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Changing the Game: How Environmental International
Non-Governmental Organisations Empower the State by
Mobilising Society in China

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Abstract

International NGOs have grown in stature and influence in China, and are widely seen as important contributors to the development of a more dynamic Chinese society. This paper contributes to theoretical frameworks regarding how to understand the way in which INGOs are able to influence certain political outcomes in China; arguing that in both the short and long-term, INGOs have worked to mobilise society in active support of environmental protection in different parts of China. The ability to change the social structure has been important in empowering relevant institutions within the state, such as the Ministry of Environmental Protection, to respond to environmental protection issues. A greater role for such ministries represents a change in political structures around environmental protection. In doing so, this paper provides a thorough analysis of China's society's response to environmental protection and the political decision making processes at play when environmental issues are involved. Two case studies collected from field work, of International Rivers contribution to the anti-dam movement in the campaign against the Nujiang Dam; and Pacific Environment's support for a local NGO opposing river pollution in Anhui province, will be utilised to support the argument that INGOs' mobilisation of society is an important means of 'empowering' the state to respond positively to environmental protection issues. Such developments are taken as signs of growing social pluralisation.

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1. Introduction

The economic reforms first embarked upon in the late 1970s are important symbols of China's transition from a totalitarian command economy to the thriving economy and considerably more open society that exists today. Although the reforms that began in this period are sometimes viewed as the first steps of a precise strategy, a social, economic and political transition with a clear beginning, middle and end; in most ways such notions are false assumptions. Rather than viewing the reforms as part of Deng Xiaoping's (or the post-Mao political elite's) great vision for a new China, a distilled narrative that is often perpetuated for the sake of simplicity, a better way to frame the reforms are as a series of tentative experiments, many of which started only very modestly but transformed into more sweeping reforms after success at the local level (Shirk, 1993; 30).

In fact, the very incremental nature of China's economic reforms have been part of the great fascination scholars and other 'China watchers' have held, and have led to a contradiction between a sense of progress or development in some areas alongside lag or dogged conservatism in others. These contradictions have fascinated and confused the ongoing attempts to locate and identify China conducted by different stakeholders at an international and domestic level- governments; business; the media; academia; political activists; and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The search to find China, to identify it and put in an understandable context is perhaps really more of a series of attempts to answer the question: what is really possible in the new, emerging China? From the international perspective, this question can be rephrased as: what can foreign governments, businesses and NGOs achieve in China? While there is a certain amount of clarity about what is possible in terms of economic relations with China, an understanding of interactions between international actors and the Chinese polity and society are more obscured.

In the social realm, various scholars have addressed the role international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) have played in China's social development.¹ These works have gone a considerable way to clarifying INGOs role in China,

1 See for instance, (Chen 2006, 2010; Morton 2005, 2008; Wu, 2005; Wang, 2006; Young, 2005).

highlighting that INGOs have functioned most effectively in areas where they provide a social service and do not serve as a direct challenge to the central government's legitimacy, such as environmental protection, health and rural education; yet have made little inroad in areas such as human rights that directly call into question the central government's actions and treatment of opposition. In particular, scholars have focussed on environmental INGOs' dynamic contribution to Chinese society, noting the presence of more than fifty INGOs working in this area (Wu, 2005; 145), and identifying how INGOs have fostered the growth of many local environmental NGOs (Chen, 2010).

However, despite the contributions of INGOs such as those working in the field of environmental protection, there still exists a lack of clarity regarding how to measure INGOs' contribution to Chinese society. Are they helping to create a more open society, much like foreign direct investment and other financial instruments have helped to liberalise China's economy? Or does the work they carry out fail to leave a lasting impact on China's social and political milieu? If the work they are involved in does have an influence on the state, how best to conceptualise the way in which it occurs? Thus, this thesis is involved in trying to find ways of assessing the contribution of environmental INGOs to Chinese society.

In the following chapter, I will chart the emerging role of environmental INGOs in China amidst changing state-society relations brought about by the economic reforms in order to provide some contextual background to the topic. Following this, I will consider various theories regarding how INGOs seek to influence the state in authoritarian contexts, agreeing with Wu and Wang's proposition that environmental NGOs working in China attempt empower the state in a non-confrontational fashion while mobilising society around environmental issues (Wu, 2005; Wang, 2006).

Extending this idea, I will elaborate on the 'empowerment through mobilisation' thesis that is central to this paper: which suggests that while the relationship between INGOs and the state is non-confrontational, the ability to empower the state to respond in a way that changes the status quo very much hinges on INGOs capacity to work with domestic NGOs to mobilise the media and society,

changing society's awareness and involvement in environmental protection issues, and elevating the status of environmental protection arguments. This social mobilisation empowers ministries involved in environmental protection at the national and local level (basing my work mainly on the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) and local Environmental Protection Bureaus (EPBs)) in various ways, a process referred to as a change in the domestic political structures around environmental protection throughout. The capacity to change political structures following the mobilisation of society around environmental issues will serve as a positive indicator of INGOs ability to influence the Chinese social and political landscape, and more broadly, of a growing pluralisation in China's political process.

In the third chapter, I will provide greater detail of the underlying social and political structures surrounding environmental protection in China. In doing so, I will expound upon the developments and limitations within China's social structure around environmental protection, exploring areas such as environmental NGOs (ENGOs) ability to work with local communities and the media. In regards to political structures existing around environmental protection, I will highlight the key structural deficiencies that account for the marginalisation of ministries holding progressive norms (such as the MEP and EPBs) within the domestic political structure, while locating evidence that this marginalisation can be overcome.

The fourth chapter will progress to identify the two case studies under investigation in this thesis: the involvement of a US based NGO, International Rivers, in supporting domestic NGOs such as Green Watershed and Green Earth Volunteers in the well-known campaign to oppose the construction of the Nujiang Dam in Yunnan province. I will identify the normative and practical contributions International Rivers made to the campaign, arguing that they supported China's social elite in the national campaign opposing the Nujiang dam. In doing so, I will test the effects of social mobilisation on the capacity to empower the MEP to prevent the development of large dams. The second case study also involves an INGO based in the US, Pacific Environment, which has played an important role in supporting local and poorly funded grassroots ENGOs. In this case study, I will examine how long term support Pacific Environment assisted Green Anhui's successful campaign against three chemical companies pollution of the Huai River, a major river that runs through parts

of eastern and central China. From this perspective, I will be well equipped to see the impact of a mobilised ENGO, the media, and public opinion in Bengbu city on a largely inert city Environmental Protection Bureau, and assess whether it changed the role and status of the EPB within the local political context. These two case studies will provide a useful framework for considering what contributions INGOs are really able to make to aspects of state-society relations particular to environmental protection issues.



2. Environmental INGOs in China: A Theoretical and Practical Overview

In this chapter, I explore how changes in China's economic structure since the late 1970s have stimulated social changes and allowed for a role for INGOs in China's environmental protection. Discussing environmental INGOs role in society and whether they should be viewed within a corporatist or civil society framework, I argue that INGOs have developed ways to circumvent laws that try to keep INGOs within the scope of state control and have participated in China's civil society, providing a brief historical account of INGOs work in China. This validates the assumption that INGOs are capable of mobilising social structures in China. Following this, I consider arguments regarding how INGOs work in authoritarian contexts, considering different theoretical viewpoints relevant to environmental INGOs working in China. I seek to overcome the lack of clarity in understanding the exact contribution of INGOs work, and whether they contribute to only superficial change in environmental protection or something more substantial. This is achieved by introducing Wang's argument, heavily influenced by Risse-Kappen's theoretical model, which states that INGOs capacity to influence the norms and practices of the state can be assessed by whether or not they are able to change the domestic political and social structures that exist around environmental protection (Wang, 2006). From this position, I explain my 'empowerment through mobilisation' thesis, which provides that INGOs involvement in the mobilisation of social structures leads to political empowerment of state bodies invested in environmental protection.

2.1. Changing State Society Relations

Although what can be thought of as INGOs have existed in China since before the 1919 May Fourth Movement (Zhang, 2003; 5), INGOs as understood in the contemporary context have a relatively short history in China. The reasons for this are easily guessed for China watchers. Time virtually stood still during Mao's reign in terms of Chinese society's relations with the outside world, and so the story essentially begins (like so many related to new phenomena in China) in the period marking the establishment of Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms. While commentators often highlight the crucial difference between Deng and his

contemporary socialist 'reformer' Mikhail Gorbachev as lying in the absence of *glasnost*, or political reforms (Morton, 2005; 520), it is commonly argued that economic reform, perhaps by necessity, has decisively loosened the state's grip on society (Zhang, 2003; 9). Acting in the interests of economic efficiency, the retreat of previously critical party-controlled institutions such as the work unit (*danwei*) and village collectives, along with a substantial amount of government decentralisation has weakened the state's capacity to control Chinese society. Further, the processes of reform irretrievably changed the underpinnings of the Chinese state, and weakened Communism as the state's binding ideological basis of legitimacy.

For tens of millions of people, the state is an inadequate provider of public goods like health care, employment opportunities and environmental protection, and as Minxin Pei noted in 2005, but was beginning to unravel in the early 1980s, the Chinese state is faced with the interlinking crisis of being unable to provide public goods and at the same time lacking "pressure valves" to settle disputes and relieve tension (Pei, 2005;103). Worryingly for the Chinese state, this new socio-political reality has also resulted in the rapid rise of public protest, or 'mass incidents' as they are formally known, as a means of challenging the status quo. In the social realm, the lack of adequate bona fide 'pressure valves' has meant a dramatic increase in the number of protests, with more than 30,000 protests occurring in the first nine months of 2000 alone (Morton, 2005; 527). While I am by no means painting the pre-reform Maoist era as a golden era for environmental protection, and certainly not one for citizen recourse to official complaint, the partial unlinking of China's economic and political spheres has resulted in a confluence of problems related to the state's capacity to manage socio-political problems and the discontent they generate.

Further, the explosion of private enterprise has meant that many of the negative externalities of economic growth have been left unchecked by various organs of the state, through both a lack of capacity and willingness. The problems that began to manifest in the early 1980s have spiralled to the extent that the year 2005 alone saw around 51,000 pollution incidents, and required a cleanup of the Songshan oil spill that cost 3 billion US dollars (Chan, 2004; 74). In rural areas, water scarcity and pollution contribution contribute to crop lost of approximately \$US 24 billion annually (Economy, 2003), as well as causing many more unnecessary costs due to

health and productivity losses (Chan, 2004; 80). It is clear to many, including China's political leadership, that a declining environment is a threat to the future of China's economic growth.

It was with a gradual awareness of the severity of such problems that the Chinese state tentatively began to enlist the support of INGOs in the early 1980s as a cost-effective means of addressing various public policy problems. The environmental realm was among the first recipients of this outreach, and large environmental INGOs worked with the state to find solutions for issues like habitat degradation and species loss. WWF for instance, was specifically contacted by the Chinese government in the early 1980s to commence a program of panda habitat protection in Sichuan (Wu, 2005; 154). Additionally, in accordance with the decentralisation that was occurring in the economic realm, the state also began to encourage social organisations such as the Ford Foundation sponsored Chinese Academy of Social Sciences to develop ways to tackle environmental and other social problems. During the 15th Party Congress in 1997, the five yearly event being one of the most reliable means of assessing the pulse and direction of the Chinese state, then supreme leader Jiang Zemin stressed the need to "cultivate and develop...social intermediary organisations" (Saich, 2000; 128). Given these developments, some pondered whether the decentralisation at the economic level was slowly being replicated at the social level and creating an autonomous 'civil society' in which INGOs could work within.

2.1.1. Corporatist and Civil Society Frameworks

Starting with Oi in 1992, scholars primarily pointed to a corporatist model or 'statist' perspective to explain how "downsizing the government apparatus" (Ma 2005; 66) in the economic realm had led to an intertwined relationship between private business and the state as a result of economic reforms.

At the same time, scholars were noting that the state were 'downsizing government apparatus' in other areas, highlighting new 'corporatist' relationships between the state and 'social organisations', which were gaining relevance in poverty, labour, gender, rural and environmental issues among others². Quashing popular speculation raised in the Western media at the time that China's economic reforms

2 See for instance: (Whiting, 1991), (White, 1993), (Pearson, 1994) and (Unger and Chan, 1995).

would eventually and inevitably lead to social and political change as had occurred in the Soviet Union, corporatist scholars instead argued that the growth of social organisations was merely reflective of the state's developing capacity to efficiently maintain its penetration of social life in changing economic circumstances:

The state determines which organisations will be recognised as legitimate and forms an unequal partnership of sorts with such organisations (Unger and Chan, 1995; 30).

Corporatist scholars did loosely acknowledge the Western concept of civil society, which depicts an "independent sphere of social interaction between economy and state" (Cohen and Arato, 1992; ix), but were determined not to overplay the extent to which it existed. Cautious terms such as "embryonic" (White 1993, 86) were used in reference to civil society, but the corporatist perspective was framed as the primary lens of analysis and civil society was only ever considered as a tiny peephole providing only the narrowest view of state-society relations. The effort to acknowledge the civil society discourse in China, while remaining overwhelmingly rooted to corporatist perspectives can be seen in Frolic's analysis of the growth of NGOs in China as part of "state-led civil society" (Frolic, 1997), whereby the state's utilisation of hundreds of thousands of social organisations and quasi-administrative units to help it manage a rapidly expanding economy and changing society, was depicted as the mark of a delicate and fragile pluralisation.

Leading the list of concerns for those that identified a corporatist state-society relationship in China was the proliferation of government organised NGOs (GONGOs) which are administratively and financially tied to the state apparatus; as well as the enactment of the 1998 Regulation for Registration and Management of Social Organisations (Hsia and White, 2002; 337-338), which tightened the conditions governing the formation and activity of NGOs.

Looking at Chinese legislation governing NGO and INGO activities in China that were codified in the late 1990s, and even at the slightly relaxed laws that were updated in 2004, (Regulations on the Management of Foundations) the legal relationship between the state and social organisations is decidedly corporatist. From

the outset, the state places rigorous restricts on the establishment and registration of social organisations not initiated by the state itself (all social organisations beside GONGOs), which is at once a barrier and disincentive for the domestic growth of domestic organisations and for international NGOs seeking to work in China. According to the 1998 regulations, social organisations must fulfil the following criteria to officially register as a national organisation: “be corporate entities; have over 50 members' and at least 100,000 RM (approximately \$US 15, 000) in operating funds (Ma, 2006; 66). Such financial restrictions deter the growth of low budget grassroots organisations.

However, the most problematic features of these laws are how they legally enshrine the dual registration system, an oppressive instrument that can be traced to the 1950s (Ashley and He, 2008; 55). Within this system, NGOs must register first with a professional supervisory agency or mother-in-law³, and only then become eligible to apply for registration with the Ministry of Civil Affairs (and meet a new set of bureaucratic requirements). These regulations also provide that there is also only supposed to be one NGO working in each issue area and technically forbid NGOs from developing branch organisations in other cities or provinces (Ma, 2006). This ensures a substantial degree of control over registered social organisations, as mother-in-laws are fearful of the ramifications if social organisations they sponsor are perceived to be creating trouble for important individuals or state institutions. Thus, the dual registration and its implications discourage and stifle potential mother-in-laws from sponsoring candidate social organisations.

The principal practical outcomes of the dual registration system for those social organisations that do manage to get sponsored is that state officials often embed themselves in such organisations through being members of the board, and/or giving 'recommendations' on how the social organisations should conduct itself. Although no formal law existed governing INGOs until 2004, since then INGOs have also been required to fulfil the dual registration in order to register a representative office (Ma 2005, 65). The dual registration is in some ways an even greater challenge for INGOs, as potential mother-in-laws are generally disinclined to sponsor international

3 Referred to in Chinese as the “mother-in-law” (popo). These agencies are almost always a government institution.

organisations as they are often assumed to be interferers or troublemakers.

Evidence of the corporatist mode of control employed in China, and the tenuous position that some INGOs that do get registered have found themselves in can be found in the example of the Naumann Foundation. A foundation that promotes liberal politics, it was sponsored by China's State Statistical Bureau and Ministry of Agriculture in the mid 1990's to work on capacity building projects (White *et. al*, 1996; 6). However, they found their Beijing offices closed down by the Chinese government for sponsoring an international conference on Tibetan independence in Germany in 1996, evidence of the constraints the state imposes on the freedom of expression (domestically and internationally) of INGOs working in China, and strengthening the corporatist argument that INGOs in China work within narrow confines dictated by the state.

Further, the 1992 establishment of a bureaucratic channel for INGOs to work in China, the China Association for Non-Governmental Organisations (CANGO), under the auspices of the Ministry of Trade and Economic Cooperation (MOFTEC), was roundly derided as a move with the cynical function of merely "sell(ing) projects to international NGOs" (Zweig, 2002; 252). Rather than INGOs having the capacity to work with society in developing solutions to environmental problems, CANGO requires them to work closely with the state.

Even with the benefit of hindsight, this corporatist perspective does seem in many ways to aptly characterise the context (especially the legal context) international and domestic NGOs alike existed in for much of the 1990s, irrespective of the field they were working in. However, too great an emphasis on the legal context is misleading, and even anachronistic when dealing with a state as complex and contradictory as the Chinese one. Although it remains incredibly difficult for both NGOs and INGOs to register nationally with the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MOCA), or with provincial Bureau's of Civil Affairs (BOCA), this is often by no means an insurmountable obstacle. INGOs are often informally allowed to operate without MOCA/BOCA registration as long as they have a mother in law sponsor. This has become increasingly common since more and more government departments in all areas of the Chinese bureaucracy, especially outside of the sensitive political

environment of Beijing, have come to realise that in many cases the advantages that INGOs bring outweigh the risk. Ma explains the mutual benefits of such an arrangement:

Official approval and institutional support help INGOs carry out their projects smoothly, while government or governmental organizations receive overhead fees for their sponsorship and access to technological and monetary resources. (Ma 2005, 177)

In addition to such an arrangement, INGOs have developed other tactful ways of circumventing the letter of the law to work in China, some of which require clear state cooperation, while others are tacitly approved or unregulated so long as they don't directly challenge the state. The various options open to INGOs to work in China can be presented as follows⁴ :

Channels for INGO Presence in China

Clear Government Cooperation

- Obtaining an International Expert's Service Certificate from the State Bureau of Foreign Experts
- Signing an Agreement Memorandum with government bodies.

Tacit Cooperation

- Operating cooperative programs with Chinese NGOs or governmental agencies, thereby avoiding registration.

Unregulated

- Establishing Hong Kong or Macao-based headquarters or branches through which their programs are run in the mainland.
- Opening program offices, which are not required to register with the government.

⁴ This figure is developed based on (Ma, 2006) and my own observations of INGO activity.

- Registering as a commercial entity
- Remaining based overseas and working remotely through email and informal visits to local organisations.

Undoubtedly, working within a legal context where they are strictly regulated is not an ideal situation for international or domestic NGOs, and a signal that they must tread carefully in China, but it is evident that an informal flexibility exists that provides INGOs the capacity to work outside the corporatist control of the state. The fact that INGOs have many methods of working in China besides registration has given them the capacity to work outside of the state's purview. Thus, it can be argued that a key deficiency of the corporatist perspective is its overstated emphasis on legal requirements in China, and perhaps an undue negligence of the situation on the ground.

Corporatist scholars cautious of adopting a civil society perspective were also very cynical about viewing INGOs as part of an 'independent sphere of social interaction between economy and state' because of the difficulties involved in connecting INGOs with society. Such a view emphasises that although large international NGOs such as WWF and the Ford Foundation were making contributions to the way in which the state handled the environment in the 1990s, and even began to work with local populations in dynamic ways like establishing micro-credit programs aimed at ending environmentally unsound practices in the Caohai region (Wu 2005, 376), they were typically bereft of autonomous NGO partners.

More recent advocates of the corporatist lens have also placed doubts on the independence and vitality of INGO work in China, describing it as “minimal” (Hsia and White, 2002; 347) as a result of a perceived lack of a grassroots movement in China. However, the 1990s was a period of social transition, and in fact, a period of time where domestic and international NGOs grew in size, capacity and function in China, that went beyond the embryonic.

While corporatist relations between the state and a great number of social organisations remained, the rise of independently formed NGOs in China in the early-to-mid 1990s was a catalyst for significant change in Chinese state-society relations,

enabling an expanded and more grassroots role for international NGOs. In 1994, Liang Congjie established one of China's first NGOs, Friends of Nature, a seminal moment that was followed by the founding of several other NGOs later that year, which were able to work independent of the state.

Impressed by Friends of Nature's involvement in environmental education and lobbying, including a successful campaign drawing attention to illegal logging in Yunnan province that was responsible for the destruction of the golden snub nosed monkey's habitat, Tony Saich identified Friends of Nature as a leading example of a small community of NGOs that were finding ways to "negotiate the state" (Saich, 2000) Marshalling other examples from China's NGO community, he argued: "broadly speaking, education and environment groups have negotiated relatively free space" to pursue their agendas (Saich, 2000; 137) While acknowledging that China was far from developing a "civil society as conventionally defined" (Saich 2000; 139), by drawing attention to NGOs like Friends of Nature, Saich spearheaded a worthy critique of the "oversimplification" purported by corporatist models of China's state-society relations, which had failed to recognise the significance of pockets of autonomy within an increasingly amorphous state-society relationship. Saich's claims were bolstered by later assertions that:

...even when working in cooperation with local and national bureaucracy or government, in reality, most international NGOs... find a niche for their work in China through their own connections, working directly with grassroots groups.
(Wu, 2005; 390)

It is evident that despite the Chinese state's attempts to regulate INGOs, they have developed the capacity to work independently with local groups and emerging grassroots NGOs. Such a collaboration is indicative of an emerging 'independent sphere of social interaction between economy and state', or nascent civil society.

2.2. INGOs in the Authoritarian Context

Despite INGOs participation in China's nascent civil society, it is still not clear what the implications of such participation are. Do INGOs in China have the capacity to

promote ideas and international norms as part of a 'transnational civil society' and change the environmental protection policies and practices of the state and society (Florini, 2000; 10-11)? Or are they limited to only a superficial or fringe input?

The possibility that INGOs work can be considered to be part of a 'transnational civil society' is thought to have especially significant implications in authoritarian contexts like China. Risse, Ropp and Sikkink's spiral model depicts INGOs as capable of forming 'transnational advocacy networks' with domestic partners, engaging states in a game of political cat and mouse, gradually and methodically redefining the status quo (Risse et. al. Sikkink, 1999). According to this model, INGOs are able to perform this process of norm socialisation through a five-phase process; whereby INGOs act as moral entrepreneurs to entice states to gradually internalise progressive norms. The first two phases involve "repression" and violation of international norms, and then "denial" of INGOs criticisms. The next phase is critical, involving INGOs pressuring the state to make "tactical concessions", which create a window of opportunity to get the state to rhetorically accept the norms it is violating. Once this occurs the state begins to gradually accept its responsibility in upholding the norms, which reach "prescriptive status", and finally uphold the norms through "rule consistent behaviour" (Risse. et. al 1999, 22).

In his work on transnational dam campaigns, Khagram challenges the idea that norms flow from INGOs and transnational civil society to states through a spiral model, arguing that China's 'domestic structures' are resistant to such processes (Khagram, 2004). By domestic structures, Khagram refers to Risse-Kappen's description of:

the organisational apparatus of political and societal institutions, their routines, the decision-making rules and procedures incorporated in law and custom, as well the values and norms embedded in the political culture. (Risse-Kappen, 1995; 19)

Khagram's conclusion is informed by Risse-Kappen's domestic structures methodology, which asserts that domestic structures determine the likelihood of INGO's accessing political systems, linking up with domestic actors, and influencing

the policies and attitudes of the state. Although the impact might be profound if INGOs gain access to a highly centralised state, this is unlikely if the society is weak, especially if the INGOs actions challenges the status quo. For this reason, Risse-Kappen argues that INGOs are most likely to exert influence in contexts where the political structure is fragmented and a plural social structure exists (Risse-Kappen, 1995). Based on these assumptions, Khagram posits China's lack of democracy, dogged efforts to control society through censorship of the media and restriction on the development of NGOs (described above) as reflective of a centralised political structure, and a weak society; and argues that INGOs do not perform significant roles in China.

Figure 1.1. Domestic Structures and Campaign Outcomes.

Based on (Risse-Kappen, 1995; 25)

Domestic Structure	Access to Domestic Institutions	Policy Impact in Case of Access
Centralized Political Institution Weak Society	Difficult	Profound in case of access
Centralized Political Institution Strong Society	Moderate	Incremental but long lasting if with strong coalition
Fragmented Political Institution Strong Society	Easy	Difficult
Fragmented Political Institution Weak Society	Easiest	Unlikely

Khagram's position is challenged by two perspectives- Keck and Sikkink's boomerang model (Keck and Sikkink, 1998) and the double mobilisation thesis offered by Wu (Wu, 2005). According to Keck and Sikkink's boomerang model, local groups operating in authoritarian regimes that seek to change the status quo around an issue like human rights or environment, seek out the assistance of INGOs. INGOs then develop international advocacy campaigns aiming to pressure and shame the offending government's failure to uphold international norms in three ways: direct criticism of the state's activity; lobbying other states to place pressure on offending

governments; or lobbying intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) such as the World Bank to place pressure on offending governments (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; 17). The boomerang model is hence the description of the process where local NGOs, due to oppressive local conditions, 'throw out' information exposing the state's violation of international norms in the direction of INGOs, which through a carefully crafted international campaign is then directed to 'come back' in the form of pressure to act at the state. This pressure is expected to challenge the state's moral legitimacy to govern, and thus pressure the state to change its policies or approaches.

Clearly, the main problem with utilising Keck and Sikkink's model when discussing transnational advocacy networks and INGOs in China is that it fails to adequately take into consideration the options available to advocacy networks when the target state is not particularly susceptible to international pressure. Unlike the military dictatorships in Latin American countries that Keck and Sikkink's thesis chiefly emphasises, China is at once a great power (even an emerging superpower) and an authoritarian regime. The ruling regime is extremely resistant to contentious forms of pressure that are suggested in the boomerang model- patently demonstrated by the unsuccessfulness and limited duration of sanctions imposed by the Clinton administration upon China in the early 1990s, following human rights abuses evident in the June 4th Tiananmen Square incident.

Does the inapplicability of the boomerang model prove Khagram's assertion that the Chinese state is resistant to INGO influence? Not according to Wu, who negates both Khagram's arguments and the boomerang model proposed by Keck and Sikkink (Wu, 2005). She indicates that the boomerang model, as well as Khagram's argument that INGOs are unable to influence society, reflect a "theoretical bias in the transnational civil society literature towards contentious relations between state and society" (Wu, 2005; 44). These perspectives controversially suggest that INGOs must confront the state to force a political outcome (boomerang model) and that 'the state' is uniformly opposed to civil society. While it is true that the Chinese state seeks to regulate civil society, as identified above, this is only one element of the state's attitude. Recognising this, Wu ascribes a cooperative and non-confrontational triangular relationship between INGOs, the state and society, a 'double mobilisation'; whereby the INGO community attaches importance to establishing constructive

relationships with state institutions like the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Ministry of Forestry, as well as local communities and NGOs (Wu, 2005).

Using a Tang dynasty poem's metaphor of 'spring rain', Wu describes the gradual spread and penetrative, sustainable effects of INGOs 'double mobilisation' in China. She argues that this model is of greater utility because it demonstrates how working with local communities and domestic INGOs, as well as engaging in constructive dialogue with the state has yielded constructive results in policy development (especially in the environmental area) and has had a flow-on effect of widening the space for civil society actors in China.

The double-mobilisation thesis is important because instead of looking at *macro-level* variables such as democracy and social pluralisation broadly as Khagram attempts, it considers China's domestic political and social structures at the *micro-level*. This identifies the fact that while certain issue areas such as security and foreign policy are heavily centralised within China's political structure; and that a distinct lack of plurality exists in certain social issues like human rights; political and social structures should not be portrayed as centralised and completely penetrated by state power respectively (Wu, 2005; 93). Instead, at the micro level of environmental protection issues, the Chinese state is increasingly fragmented, and there is an emerging green social structure consisting of INGOs, NGOs and the media.

Like Wu, Wang's detailed study of Greenpeace campaigns in China is also theoretically indebted to Risse-Kappen, but attempts to use micro-level structures as evidence of INGOs policy impact. (Wang, 2006) While the scope of Wu's work is in defining a theoretical framework for understanding how INGOs campaign in different issue areas in China, Wang attempts the more ambitious task of holding micro-level structures up as metrics to assess the contribution INGOs make to state-society relations in China (Wang 2005). In doing this, he suggests that:

The success of INGO campaigns depends on whether INGOs can create a favourable political and social structure around the campaign issue. (Wang 2006, 95)

Wang states that favourable structures are produced by empowering the state

with "information, knowledge and moral persuasions", while simultaneously mobilising society with "ideas and capacity-building measures to exert social pressure on the campaign targets" (Wang, 2006). However, while Wang identifies clearly that the creation of a strong society is necessary for campaign success, he is ambiguous as to what the required political structure is for campaign success.

I feel this ambiguity is in part produced by confusion over the terms: centralisation; decentralisation; fragmentation; centre and local, which I will now make an effort to clarify. The Chinese state can be described as *centralised* on the macro-level in the sense that the central political leadership (by which I refer primarily to those political leaders in the Standing Committee of the Politburo) exercise a great deal of authority in determining China's political agenda through pronouncements like Five Year plans. On the micro-level, the state is also *centralised* when it comes to how the political leadership exercise a great deal of control over important state issues like foreign policy and security, and carefully restrict the expression of alternative views.

However, on the micro-level, the state is also *fragmented* when it comes to environmental issues, in that the rigorous restriction of alternative views does not occur. This does not mean that the central government can be confrontationally criticised about its environmental record as occurs in Western countries, but that the state does not have a hegemony on the production of knowledge. For instance in security issues, Tibet's status as an inalienable part of China is a non-negotiable issue; in the environmental protection area in China by contrast, there exists the potential for differing voices in society about contentious issues like dam construction.

The state is also *fragmented* or *decentralized* in the area of environmental protection in the sense that a lack of uniformity of views exists over less sensitive issues, and that a number of state actors, such as various ministries, provincial governments, local governments, are involved in decision-making, and often have different decision-making priorities. When attempting to distinguish between these interests, terms such as *centre* and *local* are often used, with the centre denoting ministries within the State Council, a central government institution, and the the local referring to territorial governments at the provincial level or lower.

Returning to Wang's argument that success for INGO campaigns depends on whether or not they are able to create a favourable political and social structure, I argue that success depends on creating a more *centralised* political structure, by which I mean a political structure where State Council ministries sympathetic to INGOs ideas and position, are able to assert themselves in issues where environmental protection is important, and not have their authority challenged by other state actors with conflicting interests. For the sake of clarity, I will largely eschew terms such as centralised and fragmented, and instead refer to the empowerment of ministries and bureaus sympathetic to environmental protection issues within domestic political structures, primarily focussing on the national Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) and local environmental protection bureaus (EPBs))

As well as clarifying Wang's theoretical position to identify exactly what political structures are favourable, this thesis deviates slightly from Wang's empowerment and mobilisation model. In this model, Wang argues that empowering the state and mobilising society around environmental protection issues are key goals for INGOs and vital to campaign success, a proposition that I agree with. Additionally, it is my central contention that that one of the key ways in which the MEP and EPBs are empowered to act is through the presence of a society mobilised behind environmental protection goals, for example opposing pollution or the construction of large dams. This theoretical framework will be referred to as the 'empowerment through mobilisation' model throughout. It is important to note that mobilisation can occur at the national, provincial and local levels of society, and is evident by the presence of a pluralised society that can be mobilised for political causes (Risse-Kappen 1995, 17). Such mobilisation does not necessarily apply to a broad social mobilisation, where environmental protection becomes a permanent and central concern for the whole of Chinese society, but on instances where groups of people at different levels of society rally behind certain or specific environmental issues. Likewise, empowerment of the state to adequately support environmental protection norms occurs at different levels of government, and is not a uniform empowerment throughout the entire Chinese political system.

2.3. Methodology

As is evident above, the empowerment through mobilisation framework that this thesis will advance is heavily indebted to the theoretical review of Wu Fengshi and Wang Liang, who have developed comprehensive theories in order to understand INGOs relationship with the state and society, particularly those working in the environmental field. This element of their work is derived from that of Risse-Kappen, who originally developed the domestic political structures framework. In many ways, this thesis is a dialogue and extension of these works.

The many articles and books that deal with international NGOs working in China, transnational civil society and environmental governance are also used throughout this work, both in the development of the theoretical framework, as well as in providing important contextual information about social and political structures around environmental protection. Also of critical importance are the annual publications produced by the Wilson Centre's China Environment Forum, the *China Environment Series*, which provides a great deal of up-to-date information about the work international and environmental NGOs carry out. These resources are utilised as secondary evidence of INGOs capacity to mobilise society and empower the state throughout.

A field trip visit to China in September/October of 2010 was extremely helpful in developing a first-hand understanding of the work INGOs carry out, as well as in developing an understanding of the social context they work within. In this trip, I was able to interview Wen Bo, Global Fund's China Advisory Board Coordinator and Pacific Environment's China Program Co-director; Erika Helms, Roots and Shoots Beijing Director; Ms Zhang, Wetlands International's China Coordinator; and Gladys Wang, Global Environment Institute's Communication Officer. During this period of time, I also conducted telephone interviews with Nicole Brewer, International Rivers' China Global Program Associate, and Christine Tsang, Program Associate at the Blue Moon Fund. All of these interviews were useful for the development of this research, however, it is the interviews conducted with Wen Bo and Nicole Brewer that are applied most directly, as the experiences of International Rivers and Pacific Environment form the basis of the case studies conducted in Chapter Four. Through these interviews, I sought to explore in detail how International Rivers and Pacific

Environment work with civil society partners, and on the capacity of a ‘green civil society’ to influence political outcomes. Including case studies of campaigns that occurred at both the national level and local level, implicating the national level Ministry of Environmental Protection and local level Environmental Protection Bureaus, I seek to demonstrate that change to micro-level structures is possible at the various levels of environmental governance. This is an important distinction, and one that is omitted in Wang’s analysis of changes in domestic structures around environmental protection.

Another important distinction pertains to the size and nature of the INGOs included in the case study. Wang Liang’s case study focuses on the work of Greenpeace, a large, internationally renowned environmental NGO; however, this case study focuses on INGOs with smaller budgets and different scopes. This is important in demonstrating that smaller NGOs are also able to contribute to change in micro-level political and social structures in China. Beyond this, based on comments from field research and the empirical evidence included in Wang Liang’s thesis, it seems that Greenpeace takes a more unilateral approach to their advocacy work, which does not encourage an active role for local NGO participants or civil society. Focussing on NGOs with close connections to the grassroots, particularly Pacific Environment, will allow for a more explicit demonstration of the capacity for INGOs to mobilise the social structure and thereby stimulate change in political structures around environmental protection.

3. Domestic Structures Around Environmental Protection in China

This chapter will attempt to characterise the social and political structures that exist around environmental protection in China, charting the roles and character of important actors such as INGOs, domestic environmental NGOs (ENGOs), local communities, the Chinese media and various organs within the complex Chinese domestic structure. It will introduce examples from academic and other sources to identify examples of mobilised social structures and empowered political structures around environmental protection in China. A broad understanding of the existing political and social structures around environmental protection is necessary in order to advance the theoretical framework developed in the first chapter and explored through case studies in Chapter Three- that INGOs are more easily able to empower the state by mobilising society.

3.1. Social Structures Around Environmental Protection

Based upon the definitions of social structures provided by Risse-Kappen in the first chapter, a strong society consists of “politicized civil societies which can be easily mobilized for political causes” (Risse-Kappen 1995, 17). While it is clear that a comprehensive analysis of Chinese society suggests that is not politicised or easily mobilised for political causes, as identified in the first chapter, there are indications of the vestiges of a strong society existing at micro-level areas such as environmental protection, at both the national and local levels.

Wang suggests that a strong society at the micro-level or issue-area level can be defined by the number of organised social groups like NGOs involved in the issue. This thesis expands Wang's conception and provides a wider view of social structures by considering social structure around environmental protection issues as consisting of three components: the size and organisational capacity of the environmental NGO (ENGO) community and the organisations themselves; the ties ENGOs have developed with society in order to address environmental protection; and the media's

coverage of environmental issues. Using this framework, I argue that although not occurring consistently or evenly, the social structure around environmental protection is increasingly porous and consists of discrete areas of dynamism.

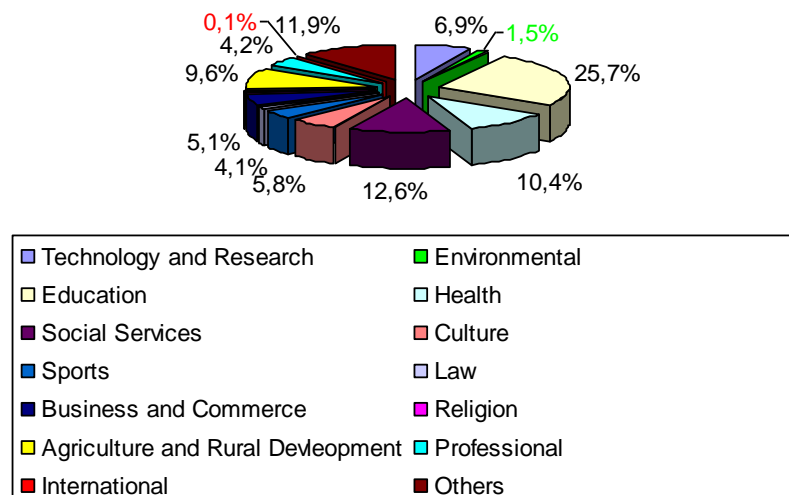
Some studies focus on ENGO cooperation with the state, and while this is important, it is beyond the scope of this research, given that the theoretical focus of this paper lies with examining the influence of a mobilised society upon attempts to empower the state. For this reason, direct ENGO and INGO cooperation with the state will be excluded from an analysis of China's social structures.

3.1.1. Capacity of ENGOs

According to the Ministry of Civil Affairs, there were almost 6000 domestic environmental NGOs (ENGOs) registered in China (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2007). Listed below, one can see the proportion of ENGOs among other social organisations.

Figure 3.1 2007 NGOs by type

Source: Ministry of Civil Affairs, Bureau of Management of NGOs



At first glance, the number of registered ENGOs seems small, especially next to the almost 100,000 educational institutes, however, these state authorised statistics fail to demarcate grassroots organisations and government organised NGOs (GONGOs). While environmental GONGOs have played an important role in

advancing environmental protection norms (Wu, 2003), it is my contention that a greater indicator of a strong society is the extent and capacity of bottom-up civil society organisations. This is not suggesting that GONGOs don't make a contribution to civil society, but is an argument that the size and capacity of grassroots organisations provide a more reliable picture of the size and capacity of the ENGO community. These groups are better indicators of the social structure because they reveal the extent to which ideals of protecting the environment have inspired individuals and groups to initiate organisations.

A clearer picture of the growth of grassroots ENGOs relative to NGOs in other sectors is underscored by the indication that there is also substantial growth in unregistered ENGOs- to the extent that for every registered ENGO in China, the same number existed as for profit business entities and thousands more internet, student and volunteer groups as well as nature clubs and those that were not registered at all (Economy, 2005). Also indicative of the number of active grassroots environmental NGOs is how many are recognised by leaders in the ENGO community. For the NGO Forum of the Global Environmental Facility's biannual conference in 2003, Friends of Nature, probably the most domestically and internationally well-respected grassroots NGO in China identified and invited over 60 grassroots environmental NGOs (Wu, 2005; 134). In the seven years since that event took place, an up to date database of grassroots environmental NGO's estimates there to be 421 'green' NGOs (Chinese Environmental NGOs Online, 2010)⁵. It is the significant number of grassroots organisations that have meant ENGOs are recognised as being at the vanguard of Chinese civil society, and have thus been conceived of as forming a 'green civil society' by various scholars (Chen, 2010; Busgen, 2005).

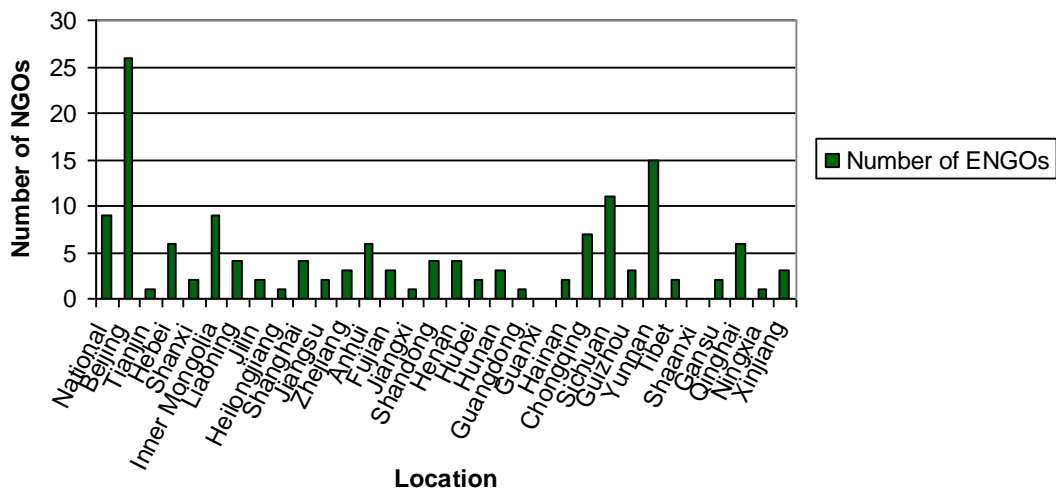
It is evident that domestic environmental NGOs work on a range of issues and have penetrated most provinces in China, although with a far greater presence in Beijing, Yunnan and Sichuan (Chinese Environmental NGOs Online, 2010). There is also a greater concentration of INGOs working in these provinces (Morton 2008, 200). This data is presented below:

5 The above listed statistics do not include the thousands of unregistered student groups all around the country, who are active in environmental education and also campaign work, and have also fomented environmental NGOs like Green Stone (Lu, 2003; 62).

Figure 3.2. Environmental NGOs by issue area.

Area of Work	Number of NGOs
Manufactured Natural Goods	20
Rural Communities	48
Environmental Policy and Rights Protection	22
Environmental Information Education and Communication	74
Capacity Building	30
Water Resources	27
Urban Communities	16
Desertification	14
Recycling Resources	13
Resources	12
Corporate Social Responsibility	9
Animal Protection	30
Biological-Diversity	22
Environmental Health	13
Plant Protection	26
Wetlands	17
Surveys and Research	23
Marine Environment	4

Figure 3.3. ENGOs by province



There exists a great deal of diversity within this ENGO community. Some NGOs such as Friends of Nature are well funded and work at high capacity, while others exist on shoestring budgets and struggle to channel their energies creatively. For instance, Friends of Nature has an annual expenditure of approximately USD\$300,000 (Friends of Nature, 2006), 700 due paying members, connections with student groups and local communities all around the country, possess educated,

trained and motivated staff, and are therefore capable of working in many provinces on a multitude of environmental protection issues (Johnson 2009, 68). By contrast, smaller NGOs, such as those that INGOs Pacific Environment and Global Green Grants attempted to establish working relationships with, often consist of only a few volunteers and lack even the technical skills to use a computer (Interview Wen Bo, 2009).

In fact, most grassroots groups exist on what by a Western perspective is considered basic funding, but have been nonetheless able to achieve impressive outcomes. One such example is the Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs (IPE) started by Ma Jun, a small NGO based in Beijing with only a handful of staff that has used basic government data along with information provided by other ENGOS to create an impressive water pollution map identifying precise areas of water pollution throughout the country (China Environment Series, 2006).

Importantly, local NGOs such as the IPE receive considerable financial and technical support from INGOs, with Ma Jun's IPE funded by the National Resources Defence Council (NRDC) to develop a similar air pollution map, also using NRDC as a consultant to help them better implement reliable ways of measuring air pollution (China Environment Series, 2006). Overall, INGOS have worked hard to establish relationships with grassroots NGOs, with 71 percent of 126 surveyed NGOs reporting contact with INGOs (Yang 2004), while INGOs such as the Ford Foundation provide up to 95 percent funding for dynamic local NGOs like the Centre for Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge (Chen 2010, 510). In sum, the number, extensive dispersion and capacity of ENGOS demonstrates an increasing non-state role in environmental protection, which INGOs play a vital role in supporting.

3.1.2. ENGOS Links with Society

International and domestic NGOs have been able to work with society and particularly local communities through establishing participatory programmes where local communities become a direct part of the solution in addressing environmental protection; setting up environmental education centres; and also assisting local

communities in locating channels to raise grievances.

Participatory programs have sought to help communities play a role in environmental governance, to protect local resources or species that are at damaged or at risk, as well as developing sustainable methods of income generation at the local (mostly rural) level. One of the most difficult aspects of campaigns that promote environmental protection is that they often interfere with the short-term economic goals of local communities, who often have so few economic opportunities that they have no choice but to abuse the scarce natural resources upon which they depend so heavily (Herrold, 1999; 445). The International Crane Foundation was a pioneer in developing participatory governance, via its campaign to organise and empower villagers to conserve black necked cranes in the Caohai nature reserve in Guizhou (Chen, 2010; 510). From 1993, “with a relatively modest budget and well-trained Chinese experts instead of expensive foreign consultants” (Herrold-Menzies, 2006; 383) ICF began working closely with Guizhou villagers to understand the ways in which activities they had been engaged in for a long time (and had now become illegal under the regulations of the Caohai nature reserve regulations) were endangering the cranes existence, such as fishing during spawning season, hunting waterfowl, draining wetlands, and clearing wooded hillsides. At first this was strongly resisted and the new regulations resulted in physical confrontations between villagers and nature reserve staff (Herrold 1999; 445) However, the new regulations became largely respected, in large part because of the establishment of a successful micro-credit grants program to help farmers set up businesses- producing handicrafts, raising vegetables and livestock and establishing inter-village trade (Herrold, 1999; 444-5). Further, beyond merely abiding by the regulations and recognising the importance of protecting the black crane, local villagers in the Caohai nature reserve region became actively involved in eco-management activities such as volunteering in lake restoration activities (Herrold Menzies. 2006; 394). This prominent example highlights the ways in which ENGOs can work in close contact with local communities to achieve the dual goals of environmental protection and development.

Another example of ENGOs working directly with local communities was derived from an interview conducted with Gladys Wang of Global Environment

Institute (GEI)⁶, a domestic NGO based in Beijing, who described the ways in which GEI used market based mechanisms to help villagers in Yunnan, Guilin, Tibet, and even Sri Lanka to invest in biogas tanks, which use yak and cow manure to produce cheap and green energy. Funded heavily by the Blue Moon Fund, these initiatives fulfilled many development and environmental objectives simultaneously- alleviating the high gas prices for villagers, replacing firewood for fuel and providing fertiliser for organic vegetable crops that GEI encouraged villagers to grow (Interview Wang 2009).

ICF and GEI's programs demonstrated the capacity for ENGOs in China to successfully cooperate (and develop programs) with local communities that promote environmental protection and the sustainable use of resources. Both these examples reflect how the Chinese social structure around environmental protection is capable of spreading environmental protection norms and practices to local communities. Of course, in a broader sense, local awareness and involvement in environmental protection is weak. With only a few hundred ENGOs in a country of more than a billion people, there are many local communities for whom the terms environmental protection is completely irrelevant. Despite these challenges, ENGOs like ICF have demonstrated an increasing awareness to locate local communities that are most vulnerable to environmental degradation and unsustainable development. For instance, Yunnan province has developed as a locus for ENGOs due to the threats (and actualization of such threats) that development poses to its unique biodiversity.

Other limitations to ENGOs capacity to connect with local communities is that programs often take many years to develop successfully, as a high level of trust and understanding needs to be built up between ENGOS and the local community. As Wen Bo of Pacific Environment and Global Green Grants Fund suggested in a personal interview, sometimes these type of programs collapse after a few years because they are too difficult to administer (Interview Wen Bo, 2009). However, it is difficult to find information about such unsuccessful programs, as ENGOs are often reluctant to share their failures. Although more extensive field work on this issue is required, including perhaps personal involvement in working on such a program, the previous

6 For more information on GEI, see Buckley (2006).

examples represent a social structure around environmental protection that has demonstrated the capacity to mobilise local communities in support of environmental development programs.

Another dimension of ENGOs mobilisation of local communities is the work they play in education. Education has been the traditional preserve of ENGOs in China, to the point where Jin Jiaman, director of GEI and formally of the Chinese Environmental Research Institute (a GONGO), encouraged Chinese ENGOS to branch out beyond education into other spheres of work (Turner, 2001). Nonetheless, environment education is important in imbuing future generations with a value for environmental protection, as well as empowering other NGOs and the state with relevant information. For instance, ENGOs have utilised education at different levels around the issue of grassland conservation throughout the country. Organisations such Friends of Nature and Han Hai Sha work at the apex of grassland conservation education, providing magazine articles, lectures and seminars on healthy agriculture in vulnerable grassland for activists and researchers in the field (China Environment Series 2003). Han Hai Sha has also worked to link together urban scientists who work on desertification with communities struggling with the problem. Owing to relationships between ENGOs and a growing sense of an ENGO community, technical and scientific information developed about grassland desertification in China is able to freely dispersed and used where it is needed. For instance, information produced by Friends of Nature has been used by Green Camel Bell in Gansu province, which works with the local education authority to edit school textbooks so that they accurately identify desertification problems (China Environment Series, 2003).

Roots and Shoots, the environmental education arm of the Jane Goodall Institute, is one of the major contributors to environmental education in urban communities in China, working with an estimate of 500 groups in Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing and Nanchang. Unlike the way in which formal education works in most parts of China and at most education levels, Roots and Shoots actively discourages the traditional model, whereby a large group of students sit and listen attentively to a single teacher, who is assumed to have all the answers (Interview Erika Helms, 2009). Rather, Roots and Shoots serves as a mechanism to support and encourage groups of

young people to learn more about environmental issues, participate in lengthy group discussions, and develop ways they can learn more about environmental issues within the local community. Roots and Shoots groups exist as after school clubs, university student groups, as well as various elementary, high school and even kindergarten classes⁷, who connect with student groups around the country and also with Roots and Shoots groups throughout the world. As well as generally working to encourage students to develop independent thinking skills and spread public awareness about environmental issues, Roots and Shoots have also encouraged its student groups to go out into the local community and apply their knowledge. For instance, a university Roots and Shoots group in Shanghai has developed the skills and knowledge to conduct basic 'green audits' of office buildings, helping to reduce unnecessary energy and water consumption, and integrate organic gardening into office balconies and rooftops. Like other areas of the social structure, this form of education exists in pockets and reflects a dynamic fringe area rather than the mainstream. However, the work of Roots and Shoots in promoting general environmental education and of a network of NGOs in advocating grassland education, both highlight how ENGOs are able to mobilise local communities.

In recent years, ENGOs have also developed the capacity to assist local communities in airing grievances. One of the most controversial and substantial ways in which they have done this in recent times is by assisting citizens in raising legal cases to defend their rights against companies that damage the environment. At the local level, the most prominent and active NGO involved in such work is the Beijing Centre for Legal Assistance to Pollution Victims (CLAPV), who are supported with financial and informational resources by the US based INGO- National Resources Defence Council (NRDC). CLAPV and NRDC have worked on a number of cases and also have connections to the China University of Political Science and Law. The most famous case CLAPV was involved in occurred in Jiangsu province, where the centre raised an action on behalf of 100 peasant families against a paper factory that was dumping toxic chemicals into the Shiliang River in eastern Jiangsu Province. After proving that the paper factory's water pollution contravened water pollution laws, a local court ruled against the factory and awarded compensation of 5.6 million

7 The affiliation with Chinese schools is informal, and Roots and Shoots have not been able to establish a program to work in the public education system.

yuan to the families affected (Chan 2004; 78). This was believed to be the first time that environmental laws had been used to protect citizens in China, and was thus hailed as landmark case, and a tentative sign of growing recognition of citizens' rights.

It is important to stress that such legal action is a very recent development and that there often exists significant barriers, including violent harassment from business and political opponents to legal action. By no means should it be assumed that NGOs are working all across the country to launch legal action against businesses that pollute the environment. Additionally, CLAPV must use their relationship with the China University of Political Science and Law, a state institution, to carefully choose their cases so as not to implicate political figures directly.

In fact, the Jiangsu case was the only instance when CLAPV won a case, however it also reached financial settlements in two other cases (Shigetomi and Makino, 2009; 92). CLAPV also played an important role in working with other smaller NGOs like Pingnan Green Association (PGA). Moreover, the experience of PGA is useful because it demonstrates both the improvements in the social structure around green issues but also the overwhelming obstacles that must be overcome. In March 2006, an Intermediate People's Court in Fujian Province found in favour of PGA and the people of Xiping in an action against the Fujian based Rongping Chemical Affiliated company, China's largest chlorate manufacturer (Pitkin, 2006; 142). Rongping was ordered to pay the people of Xiping nearly \$85000 for health and environmental damages caused, which at first was taken as a great victory. However, more than a year after the case the local people had not received the money, and PGA's leader Dr. Zhang Changjian was the target of police harassment, which ultimately led to the closure of his medical practice clinic. Despite extensive research on my part, this case has not been referred to in any publications since 2007 and the PGA website is currently unavailable in either Chinese or English. This leads one to believe that even if the money awarded to the people of Xiping was received, PGA is no longer able to function as an NGO that articulates local grievances.

Despite the limitations of PGA and CLAPV and other similar organisations, the involvement of ENGO in producing such a drastic breakthrough in elevating and recognising the legal rights of the citizens is evident that social structures surrounding

environmental protection are developing in ways that challenge the status quo.

3.1.3. Media

The media's role in social structures around environmental protection is intriguing. Since the reform era, most elements of the old economy that are capable of drawing profits have seen significant economic liberalisation. As a profit making institution the media is no exception, and hundreds of thousands of private newspapers, magazines and television channels have flourished. However, owing to the media's unique capacity to influence public opinion, and therefore threaten the legitimacy of one party rule, it has also been regulated a great deal more than most other spheres of economic activity. Particularly when it comes to reporting on foreign policy and sensitive domestic political issues like Tibet, the domestic media is heavily censored.

Notwithstanding censorship in these areas, in the realm of what might be deemed to be 'softer' social, economic and cultural issues, media outlets do exhibit many vestiges of freedom of expression. Environmental issues have emerged as one of the most open social areas of media coverage. The first basic reason for this is that the central government advocates a sustainable development policy, and thus coverage of environmental issues can be framed in pro-central government terms.

The central government's position provides the media the impetus to probe interesting and politically sensitive environmental issues, which often involve powerful institutions like state organs and enterprises (both state and private) and are “news-worthy, loaded with moral and political meanings and policy implications” (Yang, 2005; 56). These characteristics of environmental journalism, of fitting in with the state's policy and yet challenging many of the core underpinnings of the way Chinese politics and business operate, have encouraged independent media and reporters to pay close attention to environmental issues, evident in the extensive coverage of environmental issues and also of media professionals' direct participation as ENGO organisers or members (Yang 2005; 56). One notable instance of such media activism can be found in the example of Wang Yongchen, a prolific reporter of

environmental issues on China National Radio and also the founder of Green Earth Volunteers, an ENGO that will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter.

Central to an understanding of the scope of environmental stories the media can report are the methods they employ when covering environmental issues. Identifying the approach that both the media and ENGOs can (and must) adopt when covering environmental issues, the director of Pacific Environment's China Program, Wen Bo and Senior Consultant for Global Greengrants Fund explains:

Everyone loves the environment. If you're only highlighting the environmental problem without targeting any specific government official or trying to undermine the (Communist) Party authority, you can have an influence. You shouldn't make a personal enemy, (with a state official) otherwise the official in power will make it personal (Interview B)⁸.

Using this approach, major newspapers such as the China Youth Daily, Beijing Youth Daily, Southern Weekly, China Newsweek and the Legal Morning Post all reported on Greenpeace's campaign against Asia Pulp and Paper Co. Ltd. (APP)'s illegal logging in Yunnan province (Wang, 2006; 147). Rather than identifying public officials at fault, or focussing on the Yunnan provincial authorities who attempted to shield APP from criticism, the media framed the issue in emotional environmental protection terms and directed their anger towards the corporation involved. For instance, local media in Zhejiang province showed a piece of APP-made paper to the audience and said, "looking at this piece of paper is like witnessing the vast area of forests in Yunnan falling down (Wang, 2006; 150). The use of a media and ENGO approach where passions were dedicated to generating indignation at the unsustainable practices taking place and the company that perpetrated them, rather than any specific government officials, helped to prevent the ENGO issue from being censored, and insulated journalists and activists from personal attacks by government officials.

⁸ Of particular importance is avoiding direct criticism of the central government. For instance, no media outlet dares to support the Western argument that China undermined the 2009 Copenhagen climate summit. I thank Dr. Chen Jie at the University of Western Australia for this point.

Media are increasingly involved in covering environmental problems in China, and are able to raise the profile of environmental issues within society as part of a mobilised social force advocating greater environmental protection. This has been achieved through close linkages with Chinese green NGOs and a sophisticated understanding of effective ways to report on environmental issues while avoiding political censure. Additionally, while there exists scant empirical information for such a phenomenon, media have been able to provide internal references to relevant state bodies in cases where publication of issues would be too sensitive (Lu, 2007; 63).

3.2. Political Structures Around Environmental Protection

In the previous section, I explored the existing social structure around environmental protection in China, arguing that it has developed to the extent that ENGOs and the media have been able to engage society in environmental protection and contribute to a greater understanding of environmental issues. From this vantage point, I will now discuss the Chinese political structure around environmental protection, and argue that changes in the social structure have influenced significant changes in the political structures' developing capacity to engage in environmental protection.

Risse-Kappen's domestic structures thesis argues that fragmented decentralised governance is the optimal form of governance to gain access to the state, but that such access does not necessarily translate into policy impact due to problems in coordinating the various layers of bureaucracy. Lieberthal's account of the transformation of the Chinese state since the reform era confirms such problems, pointing to a high level of fragmentation in most areas of Chinese policy making excluding foreign affairs and security issues (Lieberthal, 1995). It also suggests that a fragmented process of decision making, whereby a number of state actors are required to produce an outcome, exists around many issues such as environmental protection. Chiefly, this means that owing to intervention from other state bodies like provincial governments, the state's central environmental protection body, the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP), lacks the capability to work with local Environmental Protection Bureau's (EPBs) to implement national environmental

policies.

It is Lieberthal's contention that in empowering the state to act on environmental protection issues, what is required is an understanding of which state organs can make a difference, and providing support to them (Lieberthal 1997; 7). Specifically, it is my contention that owing to the negative impact of other state actors in the environmental realm, society's ability to empower both the MEP and local EPBs to assume greater leadership on issues pertaining to environmental protection hinges on making the political structure around environmental issues *more centralised* (or at least *less fragmented*) in favour of the MEP or local EPBs.

3.2.1. Fragmentation at the National Level

Competition between state organs in China exists because of structurally produced tensions between vertical and horizontal “lines of authority” in the Chinese state (Lieberthal 1995; 169). The horizontal level, or *kuai* denotes the territorial structure of government, which consists of: the *center*, covering the entire country, thirty one *provinces*⁹, 335 *prefecture-level* divisions (where most large cities are located) , approximately three thousand *counties*; over forty thousand *townships*; and close to seven hundred thousand *villages*¹⁰ (China Statistical Yearbook, 2007). The vertical level of authority, or *tiao* also has a similar structure that operates at the centre, provincial, city, county and township level. At the centre it consists of twenty seven ministries, twenty two state bureaus and various other agencies under the authority of the State Council, with local versions of these ministries usually replicated at each territorial level of government (Chinese Government's Official Web Portal, 2010).

Although the MEP is an organ of the state's centre, for various reasons the state structure does not bestow upon the MEP a great deal of capacity to influence horizontal levels of government like provincial and city governments. The chief

9 For the sake of clarity, I clump the autonomous regions and municipality provinces in the same category as provinces, as they generally exercise province-like political authority. I exclude Hong Kong and Macao due to their only very limited involvement in the state structure, and Taiwan due to its de-facto independent status.

10 Alongside the vertical structure of the state exists central, provincial, city, county, township and village branches of the Communist Party, which adds “further complexity to the bureaucratic leviathan”(Lieberthal 1995; 169).

reason for this is the state's institutional ranking system and decision making hierarchy. Critically, within this hierarchy, State Council ministries such as the Ministry of Environment possess the same 'rank' as provincial governments (Lieberthal, 1997). This means that the MEP has very little political power at its disposal to order a provincial government to assist in fulfilling an environmental protection agenda. Further, bureaucratic practice in China establishes that all communications go up and down the national hierarchy level by level (Lieberthal, 1997; 4), which means that the MEP must overcome considerable bureaucratic challenges when attempting to implement environmental policy throughout the country. For instance, if attempting to establish a nature reserve at the county level, the MEP could potentially be forced to work with provincial, city and county governments in order to secure the necessary land for use.

The MEP's weakened position vis-a-vis provincial and other local governments is important because of the conflicting goals that provincial governments have. Since the reform era, local governments have been strongly encouraged to aggressively pursue economic growth, and performance reviews for local government officials are still entirely based upon their capacity to achieve high levels of local economic growth. Thus, the higher the level of economic growth the local government achieves, the greater the chance of its officials being rewarded with job promotions and greater access to state budgetary resources.

Owing to the importance of economic growth for local governments, they have become directly involved in attempts to stimulate economic growth. Important for issues of environmental protection, provincial governments are responsible for “mobilising and organising resources and support services for all major construction projects” (Lieberthal 1995, 63). Because there is such a single-minded focus on achieving economic growth, provincial governments tend to be undiscerning about the negative externalities of projects, be they threats to biodiversity, the loss of community access to land or natural resources, or uncontrollable levels of air and water pollution, when dealing with such construction projects.

Further, provincial government's centrality to the generation of economic growth bestows upon the provincial leadership considerable status and clout. Thus, in

the many instances of overlap in the vertical and horizontal's authority, for instance, whether a dam (environmental protection interest) should be constructed in Yunnan province (provincial government interest), authority is generally weighted towards the horizontal (or territorial) level.

By contrast, owing to the fact that the MEP is one of the most recently created and junior ministries, it suffers from a lack of status, and is generally acknowledged as the weakest of the State Council ministries (Yang, 2005). This position of weakness means that as well as being marginalised by the provincial government, it is often out-muscled on policy issues by other more powerful and senior ministries. More established ministries such as Science and Technology; Water Resources; Land and Resources; and the Ministry of Agriculture are reluctant to allow the input of the MEP if it seems that such actions will only result in programs and plans they seek to establish being (in their view) unnecessarily delayed. Although the political leadership in China has attempted to confer upon the MEP greater authority through its upgrade to Ministerial status in 2008, as well as a previous upgrade to a state agency level in 1998, MEP has still had difficulty asserting itself. Part of the problem is a lack of capacity, which really stems from a lack of money. A comparison to the United States' Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) highlights this point; while the United States' EPA has something in the vicinity of 17,000 employees, there are only a meagre 300 staff at the EPA (Lam, 2006) which, owing to the fact that environmental protection norms are less understood and respected, are responsible for enforcing and monitoring 20 environmental statutes, over 40 State Council regulations, 500 standards, and over 600 other documents that create legal norms concerning various environmental issues, as well as over 1,000 local level environmental laws (Ferris and Zhang, 2005: 75-6).

Wang's case study of Greenpeace's campaign against the Asia Pulp and Paper Company (APP) demonstrates how a mobilised social structure have contributed to addressing fragmentation around national environmental issues (Wang, 2006) Although Wang's case relates to the State Forestry Administration, (known as the SFA- a national level agency just below the ministerial level) it also reinforces the way in which social actors like ENGOs and the media are able to empower national level vertical institutions to assume a greater role in environmental protection. In this

case, Greenpeace-China led a campaign calling for attention from the State Forestry Administration (SFA) in response to APP's illegal logging in Yunnan province. Greenpeace directly engaged with the SFA, but even more useful was its mobilisation of media and the broad public support it received. As Wang argues: “once the general public was expecting the SFA to look into the APP case, SFA was morally empowered by the public will to conduct an investigation” (Wang 2006; 158). The involvement of NGOs, the media and a strong public reaction represents a change in the social structure provided two forms of empowerment- informational empowerment in making the SFA aware of illegal logging, as well as moral empowerment to act.

Although this investigation stopped short of dealing APP with punitive punishment in the form of fines, which Wang suggests was because of the protection afforded APP by the Yunnan Provincial government, it did prompt the SFA to publicly condemn APP in the Yunnan media, (Wang, 2006; 157) and conduct investigations that eventually ended the illegal logging activity. The campaign against APP highlights the ability of a changed social structure to produce a trend towards centralisation in environmental protection. This process will be elaborated on in the following chapter, through a case study of the campaign to oppose the Nujiang Dam.

3.2.2. Fragmentation at the Provincial Level

As alluded to above, within the vertical hierarchy of environmental protection, each level of government below the MEP has an environmental bureau: and as such there are provincial, prefecture, municipal, county and township EPBs. At present, there are approximately 2,000 EPBs, employing about 60,000 personnel (Economy, 2005). As subsidiaries of the MEP, these bureaus have responsibilities that include environmental impact assessment, pollution monitoring, discharge fee collection and environmental education (Sinkule and Ortolano, 1995).

The fragmentation that exists around environmental political structures at the national level is even more acute for the EPBs existing at the provincial level and below. This occurs for much of the same reasons as at the national level- a lack of both status within the political structure, and capacity to respond to the litany of

environmental problems. However, the extent of this situation is more pronounced and therefore the problems more acute. While the MEP's institutional status is diminished due its inability to exert influence over local governments, local level EPBs are also institutionally enmeshed in horizontal levels of government (Jahiell, 1998; 763) For instance, a provincial level EPB in Yunnan is directly responsible not only to the MEP, but also to the Yunnan provincial government. Given the sometimes conflicting goals of the two institutions as identified above, this can sometimes place EPBs in a compromising position and limit their effectiveness.

EPB's entrenchment in the horizontal political structures is even more problematic because they are typically reliant on horizontal institutions for funding, and that the head of local government has the authority to appoint and remove the director of the EPB within his/her jurisdiction (Gu and Sheate, 2005). The extent to which local EPBs are embedded in the horizontal political structures isolates it from contact with the MEP (Tang, *et. al.* 2005; 7), preventing the streamline implementation of national environmental policy. Additionally, the funding that EPBs receive from local government is so inadequate that they do not possess enough financial or human resources to effectively carry out core activities such as pollution monitoring. According to one estimate, as much as 50 per cent of polluting activity takes place outside the monitoring capabilities of enforcement officials (Shi and Zhang, 2006).

Further, EPBs position as effectively patrons of local governments is highly compromising because the majority of local governments in China have failed to socialise environmental protection norms. Tang, Tang and Lo highlight this in their study of Guangzhou and Shanghai EPBs (Tang, *et. al.* 2005) suggesting that local governments are so indifferent to environmental protection that many municipal agencies: “either directly run their own polluting industrial plants or have significant financial interests in them” (Tang, *et. al.* 2005, 7). This type of relationship has meant that in some cases, local governments turn a blind eye to polluters and prevent EPBs from carrying out their enforcement duties, especially when these polluting companies are important for the local economy (Johnson 2009, 6-7). Often, there is little that EPBs can do about this situation. According to Xiaoying Ma and Leonard Ortolano, ‘an EPB director that attempts to challenge a mayor that violates the law

runs the risk of being fired for violating unwritten rules about the ability of top officials to violate environmental laws with impunity' (Ma and Ortolano, 2000; 82). Whether deliberately failing to respond to breaches of environmental laws or merely being incapable to act due to a lack of resources, it is evident that EPBs are often toothless institutions within broader political structures.

Given the many challenges EPBs face, society is seemingly constrained from stimulating dynamic EPB action, or raising their status within the local political structures surrounding environmental protection. Until recently, there were very few channels connecting society and EPBs in a meaningful way. However, the new Environmental Impact Assessment Act (EIAA) passed in 2003, have created some opportunities for society to empower the state to overcome the difficulties that exist within the political structure. The new EIAA was different to the original environmental impact assessment system¹¹ in that it required public participation in environmental impact assessments under certain circumstances.

One of the first times this law was used to effect occurred in Beijing in 2005, when local NGOs and domestic media in Beijing worked together to oppose an anti-drainage project in Yuanmingyuan, the old Summer Palace and now a popular tourist park. The parks authorities began to line the park's famous lakes with plastic and cement in order to prevent drainage and keep the lakes looking well-filled throughout the year, but threatened the park's ecosystem (Johnson, 2009;115). NGOs such as Friends of Nature, Global Village Beijing, Green Earth Volunteers and the Earthview Environmental Education Centre, along with major national newspapers such as the People's Daily, Southern Weekend and China Youth Daily, all worked to raise the profile of this case. The "quickly escalating public outcry" (Moore and Warren, 2006; 9) placed pressure on the Beijing Municipal EPB and Haidian district EPB to investigate.

Following an investigation, the EPBs concluded that the project was being carried out without a legally required EIA having been conducted. This investigation triggered SEPA's participation, who ordered a public hearing on the matter that was

11 For more information on this system, see (Tang, et. al. 2005; 6).

participated by the above-mentioned NGOs and other members of society and 73 interested citizens who applied to participate. This public hearing found that:

the project failed to protect the local ecology, (2) the expert opinion on which the project plan relied was based on true science, and (3) the construction that had already begun should be demolished and removed (Moore and Warren, 2006; 11).

Through their investigation, the Beijing and Huadian EPBs played an important role in quashing this environmentally unsustainable project, as well as in facilitating societal participation in environmental protection issues. Due to the emergence of strong social forces around the issue, the EPB was able to overcome its bureaucratic weakness in the project vis-a-vis other state agencies involved in its development—the Yuanmingyuan Management Department, the Water Resources Research Institute of the Beijing municipal government, and the Water Resources Bureau of the Haidian district government¹². It is evident that despite structural impediments that do not promote an active role for EPBs, new political instruments developed by the MEP with the support of the central leadership, such as the revised EIAA, have enabled society to empower local EPBs to act.

12 Information about state agencies involved in this program is derived from (Johnson, 2009; 114).

4. Changing the Game - A Study of Two INGOs

This chapter will draw its attention to two INGOs and examine the impact of the partnerships and advocacy work they are involved in, and how this contributes to changing the balance of, or realigning China's domestic political structures around various issues of environmental protection. It will present these organisations main areas of work and the methods they apply, as well as detail the nature of their connections to local NGOs, other social groups, the media, and different organs of the Chinese government.

This chapter has been developed based upon a series of face-to-face interviews conducted with INGOs and local NGOs in Beijing in September/October 2009, as well as telephone interviews and email correspondence in the same period¹³. Representatives from five INGOs and one NGO were interviewed in order to gain a sense of the effects that INGOs have upon domestic political and social structures. Due to constraints of time and space, this section is chiefly based upon phone and email communications with Nicole Brewer of International Rivers, and a face-to-face interview in Beijing with the Program Director of Pacific Environment, Wen Bo¹⁴.

The first INGO under discussion is International Rivers (IR), an INGO started in 1985 and based in California. Although a relatively small NGO by comparison to the largest INGOs working in China, IR is actively involved in opposing the development of ill-conceived dam projects that have negative repercussions for local communities and the natural environment in over sixty countries. It will primarily consider International Rivers' work with local ENGOs, Green Earth Volunteers and Green Watershed, and its impact on the national campaign opposing the construction of the Nujiang Dam in Yunnan province.

The second section deals with Pacific Environment; also a California based organisation with a mission of protecting the environment in the Pacific Rim. Its

13 Special thanks to my interviewees for taking the time to assist my understanding of their organisation and civil society organisations generally in China. I am solely responsible for any errors or misinterpretations represented in the analysis.

14 Wen Bo also has a voluntary role as the China Coordinator for Global Green Grants, a Colorado NGO that provides small grants to develop grassroots capacity.

China program focusses on water pollution and marine issues, heavily emphasising partnerships with local grassroots groups. This case study will review the work of Green Anhui in their attempts to bring an end to water pollution perpetrated by three large chemical companies in Bengbu City, Anhui, and discuss the importance of Pacific Environment's funding and ongoing support. Both of these cases seek to assess INGOs ability to contribute to the changing of domestic political and social structures, and will employ the empowerment through mobilisation thesis.

4.1. International Rivers

International Rivers, formally International Rivers Network works in more than sixty countries around the world to oppose the development of large dams. While not ideologically opposed to dam development, they stand in resolute opposition to the development of large dam projects that do not consider the social, environmental and broader economic implications of their construction. In many cases, such projects force the eviction of huge numbers of people from their homes; impact fisheries stocks and biodiversity; spread malaria; decrease water quality and lead to a decline in the fertility of farmlands and forests due the loss of natural fertilisers and seasonal floods that healthy rivers provide.

IR works in so many countries on a relatively small annual expenditure of approximately \$US 2.8 million (International Rivers 2008), which pales in comparison to a large NGO like WWF's €447 million (WWF, 2008), and means that establishing close contacts within civil society is essential. Owing to this and its often very direct criticism of large-dam projects, IR has neither a representative office nor program offices in China. Instead, as in other countries it works in, IR's approach in campaigning against large dams in China primarily involves helping to create a network of opposition by raising awareness at a local level, supporting that network and its constituent members with technical information and advocacy strategies, as well as pressuring or discouraging governments and businesses from investing in large dam construction projects. This strategy is chiefly co-ordinated by the director of the China programme, Peter Bosshard, three paid staff and a small team of volunteers.

Owing to China's enthusiastic support for large dam projects, with more than 22,000 large dams that cover all of China's major rivers except the Nujiang in Yunnan and the Zangpo in Tibet (Wu *et. al.* 2004; 241), International Rivers has viewed its China campaigns as a vital part of its work since its inception in 1985. Its two most noteworthy campaigns against large dams in China were in opposition to the Three Gorges Dam that spans the Yangtze River in Hubei province; and the proposed Nujiang¹⁵ Dam.

The following section will review International Rivers work in China from the start of its Three Gorges campaigns in the late 1980s through to its ongoing campaign to oppose the Nujiang dam, contrasting the political and social structures between both campaigns, and arguing that IR played an important (although in some ways gradual) role in changing the political and social structures around large dam development in China.

Shortly after International Rivers' establishment in California, discussion commenced concerning plans to implement the infamous Three Gorges Dam first envisaged by Sun Yatsen in 1919 (Heggelund, 2004). It would become the world's largest hydroelectric dam, and force the relocation of more than one million people from their homes; as well as having drastic ramifications for the Yangtze River and the many ecosystems it supported. The Three Gorges Dam was proposed by the Three Gorges Project Construction Committee that was set up by the State Council as the supreme policy-making body of this development (Heggelund, 2004). From the time of its establishment, the powerful construction committee consisted of the Premier, Li Peng, as chairman, members of the heads of relevant State Council ministries, heads of relevant ministries and the governors of the two affected provinces- Hubei and Sichuan (Jackson, S *et. al.* 2001; 62)¹⁶. SEPA was also included in this committee, however due to its comparatively low status vis-a-vis the premier, governors, Ministry

15 The proposed Nujiang Dam was the name commonly referred to during the campaign and in the international media, and so is the term I will carry throughout, where Nu is a place name, and Jiang denotes river in Chinese.

16 After 1997, Sichuan was replaced by Chongqing Municipality, which gained provincial status that year and took over administration of the portion of the Three Gorges area previously located in Sichuan.

of Science and Technology and Ministry of Water Resources, it was by no means an influential powerbroker.

Along with the Canadian NGO Probe International, IR was a fierce critic of the dam proposal. IRN's campaign focussed on discouraging foreign company and World Bank investment in the project, which had varying degrees of success. However, neither Probe International nor IR, were able to make any meaningful contacts with Chinese society or the media. In any case, the dam was approved and foreign investors and companies from Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Japan and Norway among others were involved in providing financial and technological support for the project, which commenced in 1993 (Probe International, 2007).

IRN extended its ardent opposition to the Three Gorges through every phase of its development, continuing to visit Hubei and Sichuan/Chongqing provinces in order to highlight the apparent environmental and relocation problems, and calling for its decommissioning internationally. In 1997 IR conducted extensive field study of dams in China and abroad, as arguably the leading NGO participating in the World Commission on Dams- a global multi-stakeholder body initiated by the World Bank and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) in response to growing international acceptance of the negative repercussions of large dam construction.

From 2003, International Rivers began to have a deeper and more embedded role in China's domestic dam opposition. It had some contacts with the domestic media including the leader of Green Earth Volunteers, Wang Yongchen, as part of the successful campaign to oppose the Yangliuhu Dam in 2003, an undertaking that threatened the existence of a 2,200 year old World Heritage Listed water conservancy project in Sichuan province. There were still not yet any organised domestic NGOs actively campaigning in opposition to this project¹⁷, but IR served as a useful resource to help the local media communicate the negative implications of large dam projects, both domestically and abroad, refuting the claims perpetuated by the Sichuan Provincial Water Resources Bureau and the Huadian Corporation (a state-owned

17 The difference between Wang Yongchen's earlier work and that in Yunnan is that the Nujiang campaign involved the contribution of GEV staff and volunteers NGO. The Yangliuhu work was done solely in her capacity as a journalist.

enterprise) that the dams impacts would be minimal (Mertha *et. al.* 2006; 11). A key reason for the rejection of the dams' approval was the Dujiangyan County and Sichuan Provincial government's fear of the likely damage to a local growing industry that had just been bolstered by the granting of World Heritage status upon the local Dujiangyan area. Mertha and Lowry elucidate the importance of framing the debate around the notion that Dujiangyan is a World Heritage Site:

...(The fact that it is) a World Heritage Site... is a source of pride for China and the Chinese, but this designation is an independent (external, international) acknowledgement that Dujiangyan is a central, symbolic part of China's cultural heritage and Chinese identity. (Mertha et. al. 2006; 13)

While UNESCO's World Heritage Status recognition was arguably the overwhelming international factor in shaping the debate, International Rivers' involvement in the World Commission on Dams and the informational empowerment they provided to the local and international media was significant in stressing the impacts a large dam would have on this revered site.

However, IR's most active work in China commenced shortly after the Yunnan Provincial Government announced plans to build a 13-stage dam in July 2003 on the Nu River (Nujiang), with a projected capacity that would make it more than double the size of the Three Gorges dam (Busgen, 2006; 21) The project was to be constructed by Yunnan Huadian Nu River Hydropower Development Company (Huadian Nu), a company created with the investment of China Huadian Power Company, (one of China's five largest power companies) as well as by Yunnan businesses such as Yunnan Electricity Group's Hydropower Construction Company (McDonald, 2007;69). It was strongly supported by the Yunnan provincial government, who recognised the substantial financial contribution that such a project would provide to Yunnan's economic growth- thousands of jobs, great pools of tax revenue and a huge source of cheap electricity for the province.

After learning of the project through its relationship with the Southeast Asian River Network in Thailand, who were concerned about the downstream implications

of the dam on the river (known as the Salween in South East Asia), IR first began working on attracting international media attention. The next stage involved working with domestic NGOs who had become involved in the campaign, Green Watershed (GW) in Yunnan itself, and Green Earth Volunteers (GEV) in Beijing. As a result of its campaign opposing the Yangliuhu Dam, IR had already had some contact with Green Earth Volunteers' founder Wang Yongchen, a Senior Environment Reporter for China National Radio, a relationship that according to Nicole Brewer, helped keep IR “in touch with the situation in China” (Interview, Nicole Brewer 2009). IR also worked closely with local Yunnan journalists and online websites that provided comprehensive bilingual coverage of the issues: Green Beat and China Dialogue.

IR connected with the local anti-dam network during its regular and frequent visits to China during the period, joining investigative tours of the Nujiang region that would be affected, cooperating in several planning and discussion meetings of NGOs in Yunnan, as well as participating in Environmental Journalists' Salon meetings. All of these activities served to link IR and the domestic network closer together, and encouraged a vibrant community with a rich abundance of reasoned argument. For its part, IR and Green Watershed dispersed a Chinese version of the IR produced: *A Citizen's Guide to the World Commission on Dams* to NGOs, scientists, media and communities in the Nujiang area. Additionally, IR sustained close and regular telephone and email contact with the major domestic NGOs involved, GW and GEV, in order exchange information as well as “discuss strategies” for ways to expose the full extent of the Nujiang dam project internationally and domestically (Interview Nicole Brewer, 2009).

In SEPA, International Rivers and the rest of the transnational advocacy network (TAN) found somewhat of an ally. Just two months after the Yunnan provincial government's announcement of the project, SEPA utilised the new Environmental Impact Assessment Act (EIAA) and convened an expert panel to examine the plans to develop hydropower on the Nujiang (Dore *et. al.*, 2004;17). Recognising the deleterious impact the project would bear on biodiversity, geological stability, cultural preservation and calling into question its utility in alleviating local poverty issues, SEPA expressed grave reservations about its feasibility (Busgen, 2006). Although this evaluation was retorted by the Yunnan Provincial Government's

separate 'review', the combination of SEPA's opposition, "dozens of conferences and workshops held on the issue, petition letters written, numerous news reports filed, websites set up, and public exhibitions organised" (Busgen 2005, 22) meant that construction was delayed beyond the proposed March 2004 deadline. Reasons for the delay were not stated publicly, though the events that followed suggested the involvement of the highest level of the State Council. In a directive to the Yunnan Provincial Government, Premier Wen Jiabao ordered the projects suspension pending further review, stating:

We should carefully consider and make a scientific decision about major hydro-electric projects like this that have aroused a high level of concern in society, and with which the environmental protection side disagrees (Wen Jiabao quoted from Yardley, 2004: 1).

This intervention was proclaimed as a success, and the intervention of a high-level figure like Wen on the side of the environmental movement was unprecedented. However, it by no means signalled the end of efforts by the consortium of government and business advocating the project. In the fall of 2005, Huadian Nu submitted a new Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) seeking approval for four out of the originally thirteen proposed dams (McDonald, 2007; 80), though this was sign that at the very least the campaign has minimised the very worst excesses of the project. However, the results of the subsequent Environmental Impact Assessment were never released due to "national security" (Noam, 2008). There has been a distinct lack of a decisive outcome on the project, which IR took to be a sign of the gradual and surreptitious implementation of the project (Interview Nicole Brewer, 2009). Renewed hope was raised when Wen Jiabao directly intervened for the second time in placing the project on hold, calling upon all parties to "widely heed opinions, expound on [the plan] thoroughly and make prudent decisions" (Shi, 2009). Nonetheless, information provided to IR by its local contacts reveals that preparations continue for the project, and that large machinery is clearly visible and seemingly involved in preparatory work (Interview Nicole Brewer, 2009).

Since Wen's declaration in 2004, the dynamism of the campaign has gradually

eroded and has been replaced by a drawn out on-and off flow of events. For its part, IR has largely decided to divert much of its attention and funds away from active campaigning against the development of dams in Nujiang, though still remaining in contact with many of its local NGO partners. As Nicole Brewer explained, the stalemate does not lend itself to an active role, though IR is prepared to recommence active campaigning given any new developments (Interview Nicole Brewer, 2009). One way that IRN has been able to stay connected is through establishing China Rivers Project, which promotes eco-tourism and spectacular white-water rafting trips as a way of reaffirming the uniqueness of the local area and exactly what stands to be lost if a large dam is built.

4.1.1. National Social and Political Structures Around Large Dam Construction Prior to the Nujiang Campaign

A review of the domestic context the commencement of IR's Three Gorges campaign to the beginning of its Nujiang campaign is necessary to contextualise IR's contribution to altering the domestic political and social structures around dam developments in China, and to see the drastic changes in both the political and social structures surrounding dam related development in China.

It is evident that at the time of the Three Rivers campaign, weak social structures and a marginalised voice for environmental protection in the large dam issue area prevailed. In the social sphere, a disparate domestic opposition to the project existed, but was fiercely suppressed, as the most prominent local activist Dai Qing discovered following the publication of “Yangtze Yangtze!” (*Changjiang Changjiang*), a book she edited compiling scientific and social critiques of the Three Gorges project (Heggelund, 2004; 31). Dai Qing's book was useful in raising awareness of the dams impacts, and in particular the huge relocations it would force, but it was banned in 1989 and her movements were vigilantly monitored by the state, until she was arrested and jailed in 1989 (Heggelund 2004; 31). Despite the fact that scientific and academic articles expressing reservations were published locally, they were not represented in the media and marginalised in the policy-making process (Heggelund 2004; 211). Instead, the domestic media's coverage of the Three Gorges

Dam was almost entirely positive.

Further, the political structure surrounding large dam construction marginalised the participation of environmental protection. Support for the dam came from powerful sources, both institutionally and individually. The Three Gorges Dam involved a number of state actors, newly independent enterprises with close ties to the state and international companies. However, the highest authority existed with the Three Gorges Dam Project Construction Committee; a powerful nineteen member committee initiated by the State Council and which contained Premier Li Peng, and the governors of Sichuan and Hubei province.

SEPA was also involved in this committee, but even if one goes so far to assume it privately opposed the dams development, it was weakened by the presence and voice of so many political heavyweights, in particular the powerful and Machiavellian Premier, Li Peng. This committee tightly controlled the parameters of the debate, employing Maoist techniques such as the use of 'red experts'. As Beattie notes:

To maintain a pro-dam scientific discourse the CCP loaded TGP committees with dam protagonists and barred dissenters. Of some four hundred and twelve experts sitting on the Leading Group for the Assessment of the Three Gorges Project, only one, an enthusiastic Three Gorges Dam supporter, was an engineer (Beattie, 2002; 146).

Further, important opposition from within the National People's Congress was decisively manipulated by the State Council. During the debates, Huang Shunxing a member of the Standing Committee of the NPC and expert on hydro-electrics tried to make use of the right of interpellation to voice his criticism. At the crucial moment, the microphones were unplugged (Ho 2001; 90).

There is no questioning the ways in which the political structure demonstrated thoroughly non-pluralistic decision making processes and failed to take into account or even properly recognise the environmental impact information that an organisation

such as SEPA would have been able to provide if given the chance. The political structure was also impermeable to outside normative influences and unresponsive to the voices of INGOs like IR. Further, many of the procedures involved in developing the project and crafting the propaganda necessary to promote the project to China's citizenry occurred at a time of great social tension in China- the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square protests. Not only had China's civil society not developed to an extent necessary for International Rivers to be able to operate locally, the tense social situation meant that it was exceedingly difficult to establish local contacts that were opposed to the dam and able to work with IR.

Judged harshly, IRN's campaign against the Three Gorges Dam can be thought of as a complete failure. The Three Gorges Dam proposal was approved, with SEPA being largely sidelined in domestic and state discussion, the local media overwhelmingly supporting the state position (or voicing only faint dissent), and the Three Gorges consortium securing the foreign investment necessary to green light the project¹⁸. It was a campaign that, at least in the crucial stages where the project was being approved, occurred before the information technology revolution that made regular transnational contact frequent and immediate. As such it was not easy for IRN to establish any direct contact with disparate local opposition within Chinese society, such as Dai Qing, nor did it perceivably influence SEPA, whose role in the approval phase of the Three Gorges Dam was conspicuously diffident.

Due to the massive scale of the project, the cost of financing it and necessary technology acquisition, as well as the large number of government bodies involved at both the horizontal and vertical level, the project did need the acquiescence of numerous actors within the Chinese bureaucracy. Opposition for the project did arise from the National People's Congress (NPC) debate on the project, with more than a third of deputies refusing to support the project. The position of a large number of

18 One should also acknowledge the undeveloped state of international norms of the time regarding large dams, and that until the mid 1980s dams were vigorously advocated and funded by the World Bank as a means of providing 'green' energy and flooding control (World Bank 2001) Since its inception in 1985 and spanning its Three Gorges campaign along with dozens of other campaigns throughout five continents, IR was deeply involved in the process of norm contestation and development. This is an unfortunately gradual process that requires many years of work and unquestionably credible evidence to challenge the determination of businesses that are allured by the abundant financial riches promised by large dam projects.

NPC delegates was especially significant given that until this point the NPC had for the most part functioned as a rubber stamp legislature. (Ross 1998; 50) This suggests a certain level of penetration of the arguments IR raised in opposition to the dam, however due to IR's lack of penetration in Chinese society, it is more likely that scientific technical advice from domestic experts was more influential in this debate. Hence, it is clear that IR was not able to empower the political structures through a mobilisation of the social structures in its campaign opposing the Three Gorges Dam.

4.1.2. National Domestic Structures Around Large Dam Construction Province During and After the Nujiang Campaign

IR failed to succeed in halting the Three Gorges campaign, owing to overwhelming impediments in the domestic political and social structures around dam development, but this process began to change as the impacts of the Three Gorges Dam project became manifest- forced relocation, flooding, biodiversity loss and pollution build up in the reservoir (International Rivers 2009), and the information and arguments IR had been espousing became increasingly more useful. As noted in Chapter One, by the early 2000s, a vibrant environmentalist sector had sprung up in Chinese society, and organisations such as Green Watershed (founded in 2000) and Green Hanjiang (founded in 2002) emerged to be involved in dealing with the repercussions of dam issues and large water construction plans such as the North-South Water Diversion project (Damon 2006, 191).

Large INGOs such as WWF China, Conservation International, The Nature Conservancy and Oxfam Hong Kong joined IR in the early 2000s to become involved in working on dam and post-dam related issues. WWF China developed several integrated river basin management initiatives on the Yangtze River¹⁹; Conservation International and The Nature Conservancy worked with the State Forestry Administration to carry out a pilot project in Yunnan focused on watershed protection

19 This includes demonstration projects to improve flood control by restoring wetlands and lakes and increasing public participation in water management through community education and NGO capacity building activities. In 2005, WWF established a small grants program for local NGOs and communities to fund projects aimed at promoting the conservation of Yangtze aquatic species.

and reforestation²⁰; and in 2004 Oxfam Hong Kong began a partnership with Lanzhou University's Resource and Environmental Sciences College to conduct a rights-based water pollution assessment and governance project on the Hongyashan reservoir in the Shiyang River Basin (Birnbaum and Yu, 2006; 185-188)²¹. Although this emerging role for INGOs did not include advocacy campaigns, their actions nonetheless served to enhance a social understanding of the implications of large-dams and river management issues. INGOs ongoing work in opposing the Three Gorges dam had an important normative influence on developing somewhat of a social community in opposition to large dam development.

The growth of domestic and international NGOs and the changing social structure around large dam issues just prior to the Nujiang dam proposal both influenced and coincided with a changing political structure around environmental protection broadly, and large dam issues specifically. Around the time of the expiration of Li Peng's term as premier, pronouncements from key political figures in the Central government such as new premier Zhu Rongji indicated that a new awareness had developed about the deleterious affects large dams could have- on the environment, and also on social stability in affected areas. (Busgen, 2006) Political instruments such as the new Environmental Impact Assessment Act (EIAA), a law that mandated compulsory environmental impact assessments was promulgated in 2003 and gave SEPA a greater status generally and also in large dam issues.

As Peter Ho notes, since the Three Gorges Campaign:

...the central state has become increasingly aware of the dams negative influence as well as broader environmental problems and has put protection of the environment high up

20 CI also is collaborating with the Environment and Natural Resource Protection Committee of China's National People's Congress in research and projects to help inform the creation of payment for environmental services legislation in China. In partnership with Chinese government agencies and academic institutions, in 2006 The Nature Conservancy catalysed an assessment of sustainable energy options for an integrated power grid in which hydropower development is designed to the greatest extent possible to conserve freshwater ecosystems and sustain local livelihoods.

21 The project aims to: (1) assess the sources and process of pollution to provide a scientific basis for an integrated management approach, (2) promote dialogue between community members and the government on pollution control, and (3) establish strategies for river basin water resource and pollution management (Birnbaum and Yu; 2006).

on the political agenda (Ho 2001; 914).

Evidence of the changing political structure around large dams came only a few years prior to the proposal of plans to build the Nujiang Dam, when SEPA, the Chongqing EPB, the Chongqing Morning News and even the state-owned China Central Television (CCTV) voiced criticism about ongoing environmental protection problems in the reservoir area of the Three Gorges Dam (Heggelund 2004, 189). Further, SEPA also played a role in the successful opposition to the Yangliuhu Dam (McDonald, 2007). Some of these changes can be attributed to the normative influence IR had in its prolonged anti-dam campaign in China, while it also developed from the state witnessing first hand that the negative impacts of large dams were perhaps more substantial than it had initially assumed.

Notwithstanding these apparent change in the political structure in 2003, the central government approved Huadian Nu's proposal to build a huge dam on the Nujiang, despite the MEP's rejection of the Nujiang Dam's environmental impact assessment (EIA). IR was thus involved in a bid to mobilise society around large dam construction towards a more environmentally sustainable position, and empower the State Environmental Protection Authority to obstruct the dams' development.

IR played a significant role in helping to mobilise society in opposition to the Nujiang dam. However, unlike in other examples of INGOs campaigns in China, such as Greenpeace's high-profile campaign against Asia Pulp and Paper's illegal logging in Sichuan (Wang, 2006), IR did not assume a prominent, public role domestically. There are a few explanations for this. Firstly, as a much smaller organisation than Greenpeace, and lacking an office or local voluntary staff to assist with the campaign in China, IR was not logistically equipped to play the leading public role in opposition to the dam. Further, they did not possess an immediate access to information and while they had a wide networks of contacts around the country- scientists, university professors, media and NGOs, these were not nearly as deep nor extensive as those possessed by GEV in Beijing or Green Watershed in Yunnan.

Beyond mere financial reasons, the lack of a prominent domestic role was also strategic. Given the existence of local organisations in Green Earth Volunteers and

Green Watershed, which were already led by capable leaders with a credible public profile in China, IR recognised that the anti-dam message would be stronger if it was articulated by domestic voices. Moreover, it would insulate domestic partners from claims of foreign intrusion in China's affairs, such as those levelled against Beijing Green Volunteers (Busgen, 2006; 41).

Thus, while acting as the mouthpiece of opposition to the Nujiang Dam internationally, IR assumed an important behind the scenes role that focussed primarily on assisting Green Earth Volunteers and Green Watershed, whose leaders Yu Xiaogang and Wang Yongchen served as the voices and faces of the campaign, and played a leading role in working with media and local citizens groups in the Nujiang area to articulate social opposition. It is important to note that the social mobilisation that occurred was not a large scale mobilisation of Chinese society, or a grassroots movement, (McDonald, 2007; 216) but one which helped to support a relatively small elite NGO activists, academics and journalists to advance their arguments in organised opposition to the powerful advocates of the dam.

IRs major contribution to the campaign was in mobilising its local ENGO partners with information, which equipped them well to claim scientific and technical credibility in dealing with the issues, and play a leading role in establishing a 'Chinese anti-dam movement' (Litzinger 2007:11): consisting of NGOs and like-minded elements of the media, as well as parts of the academic and scientific community, many of which were employed by the state.

IR's informational mobilisation was highly significant given that although Green Watershed and GEV were dynamic organisations, they were both also recently established ENGOs when the Nujiang campaign commenced in 2003²². Regular telephone and email communication, as well as several visits to the Yunnan province between 2003 and 2004 were vital to this form of support (Interview Nicole Brewer, 2009). The information that IR provided domestic NGOs was particularly important in helping them counter the arguments of the Yunnan provincial government and

22 These were not the only NGOs involved in the campaign, but were arguably the most prominent local and Beijing NGOs. Other NGOs included Green Home, Yunnan People's River Valley, and Friends of Nature (Ma, 2005; 120).

Huadian Nu in a professional and credible manner, who also used their influence with local media to support the dams construction (Busgen, 2006; 21).

IR's intricate understanding of dam-related issues also helped in developing the capacity of these organisations to devise campaign strategies. IR was heavily involved in supporting Green Watershed's organisation of a training workshop for (potentially) dam-affected communities from the Nujiang, Jinshajiang and Lancanjiang areas. Using the World Commission of Dams resources that IR had played a leading role in developing, the workshop covered issues of river protection and preservation by communities, information on Chinese resettlement policies, and training on a participatory social impact assessment (Interview Nicole Brewer, 2009 and Busgen, 2006; 33). Along with Green Watershed, IR participated in organising a village to village visit in May 2004 for 14 community representatives from Nujiang to meet with relocated villagers from the Manwan Dam on Jinshajiang. In addition to enhancing the villagers understanding of the potential implications of relocation, the meeting was also attended by media willing to articulate this side of the story, and cleverly enabled the opportunity for villagers' opposition to the project to be voiced at a national level.

IRs contribution to the mobilisation of the social structure was aimed at supporting the serious reservations SEPA was expressing about the project and questions they were raising about the limited impact assessment review that Huadian Nu had carried out. The presence of a professional, well informed and mobilised social structure, consisting of the social elites forming the 'Chinese anti-dam movement', who were dynamic in organising conferences, workshops and public forums around the issue of large dam development in Nujiang was instrumental in empowering SEPA with information it could present in reports to the State Council about the implications of the dam. Further, the existence of the anti-dam movement also empowered SEPA with a moral legitimacy and status that they were representing the factual, valid and coherent concerns of an organised social opposition to the dam, when dealing with the central government and in State Council meetings.

Unlike in the Three Gorges campaigns, when the then NEPA did not voice any significant concern about the project in public, SEPA questioned the projects

environmental implications publicly, and utilised important political instruments such as compulsory environmental impact assessments in order to retard the construction of the Nujiang dam. In these actions, SEPA showed itself to be a well informed and dynamic state body with a powerful voice in the state structure, indicative of its enhanced role in the Chinese political structure. This demonstrates the successful readjustment of the Chinese political structure around large dam issues to include a greater role for the state environmental ministries (SEPA and later the MEP), and a greater respect and consideration for environmental concerns. It is my contention that this empowerment of SEPA was greatly influenced by the existence of a highly mobilised elite social structure, which International Rivers provided substantial informational and strategic campaign support to.

4.2. Pacific Environment

Pacific Environment began its foray into China in the late 1990s, and over the last decade has established itself as an important civil society actor in marine conservation and water pollution. Pacific Environment does not have registration as an official NGO in China as it operates only as a program office, and is therefore not legally required to register. Instead, its California offices attend to its funding requirements, reaping the benefits of laws in the United States that provide more financial incentives to non-profit organisations. Pacific Environment operates an office in Beijing, and has three staff members that spend most of their time in China.

Like IR, Pacific Environment is not one of the larger INGOs in China. It has an annual budget of US\$2.4 million across all five of its issue areas of which the China program is one (2008-09 Annual Report), and focusses much of its China budget on supporting local groups. Pacific Environment sees their biggest contribution in supporting the “organic growth of local groups all throughout China”, working with twenty-one grassroots NGOs in sixteen provinces in China, including urban, developed provinces in the coastal east like Zhejiang, Shanghai and Jiangsu, as well as rural, underdeveloped provinces like Xinjiang, Kunming and Gansu²³. Recognising that they don't have the expertise or capacity to work across all issue

23 For the full list see: Pacific Environment (2010) 'Environmental Heroes of the Pacific Rim' <http://www.pacificenvironment.org/article.php?list=type&type=19>

areas, Pacific Environment have traditionally focussed their attention on locating and working with local groups active in addressing water pollution and marine conservation issues²⁴.

Wen Bo describes Pacific Environment's work with local NGOs as consisting of three phases: “first we identify potential groups to work with, then we work with them to develop a project, and then we provide the funding accordingly” (Interview Wen Bo, 2009) He stressed that the amount of funding was based upon the experience that local organisations had, and that providing only modest funding allowed the local groups to develop organically, but provides the stability to ensure organisations survival (Interview Wen Bo, 2009).

Working primarily with young people such as recent university graduates, Pacific Environment provides small 'sub-grants' of usually less than US\$5000 to the organisations it supports, filling an important role in efficiently linking international funds with grassroots groups in Chinese civil society. Wen Bo previously worked for Friends of Earth Hong Kong, played a leading role in establishing Greenpeace's work in China, as well as linking environmental student groups around the country in China Green Students Forum. This vast personal experience and that of his colleagues means that Pacific Environment is able to utilise its comprehensive understanding of local environmental problems and groups to direct international funds to where they are most needed. Additionally, like Global Greengrants Fund, an NGO that Wen Bo is a volunteer consultant for, Pacific Environment eliminates the financial inefficiencies and administrative costs a large foundation like the Ford Foundation would shoulder if they directly funded a grassroots group. Pacific Environment instead accepts donations from larger funds and foundations wanting to support Chinese environmental protection, and distributes them throughout the country, which is an efficient way of building NGO capacity throughout the country and fostering national involvement in environmental protection.

Assisting local groups in understanding and responding to water pollution and marine conservation issues is another important contribution Pacific Environment

²⁴ Following the success of a Green Eyes campaign in Guangzhou, Guangdong, Pacific Environment China Programme has also launched an Endangered Species Trade campaign.

makes. As well as organising an annual water pollution meeting every year and a partners retreat, Pacific Environment staff remain in regular contact with local organisations by phone and email, and encourage local groups to work together to share information. These steps reflect Pacific Environment's goal of attempting to foster an organic NGO community, which is important given the gradual process of developing an effective grassroots organisation, as the moral support, encouragement and recognition it provides local staff is a factor in maintaining high levels of participation despite any sense of campaign success often taking a few years to manifest. The combination of small grant funding along with long-term informational and moral support, were the main elements of Pacific Environment's assistance to Green Anhui's campaign in Bengbu.

4.2.1. Green Anhui²⁵

Green Anhui was established in 2003 by a group of journalists, environmental activists, students and scientific experts and works on water pollution and river management issues in three major cities in Anhui- the capital city Hefei, as well as Bengbu and Wuhu. According to Pacific Environment's website:

Their primary program is the protection of the Huai River through educational activities in grade schools and universities, river investigation tours, conservation publications, and other public outreach programs. Green Anhui has also organized "Green Media Salons" training thousands of journalists on environmental issues and reporting and conducted high-profile conferences that brought together government officials, experts, activists and concerned citizens (Pacific Environment, 2010b).

Green Anhui's most successful campaign to date began in Qiugang Village, on

25 Pacific Environment's involvement with Green Anhui was discussed with Wen Bo during the face-to-face interview conducted, however, some of the details of this narrative have been clarified by information presented on Pacific Environment's website. See: Li, Xiu Min (2008) "'Detoxing' China's Huai river' Pacific Environment <http://pacificenvironment.org/article.php?id=2901>

the outskirts of Bengbu City in 2006²⁶. After a protracted battle, Green Anhui's work was instrumental in the closure of three large polluting chemical factories in Bengbu in the middle of 2009. Jiucailuo Chemical Ltd, Haichuan Chemical Ltd and Zuguang Microchemical Ltd were involved in depositing dirty waste-water directly into the Huai River, a gross and blatant violation of existing local water pollution laws, which was uncovered by a group of Green Anhui volunteers who were conducting pollution inspections in the Huai River. After becoming aware of the problem and the responsible culprits, Green Anhui immediately sought to engage and mobilise the local citizens in Qiugang that were being directly affected by the problem, and realised that the river pollution had destroyed farmland, killed livestock and caused regular health problems to children at a nearby elementary school. In a village of only 1800 people, fifty one otherwise healthy people in their prime years died from unexplained causes, including children. Later research uncovered that village's drinking water had an excessive level of sediments and chemicals and that it was not suitable for consumption. Beyond this were a myriad of wider, more complex problems to the ecological habitat that resulted from the systematic and major pollution of the Huai River: a 1,100 kilometre long river that supports approximately 50 million people in four provinces.

The next step involved simultaneously mobilising the media and empowering the Bengbu City EPB to act. Green Anhui brought their volunteers to the village and collected photos and personal accounts of the rivers impact on the local villagers lives, and distributed the materials to journalists they were in contact with. With Green Anhui's support in March of 2007, villagers submitted petitions to the local Environmental Protection Bureau and and forty students wrote letters to the EPB urging them to clean up the river.

The Bengbu EPBS response was telling: initially they were deliberately uncooperative and uninterested in being involved: denying the pollution even existed. However, as the reports piled up in local media such as the Xinan Evening News and even to a national audience via Xinhua News Agency's website, the EPB eventually admitted the existence of the problem on a television interview, and began to assume a

26 An awareness of this cases comes from the field interview with Wen Bo and subsequent email correspondence, as well as information in (Li, 2008) posted on Pacific Environment's website.

supportive role in the campaign to make the factories accountable. EPB investigators were sent to conduct random inspections on the factories and confirmed that they were in violation of the law and two of the factories were ordered to pay a fine of 100,000 RMB (15,000 USD), and one was told to reduce their waste. These punishments were not particularly helpful given Jiucailuo's annual revenue is US\$6 million. However, SEPA became involved in late 2007 and pointed out that the three factories continued violations and lack of adequate waste-water facilities were grounds for closure. The Bengbu EPB echoed this view and directed the three factories to close. This order was initially ignored for months, but became more compelling when the EPB instructed the local government to cut off the power. Although increased EPB monitoring of the factories had led to an improvement in all of the factories water management and the water quality of the river near Qiugang improved markedly, by December 2008 the factories were all closed and relocated away from residential areas to an industrial precinct with sufficient waste treatment facilities.

4.2.2. Domestic Structures Around Water Pollution Issues in Bengbu Prior to Green Anhui's Campaign

4.2.2.1. Political Structures

With a population of 3.5 million, Bengbu is the second largest city in Anhui province, and is largely economically reliant on the textile, engineering, electronic and chemical companies that operate in the city. Based on most indicators, such as economic priorities, political milieu and ethnic composition, Anhui is in many ways an 'average' Chinese province, and Bengbu a typical medium sized city in China (Embassy of the United States in China, 2002) Seemingly, this quality of 'averageness' also largely held true in the domestic political structures surrounding environmental protection.

Based on a survey of the literature, there is a dearth of specific information about the operations of the Bengbu city or Anhui EPB in particular, however, the observations and experiences of Pacific Environment and Green Anhui suggest that many of the systemic problems that Environmental Protection Bureaus have are

experienced in the Bengbu city EPB and the local governing structure.

The most obvious reasons for the marginalised position of EPBs relate to funding. EPBs around the country often lack the resources to purchase the requisite instruments to measure pollution levels, and even if they do, find that regulation is impeded by a shortage of staff trained and capable of carrying out pollution inspections (Ma et.al 2000; 21). However, according to Wen Bo, this was not an overwhelming factor in Bengbu EPBs initial failure to respond to Green Anhui's campaign.

More tellingly in this case, and many others around the country, is where the funding comes from, and the structural disincentives that are built around EPB funding. Unlike in countries such as the United States, where local environmental protection bureaus receive funding from the federal environmental protection authority (USEPA), China's local EPBs are funded by local horizontal authorities- meaning that the Bengbu EPB is funded by the Bengbu City Government, a factor that gives the Ministry of the Environment and higher level environmental protection only very limited leverage over lower-level EPBs (Tang *et. al.* 2005, 8). This reflects a structural deficiency in China's design of environmental protection governance, because while at the vertical level the Ministry of Environmental Protection is charged with the same basic goal of protecting the environment, horizontal organs of the state like provincial and city governments have conflicting priorities. Exacerbating this situation are the way the work local governments from provincial down to village level is assessed, with economic growth used as the sole method of assessing horizontal level government leaders (Jahiell, 1998; Gu and Sheate, 2005).

Thus, any provincial or city leader seeking job security, or aspiring for a promotion has two chief priorities- ensure something approaching double digit economic growth and avoid (or control) scandals. Environmental protection or supporting local Environmental Protection Bureaus does not typically factor high on the list of priorities below this. Beyond this, the very notion of an effective, clout-bearing EPB within the political structure clashes with the economic interests of the local political status quo, as an inevitable part of the work effective environmental protection bureaus carry out involves regulating and punishing the worst excesses of

businesses.

A prioritisation of economic growth breeds either apathy or contempt about environmental problems amongst pro-business provincial and city governments, creating a relationship whereby EPBs are often reluctant to harshly penalise industrial pollution violators due to the fact that such enterprises often have connections with the local government power base, or are viewed as important tools of sustaining local economic growth. Given the fact that the Bengbu EPB fits within the exact same structure that places all EPBs under the politically compromised authority of horizontal authorities, one can deduct that such apathy is likely to have informed the Bengbu EPA's initial unresponsiveness to and denial of Green Anhui's claims.

Further, EPBs around the country suffer from a lack of status within the overall governing structure, part of which can be ascribed to their being relatively new institutions within the Chinese state structure. The Anhui EPB was established only in 1995, with most counties and municipalities (of which Bengbu is included) setting up branch EPB's between 1997 and 2000 (Embassy of the United States, 2002). Given its common lack of seniority, the Bengbu EPB's relations with other organs of the Bengbu city government is likely to resemble the problems experienced by EPB's around the country.

In the area of industrial and water pollution, one of the main roles of EPB's around the country is to liaise with, inspect and sanction factories that do not adequately treat waste, or discharge waste water directly into the river. However, within local political structures exist other authorities with much longer histories and more powerful influence over regulatory enforcement and decision making such as industrial bureaus (Wang et.al 2008; 656). There exists a substantial amount of territoriality: many of these institutions have not yet grown accustomed to the involvement of new institutions like the EPB and perceive the relations with businesses and factories as exclusively their preserve. These institutions often have little understanding or interest in environmental issues. Further, given that their performance is also assessed on economic indicators, there exists a structural disincentive for action to be taken that will result in added costs for businesses and state-owned enterprises, and thus a decline in tax revenue. The importance of

chemical industries to Bengbu's economy suggests that the EPB was likely to have been in a weaker position vis-a-vis the industrial bureaus responsible for overseeing Bengbu's chemical industries, and further the reinforces the Bengbu EPB's lowly position within the city political structure.

Bengbu EPB's lack of independent funding and status in the city political structure accounts for its initial inertia in response to Green Anhui's attempt to generate state action against the violating companies. Beyond the inertia, in Bengbu as in the rest of China there typically exist very few options available to EPBs to both enforce water pollution protection and adequately punish violators. As Ma and Ortolano note, the main political instrument available to environmental protection bureaus are fines, which are not particularly effective (Ma and Ortolano, 2000; 116). One reason is because the maximum fines that can be imposed for environmental violations is very low, less than \$15, 000 US in 2000, (Ma and Ortelano, 2000) and in many cases much lower. These fines are imposed regularly around the country, but in cases of water pollution, 80% of it gets returned to the company to encourage it to develop better wastewater facilities, while 20% of the fine props up the budget of EPBs (Wang *et. al.* 2008; 648). EPBs then come to rely on such funds to maintain their budgets, which is another reason why factories that violate water pollution standards are very rarely closed down (Wang, *et. al.* 2008). It is evident that severe structural barriers exist preventing responsiveness from local EPBs to water pollution problems, and that the Bengbu EPB was in a marginalised position within the city political structure.

4.2.2.2. Social Structures

Prior to Green Anhui's successful campaign, the social structure around water pollution issues in Bengbu city, as in most other parts of Anhui in many ways weak, but in the process of developing. A key reason for the formation of Green Anhui in 2003 was the recognition of the group of journalists, environmental activists, students and scientific experts who formed Green Anhui in 2003 that the profile of water pollution issues was low in society as well as within the government (Interview, Wen Bo, 2003). Another small NGO, Huai River Defenders also began work in Anhui in 2003 but given the broad agenda of water protection in the four provinces the Huai

River runs through and the fact it was based in Henan, it was not able to establish deep roots in Anhui itself.

Since the launch of the Green Anhui office in Bengbu city in 2004, a gradual process began where society became more involved in water pollution issues. The chief way in which this was achieved was through education programmes that sought to explain the sources of pollution in the Huai River and also the effects that drinking and using the water would have on people's health and that of the river. Education occurred through formal institutional channels at primary, secondary and university levels. These educational initiatives were also a means of attracting volunteers to participate in activities such as the Huai River patrol that initially uncovered the source of the water pollution in the stretch of the Huai nearby Qiugang village. Given that some of Green Anhui's founders were journalists, articles informing society about water pollution in the Huai River were published, but had not really penetrated the mainstream media.

Prior to Green Anhui's involvement with villagers Qiugang, the local community was not able to effectively mobilise to assert their rights. They were well aware of the fact that the river was polluted, this much was obvious from the discolouration in the water, and suspected that it came from the factories, but did not know that it was related to their health problems. Moreover, the villages did not even know who to report their suspicions to, or how to go about ending the pollution in their community (Li, 2008).

4.2.3. Domestic Structures Around Water Pollution Issues in Bengbu During and After Green Anhui's Campaign

Events in Bengbu reflects the capacity for ENGOS to stimulate changes in Chinese social structure primarily at the village and city levels, but also with wider implications, which places pressure on the local political structure. The first change witnessed from this case is the way in which the Green Anhui's actions helped to build community participation in Bengbu and also broadly throughout Anhui province. Prior to the campaign Green Anhui had commenced building a network of volunteer

river monitors to track ambient changes in river quality. These volunteers were critical in identifying the problems in the section of the river adjacent to the village in Qiugang, but the conspicuous and well known success of the campaign was successful in generating broader community interest, and led to a surge of people joining the voluntary monitoring groups along the Huai River. This has enhanced Green Anhui's understanding and knowledge of the most serious sites of water pollution in Bengbu, as well as Hefei and Wuhu (where it is also active) and various other Huai River locations.

Critically, Green Anhui served as an indispensable link between Qiugang and the broader social and political structures. Without Green Anhui's work, the villagers' situation would have been extremely unlikely to have been successfully communicated to the media, the Anhui citizenry, or the local state authorities. Green Anhui's brokering of direct meetings between village representatives and the Bengbu Environmental Protection Bureau in particular is a remarkable sign of their capacity to induce and develop direct citizen participation in political affairs, a norm that has been conspicuously absent under the Communist Party's authoritarian regime.

The water pollution information that Green Anhui collected was also sent and used in the famous China Water Pollution Map started by Ma Jun, Director of the Institute of Environmental and Public Affairs (IPE) in 2003. Ma's map uses official and NGO data to identify areas of water pollution in waterways all throughout China. Ma's maps have been important in drawing the attention of centre institutions to China's water pollution, and strengthening the moral argument for greater attention be paid to this problem.

The collaboration between Green Anhui and Ma Jun's IPE is demonstrative of the development of a nationally interlinked civil society, where NGOs are able to dynamically work together and empower each other with information to be used in multiple campaigns. Further, Wen Bo identifies that the success of local NGOs such as that which Green Anhui experienced, is also beneficial in providing knowledge, moral support and encouragement to other local NGOs in the region, such as Huai River Defenders, to continue their efforts in the knowledge that with a combination of the right circumstances and effectively orchestrated campaigns, NGOs are able to

influence changes in local political dynamics.

Prior to the uncovering of the serious impacts of the chemical factories blatant flouting of environmental law, both the media and the public were by no means unaware of the pollution in the Huai river. The extent of serious river pollution, with volunteers witnessing brilliant red colours filling large sections of the river was by no means isolated. Nonetheless, the large volume of water in the Huai River meant that for many people, their understanding of the problem were vague or not understood as directly impacting their lives. Much like the pollution in high volume parts of the Huai River, a conception of river pollution lingered below the surface of many peoples consciousness. Green Anhui's initial mobilisation of local media in Bengbu changed this, and they were able to effectively work together with the local media to communicate a message about the nature of the pollution and its effects. The effectiveness of this initial outreach led to the creation of well-informed, well-presented and newsworthy articles, which spread up the rungs of the national media ladder and were eventually publicised by Xinhua. In addition to mobilising the media to act and drawing national attention to a medium-sized, unremarkable city in Anhui, Green Anhui's collaboration with the media helped develop a critical mass of popular dissatisfaction with the factories and the conditions that were making them immune from sanction. In a Western sense that is not entirely fitting in the Chinese context (but still a useful way of understanding the dynamics of what occurred), the collaboration between Green Anhui and the media shaped 'public opinion', which was a form of pressure on the Bengbu EPB to act with the support of the Bengbu city government.

By contrasting the political structures prior to and after the campaign in Bengbu it is evident that the Green Anhui's contribution to changing social structures empowered the EPB to overcome its weak position vis-a-vis the city government. The obviously dismissive and unresponsive stance that the Bengbu EPB exhibited in the early stages of the campaign is indicative of how Chinese governments at the provincial level and below are structured in a way that prioritises economic growth and marginalises environmental protection. To the contrary, the proactive position the EPB eventually assumed following the support that the campaign received from SEPA and the media indicates that in this case, Chinese city governments' structural

tendency to fail to adequately respond to water pollution issues because of the economic benefits brought by the perpetrators of such pollution, was overcome. The original disincentive, discouraging the proactive work of local EPBs because of the challenge this implied to the city government, was thus removed from the political structure.

Importantly, it was the ability of the mobilised Bengbu and Anhui society, consisting of Green Anhui, journalists and the Qiugang villagers to get their issue publicised on a national level that brought about SEPA's involvement in the issue. Although SEPA exercised no financial control over the Bengbu EPB or city government, the order of a national level ministry carried with it significant status and the expectation to respond positively. The involvement of a national ministry actor was another important change in the political structure surrounding water pollution in Bengbu city.

Finally, the rallying of the media and SEPA behind the campaign also enhanced the EPBs status in the local political structure. This enhanced the capacity of the Bengbu EPB and enabled it to successfully use the instruments at its disposal to regulate the factories - conducting regular inspections and successfully forcing the companies to pay fines. Further, it also meant that the Bengbu EPB went beyond merely using pollution fines as a way of supporting the bureaus funding, overcoming the institutional inertia that the system creates. Instead, water pollution fines were used as a first step in a logical and legal process of establishing industrial compliance- whereby the Bengbu EPB then worked with the city government to turn the power off at the factories, and threatened (and eventually ordered) the closure of the three factories.

4.2.4. Pacific Environment's Role

From the above case study, it is clear that much in the way International Rivers assumed a behind the scenes role in assisting Green Watershed and GEV in the Nujiang campaign, so too did Pacific Environment encourage Green Anhui to assume a leading role in the campaign. Like the local organisations involved in the Nujiang

campaign, as a result of its direct contacts with the local media and its work with Qiugang villagers, Green Anhui did not require a great deal of specific assistance in executing the campaign strategy. Additionally, the type of informational support that IR provided in the Nujiang case was not so important during Green Anhui's campaign, as unlike in the Nujiang campaign, Green Anhui's did not require sophisticated or technical information. All they required was to locate the source of the pollution, a relatively simple task not requiring a great deal of technical expertise, and widely publicise the issue in order to put pressure on the chemical companies and the local EPB to act. In fact, aside from staying in regular contact with Green Anhui throughout the campaign and carrying on its normal activities that aim to link environmental NGOs work around the country, Pacific Environment did not have a great deal of direct involvement in the campaign. It would seem then, that Pacific Environment's influence of the social structures around water pollution in the campaign in Bengbu was negligible, and thus negates the thesis that INGOs contribute to a change in the political structure through mobilising social structures.

However, such an argument is misplaced because it uses the same lens to assess different INGOs influence on the social structure. While International Rivers were able to assist domestic ENGOs in mobilising the social structure during the Nujiang campaign, an appreciation of Pacific Environment's mobilisation of Green Anhui comes with a longer term perspective.

Arguably the most important contribution that Pacific Environment provides is funding. Supporting Green Anhui since its formation in 2003 with regular small grants of between \$5000 to \$10,000USD has been significant in ensuring the financial viability of Green Anhui, and contributed to covering administrative costs and in supporting nine full and part time staff in three offices in Anhui. This helped to ensure the financial stability of Green Anhui and ensuring it has the resources to continue its work. It is in fitting with Pacific Environment's broad goals to help financially support NGOs especially in the initial stages, and encourage them to organically grow and find other sources of funding, which Green Anhui has been able to do.

According to Wen Bo, a large part of what sustains small NGOs like Green Anhui in the early phase is feeling part of a community of NGOs because of the way

it creates a sense of solidarity they are doing something important (Interview Wen Bo, 2009) Pacific Environment helps to foster this sense of community in its work with environmental NGOs all around the country on water pollution issues, by creating avenues for greater participation such as annual water pollution meetings and a water network bulletin, which enable NGOs around the country to share their unique experiences and learn more about water pollution issues throughout the country. The existence of a community of NGOs working on water pollution issues gave Green Anhui the initial moral encouragement and sense of solidarity to continue their work. Rather than merely viewing Green Anhui's campaign in Bengbu as a successful individual campaign, it can be also be viewed as the culmination of a process of developing the information and capacity to execute a professional and successful campaign that took many years. Being part of a community of NGOs coordinated by Pacific Environment was instrumental in developing these capacities long term, and is evidence of the long term support INGOs provide to local NGOs, and by extension, the social structure. Thus, while INGOs contributions to the social structure can be indirect, they are nonetheless an important part of mobilising society, which is necessary to change domestic political structures, in accordance with the empowerment through mobilisation thesis.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Review of Research

Throughout the last twenty years, INGOs have been able to contribute to building an awareness of China's environmental problems through methods such as environmental education and projects designed to protect endangered habitats or species. The fact that INGOs have been able to work in these ways without the direct supervision of the state is indicative of a greater social space for non-state involvement in China. INGOs greater role in Chinese society has also been accompanied by the growth of grassroots ENGOs, and an increasingly dynamic green civil society.

Despite the increased status of environmental protection in Chinese society, and the Central Government's growing appreciation of environmental protection, political institutions charged with the responsibility of advancing environmental protection often lack the authority or capability to fulfil their mandates. This political structure inherently frustrates attempts by INGOs to advance environmental protection. This paper contends that INGOs have been able to empower state organs such as the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) and local Environmental Protection Bureaus (EPBs) to assume a greater role in environmental protection issues. This empowerment is achieved through assisting local ENGOs in developing a stronger society, or a mobilised social structure around issues of environmental protection, consisting chiefly of ENGOs engaged with the state and local communities, as well sympathetic media. A mobilised social structure also represents an organised public opinion voice, which the state recognises it must at least be aware of in order to sustain its legitimacy. The existence of a mobilised social structure, which clearly articulates opposition to unsustainable practices, has helped to elevate the status of environmental protection issues at both the national and local levels, and given informational and moral empowerment to the MEP and local EPBs to respond effectively to environmental protection issues.

After explaining the institutional context and theoretical framework underpinning the empowerment through mobilisation thesis in Chapter Two, I

proceeded to locate the social and political structures that exist around environmental protection in Chapter Three. I identified the signs of the emerging social structure; a growth of grassroots environmental NGOs working in almost every province in China; that ENGOs have been able to establish working relationships with local communities; and that environmental issues have a growing currency in media reporting throughout China. I discussed problems in the Chinese political structure around environmental issues- fragmented decision making processes; a lack of status for the Ministry of Environmental Protection; as well as the marginalised position of Environmental Protection Bureaus. Despite these problems, based on information from academic literature and other important sources such as the *China Environment Series*, I pointed to instances suggesting that in various instances these difficulties have been overcome, where domestic political structures around environmental protection have changed. Common to many of these cases is a simultaneous mobilisation of society.

In Chapter Three, I sought to prove that INGOs play an important role in mobilising social structures, and through this mobilisation, empower the MEP and local EPBs in a fashion that produces change in the domestic political structure around environmental protection. I advanced this argument using two case studies: the national campaign opposing the development of the Nujiang Dam in Yunnan province, and the much more local campaign to prevent three chemical factories from polluting the river in Bengbu city, Anhui province. In the Nujiang Dam campaign, International Rivers Network worked closely with two domestic NGOs, Green Earth Volunteers in Beijing, and Green Watershed in Yunnan, supporting them with valuable scientific, technical and strategic information to assist them in convincingly arguing against the dams construction. These ENGOs were extremely active in Beijing and Yunnan, hosting a number of public forums that sought to highlight the effects of the proposed Nujiang Dam, building opposition within local communities so they understood clearly the negative effects of large dams, and working closely with journalists through forums such as green media salons to articulate clearly these problems in the domestic media. International Rivers was also important in the long term development of this social structure around large dam issues, owing to its presence in China for more than twenty years.

The existence of this mobilised social structure gave legitimacy and status to SEPA in its attempts to block the approval of the dam's construction, owing to the developers inability to pass the required environmental impact assessment. In contrast to SEPA's ineffectual role in opposing the Three Rivers Gorge dam, in the Nujiang campaign, they acted as an effective and important contributor to change in the domestic political structure around dam development, which stood in opposition to the positions of the state-owned hydroelectric company, Huadian Nu, and the Yunnan provincial government. Evidence of the legitimacy and status that SEPA carried in the political structure around dam development was manifest in the direct involvement of Premier Wen Jiabao on two separate occasions to halt dam construction owing to the lack of due diligence on its environmental and social impacts, and the fact that the project has been successfully delayed until this point. Although a dam may very well be built in Nujiang, it seems likely that it will avoid the worst excesses of the original proposal in 2003, and will have been influenced by the environmental impact assessment process.

Pacific Environment provided long term financial and organisational support to Green Anhui that enabled them to organically develop as a grassroots NGO and play a leading role in the successful campaign to end industrial water pollution in a section of the Huai River nearby Qiugang village. In this campaign, Green Anhui worked intimately with local villagers in Qiugang, and engaged local media in Bengbu city in order to articulate the villagers plight, as well as raise social indignation about the chemical companies negligence and the fact they were polluting with impunity. The dynamism of this campaign and the local media's coverage of it drew the attention of the media at the national level. This in turn attracted the attention of SEPA who called for the enforcement of punitive action against the offending companies. The involvement of SEPA represented a temporary change in the Bengbu city political structure around water pollution, which stimulated the Bengbu city EPB to overcome many of the problems of institutional inertia that typically plague EPBs. The effective use of fines, monitoring and the eventual successful order to close the plants demonstrated the Bengbu city EPB's new found capacity to prevent the offending chemical companies from continuing to discharge their waste water directly into the river, and its enhanced role in the local political structure surrounding water pollution.

5.2. Implications of Research

This paper has confirmed INGOs ability to work with local NGOs to create a mobilised society around environmental protection issues, consisting of a wider community of NGOs; scientific and technical experts; the media; and local communities directly affected by environmental protection issues. Such mobilisation is a sign of the increasing participation of non-state actors in social life, and reflects the relevance of the concept of transnational civil society in accounting for the dynamism of China's environmental NGO community.

The ability for social structures, which INGOs have helped create and nourish, to provide informational and moral empowerment to state organs such as the Ministry of Environmental Protection within domestic political structures, around issues like water pollution and large dam construction, is more telling. The notion that a mobilised society empowers state organs to act demonstrates society's indirect involvement in the political decision making process, and that the Chinese state as a whole entity is responsive to the concerns of society, particularly if those concerns are organised. INGOs can therefore be gauged as fulfilling an important role of linking social concerns with the state. Standing alone, these factors indicate a greater autonomy and vibrancy in Chinese social life.

That it is only an indirect pressure highlights the fact that while the ability to influence political structures is important, it does not go as far as reflecting democratisation in the Chinese political process. Society is clearly limited by the lack of institutional channels establishing tangible and formal social participation in the political making process. Additionally, the capacity to change both social and political structures is limited to relatively soft social issues like environmental protection, and does not imply at all that INGOs are able to influence social or political structures in more sensitive issue areas like human rights. Nonetheless, the very fact that society is able to ensure that environmental agencies are more capable of fulfilling their function despite conflicting interests within the political structure is an encouraging sign of pluralism and porousness in the Chinese state.

This paper has provided an analysis and theoretical reconceptualisation of the role of INGOs in the Nujiang Dam case, as well as empirical evidence surrounding the roles and capabilities of INGOs in dealing with smaller, more local issues, such as that discussed in Anhui province. This is a theoretical and empirical extension of the robust base of scholarship on how INGOs influence environmental political and social structures developed by Wang Liang and Wu Fengshi.

5.3. Limitations of Research

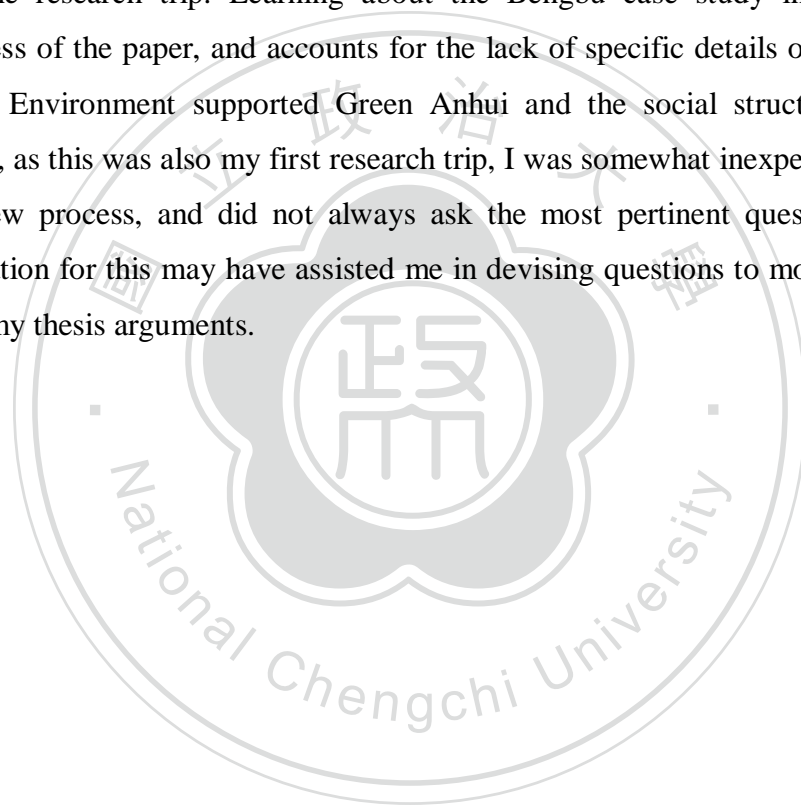
This thesis is limited by the fact that the scope of what it is trying to prove requires the researcher to conduct significantly more fieldwork than what I was able to conduct, in order to do so conclusively. I made a short visit to China in late September, 2009, in which I interviewed representatives from a number of INGOs in order to gain a first-hand appreciation of the general situation for INGOs in China. During this period of time, I conducted the two interviews that were most critical for this research and that informed the case study, with Wen Bo of Pacific Environment in person, and with Nicole Brewer of International Rivers in a telephone conversation between Taipei and San Francisco.

However, given that this research places the domestic NGOs IR and Pacific Environment support at fund at the epicentre of the social structures it attempts to influence, the research would be stronger if I had been able to interview representatives from the NGOs that IR and Pacific Environment worked with. Green Watershed and Green Environment Volunteers were both contacted at this time via email; however, I never received a response. They were also contacted by telephone, but were not reachable at the time as their offices seemed to have closed early prior to national holidays in China celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of the PRC at the time. I acknowledge that their absence from the fieldwork is a limitation of this research.

Further, I did not have the resources nor the contacts to establish communications with any government officials in the Ministry of Environmental Protection or any of the relevant environmental protection bureaus around the country. The lack of contact

with domestic NGOs or the government has meant that I have had to try to rely on other sources to get a general impression of these organisations, as was the case with my review of the Bengbu city EPB, or draw my interpretations largely from the comments of Wen Bo and Nicole Brewer.

These interviews helped me to get an understanding of how the organisations operated, and how it conducted itself in the campaign. The interview with Wen Bo had to be augmented by a series of emails that requested further details about Green Anhui's campaign in Bengbu, as the case studies were not specifically selected until after the research trip. Learning about the Bengbu case study in this way is a weakness of the paper, and accounts for the lack of specific details on precisely how Pacific Environment supported Green Anhui and the social structure in Bengbu. Further, as this was also my first research trip, I was somewhat inexperienced with the interview process, and did not always ask the most pertinent questions. A greater preparation for this may have assisted me in devising questions to more convincingly prove my thesis arguments.



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