

NGOs, Civil Society, and Environmental Governance in China

Shui-Yan Tang

Background

- New Developments: registration requirements; the party's involvement in developing and monitoring civic organizations.
- The increased service role of NGOs; their advocacy role remains uncertain
- Transformations of the party, governments, markets, civil society
- State corporatism, with Chinese characteristics?

Research Projects

- Ecological modernization; collaborative governance; the role of civil society and NGOs; mutually reinforcing expectations among actors from multiple sectors; the unique role of NGOs as a bridge across governments, corporations, and civil society
- Surveys on environmental officials (2000; 2006), corporations (2007), and NGOs (2003/5; 2009/10; 2011-2012)
- Not just about what NGOs and social groups have done, but their interactions with local environmental officials and enterprises and the extent to which their role as a bridge across sectors is hampered by the authoritarian settings as well as their own developmental trajectory.

Some Relevant Publications

- X. Zhan and S. Y. Tang, "Institutional Embeddedness and Government-NGO Relations: Political Ties of Environmental NGO Leaders in China", working paper.
- C. W. H. Lo and S. Y. Tang, *Institutions, Regulatory Styles, Society, and Environmental Governance in China*, Oxford: Routledge, 2013, forthcoming
- X. Zhan, C. W. H. Lo, and S. Y. Tang, "Contextual Changes and Environmental Policy Implementation: A Longitudinal Study of Street-Level Bureaucrats in Guangzhou, China," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, forthcoming
- Yee, W-H, C.W. H. Lo, and S. Y. Tang, "Assessing ecological modernization in China: Stakeholder demands and corporate environmental management practices," *The China Quarterly*, forthcoming
- X. Zhan and S. Y. Tang, "Political Opportunities, Resource Constraints, and Policy Advocacy: A Longitudinal Study of Environmental NGOs in China," *Public Administration*, 2013, forthcoming
- C. W. H. Lo, G. Fryxell, and S. Y. Tang, "Stakeholder Pressures from Perceived Environmental Impacts and the Effect on Corporate Management Programs in China," *Environmental Politics*, Vol. 19, No. 6, 2010, 888-909
- S. Y. Tang, C. W. H. Lo, and G. Fryxell, "Governance Reform, External Support, and Environmental Regulation Enforcement in Rural China: The Case of Guangdong Province," *Journal of Environmental Management*, Vol. 91, No. 10, 2010, 2008-2018
- S. Y. Tang and C. W. H. Lo, "The Political Economy of Service Organization Reform in China: An institutional Choice Perspective," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 2009, 731-767
- S. Y. Tang and X. Zhan, "Civic Environmental NGOs, Civil Society, and Democratization in China," *Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 3, 2008, 425-448.

From the Perspective of Local Environmental Officials

- Local environmental officials in Guangzhou perceived higher levels of societal support for their work (between 2000-2006).
- Local environmental officials in Guangzhou perceived greater importance of support from social organizations for effective enforcement (between 2000-2006).
- In 2006, support from local government, **but not support from the public**, is the major significant factor for perceived effectiveness by enforcement officials.
- In interviews, officials complaint about pressure from the public as a source of difficulty for their work; not much collaboration with NGOs; government officials facing angry citizens; NGOs have played a limited role as a bridge between governments and citizens

Table 1. Changing Political Contexts (Zhan, Lo, & Tang, forthcoming)

Items	Variables	Statistics	Year		t-Statistic
			2000	2006	
Governmental Support	Central Government Support	Mean	3.43	3.59	1.673* (.095)
		(S.D.)	(.855)	(.807)	
		Case No.	138	153	
	Provincial Government Support	Mean	3.35	3.51	1.702* (.090)
		(S.D.)	(.891)	(.814)	
		Case No.	171	152	
	City Government Support	Mean	3.44	3.52	.856 (.393)
		(S.D.)	(.861)	(.838)	
		Case No.	171	152	
	City Mayor Support	Mean	3.39	3.46	.709 (.479)
		(S.D.)	(.865)	(.831)	
		Case No.	162	151	
	Support from other departments in municipal government	Mean	3.02	3.14	1.186 (.237)
		(S.D.)	(.908)	(.846)	
		Case No.	155	152	
Societal Support	Support from National People's Congress	Mean	3.48	3.51	.270 (.787)
		(S.D.)	(.854)	(.797)	
		Case No.	160	152	
	Support from Political Consultative Committee	Mean	3.16	3.50	3.609*** (.000)
		(S.D.)	(.897)	(.738)	
		Case No.	153	151	
	Support from court	Mean	3.47	3.45	-.166 (.868)
		(S.D.)	(.839)	(.821)	
		Case No.	164	152	
	Public Support	Mean	3.16	3.35	1.979** (.049)
		(S.D.)	(.956)	(.782)	
		Case No.	168	153	
	Support from the mass media	Mean	3.19	3.42	2.411** (.016)
		(S.D.)	(.938)	(.775)	
		Case No.	166	153	
Perceived Importance of External Stakeholders	Support from environmental organizations	Mean	3.04	3.45	4.603*** (.000)
		(S.D.)	(.854)	(.698)	
		Case No.	157	152	
	Support from other social organizations	Mean	2.86	3.24	4.651*** (.000)
		(S.D.)	(.804)	(.641)	
		Case No.	154	152	
	Business Support	Mean	2.92	2.97	.616 (.538)
		(S.D.)	(.888)	(.786)	
		Case No.	167	153	
	Importance of governmental support	Mean	3.96	4.17	3.046*** (.002)
		(S.D.)	(.674)	(.592)	
		Case No.	185	154	
	Importance of social organization support	Mean	2.69	3.49	8.917*** (.000)
		(S.D.)	(.814)	(.794)	
		Case No.	171	154	

Notes: * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01. The scores are based on Likert-scale questions, and the answers include "strongly disagree" (1); "disagree" (2); "neutral" (3); "agree" (4); and "strongly agree" (5).

Table 2. Explaining Perceived Implementation Effectiveness (Zhan, Lo, & Tang, forthcoming)

Dependent Variables		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
Unit Effectiveness		Year 2000	Year 2006	Year 2000	Year 2006	Year 2000	Year 2006	Year 2000	Year 2006
Contextual Factors	Central Government Support	.386** (3.175)	-.188 (-1.347)	.278* (1.958)	-.173 (-1.287)	.331** (2.640)	-.172 (-1.246)	.252* (1.733)	-.161 (-1.211)
	Municipal Government Support	-.063 (-.501)	.560*** (3.498)	.021 (.144)	.586*** (3.803)	.028 (.211)	.555*** (3.529)	.089 (.596)	.583*** (3.837)
	Business Support	-.144 (-1.370)	-.044 (-.387)	-.124 (-1.048)	-.023 (-.201)	-.115 (-1.061)	-.032 (-.287)	-.089 (-.717)	-.005 (-.041)
	Public Support	.133 (1.204)	-.164 (-1.362)	.091 (.789)	-.108 (-.911)	.092 (.815)	-.200* (-1.668)	.058 (.485)	-.148 (-1.249)
Work Situations	Goal Ambiguity			-.128 (-1.264)	.108 (1.228)			-.106 (-.972)	.087 (1.003)
	Administrative Resource Scarcity			-.029 (-.268)	-.040 (-.414)			-.043 (-.383)	-.009 (-.091)
	Inadequate Administrative Authority			.058 (.528)	.299*** (3.238)			.079 (.685)	.276*** (3.001)
Enforcement Strategies	Formalism					-.234** (-2.107)	.043 (.476)	-.192 (-1.612)	.051 (.566)
	Collaboration					-.041 (-.394)	.205** (2.278)	-.010 (-.087)	.171* (1.941)
Control Variables	Gender	-.033 (-.350)	.158* (1.766)	-.011 (-.102)	.169* (1.919)	-.008 (-.079)	.148* (1.638)	-.035 (-.321)	.167* (1.907)
	Years of law enforcement	.026 (.280)	-.187** (-2.074)	-.016 (-.164)	-.159* (-1.829)	.102 (1.021)	-.159* (-1.782)	.048 (.442)	-.136 (-1.547)
Sample Size		202	154	202	154	202	154	202	154
<i>R</i> ²		.131	.151	.128	.238	.191	.197	.162	.271
<i>F-ratio (sig.)</i>		2.545 (.025)	3.250 (.006)	1.472 (.170)	3.712 (.000)	2.661 (.011)	3.316 (.002)	1.444 (.169)	3.553 (.000)

Notes: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$; standardized coefficients with *t* scores in parentheses.
The sample sizes reported here are the numbers of questionnaires returned; yet in each regression the sample size may be slightly reduced due to the omission of cases involving missing data.

Interviews with officials

- Local environmental officials have increasingly felt the pressure of citizen complaints.
- Local environmental officials are not used to working with civic NGOs.
- Local environmental officials have worked with non-government entities, but they are mostly spinoffs from the party-state establishments.

From the Perspective of Enterprise Executives

- Enterprise executives feel more pressure from government and the market, than from the community.
- Enterprises that have less developed environmental management programs are more likely to feel pressure from the community.
- Many enterprise executives do express concerns about possible negative media exposure, but most do not feel pressures from environmental interest groups and have seldom worked with them.
- Many enterprise executives tend to dismiss citizen complaints through government hotlines as attempts to seize monetary compensation.

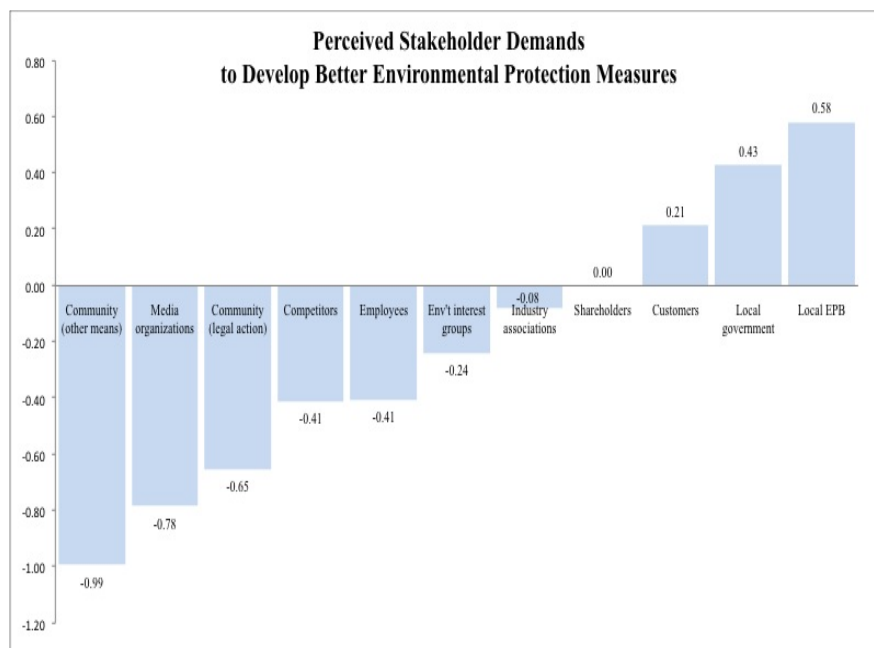


Table 3. OLS Regression Analysis on EMP Adoption (Yee, Lo, & Tang, forthcoming)

Independent variable	EMP Adoption		
	Standardized Coefficients	Standard Error	(Sig.)
Stakeholder demands			
Local government	-.044	(1.520)	(.651)
Local Environmental Protection Bureau	.225**	(1.500)	(.023)
Customers	.096	(.845)	(.132)
Industrial associations	.077	(1.011)	(.280)
Major competitors	.019	(1.055)	(.793)
Shareholders	.105	(.969)	(.130)
Employees	-.043	(1.139)	(.547)
Environmental interest groups	-.061	(1.131)	(.414)
Media organizations	-.068	(1.096)	(.359)
Community via legal action	.034	(1.266)	(.698)
Community via other means	-.171**	(1.287)	(.042)
Control			
Top management attitude	.513***	(.278)	(.000)
Export-orientation	.060	(2.177)	(.196)
Financial status	.088*	(.831)	(.056)
F	18.123***		(.000)
R Square	.500	(15.782)	
Adjusted R Square	.472		

* p ≤ .10; ** p ≤ .05; *** p ≤ .01

From the Perspective of NGOs

- From primarily focusing on environmental education and conservation projects to some pursuing limited policy advocacy and political actions (from 2003/3 to 2009/10).
- NGOs still have limited access to the formal policy making process.
- Most civic ENGOs did not emerge from the grassroots; many instead emerged from within the party-state.
- While NGO leaders' personal *guanxi* with government officials may help them obtain government funding; such relationships may also undermine their willingness to advocate for policy change and to hold government accountable.
- Major funding sources: foundations and governments; not much from individual members.

TABLE 4 *Organizational activities of civic eNGOs* (Zhan and Tang, 2013)

Time	Beijing-based NGOs		Non-Beijing NGOs	
	2003-2005	2009-2010	2003-2005	2009-2010
Primarily engaged in environmental education and conservation projects (type 1 to 3 activities), with limited engagement in advocacy	8	4	17	14
Primarily engaged in political actions (type 4 to 6 activities) *	2	4	1	2
Total Number of eNGOs	10	8	18	16

* Data reported in this table was collected through interviews, online sources, and other third-party reports. These data must be interpreted cautiously because some eNGO officials might not have reported their environmental advocacy activities during our interviews.

Table 5. Policy Role of Surveyed eNGOs
(Zhan and Tang, Working Paper)

Items	Beijing Mean (S.D.)	Coastal Mean (S.D.)	Inland Mean (S.D.)	All Mean (S.D.)
We are often invited by the government to participate in environmental decision making/working committee	3 (1.414)	2.75 (0.957)	2.73 (1.009)	2.83 (1.129)
We are often invited to participate in the development of environmental regulations and policies	2.67 (1.225)	2.25 (0.957)	2.45 (0.82)	2.5 (0.978)
We often work with other NGOs to provide suggestions for environmental protection policy	3 (1.414)	2.75 (0.957)	3.36 (0.924)	3.13 (1.1)
We often release policy research reports to raise the attention of the government and public	3.56 (0.882)	3 (1.581)	3 (1.414)	3.2 (1.258)
We have recently strengthened the efforts of environmental policy advocacy	3.78 (1.202)	3.75 (0.957)	4.09 (1.136)	3.92 (1.1)

Note: A five-point Likert-scale was employed. The answers to each Likert-scale question include “strongly disagree” (1), “disagree” (2), neutral (3), “agree” (4), and “strongly agree” (5).

Table 6. Summary of the Institutional Embeddedness of ENGOs
(Zhan and Tang, Working Paper)

Number of Cases	Political Embeddedness	Organizational Embeddedness	Individual Embeddedness
4	x	x	x
3	x	x	
0	x		x
3		x	x
1	x		
4		x	
5			x
6			

Table 7. Institutional Embeddedness and Government-NGO Relations
(Zhan and Tang, Working Paper)

	Dependent Variable A: <i>Policy Advocacy</i> (whether an NGO has been engaged in policy advocacy)		Dependent Variable B: <i>Government Funding</i> (whether an NGO has received funding from government)	
Variables	Model A1	Model A2	Model B1	Model B2
Political Embeddedness	-.680 (.569)		.389 (.747)	
Organizational Embeddedness	-.199 (.856)		1.092 (.308)	
Individual/Informal Embeddedness	.576 (.557)	.618 (.530)	-.709 (.438)	-.623 (.502)
Formal Embeddedness (i.e., with <i>either</i> political <i>or</i> organizational embeddedness, or both)		-.1015 (.309)		1.574 (.091)*
Advocacy Capacity	1.395 (.033)**	1.397 (.032)**	-----	-----
Fundraising Capacity	-----	-----	-.975 (.317)	-1.007 (.278)
Registration	.659 (.611)	.558 (.673)	-.153 (.890)	-.117 (.917)
Sample Size	26	26	26	26
-2 Log Likelihood	26.722	26.234	29.388	29.562
Nagelkerke R^2	.350	.369	.148	.196
Percentage correctly predicated	72%	72%	61.5%	69.2%

Notes: * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01; coefficients with p value included in parentheses.

Table 8. Major Funding Sources of Surveyed eNGOs
(Zhan and Tang, Working Paper)

Items	Beijing Mean (S.D.)	Coastal Mean (S.D.)	Inland Mean (S.D.)	All Mean (S.D.)
Membership fees (%)	.63 (1.768)	1.25 (2.500)	.18 (.405)	.52 (1.442)
External individual donations (%)	1.71 (3.454)	27.00 (48.813)	2.36 (4.050)	6.42 (20.723)
Donations by NGO leaders (%)	1.56 (3.458)	.00 (.000)	.65 (1.563)	.85 (2.292)
Government contracts and funding (%)	6.72 (15.883)	18.75 (37.500)	2.41 (5.903)	6.75 (17.985)
Other contracts (%)	4.41 (6.272)	.00 (.000)	5.00 (6.325)	3.88 (5.816)
Foundations (%)	60.99 (35.208)	38.75 (42.890)	82.14 (25.669)	66.56 (35.115)
Sales of products (%)	8.88 (24.701)	.00 (.000)	6.05 (18.900)	5.98 (19.133)
All others (%)	2.60 (3.865)	12.50 (25.000)	.05 (.158)	3.24 (10.752)

Conclusion

- Although environmental officials and corporate executives have felt increasing societal concerns for environmental protection, they have yet to learn to work with NGOs productively to address those concerns.
- The contributions of NGOs to environmental governance have been hampered not just by China's authoritarian setting, but also by some of their own internal developmental dynamics shaped by their leaders' close ties to the party-state system.
- Limitations: surveys/interviews done at different times and different regions
- How to strengthen the NGO sector as an effective force in environmental governance and China's democratization?

The Influences of Tradition

- **Liang Qichao:** Civic Organizations in china-towns in North America (1902)—either dominated by a handful of strong leaders or at the edge of chaos; why he favored gradual reform rather than revolution; to avoid the replacement of one form of tyranny by another form of tyranny.
- **Fei Hsiao-Tung:** China's traditional governance system fostered the development of informal networks to mitigate the ills of a centralized and unaccountable formal system. Yet many of these informal networks arose randomly and arbitrarily. And there were no reliable mechanisms to hold them accountable, either. Although these informal networks could be used in socially beneficial ways, they might also be used in socially destructive ways (Hsiao-tung Fei, "Peasantry and Gentry: An Interpretation of Chinese Social Structure and Its Changes," *American Journal of Sociology*, 1946).
- **Sun Yat-sen:** complained about weaknesses in individual-level behaviors; but noted strengths in families and groups.

Civil Society and Democracy in China

- Developing civic organizations that are founded on self-governing principles.
- Building the foundations for a rule-ordered society.
- Balancing the influences between familial/clan ties and the mutually beneficial relationships that respect individual rights and obligations.
- Developing community-based governance, in which people learn the art of civic association.
- Reforming the centralized governance system.
- NGOs should not rely primarily on the personal connections of their founders.
- NGOs as a bridge across local, regional, and national communities.

