's organisation *renmin tuanti* (人民团体) are deeply rooted in a current political system. These organisations are directly led by the Communist Party and their staff is appointed by the government. They are strongly political in nature and they perform certain administrative tasks on behalf of the government. Mass organisation and people's organisation are sometimes used in more general sense to refer to all organisation operating in the public sphere but for the sake of clarity it might be more reasonable to refer mass organisations only to semi-governmental organisations such as Communist Youth League, All-China Federation of Trade Unions, All-China Women's Federation, and All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce. Trade unions can also be regarded as mass organisations.[25]

The term third sector organisation *disanbumen zuzhi* (第三部门组织) has been relatively recently introduced in the Chinese academic discussion of civil society. It is abstract technical term which can also be misinterpreted as an economic three-sector theory's tertiary sector (services.) The term volunteer organisation *zhiyuan zuzhi* (志愿组织) has an obvious problem too. It emphasises the voluntary nature of civil organisations, but volunteering is not exclusively civil society organisations' characteristic. According to Yu, many party organisations in China also stress their voluntary nature.[26]

Non-governmental organisation *feizhengfu zuzhi* (非政府组织) is widely used in present discussion but civil society activist themselves avoid using it because *feizhengfu* can be interpreted as "anti-governmental". However, many of the organisations use English abbreviation NGO instead. Its connotation emphasises organisations formal independence from the government. As I shall argue later, there is a fuzzy line between civil society and the government in China and the formal independence may not be the most relevant character in explaining the behaviour of the civil society organisations.

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[24] Yu, 2011, 67
[25] Yu 2011, 67
[26] Yu 2011, 68

The term originates from Western liberal theories of civil society and the usage of the term suggests that NGOs have confrontational nature towards the state.

Social organisation, *minjian zuzhi* (民间组织) is the broadest term denoting Chinese civil society organisations. Direct translations of them would be 'among the people organisation' or 'citizen-initiated organisation'. Perhaps the best translation would be a "civic organisation". The concept of civic organisation emphasises organisation's societal basis. It has emerged among the people and is managed by citizens. However, the Chinese term is used to denote very different organisations in China and some of them are run by government. Thus, I prefer to translate it as social organisation. This concept emphasises the purpose of the organisation. Social organisations purpose is to produce some common or public good. This concept leaves open its relation to the government and can refer also to government-organised social organisation as long it functions like social organisation. Civic organisation could perhaps be used more naturally for grassroots organisations as they are usually genuinely run by private citizens.

Officially registered social organisations *shehui tuanti* (社会团体) are subdivision of social organisations. I use social association (SA) to distinguish it from general term denoting to all other social organisations.

Institutional Environment

Douglas C. North, an important researcher on institutions and proponent of New Institutionalism has defined institutions as: "...[] humanly devised constrains that structure political, economic and social interaction. They consist of both informal constrains (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct), and formal rules (constitutions, laws, property rights)" He also states that institutions have been devised throughout history to create order and reduce uncertainty in social, economic and political exchange.[27] Thus, institutions tend to be relatively stable and long lasting.

According to Yu Keping, institutions can be explicitly announced and enforced by authoritative bodies like statutory regulations or they can implicitly restrict people's

[27] North 1991, 97

behaviour like codes of conduct or social norms. Political institution is a compilation of regulations which restrict people's political behaviour and thus defines people's sphere of political action. As political institutions are usually established and reinforced by the state and they represent the basic interests and values of current political authority, they are the most overriding institutions.[28]

Although most of the social organisations claim to be apolitical in a sense that they do not pursue political power or try to challenge current political authority, in a more general sense civil activism can hardly be seen as unpolitical. Especially environmental SOs have goals which can be seen as political in nature. They have variety of environmental goals and they sometimes engage in policy advocacy. Thus, social organisations' activities should be structured by political institutions.

In China, institutional environment of civil society is the aggregate of informal and formal regulations shaping social organisations' activities. According to Yu Keping this institutional environment has five aspects. First, civil society is structured by the constitution which provides the fundamental legal framework and legitimacy. Second, ordinary laws stipulate the specific and comprehensive rules on civil organisations' behaviour. Third, administrative regulations imposed by central and local governments. Fourth, party policy regulations affect SOs, and fifth, informal institutions, that is, implicit rules disseminated in the society and the government also play their role.[29]

Since political and legal institutions have manifold influence on social organisations' behaviour and development through supervision, guidance, financial policies, control etc. It is important to analyse these different factors in detail. In the following chapters I will examine some relevant features of China's institutional environment for civil society.

Institutional Environment and Social Horizontalisation

From the 1950's until the beginning of the reforms and opening up, interaction between the society and the state was organised vertically. The party-state allowed only one government organised mass organisation for any given social field to represent citizens' interests. Most of the social activity was directed through work units and mass

[28] Yu 2011, 69
[29] Yu 2011, 70

organisations which were permeated by the party-state system and there was no room for voluntary social organisations. However, economic reforms and decentralisation starting in the end of 1970s' changed the institutional environment to more beneficial to the civil society. The constitution promulgated in 1982 assured the freedom of association for citizens. It diminished the significance of work units and mass organisation and brought down their monopoly of interest representation. Chinese scholar Gao Bingzhong describes this change as a shift from vertical to horizontal pattern of social organisation, as it allowed people to organise themselves horizontally.[30]

One particularly important condition for the emergence of civil society is that people are free to associate horizontally without repression or repressive social control. They have opportunity for open political dialogue, free association and freedom of speech.[31]

Despite some backlash in recent years, in overall, social organisations in China have gained more freedom and greater autonomy in the past thirty-five years as the associational spectrum of Chinese society has become more pluralistic. Many important policies formulated by the Communist party such as promoting market economy, structural reforms, separation of government and business, and establishing the rule by law have created room for functional civil society. Moreover, as Xie Lei has pointed out, the Chinese government has increasingly emphasised social management as a way to ease current social tensions and the cooperation between the state and social organisations has been officially regarded as part of the social management[32]. On the other hand, Chinese government believes that regulation of civil society is vital to maintain the stability of the society. The basic orientation of laws and regulations promulgated by governmental agencies are restrictive and supervisory. They mostly erect obstacles and hindrances for the development of social organisations. The unique feature in the Chinese system is that while restricting civil society, it at the same time permits and even encourages collective citizen action, as long as such actions do not undermine the legitimacy of central government or jeopardise social harmony. As Yu Keping puts it, the institutional environment of Chinese civil society in macro level is generally encouraging, but in micro level it is restricting.[33]

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[30] Keith 2003, 38-39; Gao 2001, 73; Yu 2011, 78
[31] Keith 2003, 39; Yaziji & Doh 2009, 27
[32] Xie 2009, 49
[33] He 2012, 1-2; Yu 2011, 79

Registration and Dual Supervision System

The horizontal development of Chinese society was halted and turned back after 1989 demonstrations in Tiananmen Square. Before 1989 any state or party agency could approve and take charge of social organisations but after 1989 the government centralised the registration of social organisations and stipulated regulation that all social organisations should be registered with the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA) in Beijing or with local civil affairs bureau or office. Before registration, social organisations are required to find a state or party organisation as its professional administrative unit *yewu zhuguan danwei* (业务主管单位). Professional administrative unit assumes political responsibility for inspecting the activities and finances of SOs and it must be in the same field as the supervised organisation. The professional administrative unit is especially responsible for that SO does not take part in any illegal or anti-governmental activities. This forms the basis of system of dual administration *shuangchong guanli* (双重管理).[34] However, system of dual administration is not applied consistently in all provinces and for example Guangdong province has gradually laxed the regulation and allows all social organisations to apply registration status without finding a professional administrative unit first.[35]

In addition, there are two regulations which restrict the civil organisations' registration: ”The non-competition principle” *feijingzheng yuanze*(非竞争原则), stipulates that in the same professional field within the same administrative level, only one social association can be registered. The other one is ”multi-level management system” *fenji guanli* (分级管理) in which SOs with nationwide activities are regulated at the national level and SOs with local activities are regulated at the local level. For example, an organisation registered in Beijing has to restrict its activities and their impact in Beijing. An organisation registered at national level is allowed to operate nationwide.[36]

These two exclusive regulations and the system of dual administration effectively limit the development and growth of SOs. Moreover, the state and party organisations are not interested taking burden of responsibility of other organisations' actions unless there is some mutual benefit or personal ties between organisations. The requirements for registering with MCA or local civil affair bureaus are high especially at the national

[34] He 2012, 1-2; Yu 2011, 79
[35] Dickson 2016, 137-138
[36] He 2012, 3

level and it is difficult to register as a social organisation without government backing. As a result, many registered social associations have some kind of government background or are established by the government. There are little possibilities for voluntary based civic organisations to obtain formal registration with the MCA.[37] Consequently, the organisational spectrum of Chinese civil society consists of a substantial number of social organisations that fail to apply for formal registration with the MCA or its local agencies.

In 1998, State Council amended new regulation concerning registration of organisations. This amendment gave recognition to new kind of social organisations such as private non-enterprise organisations and foundations. After this regulation, SOs has been divided in four categories: social associations, private non-enterprise units (After 2016 Charity Law Social Service Organisations, SSO), foundations and the branches of international SOs and foundations.[38]

Some organisations which are not able or willing to register with MCA but still want to obtain legal status may register themselves as non-profit enterprises (NPE) with the Bureau of Industry and Commerce (BIC). They are considered as enterprises, even though they are engaged in non-profit and public good activities. They suffer some disadvantages compared to SAs registered with MCA. For example, non-profit enterprises are not granted tax exemptions. However, most of the social organisations continue their activities as unregistered. These organisations, though not legal as such, are still sometimes able to continue their activities without interference. On the other hand, their prospect of development and growth are poor. They are not able to open bank account and they are not allowed to solicit public donations. Thus, their ability to manage funding and development of their operations are more or less hampered by institutional constraints.[39]

The fact that grassroots organisations are not under continuous supervision of government agencies may lead one to think that they are more autonomous and independent from governmental guidance than formally registered organisations. This is not a case, legal status and governmental connections gives registered organisations certain protection from governmental harassment. On the contrary, lacking such protection makes grassroots organisations more vulnerable to interference or even

[37] Wu & Chan 2012, 9-17; He 2012; Kang & Han 2007, 336
[38] He 2012, 4
[39] He 2012, 4

crackdown in case they happen to step on some government agency's toes. As we shall see below, governmental connections are useful resources which help social organisations to navigate through the pitfalls of the system and enjoy relatively strong autonomy in setting their own agenda.

Legal Classification of Social Organisations

An inevitable consequence of the given institutional environment is that there are great variety of social organisations with different legal status which enjoy various legal and political rights and privileges. For example, registration status determinates SOs access to certain resources and benefits such as tax exemptions. Registration status also affects actual space where organisation is able to operate.

On general level organisations can be distinguished as formal and informal. The former consists of all the registered organisations whether they have registered with MCA or some other state agency and organisations which have gained recognition by the authorities otherwise. The latter consists of organisations which are not registered or exempted from registration but continue their operations in a grey area. According to the registration system, social organisations can be divided in four distinctive legal categories. First, there are organisations which are exempted from registration. These include eight mass organisations such as All-China Women's Federation and Communist Youth League. These organisations cannot be counted as genuine SOs as they are initiated by the government and they perform administrative functions on its behalf. Another group of organisations exempted from registration regulation are those which operate internally to, and are approved by, administrative agencies, social organisations or enterprises. For example, university student unions are not under an obligation to register with MCA as long as they are approved by their hosting universities and they operate within the university. Under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Civil Affairs there are four types of organisations. The first group are social associations which, according the State Council, are "non-profit social organisations voluntarily organised by Chinese citizens to achieve the common objectives of their members by engaging in activities in accordance with their charters."[40]

[40] Yu Keping 2001, 73

The second group under MCA jurisdiction are second-level civic organisations *erji shetuan* (二级社团) or branches *fenzhi jigou* (分支机构.) of registered organisations. Organisations which do not meet the qualifications of registration system can seek to persuade registered organisation to let them hang under their umbrella. In compensation, these second level organisations usually pay host organisations annual management fee. According to Lu, these management fees were in fact a significant part of funding for many registered organisations. Before 1998, second level organisations did not need to be registered with MCA, but the 1998 regulations changed the situation and now also they need to register with MCA. However, the registration requirements are somewhat looser than for first tier organisations.[41]

The third group under MCA jurisdiction consists of social service organisations (private non-enterprise units before 2016 Charity law). According to the 1998 regulations, they are "social organisations without governmental funding organised by enterprises, institutions, social associations, other social forces or individual citizens for the purpose of engaging not-for-profit social service activities."[42]

The fourth group are foundations dedicated to the public good. According to the 1998 regulations, they are "non-profit legal persons that use funds contributed by natural or legal persons or other organisations to carry out undertakings for the public good."[43]

The third category of social organisations consists only of those organisations which are registered as non-profit enterprises with the Bureau of Industry and Commerce. The fourth category consists of all non-registered and informal groups and associations. In addition to grassroots organisations it includes internet-based communities, religious groups, urban and rural communities and so on. In this category I have restricted my study only formally organised grassroots organisations.

The figure 1 below shows the spectrum of social organisations in China according to their legal status.

[41] Lu 2009, 4
[42] Yu Keping 2011, 73
[43] Yu Keping 2011, 73

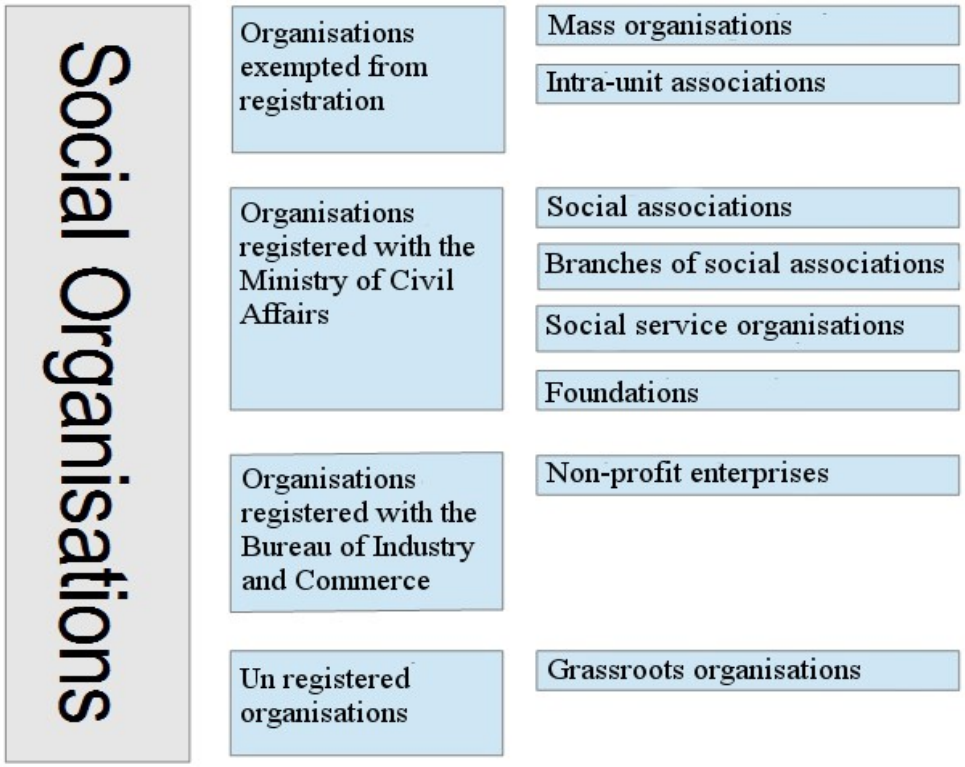

Figure 1) legal classification of social organisations

In my thesis I regard all other organisations but mass organisations in the above figure as the object of my study. Mass organisations clearly function more like state organs. Intra-unit associations might in some cases qualify as social organisations. Lu Yiyi has stated, that intra-unit associations do not necessarily confine their activities in the premises of their mother organisations and they often have their own agenda. She gives an example of very active student environmental group at Beijing Forestry University, which has cooperated with other environmental groups and organised activities such as environmental awareness campaigns, conferences and wild animal protection activities.[44] Thus it is worthwhile to regard these groups as objects of my study as well. In my sample there is only one intra-unit association and it clearly qualifies as an autonomous group with its own agenda.

[44] Lu 2009, 3

Institutional Space vs. Actual Space

Institutional space understood as a space which is confined by the regulatory laws and regulations is much smaller than the actual space where social organisations operate. Obvious evidence for that is the number of actually existing social organisations which exceeds considerably the number of registered social organisations. According to China Statistical Year book, in 2016 there were 303.393 social organisations registered formally with the MCA. Above that, there are non-profit enterprises registered with the Bureau of Industry and Commerce and unregistered organisations. It is impossible to determine the exact number of social organisations in China because there is no reliable statistics on that. However, in 2005 Wang Ming estimated that the total number of SOs in China was between 2 and 2.7 million.[45] Tian Yongjun has estimated that more than 80% of the social organisations in China are "extra-legal". [46]

According to Yu Keping, an interesting feature of Chinese civil society's institutional environment is that formally registered social organisations seem to enjoy the smallest institutional space. The regulatory laws and supervisory system restrict their operations most. On the other hand, the organisations exempted from registration and grassroots organisations enjoy the greatest amount of institutional space.[47] This does not necessarily mean that formally registered organisations have less actual space. Quite contrary they seem to enjoy often more actual space than those which are not registered, such as grassroots organisations. Registered social associations and social organisations with good connections to government officials are able to stretch their actual space beyond their institutional space. On the other hand, grassroots organisations may have to restrict their actual behaviour to be able to survive.

In next chapter I will explain why actual space often exceeds institutional space.

[45] Yu 2011, 88
[46] Tian 2011, 129
[47] Yu 2011, 89

From Partial Legitimacy to Full Legitimacy

According to Tian Yongjun, legitimacy is an intangible asset of the social organisation. It is a necessary condition of organisation's stable and long-lasting development. According to him, in order to gain legitimacy, an organisation must gain governments and society's recognition and trust.[48]

Gao Bingzhong goes deeper in his analysis of legitimacy. He also provides interesting explanation of the gap between actual and institutional space of Chinese social organisations. According to him, the law and regulations are not the only source of legitimacy. He claims that social organisations in present day China do not need to gain full legitimacy in order to survive. They are able to survive if they gain only partial legitimacy. Besides legal legitimacy which derives from organisations legal position as a registered organisation, full legitimacy consists of three other forms of legitimacy, namely, social legitimacy, administrative legitimacy, and political legitimacy. Thus, civil organisation may first acquire partial legitimacy and then pursue for full legitimacy.[49]

Social Legitimacy

Social legitimacy presupposes at least some kind of recognition or even participation by the people. According to Gao, social legitimacy is based on local tradition, local common interest, or common understanding of the local values and principles. Gao gives an example of an association which carried on tradition of dragon tablet fair in Fanzhuang village in Hebei Province. The tradition has very long history, but Communist Party considered it as heretical and feudal superstitious which should be abolished in the modern era. All ritual activities and worship were suppressed especially during the heydays of the Cultural Revolution, but even after the beginning of the reform officials continued suspicious attitude towards the tradition. However, the dragon tablet fair was based on local tradition and enjoyed strong support from the people.[50]

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[48] Tian 2011, 129
[49] Gao 2002, 13
[50] Gao 2002, 13; Gao 2011, 195-226

Moreover, the Dragon Tablet Fair Association was able to gather monetary donations and other material offerings from the worshippers and these donations were used to promote local public welfare. Financial support was given for example to primary schools and households suffering hardships. The Dragon Tablet Fair Association also helped to develop local markets and benefitting local welfare. Thus, the association had a strong social legitimacy based on tradition, shared values of the community and common interest, and even though it was lacking full legitimacy, it was able to continue and develop its operation and pursue for greater legitimacy. However, as Gao points out, social legitimacy can guarantee only limited operational space for organisation. Usually their operations are limited to a small area such as villages like in our example, or just one road and to a specific course of action. Within these limits their operations are usually approved by officials, but were the organisation to extend its operations or its influence beyond these limits it would have to gain more legitimacy or otherwise it would fall into problems.[51]

According to Gao, social legitimacy is essential not only for the founding of the organisation but also to its development. If the association is unable to gain social legitimacy, it is almost impossible for it to obtain resources for its operations, let alone raise funds needed for the registration process.[52]

While social legitimacy described by Gao is essential for the organisations in their early stage, it is not sufficient for the later development. Lu Yiyi makes distinction to other kind of social legitimacy which she calls legitimacy in the eyes of society. By that she means credibility and trustworthiness of the organisation in the eyes of their supporters, donors and general public. This legitimacy does not depend on shared values and norms but organisation's connections to state apparatus. Connections to the government assure the public that organisation is able to carry out its mission and pursue its goals, and would not be wiped away any possible conflict with officials. According to Lu, this does not apply only to the Chinese public but also to foreign companies often base their decision to fund certain organisation on the knowledge whether organisations have connections to the government or not.[53]

I will later demonstrate that connectedness to the government and financial independence has a strong correlation. Organisations which have good relations with the

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[51] Gao 2002, 14-15
[52] Gao 2002, 14
[53] Lu 2009, 54, 55

government have credibility in the eyes of society and thus they are also able to receive more donations. This connectedness I will call administrative legitimacy and I will elaborate that concept next.

Administrative Legitimacy

By administrative legitimacy I mean recognition of the organisation or its activities by individual party leaders or high-ranking government officials. In 1998, Peking University conducted a survey of its alumni associations. From that data, Gao Bingzhong found out that only 23% of the total 38 organisations were registered with the MCA. Other organisations never applied for registration, or their applications were turned down. He also noted that without exception the top posts of these registered organisations were held by local high-ranking officials. Thus, the positions of the leaders of these registered organisations were a crucial explanation of their successful registration.[54]

In cases mentioned above, the organisations acquired administrative legitimacy through the government officials' participation. In, general, participation can be either symbolic, such as nomination as an honorary chairman, or actual, such as being a member in organisation's board. Essential is that this participation connects organisation to the administrative system. Organisation can gain administrative legitimacy also if it is permitted to take part in government organised activities. Some of the organisations even perform administrative tasks on behalf of governmental organisation.[55]
Recognition can also take more subtle ways. In that respect, the Project Hope of China Youth Development Foundation (CYDF) is a good example. CYDF was able to use their good connections to persuade many top state leaders to write inscriptions for the Project Hope, including the paramount leader Deng Xiaoping. Thus, besides being a source of information and other resources, governmental connections serves as a label for the public showing that certain organisation is trustworthy, legal and safe. On the other hand, it shows that organisation has powerful allies and any potential enemy would have to think twice before making troubles for them.[56]

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[54] Gao 2002, 14-15; Lu 2009, 21
[55] Lu 2009, 21
[56] Lu 2009, 42

In order to gain and maintain administrative legitimacy, an organisation needs to keep contact with officials and report constantly of their activities. By keeping good relations to administration, social organisations are able to operate and develop within the effective range of that administrative unit even if they completely lack legal legitimacy.[57]

According to Gao, administrative legitimacy has particular significance to the Chinese organisations and their development because organisations' management in China is basically an extension of the administrative system of the state. Administrative legitimacy is usually associated with organisations registered with the MCA, or other ministries and organisations under the umbrella of registered organisation. Administrative legitimacy is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for any organisation willing to gain legal legitimacy. According to the regulations, organisations which want to enter the registration process, need to find a professional administrative agency as their supervisory unit. Thus, if organisation does not have such administrative connections which convey it administrative legitimacy, it lacks qualifications to become a registered organisation.[58]

Administrative legitimacy is even more important to intra-unit organisations because law entrusts the umbrella organisation full authority over the management of its subsidiary organisations. Therefore, the administrative and legal functions are united under the same supervising agency. Usually intra-unit organisations reside in universities, biggest colleges having dozens of student organisations under their supervision. Some universities have formulated even special regulations to enforce the management of their associations.[59]

Administrative legitimacy is less important for grassroots organisations. Grassroots organisations have social legitimacy, so they are capable of operating in certain limited area. However, local officials may expect certain amount of cooperation from them, too. Grassroots organisations can also utilise participation in governmental activities to overcome their grassroots nature and extend their operations. Any evidence of participation such as photographs, banners or certificates can be conceived as recognition by the administrative organisation and thus utilised to extend a kind of

[57] Gao 2002, 14-15
[58] Gao 1998, 20
[59] Gao 1998, 20-21

vague administrative legitimacy which could be regarded also as political recognition of their activities.[60]

According to Gao, administrative legitimacy of a social organisation and the administrative legitimacy of their activities have different basis. A social organisation can gain administrative legitimacy in a single event such as when registered organisation accepts it as a second-tier organisation under its umbrella, or it finds a professional administrative unit required for the registration process. However, organisation's activities can gain administrative legitimacy only gradually. This is because organisations activities can span administrative agencies' jurisdiction or it can change between different agencies territory. From this point of view, it does not matter whether it is a registered or intra-unit organisation. If an organisation plans to develop its activities, they need continuously contact and deal with various agencies and try to achieve cadres' approval and support.[61]

According to Gao, social organisations' development is dependent on how effectively they are able to use administrative resources. Normally this depends much on assisting agency's official's position and power. In his studies of Beijing University alumni organisations, Gao found that organisations had variety of circumstances. Some of them were registered, some were not. Some organised mutual meetings, some just held nominal positions in organisation's executive board. Administrative system entrusts associations certain administrative legitimacy. Every agency or branch is an essential constituent of organisations activities or admittance of social resources.[62]

Political Legitimacy

Political legitimacy is an essential part of the legitimacy. It involves organisation's internal qualities such as organisation's purpose, intention and significance of its activities. Political legitimacy indicates that organisation and its activities are conforming to the political standards and norms. In other words, political legitimacy is manifestation of its adherence to "political correctness" *zhengzhi shang zhengque* (政

[60] Gao 1998, 21
[61] Gao 1999, 21
[62] Gao 1999, 21

治上正确). Organisations are able to set up their own agenda and if it is accepted by the government or the party offices it will gain political legitimacy.[63]

According to Gao, political legitimacy is fundamental for the existence and the development of social organisations. He claims that every organisation operating in China's social space must, in the first hand, resolve the problem of political legitimacy and lay particular emphasis on adapting to the local administrative patterns. Organisations should consider them as the extensions of the state's administrative system. Administrative systems' purpose is to safeguard political order and thus any organisation pursuing for full legitimacy must meet the political standards. Only under these circumstances administrative leaders are motivated to let organisations to use administrative resources under their control and help organisations to develop their activities. Even registered organisations which have already proven their political correctness should pay attention to maintaining political legitimacy. Supervisory agencies continuously assess organisations' political legitimacy and responses accordingly. If organisation fails to follow the path of political correctness, supervisory agency would react and possibly withdraw its backing causing organisation to lose its registration status. Grassroots organisations which lack legal and administrative protection usually appeal to social legitimacy to avoid investigation and pressure from the law-enforcing agencies but if they fail to do that, they still may successfully appeal to political legitimacy as a last resort.[64]

Precisely, because political legitimacy is so essential, some of the organisations also pursue political legitimacy by voluntarily assuming state organisations' functions and administrative responsibilities. Many organisations for example have written into their rules that they will carry out policies and guiding principles introduced by the political leaders. Organisations have to continuously create their political correctness.

On the other hand, as Gao rightly notes, requirements of political correctness severely limit organisation's ability to criticize and oppose the political system and elite.[65] Therefore, even if the plurality and autonomy of the Chinese civil society is rising, it is difficult to see it as a democratisation process.

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[63] Gao 1999, 21
[64] Gao 2002, 15, 16
[65] Gao 2002, 15

Autonomy of Chinese Social Organisations

For many liberal scholars, autonomy is the key concept in understanding social organisations and their development.[66] No wonder that the registration and dual administration system raise questions whether Chinese social organisations have autonomy, and if they have, to what extent they have. Moreover, as I described in previous chapters, Chinese social organisations intentionally seek contacts with the government agencies. Most liberal scholars would say that Chinese SOs lack autonomy or they do have very limited autonomy. The reason for this is perhaps that they look at officially organised organisations which are under the government control. Officially registered social associations which are under the dual management system are controlled by professional administrative agencies, which are responsible for a wide variety of tasks concerning organisation's activities, for example supervising financial and personnel management, research activities, contacts with foreign organisations, how much they receive international funding and how it is used. If the organisation does not comply with the regulations, it might lose its status and be banned. Thus, the current legal framework seems to severely restrict organisational autonomy of the officially registered organisations.[67]

According to Lu, this understanding of autonomy rests on two false assumptions. First, the governmental policy is confused with actual practise. Second, government support is confused with control. Neither of the assumptions is warranted by the evidence. Even if governmental policies are strict, it does not mean that government is always capable of or even willing to put its policies into effect. On the other hand, social organisations are sometimes able to evade governmental control.[68]

Liberal conception can also be criticised for concentrating on formal independence from the government and neglecting the implications of different funding sources on *operational autonomy*. Wang Shaoguang defines operational autonomy as "organization's freedom to formulate and pursue a self-determined agenda without undue external pressures, wherever the pressures come from."[69]

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[66] For example. Salamon 1992
[67] Lu 2009, 29
[68] Lu 2009, 30
[69] Wang 2006, 4

It is widely believed that charitable contributions from private citizens, foundations and corporations are so abundant that organisations do not need to rely on sponsors which could jeopardise their organisational autonomy. According to Wang, this common belief is without empirical foundation. He analysed data from Lester Salamon's Non-profit Sector Project from 1995 and found out that private giving was not the primary source of funding in any of the 22 countries presented in the research.[70] Based on same database, Jessica Teets states that 56% of the NGOs in Western Europe received their funding from the government or public sector. Corresponding figures for post-communist countries in Eastern Europe and new democracies in Latin America were 33% and 15% respectively.[71]

Although data based on Salamon's research does not allow any conclusions about the implications of funding to organisations operational autonomy, it still shows that non-governmental organisations might have firmer relationship with the state in Western liberal countries than is generally believed.

Liberal conception of organisational autonomy might be even poorer indicator of autonomy in China. It would predict that grassroots organisations and other unregistered organisations enjoy more autonomy than registered organisations due to lacking necessary governmental supervisory unit. However, given the restrictive nature of the political and legal framework and the lack of political protection from governmental agencies, opposite is true, and the state actually intrudes genuinely non-governmental organisations' affairs more frequently or the social organisations restrict their operations voluntarily. Many popular organisations have also been gradually co-opted by the state. First, a governmental agency or organisation gives a helping hand or money to the social organisation and as the agency becomes more involved in SO's affairs, the agency gradually takes over whole SO. [72]

Operational autonomy allows us to make predictions more in line with the empirical evidence. Grassroots organisations remain small and their agenda consists of politically insensitive tasks or tasks which might not be interpreted as political. Contrary to the liberal conception, my hypothesis suggests that Chinese social organisations deliberately seek tighter connections with governmental organisations because doing so they gain more operational autonomy.

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[70] Wang 2006, 4
[71] Teets 2014, 57
[72] Lu 2009 43, 44

Even if civil society sector as a whole lacks organisational autonomy, it is still reasonable to think that certain types of organisations enjoy more operational autonomy than other. I claim that operational autonomy is fruitful a concept to explain the behaviour of the social organisations in China, and that operational autonomy is closely related to administrative legitimacy of the organisation.

CIVIL SOCIETY MODEL FOR CHINA

In this chapter I will provide a summary of the existing literature on Chinese SOs. There has been little exchange of thoughts between western, mostly English language literature and Chinese language literature. Both traditions have taken rather different approach to study Chinese social organisations and they both have raised several points which are relevant for my thesis. I start with dominant Western approaches, the civil society model and the corporatist model. The institutional approach sketched by Christopher Nevitt[73] takes account some relevant characters in Chinese society, but it is not comprehensive enough to provide model for Chinese civil society. The Consultative Authoritarianism model and the Mass Line model sketched by Jessica Teets[74] and Taru Salmenkari[75] respectively offers more comprehensive view to understand how state-society relation work in China. A recent development in the topic has been made by Sun Taiyi[76]. I have labelled his approach as dynamic adaptation model as it pays attention to changing situations and mutual learning process where both sides adjust their behaviour to meet better their goals. Lastly, I will discuss two approaches sketched by Chinese scholars.

Civil Society Model

The literature in the West has mostly concentrated around two approaches of state-society relation, namely the civil society model and the corporatist model. Most Western scholars favour the corporatist models over civil society models, but even those who favour corporatism admit that China does not fit into a purely corporatist model either. Therefore, they are taking certain elements of civil society aspect into account when describing this relationship.

Naturally, there is no agreement on specific definition of civil society among scholars although most of them would agree that at least autonomy is an essential character of social organisations. This can be seen for example in one of the most influential definition of civil society which is found in Lester M. Salamon's and Helmut K. Anheier's article *In search of the non-profit sector. I: The question of definitions*. They

[73] Nevitt 1996
[74] Teets 2014
[75] Salmenkari 2008
[76] Sun 2017

see five key factors as the most compelling in defining non-governmental organisations. First, NGOs have to be formal. That is, they have to be institutionalised to some extent. Second, organisations must be institutionally separate from the government. This does not mean that the organisations must be financially independent from the government. They may in fact even receive significant support from the government, but the point here is that the organisations must be private institutions in their basic structure, that is, the staff or executive boards should not be seated with the government officials. Third, non-profit organisations must not return profits to their owners or directors. Non-profit organisations can generate profits, but they must be returned to the basic mission of that organisation. In other words, non-profit organisations do not exist primarily to generate profits and it is this feature which differentiates the non-profit sector from the private sector. Fourth, a non-profit organisation should be self-governing. The basic activities should be controlled by organisation and not by any outside entity. Fifth, non-profit organisations should involve a significant degree of voluntary participation. This does not mean that all income should come from voluntary contributions or that all the staff should be volunteers, but that at least some of the key functions should be arranged voluntarily.[77]

Most of the proponents of the civil society approach would also agree that there is an inevitable connection between the civil society and transition to democracy. For example, Alagappa Muthiah claims that much of the (neo-Tocquevillean) literature view civil society as a supporting structure to democratize the state. Associational life in civil society is thought to provide the social infrastructure for liberal democracy, supply the means to limit, resist, and curb the excesses of the state and market etc.[78]

The idea of democratisation is connected to the idea that civil society is a political counterweight to the state power. For example, Jude Howell points out that civil society ”[...]implicitly assumes an oppositional and conflictual relation with the state, neglecting the cooperative dimensions.” [79]

The proponents of civil society model have correctly described the Chinese government’s declining capability to control society and its effect on diversity of the society. This development has inevitably created more space for autonomous and independent grassroots organisations, but these organisations rarely have willingness or

[77] Salamon 1992, 135
[78] Alagappa 2004, 41
[79] Howell 1994, 107

ability to oppose state or propose democratisation. For example, when Christopher Earle Nevitt studied small and large-scale entrepreneur's associations in Tianjin, he found out that the small-scale entrepreneurs association (SELA) whose members would benefit most from the democratisation process did not actively pursue such goals. Quite contrary, SELA was more interested in controlling the small entrepreneurs than pursuing their interest, especially their political interests.[80] Same kind of observations have been made by other researchers. Ray Yep studied private economy organisations in Huantai rural community in Shandong province, and noticed that organisations did not struggle for a greater organisational autonomy confronting the government, but they were trying to make themselves useful ally in matters which concerned the government most.[81] Jude Howell claims that apart from some underground organisations, Chinese social organisations do not have any democratic agenda and they do not provide any forum for a critical public discussion about the political affairs.[82] Generally, Chinese SOs enjoy only limited autonomy from the state. Many SOs are in fact mixed organisations in which society and state are intertwined. Hence, SOs in China seem to lack autonomy which is most widely considered as an essential feature of civil society.[83]

Perhaps the most influential proponent of civil society approach, Gordon White, thinks that despite the problems of applying civil society approach to China it still has some analytical advantages. Even though Chinese SOs could not be considered as fully independent or voluntary organisations, they still enjoy certain amount of autonomy and voluntariness. White believes that along with the economic reforms and the separation of politics and society, a relative amount of such organisations is likely to increase and this trend nurtures the development of true voluntary and autonomous civil society.[84]

However, the concept of civil society still presupposes a clear-cut distinction between the state and society and it emphasises the autonomy of civil society. According to Judith Howell, this leads to partial explanations and will neglect SOs' mutual relationships with the state in favour of their autonomous, voluntary and spontaneous characteristics.[85] It implicitly presupposes an antagonistic relation, ignoring the

[80] Nevitt 1996, 30-31
[81] Yep 2000, 565
[82] Howell 1998, 71-72
[83] Whiting 1991, 16-48
[84] White 1996, ??; Wang 2015, 411
[85] Howell 1994, 107

cooperative dimensions or as many Chinese scholars have put it "positive interaction" between the state and society.[86]

According to Wang and Song, many proponents of the civil society approach have rejected the strict interpretation of the "civil society against the state"-paradigm and have developed new concepts such as "state-led civil society" and the "semi-civil society." Drawback in this strategy is that theory has to deviate away from the basic tenets of the civil society theory. Another strategy would be to deny Chinese social organisations' autonomy as a whole and claim that they will gradually acquire it through socio-political progress in the future.[87]

Corporatist and Mixed Models

Characters of Chinese state-society relationship might lead one to think that corporatism is more suitable approach for analysing Chinese SOs. Historically, this concept was derived from the political tradition of non-democratic countries and authoritarian regimes. Contrary to civil society approach, corporatist approach does not see organisations as the basis of democratic development but as instruments of state.[88] According to Philippe Schmitter's influential definition, corporatism is

> [a] system of interest presentation in which the constituent units are organised into a limited number of singular, compulsory, non-competitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports.[89]

Institutional environment in China clearly aims to corporatist organisation of society. The registration and dual administration system are textbook examples of corporatist system but the question of whether corporatist model is applicable in China should be based on the characteristics of the Chinese SOs. Like already noted, the spectrum of social organisations in China is varied ranging from rather independent grassroots organisations to party-controlled SOs. White claimed that SOs are best described as

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[86] Wang 2015, 411
[87] Wang 2015, 413
[88] Wang 2015, 413
[89] Schmitter 1974, 93-94

forming an organisational continuum stretching from state-dominated extreme to a civil society extreme, some organisations being more autonomous and voluntary than others. Many proponents of the corporatist model acknowledge the diversity of organisational spectrum and have made some adjustments to the corporatist model. For example, Margaret Pearson claims that Chinese business organisations present a Janus-faced nature. They represent both the interests of the state and society.[90]

Pearson thinks that traditional state corporatist model exemplified by Schmitter still accounts for the structure of the relations between SOs and state fairly well. However, it fails to take account of the unique characters of socialist countries, especially those arising from the economic reforms. It also fails to consider Chinese association's historical dualist nature, that is, arrangement of the state-society relationship whereby elements of extensive state control and organisations' autonomy exist simultaneously. This system Pearson calls socialistic corporatism which should be distinguished from the state corporatism defined by Schmitter.[91]

Ray Yep, who has studied business organisations in Huantai County in Shandong province, found out that there was no such political exchange between the state and constituencies of these organisations which is essential for corporatist model to work. In the corporatist model SOs work as mediators between the state and society. They gather information from society and use it to negotiate with the state. Firstly, he found out that business organisations in Huantai County were designed primarily for top-down communication and encouragement of policy compliance. They were too dominated by the state to be able to represent and communicate the interest of their constituencies to the state. Secondly, an organisation engaging in corporatist relation with the state needs also strong internal cohesion. To be able to negotiate with the state, an organisation needs to achieve conformity among its constituency. Yep found out that managers resisted horizontal integration and the business organisations were not able to foster unity among them. These two reasons hinder the development of corporatist relation to the state. Thus, Yep concludes that here might be cases of corporatist relations in China, but it does not exist in essence.[92]

Tony Saich has criticised corporatism from different direction. According to him, government may have strict control over trade and business organisations but generally

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[90] Pearson 1994, 26
[91] Pearson 1994, 26
[92] Yep 2000, 548, 557-558

speaking it lacks capability to impose its will on SOs. Corporatist model also underestimates SOs ability to oppose government's interference. Most importantly, corporatist models overlook the idea that SOs may derive benefits from cooperation with the government. He claims that organisations' relation to state is rather symbiotic than unidirectional and they often purposely subordinate themselves to the state. This allows them to negotiate their own niche with the state and allows them to have more impact on policy-making. Through cooperative strategy SOs are also able to pursue their constituencies' collective interest and organisational objectives more successfully.[93]

Qiusha Ma has proposed that concepts of civil society and corporatism could be applied simultaneously. She argues that top-down organised SOs, for example trade organisations could be analysed using corporatist model. Bottom-up organised organisations, on the contrary, should be analysed using civil society model[94].

More recent attempt of overcoming the state control's contingency problem is the concept of graduated control proposed by Kang Xiaoguang and Han Heng. According to them, various social organisations differ in public goods they provide and in their capacity to challenge state power. Therefore, any authoritarian government that wants to maximise the benefits derived from the social organisations and at the same time maintain its monopoly of political power, needs to supervise and regulate various social organisations differently according to their capability to organise collective action and the nature of public goods they provide.[95]

Different kinds of organisations challenge the state authority with different intensity. Kang and Heng have divided five different strategies which they have exemplified with regard to five basic organisation types. Politically antagonistic organisations, trade organisations and spiritual organisation possess greatest capability to organise collective action. Antagonistic organisations are by their very nature a threat to political elite, but trade organisations and spiritual organisations are potential threats. Official SO's and grassroots organisations have only weak capability to challenge government. With regard to the public goods, antagonistic groups do not offer any public goods that government would be interested in, therefore the strategy is to ban them and crack them down as soon as they are detected. Trade organisations play an important role between the state and society so government's strategy is to co-opt them and turn them into

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[93] Saich 2000, 125
[94] Ma 2006.
[95] Kang 2008, 38

government-controlled organisations. Spiritual organisations potentially produce public goods, so the government's strategy is to restrict their establishment and growth so that their capability to collective action is limited. Official SOs produce important public goods so government's strategy is to encourage their establishment and development. Strategy towards grassroots organisations is one of non-interference. They potentially produce important public goods, but because of their lack of potential to threat government they can operate quite freely unless they turn to antagonistic organisations.[96]

According to Yiyi Lu, these attempts to overcome the contingency problem have some theoretical appeal, but in essence they are still some version of corporatism-civil society continuum. Basic problem with these aspects is that they ignore the fact that in China the boundary between state and society is often vague. Consequently, scholars in this state-society paradigm treat SOs autonomy as degree of formal independence from the state, even while realising that the most SOs are in fact mixture of state and society.[97]

It seems that state-society paradigm models face insuperable problems. First, the associational complexity results in creative application of theories which stretches the boundaries of theoretical consistency. Hence, scholars have revised existing theories and named them according to these characteristics as "Socialist Corporatism"[98], "State Corporatism"[99], or "system of graduated control."[100] Second, state-society paradigm models overlook essential features in Chinese associational life. In the next chapters I will treat models which try to overcome these problems.

Institutional Approach

Christopher Nevitt has suggested a different point of view. He uses in his studies an institutional focus by which he means "a focus on changing incentives and behaviour within the institutions of the party-state"[101] He compared two major private business organisations in Tianjin. One of these was Self-Employed Labourers' Association (SELA) *Geti laodongzhe xiehui*, which consisted of small entrepreneurs. The other one

[96] Kang 2008, 49
[97] Lu 2009, 14
[98] Pearson 1994
[99] Unger 1995
[100] Kang 2008
[101] Nevitt 1996, 41

was the Industrial and Commercial Federation (ICF） *Gongshangye lianhehui*, which consisted of big private and public enterprises.[102] Quite contrary to his assumption, ICF was far more active in pursuing its member's interests than SELA. Nevitt argues that the reason for such a stark contrast in their behaviour was not due to deliberate party-state policy, but different incentives guiding the careers of party-state officials who controlled these organisations at different levels.[103]

Nevitt distinguished two different career strategies for the officials. The traditional ”ladder of advancement” strategy means that officials are trying to fulfil their tasks and the expectations of their superiors as well as possible in order to get promotion. After the market reforms and economic decentralisation, ”Big-fish-in-a-small-pond” strategy became a more attractive option. Officials pursuing this strategy are more interested in developing their own local networks than pleasing their superiors and they actively try to isolate themselves from the officials above them. Thus, they are favouring policies and actions which are in the best interest of their local political constituencies.[104]

According to Nevitt, this explains the difference between the behaviour of SELA and ICF. Municipal-level officials are under direct scrutiny from the central government and they have already invested a great deal in their careers. In consequence, they are much more likely to trust in the ladder of advancement strategy than district level officials. District level officials on the contrary, have invested less in their careers and they are not under direct supervision of central government. They have strategic advantage on creating personal networks and increasing their power at the expense of the municipal level officials, hence they are more likely pursue ”big-fish-in-a-small-pond” strategy.[105]

For district level officials, small entrepreneurs of SELA are a poor investment for political capital. In consequence, SELA chapters merely concentrate on controlling their members and avoid wasting district government's resources by pursuing their interests. On the other hand, big private enterprises of the ICF serve as engines of the economy and thus, promoting their rapid growth is an effective investment on political capital of the district officials. On municipal level, officials are not so much interested in gaining their institutional power as they are pleasing their superiors in Beijing. On municipal

[102] Nevitt 1996, 26-27
[103] Nevitt 1996, 36-37
[104] Nevitt 1996, 38
[105] Nevitt 1996, 39

level SELA and ICF acted quite similarly and both tried to balance their control and advocacy functions in a way that it did not generate friction with their superiors.[106]

Jonathan Unger has studied business organisations in Beijing and he has come to same kind of conclusion. He found out that SELA and Private Enterprises Association (PEA) were dominated by their supervising government agency to that extent that they were not able to present the interests of their constituencies. On the contrary, ICF was extremely successful in presenting their member's interests to the central and local governments even beyond the goals of the state.[107]

Anthony Spires has conceptualised this institutional setting differently. He has studied grassroots organisations and found same kind of tendencies as Nevitt and Unger in private business organisations. Because government officials' survival and career progress in China is determined largely by how their superiors judge their performance, especially officials at lower level strive for political credit *zhengji* (政绩) in order to be judged favourable. Political credit can be understood as political equivalent of the concept of "face" *mianzi (面子)*. "Face" is prestige or social standing and it can be granted or lost. According to Spires, organisation which is able to grant political credit to government official is more likely to get support from him or her and can lead to symbiotic relation with the government official with mutual benefits. Conversely, if SO's activity is apt to reveal policy failures or otherwise make government officials lose political face in the eyes of their superiors. This relation he calls contingent symbiosis as it is based on practical considerations on each side. Symbiotic relation emerges only when both sides have something to gain. Thus, in order to survive, SO leaders must minimise conflicts with government agents and maximise the political credit given to them.[108] This symbiotic relation gives SOs space for manoeuvring and is important institutional factor when SOs, in Tony Saich's words, negotiate their own niche with the state. According to Saich, it is rational for the SOs to engage in symbiotic relationship with the state because then they can influence officials to their own advantage.[109]

According to Lu Yiyi, institutional analysis gives us more subtle understanding of the Chinese SOs. It pays attention to different actors within the state and society and to the incentives, opportunities and constraints that shape their behaviour. Moreover, it reveals

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[106] Nevitt 1996, 40-41
[107] Unger 1996, 813-15
[108] Spires 2011, 22
[109] Saich 2000, 139

another deeply-rooted habit of thinking in the state-society paradigm. Scholars have considered the autonomy from the state as the most important attribute of the SOs. Many classifications of the SOs have been made on the basis of their relative autonomy, for example by dividing them into government organised NGOs (GONGO) and genuine NGOs. This suggests that researchers have considered relative autonomy to be a significant clue to SOs' behaviour. However, Lu argues that relative autonomy is a poor indicator of SOs behaviour. An officially organised SO may in fact enjoy more actual autonomy than popular organisation and classifying Chinese organisations according to their relative autonomy from the state can actually conceal some essential features in their relationships with the state and their constituencies. For example, the previously mentioned ICF enjoyed more autonomy than SELA, although its tighter connections to the government would suggest otherwise.[110]

Consultative Authoritarianism Model

Consultative authoritarianism describes a type of authoritarian regime which uses formal communication channels to get information from its citizens' preferences and opinions. According to He and Warren, authoritarianism can be divided in three different style according to their communication. Command authoritarianism uses instrumental communication. Its purpose is to deliver preferences of those in power to citizens without regard to what preferences citizens have. Deliberative authoritarianism instead, encourages citizens to express their ideas. Communication is seen as a means to mutual change of ideas. Consultative authoritarianism is a mix of the two. Its communication is strategic. Main purpose of communication is to express decision-makers own preferences, but they take preferences of the citizens into account to achieve their own goals.[111]

Jessica Teets has developed the idea of consultative authoritarianism to state-civil society relations. According to her, under the consultative authoritarianism, state is able to take advantage of more autonomous and pluralistic civil society, while still maintaining control over it by creating more sophisticated means of control.[112]

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[110] Lu 2009, 18
[111] He & Warren 2011, 273
[112] Teets 2014, 2

Authoritarian states are unable to get reliable information of citizen's grievances through their formal institutions. Teets claims that officials in China have learned through experience and observing other authoritarian states that autonomous civil society can help also authoritarian states to improve their governance. Moreover, changes in political economy in China have opened opportunities for SOs to cooperate with government agencies. Through decentralisation process, central government has devolved responsibility of provision of public goods to local governments. At the same time central government has kept monopoly on fiscal policy. Local governments' ability to collect taxes and raise loans are restricted. Growing demands on performance and low funding has led local governments to run budget deficits and collect illegal taxes or fees. Moreover, cadre performance is evaluated by economic targets such as provision of public goods and this affects how local officials are promoted. According to Teets, local governments have learned that social organisations besides having close contacts to society are also a source of funding and novel policies from abroad. Thus, social organisations are able to help local governments to fulfil their targets.[113]

According to Teets, there are several differences in CA model compared to corporatist models. First, unlike corporatism, CA model allows multiple organisations to compete in the same area or jurisdiction. In corporatism state has given monopoly of representation to one organisation for an entire constituency, usually to an organisation founded by the state itself. Thus, CA model is more open to different kinds of standpoints and opinions.[114]

Second, CA model allows SOs considerable autonomy. They are able to hire their own staff, they have independent resources and goals.

Third, CA model utilises more adaptable means of control. Unlike corporatism, which uses direct means of control, CA model uses more sophisticated means.[115] In previous chapter I introduced the concept of graduated control in which government agencies utilise different kind of instruments to control different kind of organisations[116]. Those which are regarded as safe or beneficial are treated differently from those which are regarded as harmful. It is also noticeable that different state agencies may have different standpoint to the same organisation. For example, a certain environmental SO may be

[113] Teets 2014, 10, 16
[114] Teets 2014, 71
[115] Teets 2014
[116] Kang

deemed harmful by local authorities, but a central government agency can see it as a useful tool for implementing national environmental laws.[117]

Fourth, CA model uses also positive incentives to control organisations. Organisations which have close ties to government have access to the policy-making process. Other positive incentives are governmental funding, capacity-building programs and pilot project permits.[118]

Consultative authoritarianism defined by Teets comes very close to Anthony Spires's concept of contingent symbiosis. The essential feature in both is mutual benefit. Government officials will gain resources which they can turn into political credit while SOs will gain resources and as I shall argue, legitimacy is the most important of the resources, because it will give SOs protection and opportunity to develop their operational autonomy. The CA model is also compatible with the graduated control approach. Officials who are engaging in cooperation with SOs have to consider their advantages and disadvantages the way described by the graduated control approach.

Mass Line Model

Taru Salmekari claims that, if we are to find a unified Chinese civil society model, we have to look in the state itself. She proposes a civil society model which derives from the Communist ideology itself. The Maoist mass line model is a model of political communication between the Communist Party and the people. According to the mass line model, ordinary people provide the grassroots information of their needs and interests, which government then organises into intelligible form and uses for drafting new policies. This vertical consultation system was designed to provide reliable and comprehensive information for the policymaking.[119]

It must be noted that originally mass line concept was designed to be link between rigid party system and the masses. Party has bureaucratic tendencies and it would alienate itself quickly from the ordinary people's troubles and grievances unless there is a system of mutual communication. Moreover, the traditional concept regards masses as

[117] Teets 2014, 8-9
[118] Teets 2014, 9
[119] Salmenkari 2008, 399-400

individuals[120]. The present mass line model is revised version of the original concept where individuals are seen also as members of organisations.

According to Salmenkari, the mass line model encourages SOs to engage in vertical relations to government officials, while discouraging horizontal relations between other SOs. Moreover, it does so especially by promoting personal relations between governmental officials and private citizens. Thus, the essential features of the model are tight vertical relations and vague boundary between the state and society. This kind of arrangement definitely fosters corporatist or co-opted mode of relations between the state and society jeopardizing the organisational autonomy. On the other hand, this model gives ordinary people and SOs an opportunity to influence state policies through providing state agencies information. In other words, mass line model fosters the deliberative functions of the society.[121] As Jude Howell and Ronald C. Keith respectively have shown in their studies, Chinese SOs can raise critical issues in public debate even in some sensitive areas, such as human rights, but horizontal cooperation such as collective action is discouraged.[122]

Mass line model and consultative authoritarianism model share some essential features. Both concentrate on the relations of the state officials and SOs especially the mutual flow of information and resources and rejected the idea of autonomy as degree of independence from the state. Hence, both models are able to escape the duality problem characteristic of the state-society paradigm. Both models can also explain how autonomous SOs can survive and develop in China. However, consultative authoritarianism model is more general, it can be applied to different authoritarian systems in different countries. It gives explanation how interaction between officials and SOs actually work from the point of view of an outside observer. The mass line model, on the other hand, puts the phenomenon in its historical context. It provides normative rationale for SOs behaviour from the point of view of those inside the system. In other words, the CA model obtains an etic point of view and the mass line model an emic point of view. Ideally, a good research should combine both of these viewpoints.

According to Teets, the rationale behind collaboration for government officials is strategic. Changing political economy and promotion criteria has led them to

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[120] Dickson 2016, 123
[121] Salmenkari 2008, 400
[122] Howell 2004, 154; Keith 2003, 38

collaborate with SOs. Unfortunately, this view is too limited. It explains why local authorities collaborate with SOs, but it overlooks the multitude of other reasons behind collaboration. For example, some environmental SOs act directly against the interests of local authorities and collaborate with central government agencies. It also fails to take into account SOs active role in pursuing larger autonomy and government agencies' tendency to co-opt SOs. Many SOs actively search foreign and domestic private resources to achieve stronger negotiation leverage and gain autonomy. Teets, also claimed that consultative authoritarianism can be used to describe most of the SOs but not organisations which are operating in the corporatist system. The advantage of the mass line model is that it can explain the different government attitudes toward various organisational forms with single model. It can explain traditional corporatist organisations and newly emerged civil society organisations alike.[123]

Dynamic adaptation model

An interesting recent development of the state-society relationship model is made by Taiyi Sun. I call his approach as dynamic adaptation model as it emphasises government's and SO's interactive learning process where both sides adjust their behaviour in changing situations to achieve their goals better. Sun studied SOs after major earthquakes in Wenchuan (2008) and Lushan (2013) to see how exogenous shocks affected to state-society relations. His model does not provide normative grounds for the state-society relations, but it gives an interesting viewpoint how this relation can evolve and especially how SOs' possibility to develop autonomy can change over time. Sun's model focuses on two variables which determine the nature of relationship between government and SOs: government effectiveness in providing public services and the alignment of the SOs' goals with those of government. Based on these variables he has provided four types of government-SO relation: competition, complementarity, confrontation and cooperation.[124]

When the government is effective and the SO's goal aligns with the government's goal, relation is competitive. Competitive relations tend to be short-lived since the government must strive for similar resources and the SO might distract public attention from official's good work. According to Sun, government tries to turn competitive

[123] Salmenkari 2008, 400
[124] Sun 2017. 310

relations gradually into co-optation, and if it does not work, eventually close down the SO.[125]

When government is effective but the SO's goal is divergent, the relation tends to be confrontational. Again, the government must compete for similar resources but this time the SO acts directly against government's goal. For example, when an environmental SO exposes pollution crime and the local government wants to conceal it or when religious organisation offers public services, but at the same time promotes ideology which is contrary to the state ideology. In these cases, the government usually tries to dissolve the SO as soon as it comes aware of it.[126]

In case of ineffectiveness of the government, the possible outcomes are more complex. When a SO's goal aligns with the government's goal relationship is complementary. The government benefits from the resources and expertise of the SO and can better achieve its targets. In the long run, these relationships are quite stable unless the government feels its status in the eyes of public or superiors is threatened by the SO's good work. If so, the relationship will turn to confrontational and the government will try to get rid of the SO. Otherwise, the relationship can continue as complementary or cooperative depending whether the SO provides resources which government lacks altogether such as expertise or just basic resources which government is only short of. According to Sun, under complimentary and cooperative relationship, the government usually allows SOs to operate quite freely and gain some autonomy.[127]

If the SO's goals are not aligned with the government's goals, the relationship can initially be cooperative. According to Sun, this is possible if government is incapable of providing some public services, which is the case usually after big disasters such as earthquakes. For example, after Wenchuan earthquake some governments allowed religious organisations to help in disaster relief. Obviously, this kind of relationship is not very stable, and the government will dissolve the SO as soon as it is possible.[128]

The latter case is also the case where SOs adjustment of their behaviour became most visible. According to Sun's studies some SOs realigned their goals with the government goals hoping to transform the unstable cooperative relation to a complementary one. Especially religious organisations were successful in this transformation. However,

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[125] Sun 2017, 310
[126] Sun 2017, 311
[127] Sun 2017, 311
[128] Sun 2017, 311-312

according to same study, it was impossible to revive their original mission once they had established complementary relation with the government.[129]

In Sun's study, those SOs which were engaged in competitive relation tended to shift into co-optive relation. For many SOs in China, getting resources is continuous and severe problem. Since competition and maintaining good relations to government requires resources and if SO is not able to attract private donations, it might be rational for them to trade off their autonomy for more stable funding and switch from competition to co-optation. After co-optation, the government pays usually SO's salaries and other expenses, and consequently there is no need to put so much resources in maintaining good relations to the government anymore. However, from the point of view of civil society, it is bad thing and other SOs see it as betrayal.[130]

Not only civil society is learning and adjusting in this process. Local governments can learn from the SOs and increase the efficiency of their service provision. Thus, the long run, there is tendency to shift towards efficient government scenarios and co-optive relationships.[131]

Thus, when government is effective in providing services the relations with the SOs tend to end up in co-optation or dissolution. When government is ineffective in providing services, the relation with the SO can evolve into cooperative or more stable complimentary one.

Sun Taiyi's model is good at explaining the dynamics between the state and civil society in localities but it does not take into account the fragmentary nature of Chinese governance. It treats government-SO relations as one-on-one relation when usually this relationship is affected also by government-government relations. For example, many environmental SOs take advantage of their relations to other governments. Thus, they are able to maintain the confrontational relationship with local authorities by allying with Ministries or other Central Government organisations. However, Dynamic adaptation model shows that for any SO willing to ally with the government in mass line style relation and perhaps maintain its autonomy requires that the SO is at least a partial solution to the governments inefficiency problem. That is, it helps the government to achieve its targets more effectively.

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[129] Sun 2017, 312
[130] Sun 2017, 312
[131] Sun 2017, 318

The Dual Role of Chinese Social Organisations

An important addition to my analytical framework is brought by Chinese scholars who have introduced concepts of "post-totalist society" and "the dual nature of Chinese social organisations". By totalist society they refer to society before the reform and opening-up policy started in 1978. According to Sun Liping, in totalist society, the state controls most of the resources and economic and social interactions. In the post totalist society, state has given up the control over important resources and allows people more freely to associate in social and economic spheres. Therefore, the post totalist society is characterised by "free-floating resources" and "free operating space". However, the state in post-totalist society is not totally powerless. It is still able to exert heavy influence on economy and social life, although it does so in irregular and informal ways.[132]

Post totalist society creates possibilities for social organisations but it also determines pattern of their behaviour. According to Sun Liping, to survive and to be successful, Chinese NGOs must be able to exploit resources both "within the system" and "outside the system." They cannot ignore either of them. If a top-down organisation like the China Youth Development Organisation with its strong connections to the system insulates itself from the system, it would fail to use its political advantage and consequently it would be very difficult for it to mobilise social resources for its use. On the other hand, top-down organisation cannot rely solely on resources acquired from the system, because if an organisation wants to mobilise social resources outside state control, it can do it on its own. This is what the Chinese scholars refer to with the concept of dual nature of the Chinese SOs.[133]

In the next chapter I elaborate with one case study example how the China Youth Development Foundation was able to gain operational autonomy through administrative legitimacy and clever negotiation tactics.

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[132] Lu 2009, 19
[133] Lu 2009, 19

A Case study: The China Youth Development Foundation and the Project Hope

The China Youth Development Foundation (CDYF) is generally considered as an officially organised top-down organisation which is outside of my focus, but it nevertheless reveals some essential means to achieve autonomy which are relevant also for other social organisations' development and survival.

The CYDF was originally founded in 1989 and registered under supervision of the Chinese Communist Youth League (CYL). It was founded by Xu Yongguang, himself a former high-ranking cadre in the CYL. The Project Hope was initiated due to a fact that government had not succeed in providing all the children nine years of mandatory and free education. Some two million children, mostly in rural areas, were too poor to attend school. Moreover, there were two hundred million illiterates at that time in China. The Project Hope was CYDF's first project and its aim was to help these disadvantaged children to return to school and complete at least elementary education.[134] The Project Hope grew rapidly into one of the largest and most successful public service projects in China. According to the founder Xu Yongguang, it has raised in past 25 years (2015) almost US$ 2 billion from the public, provided scholarships for more than 5 million poor students and built 18000 schools[135].

One could think that an officially organised organisation would be mere tool in the hands of supervisory organisation, but the CDYF has enjoyed a remarkable degree of operational autonomy. It has been able successfully to push the limits and even circumvent some national regulations. At the same time, it has been able to avoid political consequences. One example of this is the launch of the Project Hope in November 1989 on the eve of 40th anniversary of the founding of People's Republic of China. Earlier that year China had gone through the most severe political turmoil of the reform era. The Party had appealed to media to concentrate on the brighter side of the country and its history and obviously exposing poverty and policy failures would not have been what the Party was asking for. Should CYDF have asked permission to organise press conference to launch the program from CYL it would most likely have been denied and the entire project would have been jeopardised. Instead, CYDF decided

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[134] Ma 2006, 101

[135] http://www.alliancemagazine.org/blog/meet-xu-yongguang-from-china-the-sixth-of-this-years-olga-prize-finalists-5/ (21.9.2017)

first to send half million copies of letter of appeal to companies all over the country asking them to donate money for the project. Rationale behind this was to cause trouble first and then see how the supervisory organisation would react. Fortunately, the supervisory organisation did not do anything, and the permission to organise the press conference was successfully applied later. [136]

The CYDF's fund raising techniques actually caused much worries in other segments of the administration. Especially the Ministry of Education was embarrassed by the publication of educational deprivation of poor children in the countryside which starkly contradicted their own statistics which always emphasised their success in school attendance. Party's Propaganda Department was also worried that such information would not only damage the Ministry of Education but would also be harmful to entire government and they actually put some pressure on the CYL. The CYL never gave in to the pressure and continued to support the CYDF and the Project Hope. Undoubtedly, the CYDF could not have resisted pressure from such powerful state organisations if it would have not been under the umbrella of the CYL protection.[137]

Another example is when the CDYF was spreading its operations to provinces. Multi-level management system requires that social organisations should be confined to the administrative level they are registered at and national level organisations are not allowed to set up local branches in provinces. The CYDF nevertheless kept establishing local offices calling them "funds". According to the CYDF, a fund is just a sum of money for a certain purpose, not an organisation or foundation and thus setting up local funds in provinces would not breach regulations.[138]

The CYDF proved to be also immune against co-optation and taking over of the Project Hope by the CYL or its local branches. According to Lu's studies, the CYL Central Committee did not have great passion to supervise, let alone co-opt the CYDF or its project. In time of registration, the CYL Central Committee appointed only one person to supervisory office which was set up to monitor the finances of the organisation and even that one was chosen by the CYDF itself. Moreover, all the expenses of supervisory office, including salaries and welfare benefits of the workers, were paid by the CYDF not the CYL. It is clear that the CYL Central Committee had a strong trust in the CYDF and their operations. However, the CYDF relied totally on the CYL's nationwide

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[136] Lu 2009, 31
[137] Lu 2009, 41, 42
[138] Ibid.

network in their implementing the Project Hope in the provinces. CYL local branches soon started to use the name of Project Hope for their own purposes challenging the ownership of the Project Hope. To counter this, the CYDF founded independent offices to manage Project Hope funds in every province. These offices were still under the aegis of provincial branches of the CYL but they all had independent legal status. The CYDF managed to gain some control over them on the basis of its ownership of Project Hope. Again, this manoeuvre which limited CYL local branches' control of the project would not have been successful without support and backing of the CYL Central Committee on the matter.[139]

As this case demonstrates, the CYDF is not a passive recipient of the orders from its professional supervisory unit but rather an autonomous organisation capable of defining and carrying out their own vision. Why the CYDF then was so successful in gaining autonomy although their operations created distractions between the CYL and other state organs and also between the CYL Central Committee and local branches of the CYL? The obvious answer is that the CYDF had very strong inherent administrative legitimacy due to the fact that its founder was respected and trusted ex-cadre of the CYL. The second reason is that the CYDF quickly gained financial independence. In the beginning the CYDF was financially dependent on the CYL. The CYL paid its registration fee and initial operational costs but soon the Project Hope's success made the CYDF independent. Financial independence gives organisation leverage to negotiate greater autonomy. The CYDF not only gained financial independence but also cleverly started to fund activities and projects organised by the CYL, turning the financial dependence upside down. Most importantly the CYDF and especially the Project Hope rendered CYL leaders with political prestige. The CYDF maintained low profile with the project and let CYL leaders to take credit for its success. According to couple of studies mentioned by Lu, CYL leaders associated with the Project Hope have actually been successful in their career advancement later in their careers.[140]

Thus, the CYDF effectively used both governmental and private resources to negotiate its operating space. At the beginning, it relied entirely on governmental resources but soon after it had established the project, it converted its strong social legitimacy into public donations and financial independence which, in turn, was used to negotiate greater autonomy. However, I will argue later that governmental resources are more

[139] Lu 2009, 33
[140] Lu 2009, 41

important in the sense that it is not possible for organisations to acquire the full potential of private resources if it has not already recognised by government and gained administrative legitimacy.

From the institutional point of view, giving the CYDF more autonomy was rational thing to do for CYL cadres. By Nevitt's concepts, CYL cadres were pursuing ladder of advancement strategy[141]. The CYDF and the Project Hope created only bearable frictions between the CYL and other state organs. It was practically free and it brought benefits, especially political prestige for CYL cadres which were later promoted to higher positions. Moreover, the CYDF dealt carefully with publicity and did not criticize the government for shortcomings but instead fanfared how the Party-state leaders have been very concerned about that project.

[141] Nevitt 1996, 41

METHODOLOGY AND HYPOTHESIS

The empirical part of my thesis aims to support my hypothesis that Chinese social organisations' operational autonomy is dependent on government official recognition. This recognition is conceptualised as administrative legitimacy. I will demonstrate that SOs' operational autonomy positively correlates with administrative legitimacy. I will also demonstrate that operational autonomy positively correlates with financial independence which suggests that Chinese SOs need also donations from private sector to gain operational autonomy. Lastly, I will demonstrate that financial independence correlates positively with administrative legitimacy.

Data Collection

My initial survey consisted of one interview in Beijing and one group interview in Chengdu. I also worked in an environmental SO in Shanghai for three months. Based on the information obtained in these interviews and fieldwork, I sketched the final version of my questionnaire. The first eight questionnaires I sent to organisations which were introduced to me by personal contacts and all of them completed and returned the questionnaire. Next round of questionnaires I sent to 20 organisations without a third person introduction but none of them completed the questionnaire. So, the final response rate was 28.5%. However, I was able to gather necessary information of several organisations through *China Development Brief's* NGO directory and organisations' web pages. Thus, altogether my sample consists of 17 organisations. Nine of them were located in Beijing, and the remaining 8 in provincial capitals including, Shanghai, Chengdu, Hangzhou, Kunming, Chongqing, Suzhou, and Changsha. Thus, my sample covers fairly extensive spectrum of different provinces from capital city and rich eastern provinces to less developed western provinces.

Low response rate was anticipated. Many researchers have reported difficulties in doing this kind of survey in China. For example, Zhan and Tang reported that many social organisations declined to complete their survey. They suggested that lack of time and political risks were possible reason for unwillingness to answer.[142] Even though the information I collected in my questionnaire was mostly publicly available, the topic in

[142] Zhang&Tang 2016, 593

itself might be understood as political and respondents declined to answer to a previously unknown person. It is also possible that many SO workers were busy working and had no time to respond to my questionnaire. However, I used an online analysis and survey tool to collect information and thus I was able to see that many organisations had opened my questionnaire, some of them even three times, and still declined to answer. Thus, for future studies, more stress on creating connections to organisations' personnel is essential.

I used semi-structured questionnaire to collect data about the nature of the organisations' operations and the resources available to them (see appendix I). Questions included the registration status of the organisation, organisational activities and resources including their relations to other sectors of society, especially to the government offices. The questionnaire was translated into Chinese so that the questions would have been understood in the same way by the respondents.

Methodology and Hypothesis

Because political connections especially to the Central Government officials and private donations were supposed to be important for obtaining operational autonomy, I expected that economic prosperity in the SO's location and distance from the political centre both have significant influence on SOs' ability to develop their activities. Thus, I first identified three distinct target areas where I would conduct my survey. 1) Beijing as a capital city and political centre has traditionally offered viable ground for social organisations. 2) Yangtze and Pearl River delta areas as economically developed regions but further away from the political centre. 3) Less developed and politically distant provinces in inland. However, when analysing the data, I realised that in most cases for the sake of my argument it is necessary to divide my data only to two target areas, namely Beijing and rest of the country. Economic prosperity of the location did not have considerable effect on SOs legitimacy or autonomy.

My main hypothesis is that social organisations in China obtain autonomy by participating in mass line style of relation with the governmental organisations. Through participation they will gain administrative legitimacy which gives them protection, and legitimacy in the eyes of the society which makes them more attractive for private

donors. With governmental and private resources together, SOs are able to achieve operational autonomy which I call dependent autonomy.
I will test my hypothesis with three kinds of relation. First, I will compare administrative legitimacy with operational autonomy. If this correlation is positive it will support my hypothesis. Any instance which presents low administrative legitimacy and strong operational autonomy would outright refute my hypothesis. Second, I will compare financial independence and operational autonomy. Again, positive correlation will support my thesis. Any instance which presents strong operational autonomy and low financial independence would pose an anomaly needing explanation. Third, I will compare administrative legitimacy with financial independence. If this correlation is positive it will support my hypothesis and prove my hypothesis that private donations are dependent on governmental recognition and administrative legitimacy of social organisation.

Operationalisation of Concepts

In this chapter I will operationalise the basic concepts I am using when testing my hypothesis. Two of them, namely, administrative legitimacy and operational autonomy have already been defined in previous chapters. However, it is not yet clear how these concepts should be understood in terms of empirical observations. The phenomena behind these concepts are diverse and they are not easily grasped by specific concepts. My operational concepts are not trying to be extensive ones grasping the totality of the phenomenon, but rather for the sake of simplicity and measurability I have provided one or two criteria for each concept which determine both sufficient and necessary criteria for the phenomena. The third concept, financial independence, is a rather simple concept which does not need further theoretical clarification. Thus, I will provide only criteria how to measure it.

Operational Autonomy

As noted earlier, by operational autonomy I mean organisations ability to independently set up its own agenda and to operate according to it regardless of opposition. Then problem rises how we know when organisations are able to set up their own agenda and how we are able to measure the operational autonomy. I claim that different activities

represent different levels of operational autonomy. Larry Diamond has identified six different types of activities that citizen are collectively engaged in public sphere 1)"to express their interest, passions, and ideas"; 2) "to exchange information";3) "to achieve collective goals"; 4) "to make demands on the state"; 5) "to improve the structure and the functioning of the state"; 6) "to hold state officials accountable."[143]

Diamond uses this classification to argue that organisations engaging in activities at the end of the list are contributing more to the development of civil society and democratisation than organisations at the beginning of the list.[144] As noted earlier Chinese social organisations generally do not have ability or willingness to contribute to democratisation process. However, I want to extend the application of Diamond's classification to the concept of operational autonomy. Thus, organisations engaging activities further down the list are representing more operational autonomy than organisations engaging activities in the beginning of the list. Activities from 1 to 3 are considered relatively nonautonomous and nonpolitical. They are usually in line with the government policy or can even be outsourced government tasks. Activities from 4 to 6 represent strong operational autonomy. These activities contain intensive and sometimes even confrontational interaction with the government officials and are more likely to raise opposition in some government organisations or officials and are also interpreted more political in nature.[145]

In my research, certain activity represents low, medium or high degree of operational autonomy. For example, environmental education represents only a weak operational autonomy. It is aligned with government's agenda and can be seen only as a tool of implementing its interests. Same goes with community service and development projects. Environmental policy advocacy, however, is by nature political and it involves changing cadres' views, government policies and laws. Policy advocacy can of course represent different levels of operational autonomy. Some organisations may avoid direct conflicts with governments and some organisations may advocate more sensitive policies. Policy advocacy intended to change village cadres' opinions is also considered less autonomous than advocating policies at provincial or national level. Exposure of illegal activities and legal assistance to pollution victims even to the extent that some

[143] Diamond 1999, 221
[144] Diamond 1999, 221
[145] Zhan 2013, 386

officials are held accountable are considered as extreme modes of policy advocacy representing strong operational autonomy.

Administrative Legitimacy

Administrative legitimacy derives from government agencies' or officials' recognition or support of the organisation or its activities. The dual supervision system requires registered social organisations to have governmental organisation as its supervisory unit. Finding a supervisory unit is itself a difficult task and requires good connections to the government. Thus, the registration status itself is an important indication of administrative legitimacy. Organisation registered as social organisations with the MCA and organisations affiliated with government organisations enjoy strong administrative legitimacy due to their close connection to their supervisory unit. Organisations registered as private non-enterprise units with MCA enjoy medium administrative legitimacy and non-profit enterprises weak administrative legitimacy. Governmental recognition and support can be verified also by informal connections to the state organs. Cooperation and financial support can also be important indication of the governmental recognition. As a rule of thumb, the higher the governmental organisation is, stronger the administrative legitimacy it gives. For example, cooperation with central government organisations such as the Ministry of Environmental Protection or the State Forestry Administration gives strong administrative legitimacy. Cooperation with provincial government gives medium administrative legitimacy and cooperation with lesser state organs at provincial level organisations such as Environmental Protection Bureaus gives weak administrative legitimacy. If organisation is not registered and it lacks any connections to state organisations it has negligible administrative legitimacy. Organisations which have been registered as national level social organisations and have connections to central government organisations would have very strong administrative legitimacy. Thus, organisations can have weak, medium or strong administrative legitimacy according to their connections to government agencies.

Financial Independence

Organisation's financial independence is determined by the size of its budget and diversity of its financial supporters. Organisations with budget over one million RMB

and multiple international and national funding sources have high financial independence. Organisations with budgets under 100000 RMB and single funding source have negligible financial independence. Thus, organisation can have high, medium, low or negligible financial independence according to their financial budget and diversity of their financial supporters.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

This section consists of two chapters. In the first one I will present the data which I collected from the questionnaire responses and different internet sources. This data will provide general background of political, legal and financial situation of the organisations in my sample. In the second part I will test my findings with correlation analysis of specific variables, namely administrative legitimacy, operational autonomy and financial independence.

Empirical Findings

This chapter clarifies the factors behind the concepts I am using in my correlation analysis. Registration status and relations to the government determines the administrative legitimacy. Organisational budgets and sources of funding determines the financial independence and organisational activities how much operational autonomy organisation has.

Registration Status

Chinese government uses registration as a tool to control the growth of the social organisations and their activities. Registration status does not only determine organisations legal status but also its ability to develop its activities and to raise funds. The most favourable status is officially registered social association which is granted a tax exemption. However, there can be only one social organisation in each level of a jurisdiction at the time. Most of the organisations must register as social service organisations, non-profit enterprises with the Bureau of Industry and Commerce, or continue without registration.

There were three organisations registered as a social association with the MCA in my sample. All of them were located in provincial capitals in western provinces. The most common registration status was social service organisation (SSO) registered with the MCA. More than half of the organisations were registered as SSOs. It was somewhat more common in Beijing as in provinces. In Beijing 66.7% of the organisations were registered as SSOs compared to 37.5% in provinces. Three organisations were registered as non-profit enterprises (NPE) with the Bureau of Industry and Commerce.

One organisation was not registered at all, and one organisation was affiliated with university and thus exempted from registration. Both of the last-mentioned organisations were located in Beijing,

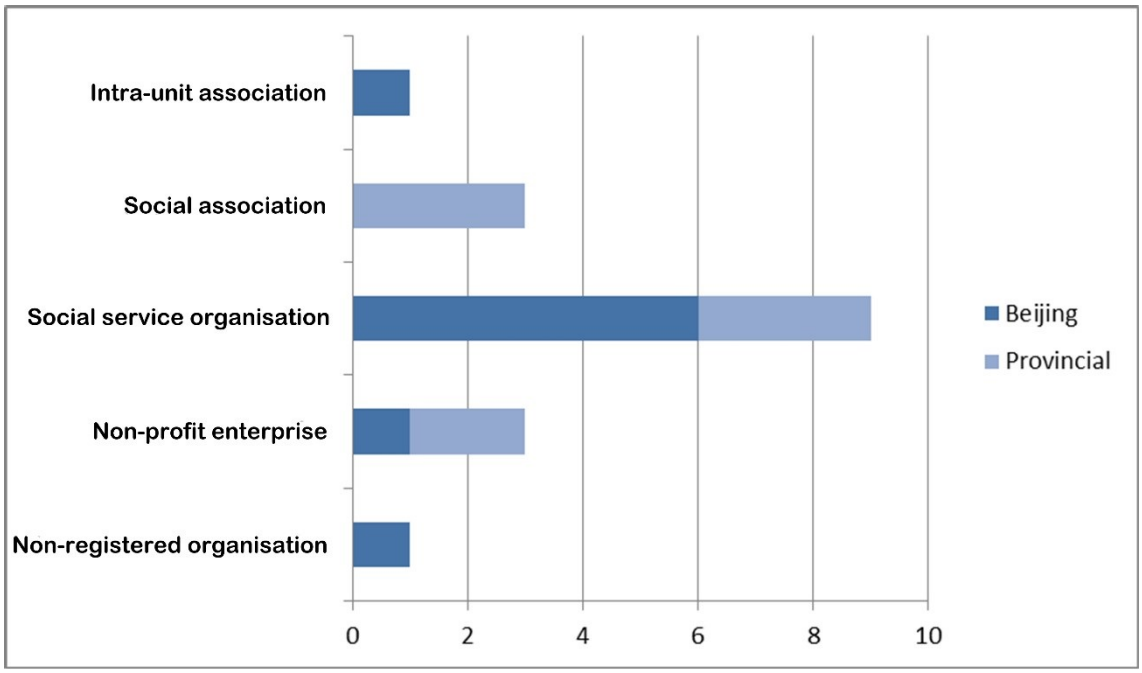

Figure 2) registration status

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Organisational Activities

Most of the organisations' activities were directly related to environmental protection. Two organisations provided legal help for pollution victims and one organisation was engaged in scientific analysis of environmental and energy source policies. Other activities ranged from environmental education to policy advocacy. Environmental education, spreading environmental awareness and community development were the most popular activities; five organisations were engaged in each of them. Two organisations were involved with scientific research and community services. One organisation monitored environmental pollution and reported violations of environmental law. Figure 3 provides detailed information about the activities of the organisations.

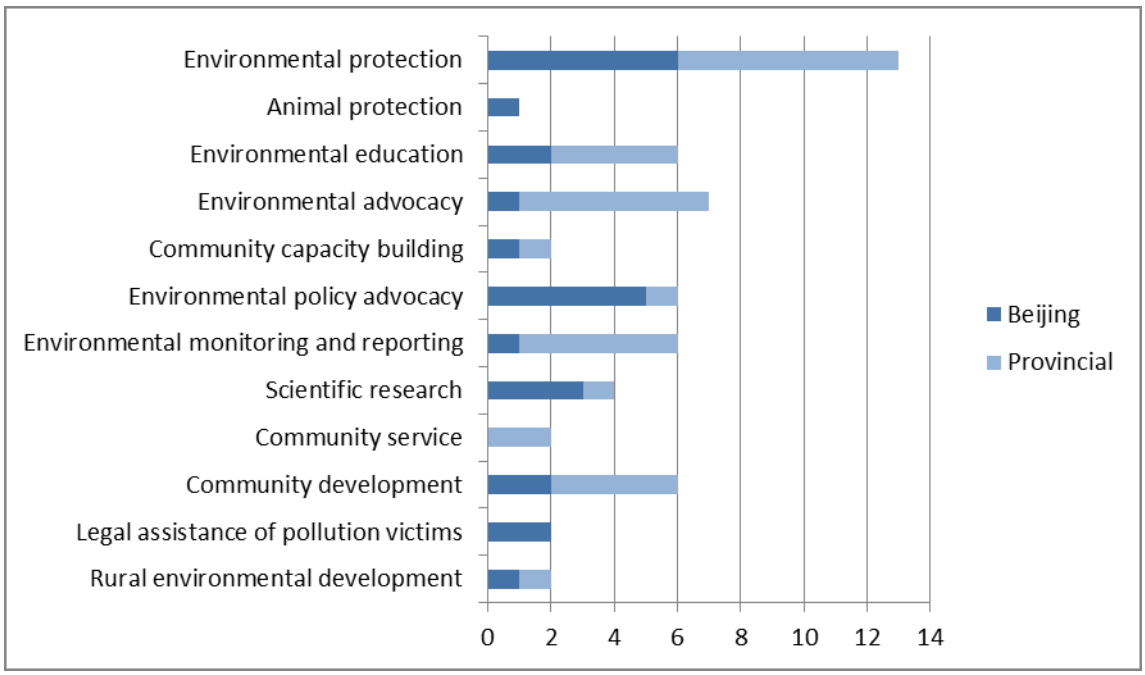


Figure 3) Organisational activities

In my sample, organisations in Beijing had different focus on activities than those in the provinces. Provincial organisations were more engaged in environmental education and developmental projects. Activities, which presented strong operational autonomy, such as environmental policy advocacy, and legal assistance of pollution victims were practically absent. Only one organisation in the provinces reported environmental policy advocacy as their primary activity. On the other hand, environmental monitoring and reporting of illegal pollution was more common in the provinces than in the capital. These organisations cooperated mostly with local environmental protection bureaus and functioned as their eyes and ears. Environmental protection bureaus are directly affiliated with the Ministry of Environmental Protection at regional level and their duty is to supervise implementation and management of provincial environmental protection.

Animal protection was reported only by one organisation as their main activity and this organisation was interested in animal protection only in a general level. It promoted vegan and sustainable way of life. This is quite surprising since there is significant number of species on the verge of extinction in China due to the human impact. Perhaps this reflects the nature of environmental problems in China. The most severe problems that concerns especially urban population are lack of clean air and food safety, not animal welfare. Consequently, authorities are obviously more interested in cooperation when there is social harmony in stake.

Organisational Budgets.

I was able to receive budgetary information from 15 organisations. I divided the organisations into four categories according to the size of their budget. Five of the organisations were big in Chinese context. They had budget from one to five million RMB and usually had 20-30 paid workers. All the big organisations were located in Beijing. Medium-sized organisations had budgets from 500,000 to one million RMB and had 7-9 paid workers. All the medium-sized organisations were located in provincial capitals. Small organisations had budgets from 100,000 to 500,000 RMB. Three of them were located in Beijing and two in provincial capitals. Minuscule organisations had smaller than 100,000 RMB annual budgets. They were all located in provincial capitals.

Total budget of all the organisations in the sample was nearly 17 million RMB of which two biggest organisations accounted for more than half (50.3%). Five biggest organisations in Beijing accounted for 73.6% of the total budget. On the other hand, five smallest organisations accounted only for 5.2% of the total budget and two smallest 0.8%. When comparing the two extremes, the budget of the biggest organisation was 158 times bigger than the budget of the smallest one. Thus, my sample covers small grassroots organisations and the biggest SOs in China.

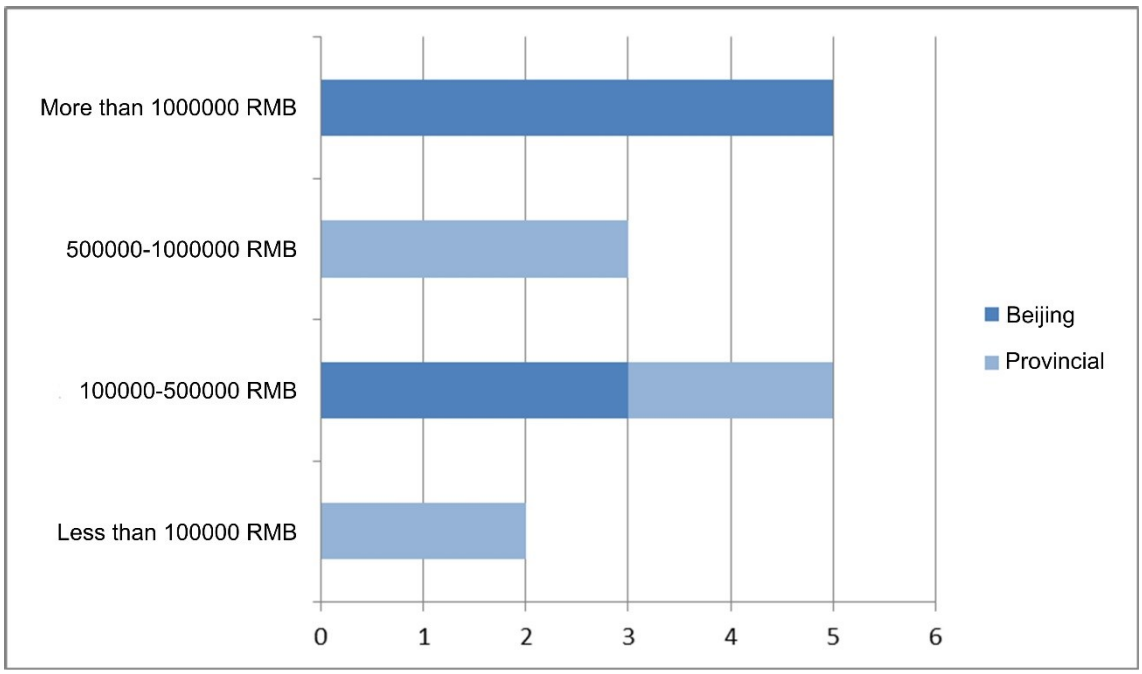


Figure 4) Annual budgets of SOs

As can be seen from the figure 4 above, on average, organisations in Beijing had bigger annual budgets than organisations in the provinces. This was an expected result. Beijing as a national capital, and highly developed and prosperous area, attracts more domestic and international donors than less developed areas and thus social organisations there also have more funding opportunities. This was most visible among big organisations with annual budgets over one million RMB. Big SOs consisted 33% of the total in the sample and yet none of them were located outside Beijing.

However, prosperity of the location in itself was not a significant explanatory factory in the organisations' budgets since organisations in Shanghai and other rich provinces such as Zhejiang did not seem to receive the same share of prosperity as their equivalents in Beijing. The biggest provincial organisations in my sample were only medium-sized on national level comparison and there was no significant difference between rich east coast provinces and poor inland provinces. The only significant difference was between the capital city and provinces.

Sources of Funding

Organisations in my sample received funding from multiple sources ranging from international enterprises and foundations to domestic companies and local governments. Only the central government agencies did not provide any funding for the SOs in the sample. The most significant funding resource was international charities and foundations like the Ford Foundation, but almost as many of the SOs received financial support from domestic foundations. Domestic enterprises supported more often than international enterprises. One SO reported service fees and other SOs' donations as their funding resource. I did not include service fees and other SOs' donations in my questionnaire, so more organisations might get funding from these sources. However, it is not probable that service fees and other social organisations are substantial source of funding for any of these organisations.

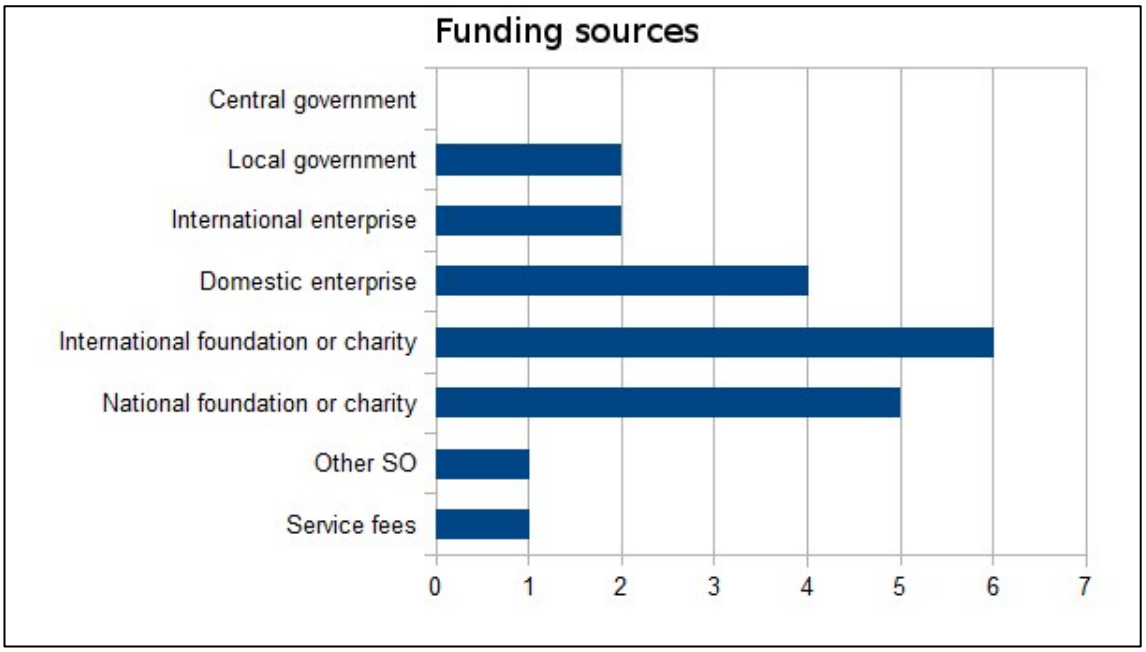


Figure 5) Funding sources

Quite expectedly, organisations with bigger budgets had more diverse sources of funding and they also received funding from international actors more often than smaller organisations. Figure 5 presents the detailed information of funding sources.

There are several major donors in my sample. The most notable international donors were the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Ford foundation, Waterkeeper Alliance and Oxfam. From international companies most frequently was mentioned the Coca-Cola Company, but wide range of different companies were mentioned from automobile manufacturers to financial and cosmetics companies such as BMW, Audi, HSBC, and Garnier.

The most notable Chinese foundations mentioned in my sample were SEE foundation, One foundation, and Narada foundation. SEE foundation is founded by entrepreneurs in Beijing who were concerned with the desertification and sand storms in Beijing, but it was soon expanded to cover all kinds of environmental problems. It was founded in 2004 and is the first foundation dedicated to environmental protection in China. One foundation, famously associated with the Chinese martial arts actor Jet Li, is closely related and inspired of SEE foundation. Many of the key personnel are same as in SEE foundation but it started with disaster and poverty relief, and aiding children of the poor families. One foundation is based in Shanghai and is funded by major Chinese corporations such as Tencent and Vanke Co.

Narada foundation is founded by the Narada Group ltd in 2007, and its primary mission is to foster civil society in China. It is also the first foundation which provided grants

directly to grassroots organisations instead of funding its own projects. The President of Narada foundation is Xu Yongguang, the previous leader of the China Youth Development Foundation and initiator of the Project Hope.

At the time of my study private foundations were not allowed to seek public donations. Private foundations had to operate with the funds their founding members had donated. From the foundations mentioned above, only One foundation was able to get status of public foundation which are allowed public fundraising. The 2016 Charity law made this distinction obsolete. It allowed foundations to register as charities and foundations which have held charitable organisations status for two years were granted to apply for public fundraising status. The new Foreign NGOs Management Law passed in the same year restricted foreign funding of domestic SOs. It is also expected that foreign foundations will withdraw their support from China as China is becoming more and more developed. These changes might have important implications for funding of SOs in China in the future and it is predicted that domestic foundations are gradually filling the gap which international foundations are leaving.

Horizontal Ties to Other Social Organisations

According to my hypothesis, the relations to other social organisations would not play an important role in their activities. However, most of the organisations reported cooperating with other social organisations. I did not research this feature in detail but the organisation I worked for cooperated with other SOs and this cooperation was coordinated more or less by a government-organised umbrella organisation.[146] Same kind of pattern was found by Taru Salmenkari in her research. This kind of hierarchical pattern suits mass-line model well. Higher level organisation systemises information collected from below. According to Salmenkari, umbrella organisation might be also responsible for applying donations from abroad and then allocating them to the member organisations.[147] Social organisations in Beijing were also actively organising seminars and journalist saloons where SOs shared information

[146] Interview with colleague
[147] Salmenkari 2008, 402

Vertical Relations to Government Agencies

As already mentioned, organisations' connectedness and relations to the government organisations is the most important source of administrative legitimacy and the administrative legitimacy is the most important resource which organisations can use to develop their activities and their operational autonomy. Generally, the biggest organisations had wide connections to all sectors of society but only they had cooperation with central government agencies, mostly with Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP). All but one of these organisations were located in Beijing. A Chongqing based organisation cooperated with national broadcasting company when revealing illegal logging in Sichuan province. Medium-sized organisations had cooperation with local governments and their offices or local bureaus of environmental protection. Small and miniscule organisations did not report any connections or cooperation with government offices.

I also asked organisation's managers or leader's background as it could indicate the possible relationship with government officials or other elite. Most of the organisations were founded by university professors or journalist. One small organisation was founded by members of other social organisation. None of the SOs reported that organisation was led or founded by retired governmental officers, but one was founded by a retired officer from the army. I expected there to be more retired cadres but this result might be due to the fact that my sample consisted only of a few officially registered social associations.

Hypothesis Testing

As stated above, my main hypothesis was that Chinese social organisations gain operational autonomy not from independence from the state but quite contrary by actively cooperating with the state organisations and pursuing recognition and support from them. This way they gain administrative legitimacy and ability to develop their operations even if they were not formally registered. Therefore, there should be a strong positive correlation between administrative legitimacy and operational autonomy. Another important factor was financial independence. Without financial independence a SO is vulnerable to the co-optation by a governmental organisation and to lose its autonomy altogether. Therefore, there should also be strong positive correlation between

financial independence and operational autonomy. Lastly, I will demonstrate that financial independence is difficult to reach without first obtaining strong administrative legitimacy. Therefore, there should be a strong correlation between administrative legitimacy and financial independence.

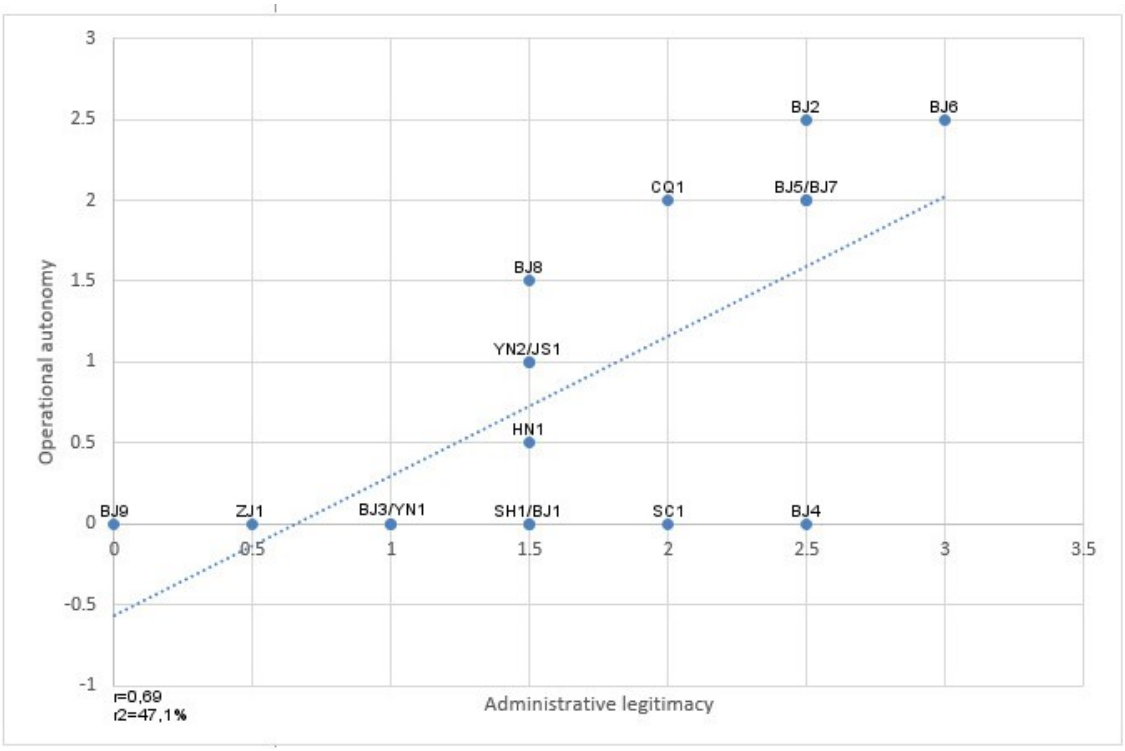
Administrative Legitimacy and Operational Autonomy

First, I tested my hypothesis by comparing organisations administrative legitimacy to their operational autonomy. If any organisation would have represented weak administrative legitimacy but high degree of operational autonomy my hypothesis would have been directly refuted. As we can see from the figure 6 below, there were no such instances in my sample. All organisations which represented medium or high degree of operational autonomy represented also strong administrative legitimacy. However, strong administrative legitimacy does not mean that organisation should have high degree of operational autonomy. There are two instances of this sort in my sample as can be seen from the chart below (B4, SC1).

This does not have to be a problem for my hypothesis. There are two reasons why this could happen. First, organisation could be so weak and dependant from governmental resources if it has been co-opted by the government organisation. As was described earlier, an organisation needs both governmental and private resources to fully actualise its potential. Second, since autonomy presupposes that organisation is able to make its own decisions regarding its goals and activity and my concept of operational autonomy comes observable only in the light of potential or existing opposition it is difficult to determine whether some organisations actually have autonomy. Thus, organisations aligning with governmental policies and interests could be able to set up their own agenda, but absence of opposition would make it invisible.

The correlation coefficient r between administrative legitimation and operational autonomy is 0,69. Thus, the evidence shows that there is strong linear correlation between the variables. Strong correlation supports the idea that administrative legitimacy is necessary, but not necessarily sufficient, condition for operational autonomy. In other words, to gain operational autonomy, an organisation needs first to gain administrative legitimacy and only then it can develop and extend its sphere of activities. Coefficient of determination r^2 is 47,1%. Almost half of the observed outcomes are explained by the model, which is acceptable since my aim was not to

establish a causal connection between the variables but indicate that administrative legitimacy is part of necessary condition of obtaining operational autonomy.



BJ=Beijing, SC=Sichuan, CQ=Chongqing, HN=Hunan, JS=Jiangsu, YN=Yunnan, ZJ=Zhejiang

Figure 6) Administrative legitimacy an operational autonomy

It is also clearly visible in the picture that organisations with strong administrative legitimacy (>2) are all located in Beijing. This is understandable. Organisations in Beijing have more opportunities to make contacts with central government officials and the leaders of organisations usually have these contacts already before they found an organisation. In fact, many of the SO leaders are high-ranking officials or retired ones[148]. However, in my sample only one of the organisation leader was retired army officer. Four of the leaders were university professors or academics and three of them were journalists. Four of the respondent reported another organisation as their leader's background.

Only one of the organisations with strong operational autonomy was officially registered with the local bureau of the Ministry of Civil Affairs. That was Chongqing based organisation (CQ1) founded by a retired army officer. Three of the SOs (BJ2, BJ5, BJ7) were Beijing based social service organisations and one of them (BJ6) was

[148] Gao 2002 14-15

affiliated with the Beijing University of Political Science. None of the formally registered social organisations were located in Beijing, so this would show that informal connections to central government agencies are more important source of operational autonomy than registration status alone.

Financial Independence and Operational Autonomy

As earlier mentioned, Sun Liping's concept of dual nature of Chinese social organisations suggests, that organisations are also dependent on private resources. I tested operational autonomy with financial independence and found out that the pattern was similar to relation between administrative legitimacy and operational autonomy. Same organisations were on the top-right corner as in previous comparison. The correlation coefficient is r=0,6, showing that financial independence is positively correlated with operational autonomy. Coefficient of determination is r^2=36% which is still acceptable.

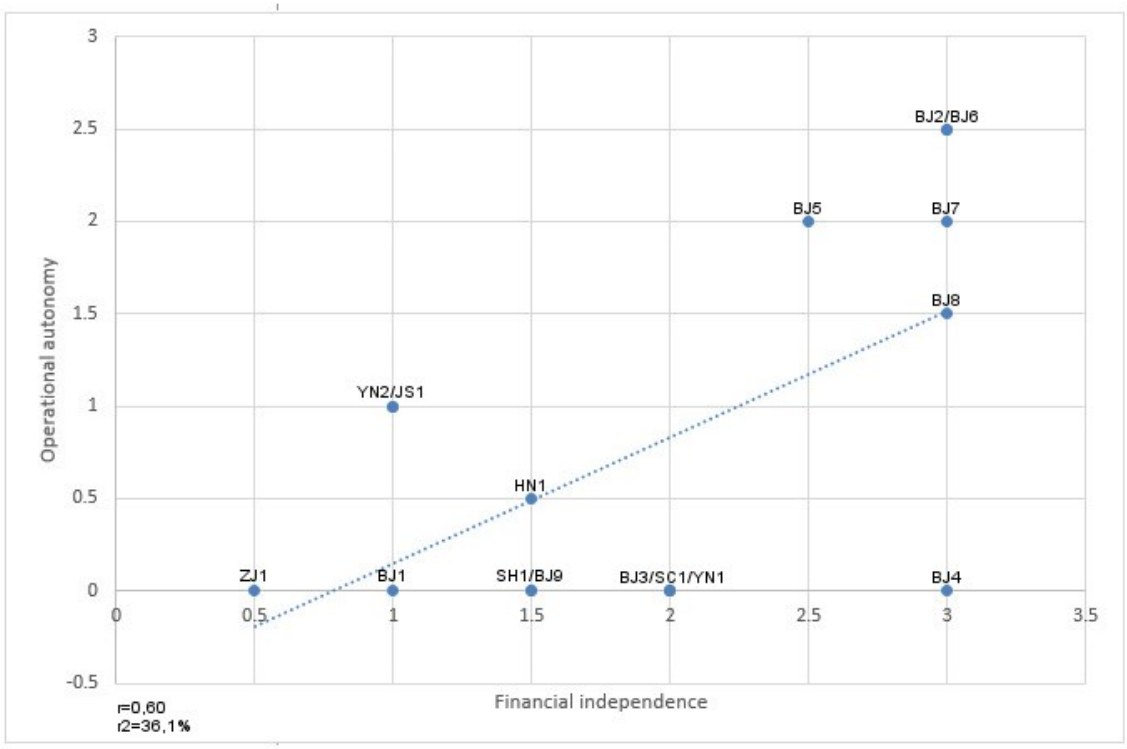


Figure 7 Financial independence and operational autonomy

The same organisation (BJ4) which presented strong administrative legitimacy and low operational autonomy presented in this comparison high financial independence and low operational autonomy. This can be an anomaly to my hypothesis since the reason for its low operational autonomy cannot be the lack of private resources. However, this

proves only that financial independence might not be a sufficient condition for operational autonomy even together with strong administrative legitimacy. It still can be part of the necessary condition. The main activity of the organisation (BJ4) is scientific research. Scientific research does not demonstrate much operational autonomy. On Diamond's scale[149], scientific research would be on level 2 or 3, that is, changing information and achieving common goals. Of course, depending on research topic, scientific research can be political in nature but that would need more careful study of its nature. However, the reason for its lack of operational autonomy is beyond my topic as my hypothesis predicts that only when organisation has strong administrative legitimacy and financial independence it can develop its autonomy to full potential.

Administrative Legitimacy and Financial Independence

Even though most of the financial resources of social organisations come from the private sector, their distribution is heavily influenced by administrative legitimacy. As figure 8 shows there is a positive correlation between administrative legitimacy and financial independence. The correlation coefficient is r=0,7 which demonstrates strong linear correlation. The coefficient of determination is =48,5% which is acceptable.

[149] Diamond 1999, 221

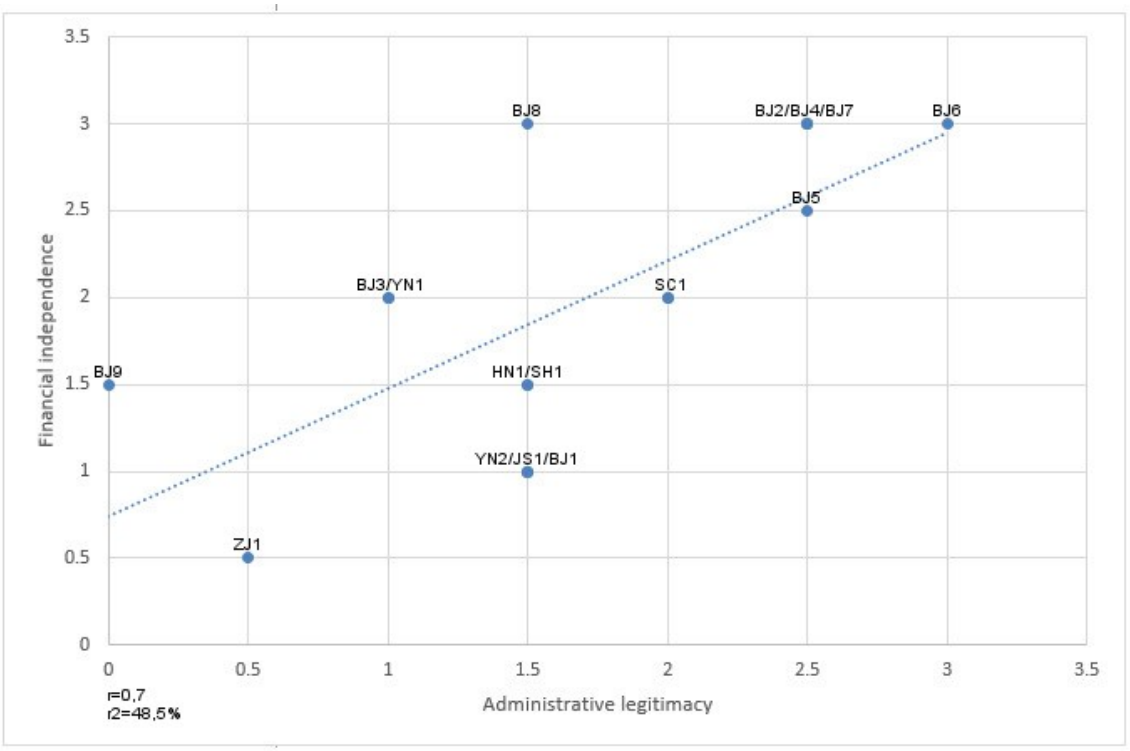


Figure 8) Administrative legitimacy and financial independence

Stronger organisation's administrative legitimacy is, the higher its financial independence, that is, organisations with strong administrative legitimacy tend to have bigger annual budgets and more diverse sponsors.

DISCUSSION

My research question was how Chinese social organisations are able to decide their own agenda and operate autonomously under an authoritarian regime. Many Western scholars have based their research of Chinese civil society on the civil society and corporatist models or some kind of mix of them. These models share the common feature that they consider organisations autonomy as independence from the state or as organisational autonomy. This conception links the degree of organisation's autonomy to its connectedness to the government in a straightforward way. The further away organisation is structurally from the government, more autonomous it is. These models are not able to provide satisfactory theoretical framework to my research question and, quite contrary, they make predictions which are contrary to the empirical observations. In China, social organisations gain legitimacy and autonomy by cooperating with government agencies. Thus, mass line model is a more appropriate model for Chinese civil society.

Connectedness to the government is conceptualised in the concept of administrative legitimacy. Administrative legitimacy is the most important resource of Chinese social organisations. It is the prerequisite to achieve full legitimacy and it is also prerequisite for social and private resources.

However, mass line model is incompatible with organizational autonomy and operational autonomy is more fruitful concept to measure social organisations actual autonomy and ability to decide their agendas. Research data supports my hypothesis that to achieve operational autonomy, organisation needs to gain administrative legitimacy first. There were no instances of weak administrative legitimacy and strong operational autonomy. However, according to my hypothesis, administrative legitimacy is not sufficient in itself but organisation needs also social and private resources to gain autonomy. This hypothesis was also supported by the data although there was a SO (BJ4) which presented strong administrative legitimacy and financial independence, yet weak operational autonomy. This is possible for two reasons. Either that SO was co-opted and did not have autonomy or there is some unclarity in the operationalisation of Diamond's model. My conception of operational autonomy comes visible only in the light of actual or potential opposition. Some activities, such as scientific research, are difficult to place in Diamond' model. Scientific research is just a means which can be used for achieving common goals, exchanging information, or scientific knowledge can

be used to advocate specific policies. Therefore, is difficult to define and operationalize it in measurable terms so that one is able to distinguish whether it presents strong operational autonomy or not. One needs to investigate more carefully what is the organisation's purpose of doing research.

Same goes with policy advocacy. In general, I have defined it as an activity presenting strong operational autonomy. A SO may report to be engaging in policy advocacy, but policy advocacy can range from one extreme where SO is pushing new ideas to the agenda of governmental officials to the other extreme where SO is just anticipating which kind of ideas would be more pleasant for the Party. My operationalisation is not very sensitive in this respect, although I have distinguished policy advocacy at different level of administration as presenting different levels of operational autonomy. Thus, an in-depth study must pay more concern for SOs and their activities.

In overall these concepts are exact enough to show that there is positive correlation between administrative legitimacy, operational autonomy and financial independence which is the base for the concept of dependent autonomy. These concepts give more fruitful starting point to study Chinese social organisations' autonomy and predict their performance than concept of organisational autonomy.

One result which was surprisingly strong was the relation between administrative legitimacy and financial independence. The operationalisation of concepts almost conceals how strong influence administrative legitimacy has on SOs private donations. Very few donors gave money to grassroots organisations and most money was given to those with good connections to the government. Close links to the government are not important only in the eyes of government officials but also private citizens and donors. In other words, engaging in mass line style of relationships with the government is important also from the point of view of society and donors.

It is an interesting question why the Chinese donors favour SOs with governmental ties. Undoubtedly, institutional pressures play an important role in their granting. Chinese private foundations also tend rather to build up their own projects than grant money to grassroots organisations[150]. I suggest that SOs with governmental ties are also seen more trustworthy and capable to fulfil their objects. This is close to the idea what Lu Yiyi meant by the notion of legitimacy in the eyes of society[151] and which I already

[150] Teets 2017
[151] Lu 2009, 54, 55

elaborated in chapter on social legitimacy. Bruce Dickson has pointed out interesting fact that Chinese are often suspicious towards social organisations. In 2010 and 2014 surveys 65% of the respondents regarded SOs as threats to social harmony. When people were asked who they trusted, only 38% trusted social organisations. SOs ranked well below government officials. According to same survey almost 80% of the respondents trusted central leaders and then trust gradually decreased when coming to provincial and local leaders.[152]

In this regard, the future implications of the new Charity Law are very interesting. According to the law, foundations may register as public charities which are allowed to seek public donations. More diverse donor base might lead foundations in future to grant money more equally to grassroots organisation too. However, the public opinion seems to set boundaries to this positive development unless there will be changes in public opinion on SOs' trustworthiness.

It is not only Chinese donors that favour organisations with strong ties to the government but also foreign grant-making foundations. Anthony J. Spires has studied US-based foundations and claims that this is due to 'organisational homophily', that is, a process where institutional demands from both China and the USA and preferences of elite-led foundations from USA converge to disadvantage of grassroots organisations.[153]

Charity law coupled with the new Foreign NGOs Management Law and foreign foundations tendency of moving their granting to developing countries will have significant implications on funding of Chinese SOs in the near future. Domestic foundations will take more important role in funding when they are filling the gap which international foundations are leaving. More heteronomous donor base perhaps will give voice for marginalised groups. It will be an interesting topic for future research how these changes will affect in Chinese SOs' autonomy and development.

Mass line style of relation between society and government can cherish plurality of opinion and autonomous social organisations, and that way increase the openness of the Chinese governance. However, it still has its limitations. The requirement of political correctness which is inherently in the system effectively prevents any criticism of the system itself. Thus, it is difficult to see that growing pluralism and autonomy of the

[152] Dickson 2016, 141
[153] Spires 2011, 305

social organisations has any significant influence on democratisation or accountability of the leaders.

I concentrated my study on environmental SOs which might raise questions whether my results are applicable to other sectors of civil society. I restricted the scope of my study in environmental social organisations for the sake of simplicity. In environmental protection the conflict of interest is mostly between the central government which passes environmental laws and local governments which might be reluctant to implement those laws in full. In other sectors conflict of interest might be elsewhere and social organisations may have difficulties to find powerful allies and thus develop their autonomy. Nevertheless, mass line model is still applicable to all social organisations whether they are fully co-opted, are in corporatist relation with the state or are grassroots organisations.

The evidence I presented supports the hypothesis that participating in the mass line style of relation with the government organisations and officials enables social organisations to achieve relatively strong operational autonomy. I call it dependent autonomy because it is achieved through participation and is strongly dependent on governmental recognition and support. Besides governmental recognition, Chinese SOs need to obtain financial independence to achieve operational autonomy. This Chinese SOs' dualist nature is compatible with the mass line model since financial independence is also strongly dependent on governmental recognition. Thus, dependent autonomy is complex mix of operational autonomy, administrative legitimacy, and financial independence.

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APPENDIX I

Questionnaire

中国民间组织的发展战略和活动的调查问卷

您好, 我的名字是马克.皮尔, 我是来自芬兰图尔克库大学的一名在读研究生,目前我正研究中国非政府组织的发展策略. 我非常感谢您抽空填写该调查问卷.您提供的所有信息都将会被严格保密,我的研究报告将不会公布您的名字和任何涉及到您身份的信息. 您所提供的所有信息将只会被用于学术方面的统计分析.

机构名称:

机构成立时间:

机构所在省份/直辖市/特别行政区和城市:

答卷人在机构中的职位:

1. 请问贵机构是由政府组建的还是民间组建的？请选择合适选项。
   ( ) 政府组建
   ( ) 民办组建

- 请问贵机构目前的注册身份？请选择合适选项 （单选题）。
  ( ) 民政部下属社会团体
  ( ) 民政部下属非企业单位
  ( ) 民政部下属分支机构
  ( ) 大学内部机构
  ( ) 在工商局注册的商业机构
  ( ) 基层组织
  ( ) 其他,请具体说明:

- 请问您贵机构主要的活动业务有哪些(可多选)？
  ( ) 环境保护
  ( ) 环保教育
  ( ) 环保宣传活动
  ( ) 动物救助和保护
  ( ) 生产能力建设支持
  ( ) 环保政策宣传

( ) 公司监督部门, 促进企业社会责任

( ) 科学研究

( ) 社区服务

( ) 社区发展

( ) 为环境污染受害者提供法律援助

( ) 其他,请具体说明:

- 请问贵机构的工作人员属于以下哪些选项？请提供对应的员工人数。

  ( ) 全职薪酬员工, 人数

  ( ) 临时薪酬员工, 人数

  ( ) 志愿者(无薪酬), 人数

- 请问贵机构的运作资金来源于何处？

  ( ) 中央政府

  ( ) 地方政府

  ( ) 国际商业公司

  ( ) 国内商业公司

  ( ) 国际慈善机构或者国际慈善基金会

  ( ) 慈善机构或者国内慈善基金会

  ( ) 其他， 请具体说明:

- 请问贵机构每年的预算是多少？请选择以下合适的选项。

  ( ) 小于 10 万元

  ( ) 10 万 – 50 万

  ( ) 50 万 – 100 万

  ( ) 大于 100 万

- 请问贵机构是否与中国的中央政府或者所在地的当地政府有相关的合作往来？例如，中国环境保护部。请选择以下合适的选项，并提供和合作相关机构的名称。

  ( ) 有， 请提供机构名称:

  ( ) 没有

- 请问贵机构是否与私人企业有相关的合作往来？请选择合适的选项，并提供合作机构的名称。

  ( ) 有， 合作私人企业的名称:

  ( ) 没有

- 请问贵机构与其他非政府组织是否有合作往来？

  ( ) 有， 合作机构名称:

  ( ) 没有

- 如果第 7 题到第 9 题中任何一提回答是“有”，请简略地说明贵机构与其他机构的合作事宜。（如空白处不够填写，烦请写在另外一张纸上）

- 请问贵机构的创建人或领导人的背景属于以下哪个选项 （单选）？

  ( ) 中央政府或地方政府官员

  ( ) 公立大学

  ( ) 记者或者其他传媒工作者

  ( ) 商务人士

  ( ) 事业单位工作人员

  ( ) 其他，请具体说明:

- 请简略地举例说明贵机构的基本活动事宜。

- 请问您如何评价贵机构目前所取得的成绩，您们是否已经成功地实现了建立贵机构的目标？请选择以下选项。

  ( ) 非常成功

  ( ) 成绩良好，还有很多改进的地方

  ( ) 马马虎虎，请您简略地说明原因:

- 请问贵机构在未来面对的最大的挑战是什么？

- 恳请您在下方空白处分享您对于我研究的课题的一些其他想法或者建议。非常感谢您对我学术研究的大力支持和无私的帮助。