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Media, Civil Society, and the Rise of a Green Public Sphere in China

GUOBIN YANG AND CRAIG CALHOUN

Abstract Direct citizen voices are relatively absent from China's public arena and seldom influence government policymaking. In early 2004, however, public controversies surrounding dam building on the Nu River prompted the Chinese government to halt the proposed hydropower project. The occurrence of such public debates indicates the rise of a green public sphere of critical environmental discourse. Environmental nongovernmental organizations play a central role in producing this critical discourse. Mass media, the internet, and "alternative media" are the main channels of communication. The emergence of a green public sphere demonstrates the new dynamism of grass-roots political change.

Keywords environment, green public sphere, civil society, media, internet

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According to media reports, China's State Council halted the hydropower project being planned on the Nu River in Yunnan Province in April 2004. The decision came after months of intense public debates. China's Premier, Wen Jiabao, reportedly cited "a high level of social concern" as an important reason for suspending the dam-building project (*Ming Pao Daily*, 2 April 2004). Such a reversal after public criticism has hardly been typical of the Chinese government—nor was the nature of the public criticism typical. In the first place, the public debate addressed policy. In contrast with the more common pattern, it was not simply the exposure of corruption or the suggestion that local officials deviated from the goals of the central Party and government. Second, a broad range of participants was involved in public discourse. This differentiated it from the "reportage" literature through which criticism flourished in the 1980s, for example, which typically

required a strong individual personality, such as Liu Binyan, willing to focus on broader concerns in his or her writing.

How did the public debates about the Nu River happen? Who was involved? What media were used? We argue that the articulation of “a high level of social concern” depended on a public sphere of environmental discourse in China—a green public sphere. Communication and debates in the public sphere channeled citizen opinions to influence government policies.

A green public sphere fosters political debates and pluralistic views about environmental issues, and for this reason it is intrinsically valuable.¹ The rise of a Chinese green public sphere commands special attention, however. First, it is exemplary of a variety of new forms of public engagement in contemporary China. These include, for example, feminist activism, cyber activism, HIV/AIDS activism, and rights activism more broadly. Second, with environmental issues as its central concern, the green public sphere represents the emergence of an issue-specific public. The differentiation of issue-specific publics is a relatively new development in China. Third, the transnational dimension of the Chinese green sphere indicates still another new trend, namely its transnationalization.² In effect, then, a Chinese green public sphere is significant in terms of both content and form. With respect to its formal attributes, the green sphere is distinctive because it engages politics and public policy without being primarily political.³ Carving out a space for “nonpartisan” advocacy is a new development in China. It is also distinctive because of its reliance on a range of media and organizational forms, including traditional press, the internet, “alternative media,” as well as environmental NGOs.

This article delineates the main features of the green public sphere, analyzes the main factors that have contributed to its emergence, and explores its functions. We argue that the emerging green sphere consists of three basic elements: an environmental discourse or greenspeak; publics that produce or consume greenspeak; and media used for producing and circulating greenspeak. First, we show that one major indicator of the rise of a Chinese green public sphere is the proliferation of environmental discourse—a greenspeak. Contrary to an earlier Maoist and Marxist view of the human conquest of nature,⁴ this new discourse warns about the dangers of irresponsible human behavior toward nature and calls for public action to protect the environment. Appearing in television programs, radio programs, newspapers, magazines, leaflets, flyers, posters, and on the internet, this blossoming discourse represents a participatory conversational situation, one “of seven mouths and eight tongues” (*qizui bashe*), as a Chinese folk saying would have it.

Second, we argue that environmental NGOs provide the pivotal organizational basis for the production and circulation of this greenspeak. A greenspeak that promotes a new environmental consciousness does not fall from heaven, but has its advocates and disseminators. We focus on environmental NGOs both because they are relatively new and because they play a central role in producing greenspeak. Third, we analyze the media of the green sphere. Distinguishing among mass media, the internet, and “alternative media,” we argue that because these different types of media differ in social organization, access, and technological features, they influence the green sphere differently. Finally, we return to the case of the Nu River to illustrate the dynamics and functions of the emerging green sphere. In the conclusion, we discuss the implications of our analysis for understanding the sources of political change in China.

Green public sphere and greenspeak in China

“Public sphere” is a controversial concept. Habermas initially defined it as “a domain of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed.” Access to this domain is “open in principle to all citizens” who may “assemble and unite freely, and express and publicize their opinions freely.”⁵ Critics were quick to point out that Habermas’s version of the public sphere was a bourgeois sphere that in reality excluded certain categories of people (such as women) and was fraught with problems of social, economic, cultural, even linguistic inequality.⁶ In response, Habermas later recognized the internal dynamics of the public sphere, the possibility of multiple public spheres, as well as the conflicts and interactions among them.⁷

In China studies, the concept of the public sphere has similarly been controversial. It was initially used to explain the rise of the student movement in 1989.⁸ Then a symposium on “public sphere”/“civil society” in 1993 introduced an influential debate. Some scholars in the debate find civil society and public sphere in late imperial China;⁹ others argue that these concepts are too value-laden and historically specific for understanding Chinese realities.¹⁰ More recently, there has been a revival of interest among China scholars in civil society and public sphere. For example, it has been argued that these categories are pertinent to China because they emerged out of experiences of modernity which transformed China no less than the West.¹¹ Others use a relaxed notion of the public sphere, adopting more neutral terms such as “public space” or “social space” or focusing on publics rather than the

public sphere.¹² One reason why we continue to use the concept of the public sphere is that Chinese intellectuals themselves have come to embrace it. A recent Chinese book on green media, for example, focuses on the building of a “green space for public opinion” (*lǜsè gōnggòng yúlun kōngjiān*), alluding directly to the Habermasian concept.¹³

Recognizing the historical baggage of the Habermasian concept, however, we maintain a broad conception of the public sphere as space for public discourse and communication. It consists of discourse, publics engaged in communication, and the media of communication. The emerging green sphere in China thus has the following basic elements: an environmental discourse or greenspeak; publics that produce or consume greenspeak; and media used for producing and circulating greenspeak. “Public” is a broad and loose concept. By the publics of China’s green public sphere, we refer specifically to individual citizens and environmental NGOs directly engaged in the production and consumption of greenspeak.

A main indicator of an emerging green public sphere in China is the proliferation of a greenspeak. Greenspeak refers to the whole gamut of linguistic and other symbolic means used for raising awareness of environmental issues.¹⁴ The Chinese greenspeak includes recent neologisms in the Chinese language such as sustainable consumption, white pollution, eco-centricism, endangered species, animal rights, global warming, desertification, deforestation, biodiversity, bird-watchers, and more. An entire dictionary of greenspeak can now be compiled.

Different social actors use greenspeak for different purposes. Business corporations, for example, may use a green language as a way of “greenwashing” its interests.¹⁵ We focus on greenspeak produced by civil society actors. This civic greenspeak has several features. First, it is tacked onto the mainstream global discourse of sustainable development. The popularity of such terms as “one world,” “common earth,” “holistic approach,” “global village,” Earth Day, and of course “sustainable development” attests to the global dimension of this discourse. Following the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, moreover, the Chinese government published its strategies for sustainable development in a “China Agenda 21” White Paper issued in March 1994, thus legitimating an official discourse of sustainable development in China.

Second, greenspeak expresses the tension between environmentalists and economic actors. Similar to new social movements elsewhere in the world, the environmental movement in China attracts some sections of the

population and not others.¹⁶ Its main constituency consists of students, intellectuals, journalists, professionals, and other types of urbanites. For example, university student environmental associations are a main part of the movement. A nonstudent member-based organization such as Friends of Nature (FON) also draws its membership mostly from these urban groups. Greenspeak gives these people, who tend to have more cultural capital than economic capital, a rhetoric for identifying themselves and their concerns in contrast to the dominance of a more crass economic rhetoric in society at large.

Third, in response to the ascendancy of consumerism and materialism, greenspeak promotes new moral visions and practices. A central moral message is that environmentalism must be practiced as a new way of life. It promotes a new understanding of the relationship between humans and their natural environment, one that stresses human–nature harmony. A practical corollary of this view is that humans must treat nature and its flora and fauna with respect and kindness.¹⁷ It also promotes the vision of a new personhood. Practicing a green consciousness must start with oneself. If each and every person lives an environmentally friendly life, then the earth might be saved. A common personal practice is to reject the use of disposable consumer products (such as disposable chopsticks and shopping bags). These practices convey some sense of religiosity. They embody a search for more spiritual “meanings” in life—again, something that tends to be opposed to sheer economism. In this sense, the green discourse continues an opening up to “expressive individualism” in China over the last 20 years.

Yet the relationship between economism and environmental protection is also a source of dilemmas and personal perplexity. Reflecting the growing richness and diversity of current environmental discourse, these dilemmas are often openly discussed and shared. A good example comes from the publications of Green Camp, an unregistered NGO in Beijing. Each year since 2000, Green Camp has produced an informal publication featuring personal essays by participants in that year’s green camp activities. These personal stories demonstrate how China’s young environmentalists develop a deeper understanding of environmental issues by experiencing them first-hand and talking about their experience. One essay in the 2000 volume describes a small incident that happened to its author when he and a few other green campers were studying the feasibility of eco-tourism in Changbai Mountain. He heard the following conversation between a fellow camper and an employee of a local nature reserve protection station:

- Camper: What do you think is most needed for developing eco-tourism?
- Local employee: Money.
- Camper: If you see people causing damage here, would you intervene?
- Local employee: Yes!
- Camper: Why?
- Local employee: Because this is my home.
- Camper: If you lose your job and have no income, would you go into the mountains to stealthily gather mountain stuff?¹⁸
- Local employee: Yes!

After hearing this conversation, everyone became silent. It was a transformative moment for this individual. He realized that between reality and young environmentalists' idealism, there was a vast gap. He continues:

After the field trip to Changbai Mountain, I came to a deeper understanding of the difficulties of environmental protection in China. To transform economy and environment into a virtuous relationship of mutual benefit and embark on a road of sustainable development—this is still a dream. It will take arduous efforts to turn the dream into reality.¹⁹

Part of the arduous efforts is to promote environmental consciousness and citizen participation. These efforts betray a fourth feature of the greenspeak—its political thrust. The Chinese greenspeak emphasizes participation and volunteerism. While recognizing that environmental problem-solving depends on the joint efforts of government, citizens, and NGOs, the greenspeak emphasizes the role of citizens and the importance of developing an NGO culture. In addition, greenspeak is a veiled way of talking about many other things, including making criticisms of government policies. One good example is a speech delivered by the representative of an environmental NGO from Qinghai Province at an NGO workshop in Beijing in October 2002. Referring to the central government's ambitious plan to develop the western regions, the speaker argued that in western minority regions such as Qinghai Province, the protection of the biodiversity of the natural environment should be integrated with the protection of cultural diversity and that local communities should be involved in the decision-making process.²⁰ Greenspeak thus can be political, though as Peter Ho suggests in his contribution to this special issue, this may be a depoliticized politics.²¹

Environmental NGOs: the discourse-producing publics of the green sphere

Michael Warner describes a public in the following terms:

A public is a space of discourse organized by nothing other than discourse itself. It is autotelic; it exists only as the end for which books are published, shows broadcast, Web sites posted, speeches delivered, opinions produced. It exists *by virtue of being addressed* [original emphasis].²²

Warner's description captures only half of what "a public" means. A public is not just an addressee, but also an addressor. It not only reads books, watches shows, reads internet posts, listens to speeches, and receives opinions, but also publishes books, produces shows, writes or responds to internet posts, delivers speeches (or partakes in conversations for that matter), and expresses opinions.

As mentioned previously, the publics of China's green sphere consist of all citizens and civil society organizations involved in the production and consumption of greenspeak. Here we concentrate on the discourse-producing publics. These are again diverse and may include scientific communities, educational institutions, and a broad array of old and new social organizations. We focus on environmental NGOs because they are the most distinctive and novel organizational base for the green public sphere.

In one of the first systematic analyses of this topic, Peter Ho shows that environmental NGOs in China cover a wide spectrum, from more or less independent NGOs to government-organized NGOs (GONGOs), student environmental associations, unregistered voluntary organizations, and NGOs that are set up "in disguise" in order to bypass the registration requirements and hide their true nature from the government's view.²³ A survey of university student environmental associations shows that as of April 2001, there were 184 student environmental associations.²⁴ Nonstudent grass-roots environmental NGOs numbered about 100 as of 2003, not including the numerous GONGOs.²⁵ According to a more recent Chinese news release, this number reached about 200 toward the end of 2006.²⁶

Environmental NGOs are engaged in a broad range of activities, from public education and community building to research and advocacy. In these activities, they resort to all forms of media and public forums, including television, radio, newspapers, magazines, web sites, exhibits, workshops, and salons. As a result, these organizations become an important institutional base for bringing green issues into the public sphere. Many organizations publish newsletters and

special reports in print or electronic form. Some produce television programs and publish books. For example, Global Village of Beijing (GVB) has an ongoing project to produce environmental television programs. Between 22 April 1996 and March 2001, Global Village of Beijing produced 300 shows for its weekly television program "Time for the Environment" on CCTV-7. It also publishes books on environmental issues which may be ordered via its web site. Current titles include *Citizen's Environmental Guide*, *Children's Environmental Guide*, *Green Community Guide*, and *Environmental Song Book*.

Two environmental organizations in Beijing have been organizing public forums on a regular basis. Tianxia Xi Education Institute, an educational and environmental NGO founded in 2003, organizes forums on topics ranging from dam building to citizenship education and public health. Green Earth Volunteers, an unregistered NGO based in Beijing, has been organizing monthly environmental salons for journalists since 1997. Featuring guest presentations on various environmental issues, these salons aim to provoke broader discussions among Beijing's unofficial environmental circles and help journalists to write more and better environmental stories. They cover a wide range of topics. At a salon event in June 2002, a retired worker who introduced himself as an environmental volunteer made a slide presentation about the desertification of the grassland in China's western regions. Then the founder of Save the South China Tiger, a nonprofit organization registered in Great Britain, spoke about the protection of the tiger. Another event, held on 19 March 2003, featured three guest speakers who spoke respectively on issues of animal protection and reproduction in nature reserves, the new challenges facing wildlife protection in the development of China's western regions, and the import and export of medicinal ingredients made from wild animals. Table 1 lists the topics of the journalists' salons from January 2003 through July 2004.

Campaigns are an effective tactic used by NGOs to publicize environmental issues. These campaigns help to concentrate public attention on specific issues by creating media visibility and public discussions. Some have directly influenced policies. One of the first public campaigns was organized in 1995 to stop the felling of an old forest in Yunnan in order to protect the indigenous golden monkeys. Since then, not a year has passed without some kind of such environmental campaigns. In 1997, a group of college students organized a campaign to promote recycling on university campuses in Beijing, while another group ran a campaign to boycott disposable chopsticks. The most important recent campaign was launched in 2003 to stop dam building on the Nu River and is still under way at the time of writing. We will come back

Table 1 Topics of journalists' salons, Beijing, January 2003–July 2004

<i>Dates</i>	<i>Topics</i>
22 January 2003	Genetic modifications and ecological safety
19 February 2003	Sand storms and their management
19 March 2003	Animal protection and reproduction; wildlife protection and western development; import and export of medicinal ingredients made from wild animals
3 July 2003	Water system design
22 July 2003	The roles of government, NGOs, business, and media in environmental policymaking in the USA
13 August 2003	Water system design
17 September 2003	The drying up of Chagannuo'er Lake and salt storms
29 October 2003	Urban transportation
11 November 2003	The public supervision of life sciences
17 December 2003	The ecological functions of rivers and streams
15 January 2004	World Dams Conference in Thailand and the impact of dams on economy, society, and culture
11 February 2004	Half a century of changing urban space in Beijing
24 March 2004	Global old-growth forests crisis and China's ocean ecology
18 May 2004	Preliminary studies about guiding ocean water to Beijing; old-growth forests and wetlands
16 June 2004	Energy for vehicles; the development of geothermal energy resources
21 July 2004	Present conditions of World Heritage Sites in China

Source: Green Earth Volunteers web site <<http://www.chinagev.org>>

to this case later in the article. As Table 2 shows, the scope of these campaigns is wide-ranging. They include both moderate educational campaigns such as promoting Earth Day activities and more confrontational campaigns to boycott commercial products and challenge industrial projects.

To understand why environmental NGOs can organize such a broad range of activities in China's constraining political context, it is essential to analyze why they have developed in the first place. We underscore three conditions. First, the growth of environmental NGOs is part of a larger "associational revolution" in China.²⁷ This has to do with many factors, including state decentralization and the government's recognition of a third sector. Second,

Table 2 Selected environmental campaigns in China, 1995–2003

<i>Year</i>	<i>Campaign themes</i>
1995–1996	Campaign to protect the golden monkey
1997	Campaign to boycott disposable chopsticks
1997	Campaign to promote campus recycling
1997	Campaign to guard the wild geese in Purple Bamboo Park, Beijing
1998–1999	Campaign to protect the Tibetan antelope
2000	“Earth Day” publicity campaign
2000	“Save the Tibetan Antelope Web Site Union” campaign
2001	Campaign to boycott “wild tortoise” medicinal products
2001–2003	Campaign to protect the Jiangwan wetlands in Shanghai
2002	Internet petition to stop the building of an entertainment complex near the wetlands in suburban Beijing
2003	Public campaign to fight SARS
2003	Campaign to protect the Dujiangyan Dam
2003	Campaign to stop proposed dam building on the Nu River

the Chinese state is taking on shades of green, as reflected by the large body of environmental laws and regulations it has promulgated.²⁸ This “greening of the state” provides a favorable condition for environmental NGOs. Third, the growth of environmental NGOs takes place in a dynamic context of multiple social actors and complex social relationships. As the concept of embedded environmentalism proposed by the editors of this special issue indicates, environmental NGOs are embedded in social relations that enable their growth. One enabling type of social relations, for example, is the growing ties between domestic NGOs and international organizations. Ranging from financial support to professional exchanges, these ties have promoted the visibility of Chinese NGOs both in China and in the international arena.²⁹

The media of the green sphere: official, “alternative,” and the internet

We distinguish three types of the media of China’s green public sphere, namely, mass media, alternative media, and the internet. Because they differ in their relationship to the state and in technological features, they are not equally accessible to Chinese environmentalists and they influence China’s green sphere differently.

Mass media

Mass media—newspapers, television, and radio—have enormous influences on the green public sphere. Since the 1990s, mass media coverage of environmental issues in China has greatly increased. Surveys conducted by Friends of Nature find that the average number of articles on environmental issues published in national and regional newspapers was 125 in 1994. This number rose to 136 in 1995 and 630 in 1999.³⁰

The public campaigns listed in Table 2 were all covered by the mass media. The bigger campaigns, such as those to protect the golden monkey and the Tibetan antelope, and the current campaign against dam building on the Nu River, generated intense media publicity. Even a small campaign to guard two hatching wild geese in a public park in Beijing caught media attention.³¹

In principle, Chinese mass media are the organs of the state. How do we explain the growing media coverage of sometimes very contentious environmental issues? First, mass media have undergone de-ideologization, differentiation, and commercialization in the reform era.³² Party organs such as *People's Daily* and commercial papers, for example, are not subject to the same degree of state control. The increasing dependence on commercial revenues gives the mass media more latitude in covering issues of broad social interest. Growing environmental problems such as pollution are issues of great concern.

Second, the Chinese government has supported media coverage of environmental issues by launching its own environmental media campaigns. The most ambitious project is the “China Environment Centennial Journey” (*Zhonghua huanbao shiji xing*). Funded by the government and led by a commission composed of high-level officials from various ministries, the campaign was inaugurated in 1993. Each year since then, the commission has sponsored mass media institutions to send journalists out to the field to do investigative reporting on a selected environmental theme. The theme for 1993, for example, was “Fighting Environmental Pollution,” and for 2005, “Clean Drinking Water.” From 1993 to 2005, 50,000 journalists from across the country participated in the project and produced 150,000 reports on environmental issues.³³

Third, Chinese environmentalists attach great importance to mobilizing the mass media and have been remarkably successful in this respect. Besides the structural changes in the media and a favorable political context, a major reason for their success is that many environmentalists and even leaders and founders of environmental NGOs are themselves media professionals. Green Camp, Green Earth Volunteers, Green Plateau, Tianjin Friends of Green, and Panjin Black-Beaked Gull Protection Association are all led by journalists or former journalists. Friends of Nature has some influential journalists in its

membership. These environmentalist media professionals serve as direct linkages between the mass media and the environmentalists.

Alternative media

Alternative media refers to the informal and “unofficial” publicity material produced and disseminated by NGOs, such as newsletters, special reports, brochures, flyers, and posters. They also include new media such as CD-ROMs and DVDs. They are an important part of the emerging green sphere, but have not attracted scholarly attention. These media materials are alternative in the sense that they are not controlled by the government, but are edited and produced by NGO staff or volunteers and distributed through informal channels. Some of these publications do not look very different from official publications, yet they are unofficial because they do not have official ISBN numbers. For example, Friends of Nature has published a bimonthly newsletter since 1996. It looks identical to a regular magazine in its professional appearance, yet is not officially registered and has no ISBN number. The advantage of having no official registration is that environmental groups can largely publish what they want. The disadvantage is that without an official ISBN, the publications cannot be distributed publicly, which limits their reach (interview with FON staff, July 2002).

Almost all the NGOs we encountered in our research have publicity materials. The number and frequency of publications depend on their professional and financial resources. Production costs are usually covered with funding raised from corporate sponsors, foundations, or foreign donors. Staff and volunteers are responsible for editorial work and distribution. In membership-based organizations such as Friends of Nature, members automatically receive the organization’s official newsletter. Many organizations distribute their publications for free while some sell them to defray production costs.

These publications cover a broad range of environmental issues in a variety of genres. There are many personal stories and perspectives, indicating an emphasis on personal experience and individual viewpoints commensurate with an ethics of participation and respect. The publications of Green Camp, already mentioned earlier, illustrate the uses of alternative media, especially in promoting participation and voice.

Since the year 2000, Green Camp has published a collection of personal stories and investigative reports after each year’s summer camp activities. These collections are the size of a magazine at about 100 pages each, and interspersed

with colorful pictures—they contain investigative reports, personal stories, commentaries, diaries, and letters. The title of a column called “Of Seven Mouths and Eight Tongues” (*qizui bashe*) in the 2003 volume most vividly captures the nature of these publications. “Of seven mouths and eight tongues” is a Chinese idiom for describing a conversational situation where everybody chips in. It is a fitting metaphor for the diverse voices featured in these publications. Titled *Ceng jing shi di* (The wetlands that once were), the 2003 volume contains, among other things, four investigative reports respectively about the cultural, community, ecological, and wetlands conditions of Ruo’ergai County in Sichuan Province, seven first-hand reports about similar green camp activities organized by college students in the provinces (Green Camp is based in Beijing), and 20 essays in the “Of Seven Mouths and Eight Tongues” column. The latter essays are personal reflections about camp experiences—the beauty and mystery of nature, the sense of pain at seeing the poverty of China’s rural areas, admiration for the simple lifestyles of farmers, the obstacles in the way of good teamwork, and so forth. In an essay titled “*Zhan chulai—shuohua*” (Step forward—and speak up!), the author describes how she and a few fellow campers, after much hesitation, braced themselves to confront a tourist group that was trampling the protected grassland in a wild jeep ride. The essay ends by calling on citizens to stand up against those who have no regard for the environment.³⁴

The alternative publications of the green sphere have historical predecessors. In production and distribution, they resemble the unofficial publications during the Democracy Wall movement in 1978 and 1979. Those earlier publications were also edited by self-organized groups and distributed through independent and informal channels.³⁵ They differ in contents and context, which partly explains why the Democracy Wall publications were quickly banned while the alternative green media today have thrived. In contents, the unofficial publications during the Democracy Wall Movement were much more radical. They were full of direct denunciations of state policies and calls for democracy and political reform. At a time of great political uncertainty, the Democracy Wall movement helped to mobilize public support for Deng Xiaoping’s political maneuvers against Mao’s designated successor Hu Guofeng, but when its radicalism challenged Deng, it was suppressed. In contrast, today’s alternative green media do not carry politically radical contents such as calls for democracy or political reform. Instead they focus on environmental education and discussion. Rather than challenging state legitimacy, they operate largely within the parameters of state policies. This approach provides some degree of legitimacy and explains the survival of alternative green media.

The internet

Compared with print media, the internet has the advantages of speed, broad reach, and interactivity. It favors open discussion, speedy communication, and wide dissemination. Chinese internet users have turned to the internet for public expression and political activism even as the government is stepping up control.³⁶ Have Chinese environmentalists embraced the internet? How and why?

Environmentalists often use three of the many different types of network functions. The first is web sites. A survey of the web presence of environmental NGOs conducted in March 2004 finds that of the 74 organizations surveyed, 40 (or 54%) have web sites. The second is mailing lists. Several environmental NGOs maintain active mailing lists that send environmental information regularly to subscribers by email. The third is bulletin boards. Twenty-four (or 60%) of the 40 web sites just mentioned have bulletin boards for public discussion.³⁷ In addition, some commercial portal sites and large online communities such as Tianya Club run “green” web forums. Blogs are a new popular form, but we have yet to find any influential blogs on environmental issues.

Environmental mailing lists and web sites deserve special attention. Some environmental groups encourage users to sign up for their mailing lists and publicize subscription information on their web sites. The contents of the mailing lists vary. Some mainly publicize activities. One mailing list we are familiar with sends a 15–20-page collection of up-to-date environmental information five days a week. In a few cases, mailing lists were set up as a campaign tool to discuss strategies and send action alerts. Although not open to the general public, mailing lists are nevertheless linked to the public sphere by channeling information there. They have the advantage of fostering free discussions within bounded social circles of people scattered in different parts of the country, which may otherwise be hard to sustain due to both political and financial limits.

Environmental web sites are growing in number and influence. Not only do green NGOs have web sites, but official environmental protection agencies have also created many. In addition, there are many personal homepages on environmental topics. All contribute to environmental discussions in their own way. For example, the environmental laws and policies archived on the web site of the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) provide useful information resources. Judging by the number of times a web site is linked to by another, however, those maintained by NGOs are more influential. The forementioned survey shows that on average, each of the 40 NGO web sites contains links to eight domestic NGOs, two international NGOs, and one governmental

environmental agency. Friends of Nature is linked to 19 times, whereas the State Environmental Protection Administration is only linked to eight times.³⁸

The networked nature of environmental web sites suggests that the circulation of discourse among environmental NGOs is vigorous, more so than between NGOs and government agencies. This implies that if just a few NGO web sites are actively engaged in publishing and discussing environmental issues, then the issues are likely to spread to other web sites (and hence other audiences). It is essential to bear these dynamics in mind when discussing the discourse in any single environmental web site.

The web site of Friends of Nature offers a good example of the discourse produced in environmental web sites. Friends of Nature went online in December 1998 and launched its first web site in June 1999 (interview with FON staff, July 2002). Besides publishing activities and showcasing the organization's projects, the web site supports an active bulletin board system (BBS) and publishes the electronic version of Friends of Nature print newsletter and an electronic digest.

A slimmer and less formal publication than the print newsletter, the electronic digest was inaugurated on 25 July 2002. From then until 10 June 2004, 12 issues were released. They featured interesting debates about such topics as the relationship between traditional culture and sustainable development, the meaning of "development," the environmental lessons of the SARS epidemic, and animal rights. The animal rights debate in the 4 March 2003 issue contains two lengthy articles. One explicates the importance of promoting animal rights from the perspective of environmental philosophy. The other argues that animal rights is a Western discourse with hidden imperialist pretensions, because in this discourse non-Western societies with different attitudes toward animals are portrayed as primitive and uncivilized.³⁹

The editors were concerned less with who was right or wrong than with using web forums to foster discussion. As the editorial accompanying the two essays explains, "we want to provoke your thinking. We believe that the independent thinking of ordinary people is no less significant and no less valuable than that of the experts."⁴⁰ To facilitate discussion, at the end of each article a hot link was set up to Friends of Nature's bulletin board system, where dozens of messages were posted in response to the debate. One message says, "I haven't had time to read the articles ... but I'd like to state my views first. In my personal view, the rights of animals are the rights to existence and to free activity, which are endowed by Great Nature and shared by all creatures."⁴¹ It is personal voices such as these that find channels of expression in the green web sites.

The green sphere in action: the campaign to stop dam building on the Nu River

We started this article with the campaign to stop dam building on the Nu River. We now return to the case to illustrate China's green public sphere in action. We highlight the interactive dynamics of civil society and different types of media in the campaign.

The hydropower project on the Nu River was approved by the National Development and Reform Commission on 14 August 2003. Its core components are a series of 13 dams on the lower reaches of the river, which fall within Yunnan Province. According to the project design, the total installed capacity of the dams will be 21 million kilowatts, exceeding even that of the ongoing project at the Three Gorges. The project aroused immediate controversy.⁴² Supporters of the project claimed that it would accelerate the economic development of the river valley regions and help alleviate poverty.

Environmentalists who campaigned against the project held that the ecological treasures of the Nu River—its breath-taking natural beauty and biodiversity—is unique in the world and that they belong not only to China but are also a world heritage.⁴³ In framing the debate, they stressed that the Nu River is part of the Three Parallel Rivers of Yunnan Protected Areas, which had just been listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO on 3 July 2003. Damming the river, they argued, would threaten a world heritage. They also argued that the project would benefit the developers more than the local residents, citing the potential problems of population resettlement and potential destructive effects on indigenous cultures. Finally, although they did not frame the issues in explicitly political terms, legal references were common. For example, a petition letter signed by 62 scientists, journalists, writers, artists, and environmentalists called for the enforcement of China's Environmental Impact Assessment Law.

The public views about the hydropower project on the Nu River were thus pitted between two opposing visions: the protection of natural heritage vs. economic development and poverty alleviation. Not a surprising conflict, this was only the most recent Chinese version of the tensions inherent in the global discourse of sustainable development.⁴⁴ What is remarkable in this case is that the arguments of both sides entered China's public sphere and influenced policy.

The role of environmental NGOs in publicizing the campaign

The campaign against dam building on the Nu River has some peculiar features. First, it enjoyed the support of the State Environmental Protection

Administration officials. When the campaign started, China's first Environmental Impact Assessment Law had just gone into effect (on 1 September 2003). Perhaps to demonstrate its commitment to the new environmental law, the State Environmental Protection Administration organized forums to assess the environmental impact of the proposed project. The first forum took place on 3 September 2003. More than 30 scholars and researchers attended. The predominant voice at the forum, led by a professor from the Asian International Rivers Center of Yunnan University, was harshly critical of the project.⁴⁵ National media, especially the *China Youth Daily*, covered the forum with such dramatic titles as "13 Dams to Be Built on the Last Ecological River, Experts Vehemently Oppose the Development of the Nu River" ("Zuihou de shengtai he shang yao xiu 13 dao ba, zhong zhuanjia banghe nujiang kaifa," *China Youth Daily*, 5 September 2003). From 14 to 19 October, the State Environmental Protection Administration led a group of experts on a study tour of the Nu River valley and then held another forum on 20 and 21 October, this time in Kunming. This second forum invited representatives from relevant government agencies at the provincial and prefectural levels in Yunnan Province, as well as scientists and other scholars. At the forum, scholars from Beijing opposed the project, whereas the local, Yunnan scholars, and government officials defended it. The State Environmental Protection Administration officials were on the opposing side, but the controversy did not seem to be resolvable between the parties directly involved.

Second, environmental NGOs played a central role in tipping the balance in favor of the opponents of the project. They were instrumental in producing the "high level of social concern" cited by Wen Jiabao. Environmental NGOs launched a campaign as soon as they learned that the National Development and Reform Commission had approved the project. The China Environmental Culture Promotion Society organized one of the first influential public events. At its second membership congress on 25 October 2003, the organization issued a public petition to protect the Nu River. On 17 November 2003, the Tianxia Xi Education Institute organized a forum to educate the public about the Nu River. The forum featured a speaker from the Yunnan-based NGO Green Watershed.⁴⁶ In December 2003, an NGO in Chongqing City collected more than 15,000 petition signatures opposing the Nu River project.⁴⁷ On 8 and 9 January 2004, five research and environmental organizations, including Friends of Nature and Green Watershed, organized a forum in Beijing to discuss the economic, social, and ecological impact of hydropower projects, again directing its criticisms at the Nu River project. From 16 to 24 February 2004, about 20 journalists, environmentalists, and researchers from Beijing and

Yunnan conducted a study tour along the Nu River. They returned to Beijing to organize a photo exhibit. Indicating the international dimension of the campaign, they took the exhibit to the UNEP 5th Global Civil Society Forum (GCSF) held in Jeju, South Korea, in March 2004 to mobilize international support. Together, these efforts created the momentum of a public campaign.

Strategic use of the mass media and the internet

Environmental NGOs made effective use of the mass media and the internet to produce and disseminate opposition. The most active NGO in mobilizing the media was Green Earth Volunteers. Green Earth Volunteers organizes monthly environmental salons for journalists. The two main organizers of the salons, Wang Yongchen and Zhang Kejia, are influential journalists *and* environmentalists. Wang is a senior journalist with China's Central People's Radio Station and a cofounder of Green Earth Volunteers. Zhang is a journalist at *China Youth Daily* and a main force behind the newspaper's Green Net, an online section of the newspaper devoted to environmental issues. The environmental journalists' salon had already proved to be an important base for mobilizing the media. It played a crucial role, for example, in mobilizing media opposition to the Dujiangyan Dam incident in 2003.⁴⁸ In the Nu River case, both Wang and Zhang were signatories to the petition letter of 25 October 2003, the first major public action in the movement. Wang organized the study tour of the Nu River in February 2004 and the subsequent photo exhibit in Beijing. Besides publishing many news reports about the debates surrounding the hydropower project, Zhang uses the Green Net of *China Youth Daily* to cover the debates.

In addition, web sites were used to disseminate information and foster discussion. Integrating new media with the traditional print media, the Green Net of *China Youth Daily* set aside a special column on the Nu River campaign and collected nearly 200 articles on the topic. The Institute for Environment and Development set up a campaign web site, which featured an online version of the forementioned photo exhibit about the Nu River, beautiful sceneries of the river valley, as well as an archive of essays debating the issues. A campaign leader reported that after the web site was set up, she received letters and telephone calls just about every day and people would tell her how excitedly they were browsing the web site and how they hoped that it could be updated more frequently.⁴⁹

Debates about the case also appeared in the bulletin boards run by environmental NGOs and commercial web sites. For example, a keyword search on 19 August 2004 for "Nu River" in the bulletin board system of the

popular Tianyaclub.com yielded dozens of postings debating the “Nu River” project. The opinions in these postings were divided; some were expressed in very angry tones. One posting laments: “Population and economic growth are the natural enemies of environmental protection!” Again, what matters here is not who is right and wrong, but that people were debating the issues in the public arena. All this shows that there was indeed a high level of “social concern” about the project, which prompted the central government to temporarily halt it in April 2004. It shows that China’s fledging green public sphere was instrumental in producing this social concern.

Discussion and conclusion

We have shown that a fledging green public sphere is emerging in China. Environmental NGOs are its primary discourse-producing publics. The mass media, alternative media, and the internet provide the communicative spaces, but are used in differential ways because of different institutional and political constraints associated with them. With the rise of a green public sphere, new ways of talking about the environment have been introduced to the Chinese public. As much as the discourse itself is important, however, it is no less important to highlight the communicative spaces in which it appears. These spaces are prerequisites for citizen involvement and political participation. They are essential for sustained and ongoing public discussion.

A green public sphere is not a homogeneous entity, but consists of multiple actors, multiple media, and multiple discourses. Nor is it completely autonomous or equal. Civil society actors must heed the political context; the different types of media are subject to varying degrees of political control. In a sense, the green sphere is a product of what the editors of this special issue refer to as “embedded environmentalism.” It is embedded in politics, in civil society, and in communications technologies. Embeddedness can be both constraining and enabling.

A main concern in the scholarship on contemporary Chinese society is the relationship between the state and society. An influential perspective is state corporatism, which argues that the state permits the development of social organizations, such as NGOs, provided that they are licensed by the state and observe state controls on the selection of leaders and articulation of demands.⁵⁰ More than 10 years ago, Unger and Chan made a strong case for a state corporatist perspective on Chinese society.⁵¹ Based on an analysis of more recent trends, Howell argues, however, that the state corporatist perspective is no longer adequate for capturing some new directions in Chinese

society, such as the emergence of new types of civil society organizations working on marginalized interests.⁵² Our analysis lends support to Howell's conclusion. Although the Chinese government undoubtedly plays an important role in fostering the green public sphere, for example by sponsoring the "China Environment Centennial Journey" campaign, a state corporatist perspective does not give enough credit to the agency of nonstate actors.⁵³ The evidence we presented shows that the constitution of a Chinese green public sphere depends crucially on citizens and citizen organizations and on their creative use of the internet, alternative media, and the mass media. We will need to develop a perspective that emphasizes the interpenetration and mutual shaping of state and society.

To some extent, the green public sphere is exemplary of the general development of the public sphere in China. There is an implicit politics to it quite beyond the environment, a politics of expanding general public discourse. This politics can also be discerned in other social arenas (such as rural poverty), where citizens and voluntary associations are similarly engaged in public discussion and in finding ways to engage policymakers. Public discussion in these other social arenas also depends on various types of media. A future research agenda therefore is to study the discourse, publics, and media in these other social arenas and explore the sources and consequences of potential synergies between different issue-specific public spheres.

Notes

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¹ Douglas Torgerson, "Farewell to the Green Movement? Political Action and the Green Public Sphere," *Environmental Politics* 9, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 1–19.

² On new information technologies and transnational public spheres, see Craig Calhoun, "Information Technology and the International Public Sphere," in *Shaping the Network Society: The New Role of Civil Society in Cyberspace*, ed. Douglas Schuler and Peter Day (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 229–51.

³ Peter Ho suggests in his contribution to this special issue that green activism is a kind depoliticized politics. See Peter Ho's article in this special issue, "Embedded Activism and Political Change in a Semiauthoritarian Context." Martens similarly argues that "from an environmental perspective, civic involvement does not have to be political in order to be significant. A focus on political participation—on citizens merely in their capacity as political producers and consumers—is thus too narrow." See Susan Martens, "Public Participation with Chinese Characteristics: Citizen Consumers in China's Environmental Management," *Environmental Politics* 15, no. 21 (2006): 213.

⁴ Judith Shapiro, *Mao's War against Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁵ Jürgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere," in *Jürgen Habermas on Society and Politics: A Reader*, ed. Steven Seidman (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1989), 231.

⁶ See, among others, Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere—A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 109–41.

⁷ Jürgen Habermas, "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere," in *ibid.*, 421–61.

⁸ Craig Calhoun, "Tiananmen, Television and the Public Sphere: Internationalization of Culture and the Beijing Spring of 1989," *Public Culture* 2, no. 1 (1989): 54–71.

⁹ Mary B. Rankin, "Some Observations on a Chinese Public Sphere," *Modern China* 19, no. 2 (1993): 158–82; William T. Rowe, "The Problem of 'Civil Society' in Late Imperial China," *Modern China* 19, no. 2 (1993): 143–8.

¹⁰ Frederick Wakeman, Jr., "The Civil Society and Public Sphere Debate: Western Reflections on Chinese Political Culture," *Modern China* 19, no. 2 (1993): 108–38.

¹¹ Mayfair Mei-Hui Yang, "Spatial Struggles: Postcolonial Complex, State Disenchantment, and Popular Reappropriation of Space in Rural Southeast China," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 63, no. 3 (2004): 719–55.

¹² Guobin Yang, "Civil Society in China: A Dynamic Field of Study," *China Review International* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 1–16; Eugenia Lean, "The Making of a Public: Emotions and Media Sensation in 1930s China," *Twentieth-Century China* 29, no. 2 (2004): 39–62.

¹³ Wang Lili, *Lǚ meiti: Zhongguo huanbao chuanmei yanjiu* (Green media: environmental communication in China) (Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 2005). A Chinese discourse on civil society had already begun to emerge in the 1980s. See Shu-yun Ma, "The Chinese Discourse on Civil Society," *The China Quarterly*, no. 137 (1994): 180–93.

¹⁴ Cf. Rom Harré, Jens Brockmeier, and Peter Muhlhauser, *Greenspeak: A Study of Environmental Discourse* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1999), 2.

¹⁵ Jed Greer and Kenny Bruno, *Greenwash: The Reality behind Corporate Environmentalism* (Penang: Third World Network, 1996).

¹⁶ On Western new social movements, see Craig Calhoun, "'New Social Movements' of the Early Nineteenth Century," in *Repertoires and Cycles of Collective Action*, ed. Mark Traugott (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 173–215.

¹⁷ Environmentalists articulated these visions forcefully in a public debate in 2005 that has come to be known as the "respect/fear nature" (*jingwei ziran*) debate. See Bao Hongmei and Liu Bing, "Zhongsheng xuanhua: 'Jingwei ziran' da taolun" (The big debate regarding "respect or fear nature"), in *Huanjing lǚpishu 2005 nian: Zhongguo de huanjing weiju yu tuwei* (Green book of environment 2005: crisis and breakthrough of China's environment), ed. Liang Congjie (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2006), 119–30.

¹⁸ The original Chinese is *toucai shanhua*. *Shanhua*, here translated as "mountain stuff," refers to profitable products from the mountains, such as expensive mushrooms and ginseng.

¹⁹ Zhou Wei, "Zoujin xianshi, zaisi huanbao" (Up close to reality, rethinking environmental protection), in "Ba qian li lu yun he yue: 2000 Zhongguo daxuesheng lǚseying wenji" (Eight thousand *li* of road, clouds, and moonlight: collected works of Chinese university students' green camp in 2000) (Green Camp publication, Beijing, 2000), 31.

²⁰ Haxi Zhaxiduojie, "Sanjiangyuan de huhuan" (The call of the three river source), Friends of Nature Newsletter, no. 4, 2002, <<http://www.fon.org.cn/index.php?id=3009>>, accessed 2 April 2003.

²¹ Ho, "Embedded Activism and Political Change."

²² Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 50.

²³ Peter Ho, "Greening without Conflict? Environmentalism, NGOs and Civil Society in China," *Development and Change* 32, no. 5 (2001): 893–921.

²⁴ Lu Hongyan, "Bamboo Sprouts after the Rain: The History of University Student Environmental Associations in China," *China Environment Series*, issue 6 (2003): 55–65.

²⁵ Guobin Yang, "Environmental NGOs and Institutional Dynamics in China," *The China Quarterly*, no. 181 (2005): 46–66.

²⁶ "Huanbao minjian zuzhi shuliang he renshu jiang yi 10% zhi 15% sudu dizeng" (Number and staff of environmental NGOs to increase by 10 to 15%), Xinhuanet, 28 October 2006, <http://news.xinhuanet.com/environment/2006-10/28/content_5261309.htm>, accessed 29 October 2006.

²⁷ Shaoguang Wang and Jianyu He, "Associational Revolution in China: Mapping the Landscapes," *Korea Observer* 35, no. 3 (Autumn 2004): 485–534.

²⁸ Ho, "Greening without Conflict?" On environmental regulation in China, see Richard Louis Edmonds, *Managing the Chinese Environment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²⁹ On the international dimension of Chinese NGO development, see Julia Greenwood Bentley, "The Role of International Support for Civil Society Organizations in China," *Harvard Asia Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 11–20; and Katherine Morton, "The Emergence of NGOs in China and Their Transnational Linkages: Implications for Domestic Reform," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 59, no. 4 (2005): 519–32.

³⁰ Friends of Nature, "Zhongguo baozhi de huanjing yishi" (Survey on environmental reporting in Chinese newspapers) (Friends of Nature publication, Beijing, 2000).

³¹ "Cong hongda maque dao shouhu dayan" (From chasing and killing sparrows to guarding wild geese), *Beijing Youth Daily*, 7 September 1999, <<http://www.bjyouth.com.cn/Bqb/19990907/GB/3998^0907B09918.htm>>, accessed 1 September 2004.

³² Roya Akhavan-Majid, "Mass Media Reform in China: Toward a New Analytical Framework," *Gazette* 66, no. 6 (2004): 553–65; Yuezhi Zhao, "From Commercialization to Conglomeration: The Transformation of the Chinese Press within the Orbit of the Party State," *Journal of Communication* 50, no. 2 (2000): 3–26; Guoquan Wu, "One Head, Many Mouths: Diversifying Press Structures in Reform China," in *Power, Money, and Media: Communication Patterns and Bureaucratic Control in Cultural China*, ed. Chin-Chuan Lee (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2000), 45–66.

³³ Wang Lili, *Lü meiti*, 114.

³⁴ Jin Cuihong, "Zhan chulai—shuohua" (Step forward—and speak up!), in "Ceng jing shi di" (The wetlands that once were) (Green Camp publication, Beijing, 2003), 44.

³⁵ On the unofficial publications in the Democracy Wall movement, see David S. G. Goodman, *Beijing Street Voices: The Poetry and Politics of China's Democracy Movement* (London: Marion Boyars, 1981).

³⁶ Geremie R. Barmé and Gloria Davies, "Have We Been Noticed Yet? Intellectual Contestation and the Chinese Web," in *Chinese Intellectuals between State and Market*, ed. Edward Gu and Merle Goldman (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 75–108; Yongming Zhou, "Living on the Cyber Border," *Current Anthropology* 46, no. 1 (2005): 779–803; Guobin Yang, "Between Control and Contention: China's New Internet Politics," *Washington Journal of Modern China* 8, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2006): 30–47.

³⁷ Guobin Yang, "Activists beyond Virtual Borders: Internet-mediated Networks and Informational Politics in China," *First Monday* 11, no. 9 (2006), available at <http://firstmonday.org/issues/special11_9/yang/index.html>.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ The two sides of the debates are represented in a recent issue of the electronic newsletter of Friends of Nature. See Friends of Nature Electronic Newsletter, no. 5, 4 March 2003, <<http://www.fon.org.cn/channal.php?cid=552>>, accessed 7 December 2005.

⁴⁰ <<http://www.fon.org.cn/enl/view.php?id=49#pinglun>>, accessed 10 May 2005.

⁴¹ <<http://www.fon.org.cn/forum/showthread.php?threadid=2527>>, accessed 10 May 2005.

⁴² The campaign is still under way as of October 2006. The controversy analyzed here covered the period from August 2003 to April 2004.

⁴³ The controversy is widely covered by the media. Transcripts of detailed arguments against the hydropower project made by scientists and environmentalists at a forum organized by the State Environmental Protection Administration are available on the Green Net web site of the *China Youth Daily*. See <<http://202.99.23.201/cydgng/gb/cydgng/content.759348.htm>>, accessed 1 May 2004.

⁴⁴ According to one study, the meaning of "sustainable development" is so ambiguous and so often contested that by 1992, five years after it was first introduced by the World Commission on Environment and Development, about 40 different definitions had appeared. See Douglas Torgerson, "Strategy and Ideology in Environmentalism: A Decentered Approach to Sustainability," *Industrial and Environmental Crisis Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (1994): 295–321.

⁴⁵ See transcripts of the forum published on the Green Net website of the *China Youth Daily*, <<http://202.99.23.201/cydgng/gb/cydgng/content.759348.htm>>, accessed 1 May 2004.

⁴⁶ Announcement of Tianxia Xi's mailing list, 4 November 2003.

⁴⁷ Jim Yardley, "Dam Building Threatens China," *The New York Times*, 10 March 2004.

⁴⁸ "Insiders' Reflections on the Fight to Protect the Dujiangyan Dam," document circulated for discussion on a private environmental mailing list.

⁴⁹ Discussions at an environmental salon held in Beijing on 17 May 2004. Source: Nu River mailing list, 31 May 2004.

⁵⁰ Philippe C. Schmitter, "Still a Century of Corporatism?," in *Social-Political Structures in the Iberian World*, ed. Frederick B. Pike and Thomas Stritch (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974), 85–130.

⁵¹ Jonathan Unger and Anita Chan, "China, Corporatism, and the East Asian Model," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 33 (1995): 29–53.

⁵² Jude Howell, "New Directions in Civil Society: Organizing around Marginalized Interests," in *Governance in China*, ed. Jude Howell (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 143–71.

⁵³ On the role of nonstate actors in China's media transformation, see Akhavan-Majid, "Mass Media Reform in China."

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