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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/chinaperspectives/7359>

DOI: 10.4000/chinaperspectives.7359

ISSN: 1996-4617

Publisher

Centre d'étude français sur la Chine contemporaine

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 June 2017

Number of pages: 74-75

ISSN: 2070-3449

Electronic reference

Virginie Arantes, « Carolyn Hsu, *Social Entrepreneurship and Citizenship in China: The rise of NGOs in the PRC*, », *China Perspectives* [Online], 2017/2 | 2017, Online since 01 June 2017, connection on 24 September 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/chinaperspectives/7359> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.7359>

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- 1 Carolyn Hsu's *Social Entrepreneurship and Citizenship in China: The rise of NGOs in the PRC* starts with an expected question: "Was the 2008 Sichuan earthquake a major turning point for Chinese citizens?" In fact, the Sichuan earthquake is widely seen as one of the most important events that contributed to a rising level of social awareness, and more importantly, in recognising the potential of NGOs in China. However, this book shows that such interest in social issues goes back before the 2008 earthquake. Based on the personal stories and practices of key social entrepreneurs, this book explores the ideology of *suzhi*, or the search for quality, as the foundation of Chinese social entrepreneurship.

- 2 The book is divided into seven chapters. In the first two chapters, based on examples recorded from the late Imperial period, the author

demonstrates how today's NGOs are the products of a long and rich philosophical tradition of humanitarianism and generosity. For Hsu, the idea that non-profit social welfare organisations are "descendants of nineteenth-century foreign Christian charities" or a totally new type of organisation in China is misleading. Hsu challenges the Tocqueville model according to which a civil society requires autonomy from the state, and criticises the simplistic state corporatism model. Rather, she investigates how *suzhi* ideology enabled individuals to transform China, thus breaking away from previous studies on "civil society" or "democracy" concepts. In contrast to Delia Lin's *Civilising Citizens in Post-Mao China: Understanding the Rhetoric of Suzhi*, who explains how *suzhi* has been made into a political resource by the Chinese Communist Party, Hsu describes how ambitious social entrepreneurs have used *suzhi* ideology and the language of populist democracy to demand state action.

- 3 In chapters 3, 4, and 5, the personal stories of different social entrepreneurs are examined against a particular historical moment. Chapter 3 starts with the story of Peter Xu, founder of Golden Key, an organisation dedicated to the education of the visually impaired. Born in 1931, Xu comes from the first generation of social entrepreneurs, when social welfare was seen as the responsibility of the state. Through immersion in the historical atmosphere of Xu's life, this chapter explores how early Chinese social entrepreneurs combined different strategies and concepts (*guanxi*) to help the government solve social problems and scale up their impacts.
- 4 In Chapter 4, Hsu continues to explore the rise of *suzhi* ideology through the experience of Xu Yongguang, founder of Project Hope. This chapter explores how Project Hope managed to create one of China's most successful charity marketing campaigns. By using Mao Zedong's strategy of visual imagery in socialist propaganda posters, the group succeeded in touching city-dwellers' hearts. While never directly criticising the government, it turned a spotlight on the government's failure to raise mass standards.
- 5 Chapter 5, focused on the story of Gu Wei, a cadre in a Communist Party department, explores how a close relationship between Chinese NGOs and government agencies was born. As the Communist Youth League slowly became obsolete, Gu Wei decided that the best way to solve his organisation's political problems would be to franchise a branch of Project Hope.
- 6 Chapter 6 focuses on environmental NGOs (ENGOS) and the experience of Jin Jiaman, a state researcher at the Academy of Environmental Sciences. For Hsu, ENGOS were able to capitalise on the prevalent ecological dominant discourse in order to become the largest and most successful NGO sector in China's early twenty-first century. Hsu also explores the environmental "quality of life" ideology and the elitist and privileged connections between social entrepreneurs and state actors, international research institutes, and foundations.

- 7 The concluding chapter presents the story of Jiang Quan, who grew up in a society defined by *suzhi* ideology. In this chapter, Hsu develops the metamorphosis of Jiang's generation from the previous stories. For Hsu, engaging with social problems outside of the state sector and coming up with inventive ways of addressing social problems has become a popular mode of citizenship in China. Furthermore, the new social entrepreneurs, contrary to the first generation, do not come from a state bureaucrat background. By using informal social networks, new technologies, better levels of education, and even overseas experience, the new generation of social entrepreneurs has been able to open a new space outside of the state to influence Chinese society and pass on *suzhi* to future generations.
- 8 By exploring the development process that social entrepreneurs have had to go through since the Imperial Period, Hsu highlights three fundamental strategies. First, chapters 2 and 5 investigate the non-monolithic quality of the Chinese government and how social entrepreneurs with cadre backgrounds (and with high levels of *suzhi*) managed to take advantage of their knowledge of government agendas and interests. However, in order to maintain state alliances, social entrepreneurs had to bear a number of costs. By staying hidden behind governmental achievements, they limited the scope of their activity and didn't generate social trust. Furthermore, their intentions only worked if their goals actually coincided with those of the state.
- 9 Second, through the lens of chapters 4 and 6, the reader is able to understand how the strategies of social entrepreneurs involved creating moral panic. Because the Party-state advanced a discourse of populist democracy to legitimise its power, it had to respond to these panics, and that required state organisations to follow social entrepreneurs. In the cases of Xu and the ENGOS, Hsu shows that NGOs were not dependent on the government, but rather that social entrepreneurs were able to create a situation in which the government needed their help. Those effects can be easily traced to recent governmental environmental policies. In the last chapter, Hsu describes the new social media strategy used by online volunteers to increase their influence outside of the state.
- 10 By tracing back to Chinese traditional charity and developing concrete case studies, Carolyn Hsu has produced an essential book for any scholar interested in Chinese studies, Chinese politics, sociology, civil society in China, or even cultural studies. Rather than taking the prevalent negative approach, this book cast a positive light on the journey of some successful individuals. This rather excessively positive analysis could have been strengthened by focusing more on the inverse influence of the government on the growth of NGOs. Although the author briefly alludes to these issues, a more comprehensive exploration of the cases of other more sensitive NGOs that don't follow state priorities could have been relevant in tackling another angle of state-society relationships in China.

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