

**From NGOs to Social Enterprises:
Chinese Social Organizations in Local and
Global Governance
LPS-SA301**

Course Outline

Instructor

Dr Timothy Hildebrandt, Assistant Professor of Social Policy and Development, LSE

Dr Timothy Hildebrandt's research and teaching focuses on the relationship between non-governmental organisations (NGO) and the state, particularly in non-democracies. His recent book, published by Cambridge University Press, is a ground-breaking comparative study of several NGO sectors across China. Trained as a political scientist, he researches social organisations primarily through a political economy lens, attentive to the role that both politics and economic resources play in the life of NGOs. He also draws upon management theories and literature in highlighting how NGOs are highly adaptive organisations, interested in ensuring long-term sustainability. One of his current research projects has him examining how Chinese NGOs have begun to spread their reach outside of the mainland as frequent government partners in development projects. His perspective is both theoretical and practical; his work seeks to engage policy and practitioner audiences, in Beijing and the rest of the world.

Course Summary

In the last decade, the number of NGOs in China has risen exponentially, and their scope has broadened significantly. Originally isolated to the political and economic centres of Beijing and Shanghai, and the areas of the country once thought to be incubators of civil society, like Yunnan, NGOs can be found throughout the country, engaged in a wide variety of social projects. But to the surprise of many observers, the vast majority of NGOs operating in China today maintain a relatively cooperative relationship with the state. They are playing sometimes key roles in local (and perhaps global) governance.

This course explores the unique context within which NGOs and other social organisations have emerged in China, revealing how they have been able to often coexist with the government. It draws attention to the strategic adaptations that leaders of these organisations make in order to operate in a more narrow political environment such as China's, and examines how this might change the nature of their activities and ultimately the effect they can have on society.

This course does not examine Chinese social organisations in isolation but rather places them in both an historical and comparative context, highlighting the difference in character, activity, and effect of NGOs in China from the rest of the world. In doing so, this course will familiarize students with relevant theories and literatures from a wide variety of fields, including international relations, comparative politics, sociology, and management. Important conceptual issues pertinent to the study of NGOs and social enterprises include: development and management of NGOs, role of transnational activism, views and practices of volunteerism, philanthropy and funding, and the effect of NGOs and civil society on Chinese society and politics. Courses will also examine how international NGOs operate in China, and how they interact with domestic Chinese NGOs – in addition, it will highlight the new role of Chinese NGOs going outside domestic borders to do international work of their own. Throughout the course, empirical cases of NGOs will be discussed, including organisations working in the areas of public health, poverty alleviation, labour rights, environmental protection, and education.

Students enrolled in this course can expect to gain:

- A critical view of NGOs, activism and civil society
- An awareness of how the activities of NGOs are shaped by not just a passion for high-minded ideals, but also the political and economic context within which they must operate
- A knowledge of theories of NGO development generally, but also an appreciation of how these theories might differ in the China context
- An ability to evaluate conditions under which activism can have positive impact on Chinese society, but also when it can have unintended effects

Background and Preparatory Reading List

- Pei, Minxin. 1998. "Chinese Civic Associations: An Empirical Analysis" *Modern China*. 24 (3): 285-318
- Saich, Tony (2000) "Negotiating the State: The Development of Social Organizations in China" *The China Quarterly* 161: 124-141
- Jonathan Schwartz and Shawn Shieh (eds.) (2009) *State and Society Responses to Social Welfare Needs: Serving the People*. New York: Routledge
- Jessica Teets (2009) 'Post-earthquake relief and reconstruction efforts: an emerging civil society in China?' *The China Quarterly* 198: 330-347
- Peter Ho and Richard Edmonds (2012) *China's Embedded Activism: Opportunities and Constraints of a Social Movement*. New York: Routledge
- Timothy Hildebrandt (2013) *Social Organizations and the Authoritarian State in China*. New York: Cambridge University Press

Assessment

Midterm Examination: 50% Paper: 50%

Course Overview

1. NGOs and social organisations (with Chinese characteristics): Theories, approaches, & history
2. Small state, big society: NGO development in reform era China
3. Managing NGOs in China: State policies and societal adaptations
4. Boomerangs in China: Transnational activism and NGOs
5. Second-image reversed: International NGOs in China
6. An NGO 'Go Out' Policy: Chinese NGOs in the World
7. Is there ever a 'free lunch'? Volunteerism in China
8. Funding activism: philanthropy in China
9. NGO to social enterprise: Success, failure and sustaining the future
10. Assessing the effect of Chinese NGOs on the State and Society