The London School of Economics and Political Science

Managing the Dream of a Green China: Chinese ENGOs' Daily Practices and Controversies

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Abstract

This research explored how Chinese environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOs) intervene with environmental crises in an authoritarian context, drawing on the data from ten-month ethnographic fieldwork in Beijing. To examine the organisations' practices and real functioning, I analysed Chinese ENGOs' behavioural patterns with a field theory approach, especially the branches of neo-institutionalism and Bourdieusian field theory. My thesis revealed different Chinese ENGOs' creativities to bring diverse material and intellectual resources into the problem area, and their capacities to expand their space in China. Meanwhile, I also found that different ENGOs have narrowed the theme of environmental protection into fragmented ideals in their daily work. This fragmentation weakens the group's potentials to provide serious and collective responses to the systematic crises. The discussions on ENGOs' practices further invite us to rethink the concepts of NGOs, civil society, environmental protection and global civil society in different contexts.

By reviewing the field history, I showed that the emergence and developments of Chinese ENGOs in the past three decades have been embedded in multiple overlapping historical processes in China. While there exist various institutional constraints, ENGOs have skilfully expanded their space, which suggests complex pluralising implications in China. Different organisations have converted the broad ideal of environmental protection into diverse manageable project designs, including small community activities, scientific investigations and struggles for social justice. Using the examples of their community activities and policy advocacies, I studied ENGOs' daily practices and stressed their practical logics, which are not reducible to their original ideals or the external constraints. Another focus of my work is the intra-field dynamics. I especially discussed how different actors compete to gain more capital and collectively create the field rules. While there exist diversities in the field, there are also fierce power struggles. The field is currently witnessing the increasingly dominant technocratic trends, the diminishment of pluralism values, the loss of connections with political and contentious discourses, and the resistances to the bureaucratisation trends.

In this thesis, I presented the field's growths, diversities, fragmentation and polarisation. Over the years, there have been growing quantities of ENGOs, increasing funding pools, and specialised management standards in this circle. It is worthwhile to discuss to what extent ENGOs can organise different sectors together and respond to environmental issues effectively.

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Chapter 1 Introduction: How to Make China Greener? A Study of Chinese Environmental NGOs (ENGOs).

1. Chinese ENGOS: the Sisyphus' Stone

'At the beginning of 2017, North China was engulfed in heavy smog. To participate in different environmental salons in Beijing, we must move from one cloud of smog to another one … Seeing the worsening environmental conditions in China, environmentalists may doubt themselves …

Will the world ever become a better place? Here is my answer: we should not feel confused at all. My confidence is neither from the blind optimism nor a strong mind. The fact is that we have already discovered the clear route to change the situation: through building a green civil society, we are heading towards our goals.'

Mr Pine (Nature name)[1], the co-founder and a board member of ENGO Nature Lovers (fictitious organisation name)[2], wrote the above words in his New Year address for his organisation. He was not only writing to his team, but also to all the peer organisations in the circle of Chinese ENGOS, as Nature Lovers has been widely recognised as one of the earliest and leading ENGOs in the field.

'Will the world ever become a better place?' Mr Pine's New Year address, a mix of pessimism and optimism, reveals an important tension shared across Chinese ENGOs: the tension between these organisations' ideals to save China from the dystopia of environmental crisis and the practical obstacles in reality.

On the one hand, the central message of the quote, which is Mr Pine's confidence in 'changing the situation through building a green civil society', correlates with a typical exciting story of global civil society. That is, people act beyond the spheres of state and

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1 Regarding the names of participants in this research, I addressed the figures with 'nature names'. A nature name is a part of Chinese ENGOS' culture, which is perhaps to show their love for nature. Each employee chooses one object from nature as their nature name and calls each other by this alias, such as maple, grass or squirrel. In my project, by addressing them with nature names, I aimed to keep this part of their subculture in my writing. Meanwhile, I also gave each participant new nature names randomly to hide their real identities.
2 For the anonymity of research participants, all the names of organisations are fictitious.

market and organise themselves to respond to the crises affecting their own life (e.g. see Falk, 1998; Kaldor, 2003a; Castells, 2008; Anheier et al., 2012; Glasius and Pleyers, 2013). In the face of Chinese environmental governance crises, plenty of voluntary environmental groups have emerged in China since the 1990s, seeking to participate in, and contribute to, good governance (Howell, 2003; Ho, 2008b; Zheng and Fewsmith, 2008). Growing from fewer than ten organisations in the 1990s to more than 8,000 organisations now[3], Chinese ENGOs are becoming increasingly visible players in China. Up to the end of 2015, 224,000 people were employed in ENGOs (All China Environment Federation, 2015, in Ford Foundation and CCIA, 2017). On the fund-raising scales, while most smaller ENGOs in recent years can attract 100,000-300,000 RMB (around 10,000-30,000 GBP [4]) per organisation annually, each big ENGO could raise the funds of 3-5 million RMB (around 300,000-500,000 GBP) per year. Different ENGOs engage in environmental governance through various routes, including community consciousness-raising activities, nature education for children, policy advocacy, scientific research, monitoring pollution data, legal assistance for pollution victims, or exposing pollution incidents via the media. Their working areas also cover various topics, including biodiversity, water pollution, air quality, soil pollution, waste management, etc.

After three decades of development, Chinese ENGOs have carved out their own space to attract resources into the environmental areas and to encounter the issues with their special skills. As proudly announced by some of them, they have successfully explored the 'right track' to control the environmental situation. Many ENGOs also believe that, with professional knowledge and approaches, ENGOs could calm down the panicked public[5], and guide society to solve environmental issues rationally and in an orderly manner. Importantly, the idea of civil society empowerment is echoed in various Chinese ENGOs' visions, who try to engage with the environmental issues by 'improving society's environmental consciousness' (Nature Lovers), 'mobilising society to monitor pollution' (Blue Sky) or

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3 According to the latest available official report (All-China Environment Federation, 2013), there were 6,816 environmental social organisations registered as ENGOs at the Ministry of Civil Affairs in China by the end of 2012. Another research report (CCICED, 2013) shows that there were 7,928 registered ENGOs at the Ministry of Civil Affairs by 2012. In comparison, by the end of 2008, there were 3,539 registered environmental social organisations in China (All-China Environment Federation, 2008). In terms of social organisations in all areas, there were 835,135 social organisations registered in China by May 2018 (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2018). Some scholars estimated that there were 3 million unregistered social organisations in China in 2016 (Hsu, Chen, Horsley, and Stern, 2016).
4 1 RMB = 0.113028 GBP (19 Sep. 2019)
5 For instance, there were 37 'mass incidents' (above 100 people) triggered by environmental issues in China during 2000-2013 (*Rule-of-Law in China*, cited in RUC report on Chinese Reform, 2014). From 2003 to 2012, there were 230 'mass incidents' (above 30 people) reported by the media (Zhang and Yang, 2015). Also, the number of environmental mass incidents is increasing by 29% each year (Ran, 2015).

'mobilising society to discuss environmental issues rationally' (Independent Rock), to name a few. The discourse of environmentalism and global civil society has been gradually adopted by Chinese ENGOs since the 1990s, and several themes have always been stressed, including the empowerment of community, responsibilities of citizens, social justice and concerns for the common good (e.g. see Cooper, 2006; Hildebrandt and Turner, 2009). Similarly, several figures of civil society movements, such as Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi, have been mentioned in different Chinese ENGOs' activities, symbolising these ENGOs' ideals and courage to dream a different, better world.

However, Chinese ENGOs' practices are too complex to be reduced to an exciting story of global civil society. These organisations have to make compromises between their value-driven visions and the practical instrumental conditions in reality. To begin with, Chinese ENGOs' practices obviously have been complicated by the context of authoritarian China, where various practical obstacles exist for civil society organisations, including registrations, censorships, repression threats and funding controls. With these instrumental concerns, Chinese ENGOs usually have limited choices in terms of strategies and project designs. For another, while some ENGOs claim the ambition to control the environmental situation, it is noteworthy that environmental crises are mostly systematic and beyond organisational capabilities. When ENGOs are working hard, horrible news on Chinese environment problems never stops: heavy smog threatening human health, shocking reports on the unsafe urban drinking water, 'cancer villages' caused by soil pollution and extinction of species, flood and desertification due to environmental degradation. Mr Pine's description of Beijing's air pollution in 2017, 'moving from one cloud of smog to another one' was by no means an exaggeration: Beijing's average PM2.5 level in 2017 was 58 $\mu g/m^3$ according to Chinese official data (Clean Air Alliance of China, 2019), while the World Health Organisation recommends an air quality standard for PM2.5 of no more than 10 $\mu g/m^3$. Dealing with this single issue in Beijing goes far beyond the ENGOs' capabilities and requires systematic radical changes in the regional coal industries, municipal transport, and heating and waste management systems. Similarly, those ENGOs working on the issues of water pollution, soil pollution and biodiversity are also facing complex issues, which demand systematic changes in the industrial structures, legal systems, bureaucratic structures and culture.

Despite their professional skills, resources and loyalty to the environmental cause, Chinese ENGOs cannot act only according to their own values or ideals, but need to consider various factors such as political risks, funding availability, project costs and benefits, project influences and media values. As observed, most ENGOs act quite cautiously and

pragmatically (Tang and Zhan, 2008; Xie, 2009; Tsang and Lee, 2013; Zhang and Barr, 2013), and work in a non-oppositional, depoliticised, low profile and mundane style (Yang, G.B. 2005, 2010; Ho, 2008b). There exists an agreement among Chinese ENGOs that some sensitive, yet significant, environmental issues cannot be touched, such as nuclear energy and agricultural biotechnology (Hildebrandt, 2013). For example, during the famous PX public protests in several Chinese cities, Chinese ENGOs were collectively absent and deliberately kept themselves distant from the protests (e.g. see Ran, 2015). Various ENGOs prefer some safe and small-scale issues, such as education, tree-planting and pollution tests on local rivers. Similarly, many organisations in this circle disagree on using confrontational tactics (Hildebrandt, 2013).

Likewise, the complexities of Chinese ENGOs' practices have been mirrored in their subjective feelings. Facing the gigantic tasks of environmental governance in China, ENGOs share the self-doubt mentioned by Mr Pine. Mr Liang, a well-recognised leader in the circle from 1994 to 2008, who posed the famous 'Liang's Question' in the mid-2000s to the whole field: 'if we have not made a difference in environmental governance, what is the value of our work and why are we still trying?' Related to Liang's disappointments, more recently, a young ENGO colleague shared a photo of 'the Sisyphus' stone' in his 2018 New Year's message to me and other employees, in order to encourage his peers to keep pursuing the seemingly impossible missions. A more typical morale-boosting phrase used across ENGO colleagues is a Chinese idiom: 'the foolish old man removes the mountains' (*Yu Gong Yi Shan*), which emphasises the virtues of perseverance and willpower against huge tasks. These emotionally charged words vividly revealed ENGOs' high ideals of environmental protection, as well as their relatively realistic views on the great difficulties in their work and ENGOs' limited capabilities.

My research project starts from this tension between Chinese ENGOs' aspirations to intervene with environmental governance and their practices in reality, which are heavily constrained by the instrumental conditions. In other words, the overall research aim is to address how Chinese ENGOs work in the face of the systematic governance tasks and the constraining context, and what the effects of their actions are. I will argue that despite their positive contributions in environmental protection, Chinese ENGOs cannot be simply counted as problem solvers in crises or democratising agencies in an authoritarian regime. Embedded in specific opportunity structures and historical contexts, these organisations also follow their own independent practical logics. Through the so-called professional conduct and management, ENGOs have narrowed the theme of environmental protection into several competing ideals in their daily work. On the one hand, ENGOs can creatively bring diverse

material and intellectual resources into the problem area and have multiple pluralising implications. On the other hand, ENGOs' actions are not necessarily functioning as serious and collective responses to the systematic crises with a bottom-up approach. While there exist diversities in the field, there are also fierce power struggles. The field is currently witnessing the increasingly dominant technocratic trends, the diminishment of pluralism values, the loss of connections with political and contentious discourses, and resistances to the bureaucratisation trends.

To be clear, I am not implying that the puzzling picture of Chinese ENGOs' effects or the tension between their aspirations and practices means that these organisations have betrayed their ideals. The non-confrontational and low-profile acting style by no means suggests that Chinese ENGOs are fake environmentalists. It is generally true that the current patterns of Chinese ENGOs are different from some of their counterparts in the world (Ho, 2001), particularly the Western European environmental groups in the 1960s, who emerged as a new political force and used unconventional protests to initiate broad environmental movements (e.g. see Dalton, 1994; Dryzek, 2013), or the ENGOs in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1980s, who politicised the issues and contributed to the democracy transformations (e.g. see Jancar-Webster, 1998). However, as Ho and Edmonds (2008) remind us, while environmentalism has rich movement history, it is important to steer away from normative assumptions on green actors. While Chinese ENGOs' rhetoric echoes the early environmental movement discourse in the 1960s and shows the courage to transform the social-economic system and the passion to proactively shape human future (e.g. see Dalton, 1994), it is unclear how likely they can achieve the ambitious ideals in a constraining context. As I will expand further in the dissertation, it is problematic to essentialise either the Western or Chinese ENGOs, considering the diversities and dynamics in both groups. The decoupling between ENGOs' ideals and activities exists in both geographical areas (e.g. see della Porta and Rucht, 2002). The tension between organisations' subjective worlds and the objective worlds is an inevitable and common phenomenon in organisations' practices.

Different from the critiques on Chinese ENGOs' mundanity, I treat this gap between ENGOs' aspirations and practices as a valuable phenomenon for sociological research. It is significant to treat ENGOs actions and actual influences seriously, which should be evaluated independently from ENGOs' ideal claims or some theoretical assumptions on civil societies, such as the empowerment arguments or the functionalist critiques. By doing so, we can observe the meaning and knowledge production, relationships and possibilities in China's environmental governance. The area of ENGOs is pretty important, not only

because of its growing size and resources[6], but also due to the fact that the presence of ENGOs is contributing a purer version of environment protection in China. The ideals, visions and critiques produced by these professional organisations could represent one of the highest standards in environmental governance. Compared to the government or corporates, ENGOs could be much more loyal to the ideal of environment protection. Being the special vanguards of environmental interests, Chinese ENGOs are providing important definitions and standards of environment protection through their daily practices. Moreover, as one of the most active areas of civil society, Chinese ENGOs have been generally considered as the model for other activism areas in China and the laboratory in Chinese politics (e.g. Wong, 2005; Tang and Zhan, 2008; Hildebrandt, 2013). The ways Chinese ENGOs make compromises between their ideals and the constraining conditions could tell us a lot about the trajectories and potential of Chinese civil society.

In the following sections, I will first discuss the existing studies and the research gaps, and then explain my choice of analytical framework and specify my research questions. The introduction chapter will end with a methodology introduction and my dissertation plan.

2. Background: to Explain Chinese ENGOs' Behavioural Patterns.

Chinese ENGOs have attracted the most attention of the scholars in the area of Chinese civil society or NGOs. Among the existing studies, the most related literatures are the civil society development framework and the corporatist framework, which have been applied critically in the context of China. While various scholars acknowledge the empowerment and pluralising effects of ENGOs' work (e.g. Howell, 2007; Buesgen, 2008), most existing research agrees that Chinese ENGOs at this stage generally act in a non-oppositional, depoliticised and mundane style (e.g. Yang, G.B. 2005, 2010; Ho, 2008a, 2008b; Xie, 2009, Hsu, 2010; Zhan and Tang, 2011; Bernauera, Gampfera, Mengb, Sub, 2016; Teets, 2017). Scholars focus on different analytical levels to explain and discuss ENGOs' organisational strategies and potential. Based on different analytical focus in this area, I will discuss two main views in this chapter. The first group pays attention to the subjective world of ENGOs and argues that Chinese ENGOs are civil society actors who seek autonomy yet are currently

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6 Regarding the new resources, for instance, since Chinese famous business figure Jack Ma's personal career change in 2016, his company Alibaba has allocated 0.3 per cent of its annual revenue to an environment protection fund. In the financial year (2015/6), the contribution was US$47.1 million.

constrained by the authoritarian context. The second group is closer to an objectivist interpretation, which sees ENGOs' actions and effects as the results determined by the structural powers. Among the existing studies, I argue the necessities of sociological interventions and a new focus on organisational practices.

To be clear, the literature categorisation in my thesis is obviously arbitrary. While there exist arguments stressing the subjectivities of ENGOs and the broad structures, it is not very accurate to neatly divide the current studies on this topic into two separate groups. I divided the existing literatures along the axis 'subjectivist-objectivist', which helps me to clarify my theoretical position and my inquiry focus, which is the negotiation between the subjective and objective worlds. While some scholars contributed the subjectivist or objectivist arguments, many of them did not exclusively stress one dimension. Many revealed the negotiating relationships between the state and ENGOs (e.g. see Yang, G. B. 2005; Ho and Edmonds, 2008; Shieh, 2009; Hildebrandt, T. 2013).

2.1 The Subjective Wills of Civil Society Actors: Self-Censorship in an Authoritarian Regime

The first group insightfully identifies and pays attention to Chinese ENGOs' passion for civic ideals and environmentalism. Chinese ENGOs, in many senses, are considered as counterweights to state power or democracy components, who are in many senses comparable to the Eastern European ENGOs in the late 1980s (e.g. see Yang, D.D.H., 2004; Hilton, 2013; Li, Tang, and Lo, 2016; Zhang, 2018). Some see these organisations as part of a global civil society and the symbol of the ecological modernisation process in China (e.g. Morton, 2005; Mol, 2006; Xie, 2011; Reese, 2015). To explain ENGOs' current non-oppositional, depoliticised and mundane styles, most studies stress the constraining political context and argue that ENGOs' current strategies are mainly led by self-protection concerns, especially the calculations of political risks and resources. That is, due to the strong authoritarian state controls on ENGOs, there is not enough space or resources for these civil society organisations to act in a critical, confrontational and active manner (e.g. Knup, 1997; Brettell, 2000; Schwartz, 2004; Gong, 2006; Ho, 2008a, 2008b; Tang and Zhan, 2008; Xie, 2009; Bernauera, Gampfera, Mengb, Sub, 2016). Some studies hinted that without a politically constraining context, environmental civil society organisations can function much better in terms of intervening with environmental governance and correcting systematic errors (e.g. Zhan and Tang, 2011; Han, 2014).

Obviously, the argument about opportunity structure and resource mobilisation is fundamentally significant in this area and has very strong explanatory power. The regime's control on social organisations[7] indeed has fairly strong shaping effects on ENGOs' actions. By law, all NGOs in China are supposed to register with the Civil Affairs Department and be supervised by a Chinese governmental or semi-governmental institution (Article 13.2 Regulation on Registration and Supervision of Social Organisations (1998)). In the new Charity Law (2016), the registration procedures have been simplified. While social organisations were supposed to first seek a sponsor and then register with the relevant bureau of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, social organisations now can skip the first step. To be clear, there are various ENGOs that have not registered. Some are registered as business groups and are regulated by tax policies. Those unregistered ENGOs are usually still visible to the local government and police and they act more cautiously, due to their illegal status (Spires, 2011; Hildebrandt, 2013). For those registered ENGOs, the supervisory institutions have the right to intervene with ENGOs' project designs, their use of funding and personnel matters. Any perceived inappropriate behaviour might provoke intervention or repression, including shutting down the organisation, arresting staff, limiting the movement of staff, and disqualifying the organisations from accepting certain funding. Economically, ENGOs also have quite limited independence from the government (Hildebrandt, 2013). In this area, ENGOs largely have to rely on the funding from the government, and domestic and foreign foundations which are also supervised by the state. Moreover, the Law of the People's Republic of China on Administration of Activities of Overseas Nongovernmental Organisations on the Mainland of China came into effect at the beginning of 2017. This means that international foundations are under tighter government control in China. Sometimes, as I observed in the field, for Chinese ENGOs and foreign and domestic foundations, besides regular bureaucratic supervisions from the government, they are also under the surveillance of security departments, such as security bureaus and police stations. The security agents can obtain detailed information about ENGOs' daily routines, including their visitors, staff travel plans and social media activities. Despite the ENGOs' ambitious aspirations of creating social change, these civil society actors must constrain their ideals.

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7 'Social organisation' is an administrative concept in China, which refers to various types of organisations, including foundations (基金会), social groups (社会团体) and private non-enterprise units (民办非企业单位). Private non-enterprise units (民办非企业单位) have been referred to as social service organisations (社会服务机构) since 2016 in the Charity Law (2016). The Charity Law (2016) broadens the definitions of the types of charitable organisations. It uses the term charitable organisation to refer to a lawfully established nonprofit social organisation that complies with the law's provisions and carries out charitable activities for the public benefit as its main purpose. In academic discussions, 'NGO' in the Chinse context has been used loosely, which generally referred to the registered or unregistered non-profit organisations dealing with social issues (Howell, 2003; Spires, 2011; Hildebrandt, 2013).

Being suspected as the authoritarian regime's challengers, they have to strategically conform to the specific context and self-censor their behaviour, in order to survive and develop in China.

While I agree with this view, which stresses ENGOs' strategic responses to the opportunity structures, I hold that this argument can be further developed. For one thing, empirically, I would suggest adding the analyses on an organisational level and discussing how these ENGOs experience the state's control in their daily practice, as their organisational strategies and management are indeed much more complex than the rational decisions on self-protection and risk calculations. For another, theoretically, as already pointed out by many scholars, it is important to examine some theoretical assumptions on Chinese ENGOs, especially when we stress the state's negative and constraining effects on NGOs' development.

First, the argument of opportunity structures largely stresses the macro-level factors and is too vague to explain the specific acting style of these organisations. Practically, there are various significant cognitive processes beneath the strategic self-censorship actions. The repressive context does not simply direct ENGOs, who are agents with self-consciousness and specific values. The realities of ENGOs' practices are much more complicated than the strategic choice of self-protection in an authoritarian state.

For instance, if their strategies are mainly guided by the self-protection principle, where are the boundaries of their activities when they pursue their high ideals and how exactly do they protect themselves? As there are no clear red lines or rules clarified in this area, the question demands ENGOs to navigate themselves based on their own judgements. Being ambiguous is one of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) governance tactics (Heilmann and Perry, 2011). While the state is constantly present in many ENGOs' daily lives, civil society organisations are supposed to self-censor their actions without clear and detailed official guidance. When they explore within the shifting boundaries, they might be repressed if the state considers their actions to be improper during specific periods.

Furthermore, beneath the strategic self-protection choice, another issue or practical dilemma for ENGOs is in the so-called repressive context, where and how do these organisations put themselves between idealist society changers and cynical realistic actors (e.g. see Ferguson, 1994; Eliasoph, 2011)? Besides the survival pressure, what moral challenges must they face when they choose their positions (e.g. see Krause, 2014)? While consideration for the regime's control can to some degree explain their general non-confrontational style and

depoliticised operations, the argument cannot satisfyingly explain these organisations' exact working focus, strategies and the degree and methods of their self-censorship, especially given other significant practical concerns in their daily lives. China has various pressing and urgent environmental issues, which threaten public health and economic development and there are obviously different ways to engage with each problem. On the issue of Beijing's air pollution, the possible proposals range from moving the steel plants outside of the area, to shutting down the incineration plants, to simply encouraging the use of public transport, or just delivering public lectures on smog. Practically speaking, with limited resources and energy, each ENGO must choose an area and a route. How do different Chinese ENGOs compare different environmental issues and decide to work on specific areas (e.g. see Medvetz, 2012; Krause, 2014)? What solutions would they specifically advocate? When they make decisions, how do they manage and balance the expectations of government, donors, the public, beneficiaries and their own employees?

For ENGOs, the above practical concerns co-exist with the fear of the authoritarian regime. The self-protection principle is too vague to guide their work in practice. While the objective contextual conditions are fairly important, ENGO staff do not simply conform to external constraints. Beneath their cautious actions are these agents' intense cultural efforts to navigate the tensions between their great missions and imperfect conditions (e.g. Minkoff and Powell, 2006) and the efforts to justify and evaluate their choices. In other words, ENGOs' actions and self-censorship are irreducible to the external structures and it is necessary to get closer to these organisations' daily practices. Accordingly, ENGOs' actions are much more complex than strategic calculations of political risks. From a sociological perspective, there are other less cognitive factors significantly shaping organisations' daily decisions, such as norms, routines, common sense and tacit knowledge (e.g. DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Eliasoph, 1997; Scott, 2008). These factors can further affect agents' risk judgement and cost-benefit calculations, or put certain issues outside the radar of instrumental rationality. In order to depict and understand the actions of Chinese ENGOs, it is necessary to explore their daily organisational life, which is richer than the general self-protection strategy.

Second, the level of organisations reminds us to be cautious about certain theoretical assumptions on ENGOs, which are disconnected to their daily experiences. Especially affected by a Euro-centric civil society analytical framework and the history of post-socialist Eastern European countries, some studies assume NGOs' democratising effects and see ENGOs as regime challengers (e.g. McCormick, Su and Xiao, 1992; Hilton, 2013; Li, Tang, and Lo, 2016) or relatively autonomous actors exerting bottom-up pressures to the state (e.g.

see Yang, D.D.H., 2004; Buesgen, 2008; Tang and Zhan, 2008; Zhan and Tang, 2011; Grano, 2012; Han, 2014; Bernauera, Gampfera, Mengb, Sub, 2016; or see the critiques in Shieh, 2009; Spires, 2011; Salmenkari, 2013). Thus, to explain ENGOs' self-protection and self-censorship behaviours, many of these studies stress the state's constraining effects on ENGOs. While hostilities between the state and ENGOs indeed exist, this dissertation will also show that there are multiple ways of being an ENGO in China. As pointed out by Ho and Edmonds (2008), there are multiple dimensions of ENGO-state relationships and the state can be restrictive and conducive to ENGOs at the same time. Moreover, it is necessary to explore the various shaping factors of ENGOs' actions alongside the state's repressive effects. The state's control on ENGOs, while significant, is not the only causal factor of ENGOs' acting styles. If the state can determine and simply constrain ENGOs' actions, an empirical question emerges: why do motivated ENGOs continue working in a highly hostile context which forces them to give up on their aspirations? In particular, when the regime is turning out to be more authoritarian and imposing stronger formal controls on civil society in Xi's era, why are various new ENGOs emerging in China every year?

As mentioned above, while some ENGOs explicitly adopt a civil society discourse, especially the ambition to pluralise Chinese politics, the whole circle of ENGOs is far more diverse than the label of civil society actors in theory. As will be shown in Chapters 3 and 4, ENGOs have diverse opinions on the regime and the opportunity structure, and also on their essential and primary tasks in China. Not all ENGOs see the Chinese context as a constraining factor for them (Howell, 2003; Hildebrandt, 2013). Many ENGOs have shown confidence in their non-confrontational and de-politicised approaches, which are perceived as effective, creative and suitable in response to governance crises (e.g. see Howell, 2003; Buesgen, 2008; Spires, 2011; or ENGOs' publication, e.g. Liang and Kang, 2005; Liao, 2010). Accordingly, many Chinese ENGOs disagree with Western green groups' confrontational repertoires such as protests and demonstrations, as these activities are inefficient, chaotic and irrational (e.g. interview with Blue Sky, 13/12/2016; interview with Global Green, 25/10/2016). In other words, from Chinese ENGOs' perspectives, they have their own practical logics and specific judgements on the opportunities and constraints. For instance, as will be shown in Chapter 5, while ENGOs' supervision institutes usually symbolise the state's control over ENGOs, some ENGOs use their supervision institutes as a bridge to connect themselves with the policy decision-makers and further affect policymaking. A lot of ENGOs see the environmental authoritarianism mode as a suitable choice for China to deal with huge systematic issues, and the most effective way is to enter the government system instead of confronting the government (e.g. interview with Blue Sky, 13/12/2016). Also, regarding ENGOs' position in the government, some ENGOs are also

orientated by the Confucianism philosophy (Xie, 2009; e.g. interview with Green Village, 25/05/2017), which emphasises a harmonious social order and the significance of state authorities. That is, there are various factors shaping ENGOs' considerations in practice and Chinese ENGOs are not essentially the political and social challengers of the authoritarian regime.

To sum up, by pointing out the limits of the opportunity structure analysis and some assumptions from the civil society theoretical framework, I wish to draw attention to organisational practices, which can reveal a more nuanced picture of this sector. These organisations react to the structural factors in a complex and diverse way. Aside from the control of the state, there are various other factors shaping ENGOs' practices, political positions and orientations.

2.2 Determined by the Objective structures: the Structural Roles of NGOs in China

While the first group above stresses Chinese ENGOs' motivation and risk calculations, a second group of study stresses the objective function of these organisations in the broad social system. In many senses, some studies hold a functionalist view, which sees each part of society as functional for the stability and operation of the whole society (e.g. Durkheim, 1982; Perrow, 1991; Chandler, 2007). With an objectivist interpretation, these studies distinguish ENGOs' actual effects from their subjective goals and consider their effects as the results determined by the structural powers. In accordance, these studies read civil society organisations in a critical approach. For instance, ENGOs are largely considered as corporatist organisations, inevitably serving the dominant interest of the state in China. In other words, behind the mundane acting styles are ENGOs' non-escapable fates in a specific structure. The gap between these ENGOs' ideals and practices is rooted in the broad power structure. These organisations function as a tool of governance and assist the CCP regime in maintaining the social order and coping with environmental governance crises. Instead of empowering communities, ENGOs are embedded in the power structure which suffocates communities and are a part of the network leading to the diminishment of civic life (e.g. see Skocpol, 2013).

Distinguished from the studies with a subjectivist view, the studies in this group stress the structural factors. For instance, some studies emphasise NGOs' dependent status on the regime, which determines their limited influence (He, 1997; Ru and Ortolano, 2008; Unger,

2008; Zhang, 2018). Due to the dependency, some NGOs have to prioritise the interest of government to the disadvantaged people (Lu, 2007). Some other studies point out the class configurations in these organisations. For instance, many ENGO teams come from the middle class in China (Yang, G.B. 2010), who are usually moderate and intend to maintain the political order (Cai, 2005). Likewise, as Beja (2008) argued, the main actors in Chinese civil society sector are intelligentsia or experts, who stress efficiency and social order and lack of the motivation to empower the disgruntled. Similar to a Gramscian view, some studies in this group hold that the middle-class groups are unlikely to bring broad social and political changes (e.g. see Tsang, and Lee, 2013). Also, in terms of culture, as argued by Wong (2005), Stalley and Yang (2006) and Lo (2015), Chinese people generally have a strong government-reliance attitude on environmental issues and there is a lack of discourse in support of environmental activism. Accordingly, as mentioned above, many studies in this group more or less recognise the corporatist features in the regime. These so-called civil society organisations inevitably serve the structural dominant political and economic power. To some degree, the NGOs are used to direct citizens' energy, solidify political power and reproduce the power structure (e.g. see He, 1997; Ru and Ortolano, 2008; Beja, 2008). It has been argued that the regime offers a more hospitable climate for NGOs to co-opt and control the social actors (Heurlin, 2009) and ENGOs' participation and consultations in environment protection have further strengthened the authoritarian regime (e.g. see Teets, 2013, 2017; Zhang, 2018; Zinda, Li, and Liu, 2018).

Embedded in the specific power structure, Chinese ENGOs' powerless and conflicted feelings have been shown in their self-reflections, which partially support the functionalist argument. One ENGOs' employee openly invited his peers to consider whether they are empowering or disempowering the community, by hiding the political dimensions of environmental issues. He asked: 'In the crisis of being "besieged by waste", most ENGOs focus on educating citizens on waste classifications. We make it look like ordinary people are the main cause of problems. No one has discussed the roles of the state or the waste management firms in the crisis. Are we helping these institutes to avoid public pressure?' (Workshop among ENGOs, 12/08/2017).

This functionalist view has a deeper reading into power relationships, and a clear elaboration on the structural limits of civil society organisations in China. In this dissertation, I also agree to draw the distinction between actors' ideals and practices and suggest a critical examination of ENGOs' rhetorical claims. However, this perspective is overbearing and largely ignores the agentic effects of actors. Thus, building on the critical reflections of the

functionalist view, I again suggest putting emphasis on organisations' practices and discussing ENGOs' different choices and actual effects in China.

First, in terms of the analysis level, it is productive to add another layer of analysis and pay attention to the organisational level. While this critical view is helpful in depicting the broad pictures in terms of power relationships and historical changes, it is not very suitable in studying a particular breed of organisations' behavioural patterns in a particular context. For one thing, the functionalist view focuses mainly on the system's self-organisation and assumes the findings could apply universally (Martin, 2003). Thus, specific environments are not paid much attention, which makes the depictions simplistic. This perspective cannot visualise the complexities inside the Chinese system, such as different empowering and constraining contextual factors for ENGOs in an authoritarian regime, as mentioned in the above section.

Meanwhile, what is also being ignored in this functionalist framework is the agentic effects. Various significant innovations and changes or the agents' actions in the field are downplayed in this view. For instance, as will be shown in Chapters 3 and 5, the ENGO-state power balances are not stable and have been dramatically changed by the emergence of new technologies, ENGOs' innovations and the shifts in the political climate, such as the technology to detect PM2.5 since 2011, the use of big data technology since the mid-2010s, Xi's new policy to control and co-operate with ENGOs since the 2010s, and even earlier, the broad use of social media since the mid-2000s. ENGOs are also actively reflecting and adjusting their strategies. For instance, ENGOs, compared to labour, AIDS or LGBT realms, are particularly active in organising experience-sharing workshops, building networks, and publishing professional toolkits in terms of project design, time management, environmental policy advocacy and fundraising (e.g. see Zhang and Barr, 2013; HeYi Annual Report, 2016).

Moreover, a functionalist view also largely ignores the diversities of Chinese ENGOs' actions, the varieties of class origins and their different ties with government. In the functionalist framework, organisational agencies are usually viewed as similar powerless actors with fixed roles in the irresistible macro structure. Yet, as will be shown in Chapter 4, the power and risk distributions among ENGOs are highly unequal. While some are struggling to survive financially, other ENGOs can spend millions of RMB to outsource their projects to other smaller ENGOs. While some ENGOs have access to policymakers, other ENGOs are heavily supervised by the police. These distinctions among ENGOs are

valuable dimensions that tell us the possibilities and potential of this sector, which are largely ignored in the structural level of the analytical framework.

Second, a functionalist framework is problematic, as many studies in this group more or less assume China as a corporatist regime, which creates a myth about the CCP regime. As mentioned above, corporatist is one useful framework in which to analyse Chinese society, yet does not accurately fit the current state-society relationship in China. On the one hand, the corporatist model refers to the structure whereby a singular regime effectively controls the non-competitive, dependent and hierarchically ordered representative corporations (Unger and Chan, 1995). Or, as Cawson (1985) puts it, corporatism is a specific sociopolitical process in which organisations representing monopolistic functional interests engage in a political exchange with state agencies. This seems to be suitable in China, a regime famous for its authoritarian control over society. The state has shown the attempt to regulate society through a corporatist regulatory framework (Howell, 2007). The donors, foundations and ENGOs are all closely linked to, or dependent on, the state, especially regarding their interests and legitimacy. Thus, some scholars pointed out the values of a corporatist framework in analysing China (e.g. see Lu, 2005, Ru and Ortolano, 2008, Zhang, 2018).

However, the social facts in the area of Chinese environmental governance are much more complicated than this model. Various pieces of evidence show that the Chinese regime does not have strong totality and effective controlling capabilities of civil society organisations (Yang, D.D.H, 2004; Howell, 2007; Shieh, 2009; Spires, 2011)[8], especially NGOs which are different from GONGOs (government-organised NGOs). For one thing, regarding the controlling abilities, the Chinese regime is not as effective as imagined in all areas. In terms of NGO management, especially within the environmental area, there are serious inadequacies in channels, personnel and finance resources to control NGOs (e.g. see Howell, 2003; Mertha, 2009; Spires, 2011; Hildebrandt, 2013; Han, Swedlow, Unger, 2014). One of my interviewees shared that there are only eight employees in the EPB (Environmental Protection Bureau) in their district, who need to supervise the ENGOs and monitor the pollution from hundreds of factories (Green North, 23/07/2018). Overwhelmed by their daily tasks, their supervisory institutes tend to co-operate with ENGOs. The inadequacy of the state power in this area offers ENGOs more autonomous space than typical corporatist

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8 Some scholars argue that CCP's strategy to include social groups in the regime is a sign of power decline (Walder, 1995), compared with pre-reform China (1949-1978). While the power decline is controversial, it is generally agreed that the totalistic party already cannot monopolistically define the interests of different sectors in the reform era (Dickson, 2000; Spires, 2011).

organisations. For instance, despite the fact that international donations need to be distributed by the state, the government sometimes entrusts some big ENGOs to manage foreign funds (Interview with Green Panda, 18/08/2017). Moreover, as claimed by some ENGOs, due to their specific skills and knowledge, they are playing leading roles in certain areas and further shaping the government's actions (e.g. interview with Blue Sky, 13/12/2016). Also, in terms of attitude, the regime has multiple faces towards these organisations. There exist significant disagreements among government institutions on the control of NGOs (Mertha, 2009). Some government institutions give their supervised organisations much more autonomy (e.g. see Lu, 2008). As said by some interviewees (e.g. interview with Green Code, 22/11/2016), environmental officials in Beijing, due to their international experiences, tend to be fairly open-minded and supportive of ENGOs. In the environmental lawsuit of Qu Jing in 2011, the local environmental department even supported the ENGOs to sue local governments and corporates (Workshop at Nature Lovers, 25/11/2016). ENGOs are not simply repressed by the state. Instead, they interact with different departments within the regime and try to carve out a space for themselves with different strategies.

In order to understand the actual effects of ENGOs and to grasp the complexities of their social world, I suggest examining the theoretical assumptions and categories of these organisations, shifting the attention to an organisational level and discussing the daily practices of these organisations.

3. Analytical Framework: Between a Subjectivist and an Objectivist View – a Field Theory Approach

As shown above, there is a lack of serious engagement in Chinese ENGOs' practices among the existing studies. Some studies start from categorical pre-judgment on these organisations: ENGOs are assumed either as civil society dissenters who are constantly threatened by the CCP regime, or corporatist groups who serve the dominant power in the system. As a result, these agencies' effects and potential are either predicted in a romantic picture of civil society or overlooked in a critical framework.

To get closer to the empirical facts, it is necessary to study what these organisations do at a practical level, and explore how these organisations start from the idealist discourses of environmentalism and pursue their goals in an authoritarian context; in particular how they

make strategies considering their visions, ideals, constraints and opportunities, and what the implications of their work are.

To unpack the above empirical questions, I suggest using field theory to analyse the practices of Chinese ENGOs. As a family of approach, field theory is a general explanatory method to discuss the regularities in individual action through structure and everyday concrete experience (Martin, 2003). To be specific, field theory invites us to pay attention to the practices of agencies and link their micro-scale experiences with broader political and institutional analyses. This perspective, especially the Bourdieusian branch, calls for a break with the daily and scholastic common sense and the need to seriously engage with empirical questions (Chamboredon, Passeron and Bourdieu, 1991; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991b). Instead of overstressing either micro-scale agentic or macro-scale structural factors, the field theory approach focuses on the mesolevel dynamics in different social worlds, especially the interactions between the subjective worlds and the objective conditions.

From a field perspective, society is defined in terms of semi-autonomous institutional logics or social problem arenas (Bourdieu, 1996; Benson, 1999). The circle of Chinese ENGOs is seen as a field, which is an area of structured, socially patterned practice. That is, we treat this professional circle as a relatively autonomous and professionally defined space following its own specific logics and values, which is irreducible to the forces regulating other fields (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). In this space, there is a specific universe of meanings orientating ENGOs' actions, which are different from common-sense understandings or theoretical assumptions. Among all the branches in field theory, neo-institutionalism and Bourdieusian field theory are especially useful in this case, to help us to remove the theoretical assumptions on these organisations, and to further explore the shaping factors of their behavioural patterns.

3.1 Neo-institutionalism: ENGOs' Daily Considerations

Neo-institutionalism is an important branch in organisational sociology. As a branch in institutionalism theories, neo-institutionalism puts study objects in embedded networks. It seeks to explain organisations' acting patterns based on the structural elements incorporated in the organisations (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991a). Distinguished from old institutional theories, this branch downplays the interest conflicts and stresses the irrationality found in formal structures and techniques of the organisations, and the cognitive processes (Meyer and Rowan, 1991). It tends to challenge the effectiveness of organisations' formal structures

and poses questions on rational myths in organisations (Meyer and Rowan, 1991; Scott, 2008). As a branch in field theory, neo-institutionalism studies put emphasis on organisational practices and empirical facts. This branch was largely inspired by Bourdieu's sociological view, which requires sociologists to break with the daily and scholastic common sense (Chamboredon, Passeron and Bourdieu, 1991; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991b). This theoretical branch can particularly benefit this project in two ways. For one, neo-institutionalism is more flexible (Medvetz, 2012) and less burdened by theoretical assumptions. It could enable us to treat the properties of Chinese ENGOs as empirical questions and break with certain assumptions and advance conclusions. For another, some newer studies in neo-institutionalism also invite us to analyse the agents' active roles in the agent-structure interactions.

First, from a neo-institutionalism perspective, Chinese ENGOs are understood not as a discrete class of organisations, but a group compromising heterogeneous green social organisations with a wide range of possible effects (e.g. see Medvetz, 2012). In other words, the analysis will not exclusively focus on those Chinese ENGOs claiming the ambition of democracy transformation or those with corporatist-like features. Different types of ENGOs with diverse working approaches and complex effects will be examined within this framework. Also, different dimensions of the context will be taken into consideration. While most existing discussions focus narrowly on ENGO-state relationships, a more flexible framework can guide us to discuss the interactions among multiple spheres, including ENGOs, politics, economics, community and international ENGOs, which are also influential factors in ENGOs' practices.

Accordingly, neo-institutionalism provides us with analytical concepts with a strong practical sense. The development of this theory is largely based on ethnomethodology and phenomenology (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991a). This theory conceptualises the interactions between human agencies and the surrounding context as complicated and multi-dimensional processes (Meyer and Rowan, 1991), including rational judgements, cultural norms, common sense and taken-for-granted knowledge (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991b; Jepperson, 1991; Powell, 1991; Scott, 1991, 2008). That is, regarding organisational behaviour, neo-institutionalism goes beyond the rational model and pinpoints other significant factors powerfully shaping organisational actions. These factors could influence organisations' judgement by shaping the agencies' understanding of situations and their imagination of possible approaches, preferences and perceived necessary reactions (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991b; Friedland and Alford, 1991; Zucker, 1991). In turn, the organisations respond to

different situations in particular ways (Scott, 1991; Jepperson and Meyer, 1991; Medvetz, 2012) that are not always optimal or efficient (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991b).

For this project, neo-institutionalism's focus on the institutional effects and the complex agency-structure interactions is particularly helpful in analysing ENGOs' attempts to fulfil the organisational ideals in a non-ideal context. In the face of various pressures and uncertainties, these organisations cannot clearly measure their efficiency. In practice, their behaviours are determined both by human rational calculations on risk and benefits, and institutional effects (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991b; Scott, 1991). For example, in ENGOs' daily work, they must take multiple factors into consideration, including the general political climate, the changing preferences of the funders, how to choose among different urgent environmental problems, how to effectively sell their proposed problem-solving plans to donors and what the values of each project are to their organisations' development (such as reputation, income and capability building). Also, the project implementation is not simply about doing good but requires strict controls and balances of time and energy investment, values, costs and risks. Confronted with all these uncertainties, it is impossible for ENGOs to consciously and thoroughly calculate and examine each step and their strategies cannot be reduced to civil society actors' risk calculations or passions for their ideals. In practice, agencies try to control the situation not only with instrumental cost-benefit calculations but also by following certain institutions. For instance, project management standard procedures are required in ENGOs[9] to assist them in focusing on specific tasks at different stages, making relatively realistic plans and evaluating their work with quantitative indicators. Also, these organisations are keen to follow their incubators[10] or big influential ENGOs and learn from their experience, in order to cope with the complexities and uncertainties. Moreover, in this relatively developed realm, specific toolkits and training lessons in this area already exist in terms of hiring people, gaining funds, time management, confronting the pollutants, working with the media or policy advocacy. Compared to the structural level factors, these tools and procedures are relatively less broadly influential. Yet, ENGOs' responses to the complicated macro-scale context are mediated by these institutions in the field, such as the routines to design and operate projects, the judgement on opportunities, the common sense on risks, the norms on appropriate actions in authoritarian China and the indicators to evaluate successful projects. In other words, these institutional factors can powerfully and directly shape ENGOs' thinking and acting styles. Particularly with concrete examples in Chapters 2 and 5, I will track the procedures and logics of ENGOs' project developments in

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9 These project management procedures have been required by donors and also welcomed by ENGOs in order to control the project progress.
10 Some big ENGOs assist the establishments of new ENGOs and thus are called incubators.

the areas of community mobilisation and policy advocacy. Based on this, I will discuss how ENGOs are navigating their own actions and what the implications are.

Second, besides the focus on institutional effects, recent developments in neo-institutionalism also provide us with the tools to analyse the agents' roles in social changes. Challenging the idea of 'institutional logics' and its overemphasis on consensus and reproduction, Fligstein and McAdam (2015) proposed to pay attention to the co-operation and competition in organisations' shared space and to use these social actors' interactions to explain how fields are socially constructed (Martin, 2003). In other words, agents are not only incorporating institutional rules and knowledge, but also seeking to fashion and maintain order in the given field. That is, there is constant jockeying among actors going on in the field, shaping the mesolevel social order. Instead of assuming agents' limited effects in historical processes, these studies seriously explore social actors' influence, particularly on the relationships and rules in the field. Agents have the 'social skills' to actively participate in collective meaning-making activities and sustain a social world by reading the people and environment, mobilising people and securing the co-operation of others (Jasper, 2004). Drawing on both Weber's stress on meaning-making and Marx's naked instrumental orientation (Fligstein, 1999; Fligstein and McAdam, 2015), the theoretical framework recognises agents' control in a given context (Padgett and Ansell, 1993 from Fligstein and McAdam 2015) as well as their capabilities to fashion shared worlds and identities (Jasper, 2004). These mesoscale conceptual tools are especially useful when we review the history and discuss the future of Chinese ENGOs, in terms of how new strategies emerged and to what extent these organisations can change the social world. Though heavily constrained by the context, looking from a meso level, ENGOs are also active agents, organising their collective lives, carving out their own space, and exploring creative working methods, which will be shown in different sections of the dissertation. For instance, in this specific authoritarian context, ENGOs are able to exploit the specific opportunity structure, such as by hiring retired government officials, which brings them precious knowledge, information and policy advocacy channels (e.g. workshop among ENGOs, 11/11/2016). Some big ENGOs are influential entrepreneurs in the field who are role models, incubators, foundation consultants and network builders[11]. Also, in some successful campaigns, ENGOs could

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11 For instance, according to my observations in the field, there are at least three ENGO networks across the state, including policy advocacy, green corporate actions and lawsuits. These networks are organised by big ENGOs, and organisations share information and resources within the networks.

advocate for policy change. Facilitated by a neo-institutionalism view, I will discuss a nuanced example of how ENGOs can mobilise available resources and pursue their ideals in a shared space and discuss to what extent they can make a difference.

In a nutshell, neo-institutionalism is especially useful in analysing ENGOs' practices and potentials, as this theory facilitates us to go beyond the theoretical assumptions on ENGOs and focus on the actual complex agent-structure interactions nuancedly and further examine the roles of agents in the social world.

3.2 Bourdieusian: Field Effects and the Explanatory Power of Distinctions

Besides neo-institutionalism, the branch of Bourdieusian field theory is also important for the analysis of ENGOs' practices. Bourdieu defines a field as an area of structured, socially patterned activity or practice whereby actors or organisations in different positions struggle for the shared field capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Martin, 2003). Similar to neo-institutionalism, Bourdieusian field theory also stresses the necessities of an epistemological break (Chamboredon, Passeron and Bourdieu, 1991; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) and seeks to reveal the social facts beneath formal accounts (Calhoun, 2003). In other words, within this framework, researchers are not burdened with the formalism assumptions on civil society organisations or the instrumentalism critiques on NGOs.

Meanwhile, Bourdieusian field theory is different from neo-institutionalism particularly in two dimensions, which shows its specific strengths for the empirical investigations in this project. First, Bourdieusian tradition has a more narrow-sense definition of 'field' and stresses the particularities of a field, which are not reducible to the broader contexts. This allows us to zoom in on the daily practice of a specific social world and study the tension between ideals and daily practices. Second, different from neo-institutionalism, with its focus on divisions and competitions in the field, Bourdieusian field theory uses the field of forces and struggles to explain the rules, possibilities and behaviours of social actors in a field. In other words, this theoretical branch helps to reveal the diversities and dynamics of this field and facilitates us to explain how ENGOs collectively organise and navigate their work through daily practices.

Regarding the first strength, as mentioned above, with a Bourdieusian field theory view and its narrow-sense definition of field, social actors in one field are not just sharing one space

or having co-operations, but they are jockeying together in the same game, with mutual recognitions and the same set of rules. Different from the loose definition of 'field' in neo-institutionalism, Bourdieusian field theory stresses that each field is defined by its own capital, logic and rationale (Bourdieu, 1986-7), which is relatively autonomous to the macro context. This focus on field-specific values and stakes is particularly useful in analysing the tensions between organisations' ideals and practices.

On the one hand, Bourdieusian field theory invites us to pay attention to the specific values and symbolic autonomy of a group of organisations. That is, each field is seen as a separate value sphere, with their own 'inner laws' or eigengesetzlichkeit. Organisations' goals, stakes, logic and rationales are endogenous to the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 1996) and irreducible to outside interests (Bourdieu, 1987; Benson, 1999; Krause, 2014). This particularly stresses the idealist dimension of Chinese ENGOs, and accordingly challenges the instrumentalism view which sees ENGOs simply as the government's spin-offs. In practice, there is various empirical evidence showing Chinese ENGOs' loyalty to their environmental cause and their resistance to the current political and economic order. Even with self-protection considerations, these organisations frequently claim their relative authority in environmental governance by intervening with different sectors in the name of environmentalism, such as their investigations on the environmental effects of the pharmaceutical, digital, fishing and clothing industries, and their campaigns on green universities, green Valentine's Day, green domestic appliances, green shopping habits, etc. With their specific reputation and skills in the area, ENGOs enjoy autonomy and authority to a certain degree (e.g. see Bourdieu, 1986-7). Donors need to respect funding procedures and environmental project evaluation criteria and cannot make decisions arbitrarily based on their own preferences or interests. The government cannot randomly arrest or shut down ENGOs and must pay symbolic costs when they intervene with these organisations. Sometimes, the state needs to work together with Chinese ENGOs to legitimise certain development projects. Similarly, some pollution corporates specifically approach ENGOs to do 'green-washing', as ENGOs' comments on corporates' environmental performances bear more weight.

On the other hand, besides recognising ENGOs' loyalty to their cause, Bourdieusian field theory is critical to social actors' own formal accounts. Bourdieu used capital distributions and positions to conceptualise the tension between purity of values and hybridity of practice. Inside one field, while some organisations draw heavily upon the field-specific capital, some organisations rely more on the capital from the neighbouring fields. While some ENGOs attack the current economic and political order more radically for the sake of environment

protection, other ENGOs tend to work closely with business and government sectors and use the resources from these sectors to deal with environmental issues. In practice, though driven by the ideal cause, ENGOs also need to consider other factors and incorporate various structural forces. As a result, in the framework of Bourdieusian field theory, the actual functioning of ENGOs is seen as relatively independent from their idealist claims and the pure instrumental concerns on power and interests. To put it in another way, with the concepts of position and capital, Bourdieusian field theory challenges both formalism and instrumentalism views, and presents the tension between purification and hybridity. At a meso level, social actors' practices are the mediations of the subjective and the objective factors. Actors' positions, on the one hand, are shaped by objective available choices and conditions, and on the other hand are mediated through subjective perceptions and striving for success (Martin, 2003). That is, by studying ENGOs' position-taking dynamics and the degree to which they draw upon the field-specific capital, we can further observe how these civil society organisations negotiate their ideals with objective conditions, how different ENGOs explore possibilities in the specific context and what the shaping factors of ENGOs' behavioural patterns are. These practical dilemmas, and the accumulated wisdom through the struggles, will be shown in my following empirical chapters.

To expand on the mediation between subjective values and objective conditions, as mentioned above, field theory views agents' actions as a game, where there are rules in place yet also space for agents to explore different possibilities. Bourdieusian field theory uses field structure and habitus to grasp the dynamics and patterns in the field, by asking what the possible positions and options are, how agents generate strategies in order to strive for success and how some agents exploit opportunities and maintain their domination in the field. From an agent's perspective, they participate in the game and explore the possibilities, especially through a sense of game, or habitus, to use the Bourdieusian term, which refers to the strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with ever-changing situations (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Calhoun, 2003). In this case, each ENGO is facing pretty complicated uncertainties in China including unstable political risks, obscure legal regulations, unclear pollution causes and the moral panic caused by the pollution victims' sufferings, to name a few. It is practically impossible for ENGOs to manage the complex with cost-benefit calculations or simply react by following their high ideals. Bourdieu grasped the daily complex with 'the sense of game' and argued that organisations navigate themselves and make decisions according to the field rules and habitus, which is the matrix of dispositions combining the external constraints and internal motivations (Martin, 2003). For instance, in the past three decades, ENGOs have accumulated practical knowledge and various techniques to manage the complexities in practice and to pursue their goals. In

community projects, professional ENGO employees are not simply delivering pubic lectures on environmental values. Instead, at a concrete level, they are managing various practical factors, including how to manage the mood, hide or emphasise political messages, create photos valuable for their social media accounts and project reports for donors, which will be presented in detail in Chapter 2. Also, in response to urgent pollution accidents, ENGOs have their own training workshops on writing social media articles. They have the accumulated experience to present the cases with specific angles to mobilise the public emotions while avoiding state censorship. Even to deal with the arrests of ENGOs' staff, some ENGOs have their own standard practices in bargaining with the government while managing their political legitimacy and social reputation at the same time, as will be introduced in Chapter 3. These techniques or practical wisdom, while appearing to be mundane, reveal ENGOs' efforts and skills to draw upon different resources and to mediate their ideals with the objective conditions. The field perspective invites us to enter the social world of these organisations and to understand their specific or professional interpretations and logics which are distinguished from common sense knowledge. From these practices, we can observe how changes happen starting from the field level, how new strategies and new working approaches are developed, how compromises between aspirations and constraints are made, and to what extent these organisations can pose challenges to the existing social order.

Second, building on the first strength, Bourdieusian field theory offers useful explanatory tools to discuss the formation of field rules, field structures and habitus. Different from neo-institutionalism which stresses shared institutions, Bourdieusian field theory pays special attention to the diversities and contests among organisations in a shared space and proposes to explain organisation behavioural patterns and the functioning of the organisations by field structure. In other words, while the neo-institutionalism approach explains organisations' actions through the incorporated structural factors, Bourdieusian field theory focuses on the level of field itself, where the stakes, rules and dynamics are generated (e.g. Krause, 2017). That is, to understand how ENGOs navigate, justify and expand their actions, a Bourdieusian view can help us to trace the formations of their norms, routines and strategy-generating principles concretely at a field level.

To be specific, to unpack the power dynamics in the field, Bourdieu pointed out the duality of the field, which is both a field of forces and a field of struggles. On the one hand, a field is shaped by various forces inside and outside the field itself. ENGOs' actions are obviously shaped by the political and economic powers and are also affected by social media, community and neighbourhoods. On the other hand, field rules are also formed at the

mesoscale among ENGOs themselves, and the field is structured by its internal oppositions. While actors in one field share the same goal or cause in general, different actors have different trajectories, resources and skills, and are subjected to different forces. As a result, actors in one field have divisions in terms of the exact definitions of the stake and the proper way to pursue the goal. In other words, the field-specific capital is not only the shared goal of actors, but also the object of struggles among actors, who compete with each other to define the cause and working approaches (e.g. Krause, 2017). These competitions further shape the meaning system of the field, particularly the specific annotations of the cause and the legitimacy of certain action models. Embedded in the field structure, different actors reflexively take positions along the divisions and try to maximise their own voices in the field. In Bourdieusian field theory, these struggles reveal the moral and practical dilemmas within the shared cause in practice, and thus are crucial dimensions of meaning-making and power hierarchies. These symbolic struggles are presented in the form of long-term capital accumulations, competitions and distributions. To gain more symbolic and material resources, each actor takes their position in relation to their peers and clarifies their stances by distinguishing themselves from other peers. In this way, actors manufacture each other and create field rules collectively. As a result, the distribution of the field-specific capital on different positions reveals the power balance among different principles and diverse interpretations on the shared cause. The field structure and rules further shape the actors' strategies and actions. Also, by paying attention to the competitions among different actors, this analytical and explanatory framework enables us to denaturalise the concept of 'ENGO', which is not a homogeneous group of organisations in reality. Similarly, the framework allows us to discuss ENGOs' agentic efforts and potential in shaping different future possibilities.

To use Bourdieusian field theory in this case, ENGOs' symbolic struggles can show us the constructions of meanings, values and authorities in the field. Inside this field, ENGOs, as players in a specific universe of meanings, are taken in by the game (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) and are motivated to strive for the field-specific capital, which in this case is their shared cause, 'environmental protection'. Even though ENGOs are not directly involved in economic competition, this circle is also full of contestations and power struggles, as different organisations are pursuing interests in a distinctive and symbolic way (Bourdieu, 1986-7, 1996; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). While sharing the same label and cause, different ENGOs have diverse values, resources and approaches. For instance, some ENGOs insist on the significance of community mobilisation and NGOs' critical view on capitalism, while others warmly embrace the marketisation trends. While some understand ENGOs simply as community organising agencies, some stress the scientific backgrounds or

political potential of the organisations. These fundamental disagreements on their shared cause further motivate actors to claim their own values and strive for the authority to define the field-specific capital (environmental protection) for their own interests (Bourdieu, 1986-7, Panofsky, 2014). Different ENGOs have tried to strive for more authority and to strengthen their own voices by accumulating more capital, and by distancing themselves from, or associating with, certain ENGOs. ENGOs compete with their peers and seek their recognition on some fundamental questions, such as what ENGOs' focus should be, what key resources and skills ENGOs should rely on, what relationships ENGOs should prioritise and what innovations are allowed and not allowed. Through the disputes and competitions on the shared ideal, ENGOs gradually clarify the values and worthiness of their causes (e.g. Bourdieu, 1986-7, 1996). Importantly, as a result, the symbolic differentiations and competitions powerfully shape how ENGOs view the legitimacies, possibilities and cost-benefits of different working approaches, and further affect what kind of work the organisations will or will not do. The field and their peers provide each player with the sense of how to act properly or whether their organisational actions are reasonable. By mimicking or opposing their peers, ENGOs reflexively take their stances. Through justifying their own strategies and capital combinations, different organisations inside the field are in fierce competitions defining the relationships between the central value of the field and other values. Consequently, certain voices can dominate this space while other voices are marginalised or never emerge. In other words, a field perspective uses capital competitions and accumulations to explain the power structures and potential in this field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Accordingly, the history of Chinese ENGOs in the past three decades can be seen as processes where different positions emerged in the field throughout the years (e.g. see Krause, 2014), and facilitates us to discuss how the authorities are distributed among organisations in the shared space and how certain voices are easily legitimatised and strengthened in the field while other voices are structurally silenced. Similarly, the future possibilities for Chinese ENGOs can also be discussed based on the field structure, which provides actors with the boundaries and categories of thinkable, unthinkable, reasonable, natural and scandalous (e.g. Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

To be clear, the emphasis on 'the field of struggle' does not mean that Bourdieusian field theory excludes the macro-level or micro-level causal factors. On the contrary, this framework seeks to combine factors at different levels together and link the structural factors with agents' daily experience. From this perspective, the effects of broad contexts on agents are not direct or determining, yet they are mediated by the field effects. The positions, capital distributions and competitions are all shaped by the broader power structure among fields. The field is a locus of relations of force (Bourdieu, 1986-7) and players are affected

by forces internal and external to the field. The dynamics and changes in the field can reveal how various factors at different levels (e.g. the broad changes of the political and economic contexts in China, individual trajectories of each organisation) fit together and shape the behavioural patterns, strategies and functions of ENGOs in China. In other words, while I acknowledge the influence of both macro-structural and micro-individual factors, I shift the focus to the interactions among ENGOs at the level of field and further use their relationships to explain the dynamics in this area.

To sum up this section, in order to understand Chinese ENGOs' features, effects and potential, this research project will go beyond the categorical pre-judgments on these organisations and shift the attention to their everyday concrete experience. I am especially interested in how these organisations pursue their ideals in an authoritarian context, how they make strategies according to their values and instrumental concerns, and how they judge the risks and explore new possibilities in everyday practices. To analyse these practical dimensions of ENGOs, I will draw upon the field theory approach, particularly the branches of neo-institutionalism and Bourdieusian field theory. The analysis will focus on how Chinese ENGOs are orientated by the routines, beliefs, norms and other institutions in their daily work and how these organisations collectively define their shared cause and the practical rules through their symbolic competitions and struggles. Building on these analyses, my conclusion will engage with the discussions on Chinese ENGOs' functioning, Chinese civil society and governance.

4. Research Questions

As introduced previously, the overall research aims to explore how Chinese ENGOs work in the face of the systematic governance tasks and the complex context, and what their effects in practice are. To be specific, my research starts from this tension between Chinese ENGOs' aspirations and their practices. The tension or the gap between ENGOs' ideal vision of a new political and economic order and their non-oppositional, depoliticised, low profile and mundane-style practice (Yang, G.B. 2005, 2010; Ho, 2008b) is not treated as a failure or a betrayal of their ideals. In practice, ENGOs are neither purely orientated by their values and visions nor guided by the instrumental cost-benefit calculations. The tension between aspirations and practices exists in most organisations' practices and reveals the negotiations between the subjective world and the objective world. In other words, this gap, along with its causes and implications, offers us an exciting starting point to seriously examine the

actual effects of some value-driven social actors, beneath the formal accounts of NGOs, or the critical view on NGOs.

As shown in the above section, field theory offers useful conceptual tools to grasp and analyse these organisations' practices. In accordance with the analytical framework, this empirical investigation will centre on these research questions:

- What decouples ENGOs' practices from ENGOs' aspirations?
- What produces differential decoupling, in other words, why is the decoupling more extreme in some cases and not others?
- How do organisations navigate, account for and otherwise legitimise this decoupling?
- If they are not realising their aspirations, what are they doing?

The term decouple in the research questions demands more explanation. The word decouple or decoupling refers to the gap or tension between ENGOs' aspirations and practices, which I have discussed in the above sections. Decoupling or gap does not imply failures or mission drifts. I am not assuming that ENGOs are moving away from their ideals or moving towards new directions. This gap between ideals and practices is universal in every organisation. And the negotiations between the subjective and objective worlds happen in every institution. In general, my central inquiry is how Chinese ENGOs work in China, especially how these value-driven organisations pursue their ideals in an unideal context. The term gap or decoupling emphasises the separation between ideals and practices. Different decouplings refer to different negotiations between ENGOs' subjective aspirations and objective conditions. As I explained before, the gap or tension is more of an entry point of discussion, which helps me to examine Chinese ENGOs' functioning and practical logics.

To answer the above research questions, I did ten months of ethnographic research in Beijing (September 2016 – July 2017, April and August 2018), including in-depth interviews with 38 ENGOs and participatory observation in three ENGOs. As mentioned above, my thesis revealed different Chinese ENGOs' creativities to bring diverse material and intellectual resources into the problem area and their capacities to expand their space in China. Meanwhile, I also found that different ENGOs have narrowed the theme of environmental protection into fragmented ideals in their daily work. This fragmentation weakens the group's potential to provide serious and collective responses to the systematic crises with a bottom-up approach. The emergence and development of Chinese ENGOs over

the past three decades have been embedded in multiple overlapping historical processes in China, and the field of ENGOs has complex implications and potential. Shaped by the specific and complex history, there emerged diverse ways to convert the broad ideal of environmental protection into manageable project designs, including small community activities, scientific investigations and pollution interventions and struggles for social justice. At a field level, different actors compete to gain more capital and collectively create the field rules. While there exist diversities in the field, there are also fierce power struggles. In this field, while the technocratic narratives on environmental protection are growing stronger, some voices on environmental justice and rural victims' interests have been consistently marginalised. Considering the field competitions and structure, the field of ENGOs is currently witnessing the diminishment of pluralism values, the loss of connections with political and contentious discourses and stronger NGO self-censorships, as well as the resistance to the dominant technocratic and bureaucratic trends. I will develop my dissertation according to the Dissertation Plan which is presented at the end of this chapter.

4.1 Key Concepts: Chinese ENGOs and Field

In the previous section, I discussed the benefits of using a field theory framework in analysing Chinese ENGOs' behavioural patterns. It is also necessary to take one step back and clarify how I will treat Chinese ENGOs as a field. This demands me to address two questions: how do I define Chinese ENGOs in this thesis? And how fielded is this space?

The first question involves categorisation, which is relative and contextually specific. The term 'Chinese ENGOs' can be used as a legal, folk and academic concept. Firstly, in China's legal framework, the most corresponding term to 'ENGOs' is the registered 'social organisations' in the environmental protection area, including foundations, social groups and private non-enterprise units. Therefore, some of the GONGOs (government-organised NGOs) are counted as ENGOs and the unregistered organisations are not included.

In comparison, the folk concept ENGOs is much broader. Generally speaking, as used by environmental groups, media and the public, ENGOs is a big group, including registered or unregistered ENGOs, GONGOs, international ENGOs and sometimes small environmental volunteer groups. Thus, there are disputes about the number of ENGOs in China. This folk concept mainly stresses whether the organisation works for environmental causes and whether the organisations has relative independence from the state. Accordingly, the

registration status, registration location and funding sources are not seen as criteria to define 'Chinese ENGOs'. The interpretations of this folk concept are both coherent and fuzzy. On the one hand, there is a strong consensus on some key features of ENGOs. For instance, when it comes to the widely recognised leading ENGOs, there are rarely doubts questioning whether they can be counted as ENGOs. On the other hand, there are also disputes about the category of ENGOs. It is debatable whether GONGOs should be counted as ENGOs, considering their close connections with the government. Some self-claimed ENGOs are doubted to be part of this group as they mimic commercial models in their organisations. Similarly, some self-claimed ENGOs are seen as lobby firms. Some consider themselves having dual citizenship, who are ENGOs/think tanks or ENGOs/social work organisations.

Thirdly, academically, different scholars applied this term critically in the Chinese context. Most commonly, scholars stress the function and social relationships of the organisations instead of the registration status and funding sources. While ENGOs act differently with different registration status and funding sources, they can still be counted as one type of group in many senses. Chinese NGOs generally refer to the registered or unregistered non-profit organisations dealing with social issues in China (e.g. see Howell, 2003; Spires, 2011; Hildebrandt, 2013). Compared to the legal term, this includes those who have no registration status and those who registered as corporates. Also, most academic work distinguishes GONGOs, Chinese ENGOs and international ENGOs as different groups (e.g. see Yang, G.B., 2005). GONGOs are reasonably not included as a part of ENGOs due to their close bonds with the government. These organisations are considered as more of the government spin-offs and do not have their own independent agenda or initiatives in environmental protection. It is also logical to me to separate international ENGOs in China from Chinese ENGOs established by Chinese people, as the two types of organisation face very different government surveillance and funding structures. In addition, compared to the folk concept, the academic discussions usually have a sharper definition on organisation, and focus mainly on the organisations with relatively formal organisational structures and full-time employees. Instead, in the folk concept, ENGOs and environmental teams are sometimes interchangeably used. Thus, some small environmental groups are also counted as ENGOs, such as some temporary local volunteer groups, a documentary production team or a group of environmental journalists.

In my project, Chinese ENGOs are defined in a way similar to the above academic concept. My primary research interest is how some citizen-initiated organisations intervene with environmental crises in an authoritarian context. In the thesis, Chinese ENGOs refer to the non-profitable organisations established by Chinese citizens voluntarily, who have the goal

of participating in environmental protection, and who work relatively independent from the state and market. That is, Chinese ENGOs are a big group with diverse working methods and social relationships. Some work closely with communities through consciousness-raising activities; some focus on factories and pollution interventions; some work along with pollution victims; and some proactively use the channels of policy advocacy or environmental litigation. Similarly, the group of Chinese ENGOs include organisations with different registration status. It is true that different registration status implies different political risks and different regulations on membership, fund-raising and tax. However, even with these differentiations, these organisations still share the same cause and are relatively independent from the state. In terms of the funding, most ENGOs rely on domestic or international foundations and many accept government funds. I did not exclude the ENGOs with government funds. Accepting government funds does not simply imply that these ENGOs become government spin-offs. These ENGOs applied for some government funds and the state-ENGO engagements mainly happen within projects. Government fund some ENGOs' projects, yet do not control the organisation's daily operations. The organisations still have their relative independence regarding their organisational visions, values and agenda. Accordingly, I did not include GONGOs as a part of ENGOs, due to their lack of independence from the government. I also agree that international ENGOs located in China should not be counted as Chinese ENGOs, considering their substantively different goals, risks, resources and trajectories. Furthermore, different from the folk concept, I only focused on the organisations with relatively formal organisational structures and thus did not include more loosely organised individuals. While these agents are important elements in environmental activism, and the boundary between organisations and groups are blurry sometimes, they engage with environmental issues quite differently from the formally established organisations.

Based on this concept of Chinese ENGOs, the next question is how fielded is the space of Chinese ENGOs? Or, considering the diversities among Chinese ENGOs, to what extent can this sector be counted as a field? Bourdieu defined field by extending Weber's idea of 'spheres of value', which stresses a purification of purpose. Each field has its own stake and is organised around a field-specific capital (Bourdieu, 1996; Krause, 2014). In his classic work, Bourdieu conceptualised fields as self-contained realms of endeavour, such as sport, art and literature.

However, fields do not always exist and thus scholars have stretched the concept of field based on the conventional Bourdieusian approach. Some studies in organisational sociology define field relatively loosely. For instance, organisational fields develop when there is an

increase in the extent of interaction among organisations, and the field becomes more fielded when the mutual awareness among participants develops (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991b). Similarly, Fligstein uses field in a broad sense and the key essence of a field is the participants' shared understanding of the rules and of what is going on in the field (Fligstein and McAdam, 2015). High consensus and widespread dissent co-exist in a field. Thus, in their case study on the Civil Rights Struggle (1932-80) in the US, different federal jurists, national interest groups and unions, countermovement groups and influential journalists are all counted as part of the national racial political field (Fligstein and McAdam, 2015). Some other studies did not define field loosely but extend this concept. For instance, Medveds (2012) and Panofsky (2014) found in their work that their study objects are located in a space with field-like properties yet are different from conventional fields. In his study on American think tanks, Medveds (2012) noted the opposing logics in the space as well as the connections between this space and the external social worlds. Thus, he used the concept 'interstitial fields' to depict this space, which has its own internal semi-structured network but also overlaps the more established spheres of academic, political, business and media production. Similarly, Panofsky (2014), in his study on behavioural science researchers, found mutual recognition and certain order in the area, yet the unifying forces are not strong enough. Therefore, he proposed to use 'an archipelago' to describe the less fielded field. These innovation attempts allow researchers to apply the concept of field more broadly.

In my case, I see Chinese ENGOs as an aggregate of organisations located in a semi-autonomous field. The space has field-like properties but also has its own particularities. The field is different from conventional fields. On the one hand, as will be discussed more in the following chapters, field effects do exist in this space. Though with diverse working areas and methods, Chinese ENGOs largely share the same goal or cause. While different ENGOs have different sets of social relationships, they are still in many senses located in the shared institutional context. They have to explore the ways to manage political risks, gain financial resources and recognitions together. In addition, as will be shown in Chapter 4, when these ENGOs are oriented by the cause of environmental protection, most organisations are aware of other ENGOs' actions and are motivated to justify or expand their interpretations of the shared cause. Considering the distinctions and competitions in the space, Chinese ENGOs are also manufacturing each other and are influenced by the field effects. A Bourdieusian field concept could be useful here to grasp the Chinese ENGOs' inter-organisational structures, relationships and dynamics.

On the other hand, the field of Chinese ENGOs is unconventional in several ways, especially considering its lack of autonomy and fierce internal oppositions. First, while this field

provides its members the stake or cause, the members are subject to both endogenous and exogenous forces. Like other fields, the field of Chinese ENGOs is located among more established social fields and has exchanges with these fields, such as politics, economics and media. Unlike other conventional fields, this field has more porous and shifting boundaries. As presented in Chapter 3, the emergence of this field is the result of different actors moving into this space through different trajectories. The intellectual and material resources in the field are brought from external spheres by field members. These organisations rely on the combination of different kinds of capital from this field and other fields. Many of the organisations in the field actively engage with the institutions outside the field and participate in other productions. For instance, some ENGOs mimic or closely collaborate with think tanks when they work on policy advocacies. Some other ENGOs, when engaging with local neighbourhoods, borrow experience or theories from the area of social work. Some other field members, when working on pollution victim cases, introduce the repertoires from social movement activists into their daily work. While some position themselves as the government's assistants in dealing with environment issues, some consider themselves as the organisers of local communities. The boundaries between this field and the surrounding fields are not clear. Second, closely related to the porous boundaries, the integrating or unifying force in this field is not as strong as a conventional field. Similar to other fields, this field is featured by the distinctions among its members. Different from a conventional field, the field of Chinese ENGOs is also witnessing the diffusion of orientations. In Chapter 4, I will present the internal oppositions in the field. Partially as a result of the fierce oppositions, some of the members could be loyal to more than one cause. For instance, some ENGOs in this field stress 'environment protection' for the sake of 'environment protection' and argue separating environment issues from other social issues. In contrast, some other ENGOs insist that 'environment issues' are essentially political or social justice struggles and thus argue the necessities to combine different issues together. Also, some ENGOs consider their missions as solving environmental issues while simultaneously building social associations. In some sense, some organisations are moving between different overlapping causes. The field is playing a mediating role in the broader social world by bridging different issues and resources together.

By clarifying the particularities of this field, I wish to explain what I mean by the field of Chinese ENGOs. While I found the concept field useful in analysing this space, this field is not as integrated as a football game field. There are both strong endogenous and exogenous forces in this space. Members are held together by the shared cause and collectively claim the social organisation's authority in intervening with environmental crises. With their mutual awareness, they are motivated to define the stake of this space, and thus manufacture

each other. Meanwhile, different members in the field also have disparate social relationships outside the field and rely on different sets of skills and resources.

4.2 Caveats: Intra-field Dynamics and Inter-field Dynamics

It is very important to point out here that my inquiry into the Chinese ENGO field is quite selective. This helps me to focus on some organisations' daily life and the field's internal dynamics. However, this field is not isolated and is instead located among different fields. There are various other shaping factors, which are not covered in my thesis.

As Bourdieu summarised, field effect involves a reduction of the myriad relationships to a manageable position (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). The field theory framework involves multi-level analyses. Besides the intra-field dynamics discussed in my thesis, Chinese ENGOs are also affected by the inter-field dynamics. Regarding the inter-field dynamics, Fligstein and McAdam (2015) used the metaphor 'Russian Dolls' to describe how a field is embedded among and shaped by different larger fields. For instance, the field of civil rights movement organisations in the US was a sub-field of the national and international political fields. The inter-field relationships provide each field the sources of change and stability. Mora (2014) used 'cross-field effects' to show how the changes in one field could spark changes in another field. For example, the institutionalisation of the category 'Hispanic Panethnicity' is shaped by the concurrent and co-constitutive changes in the field of state officials and the field of social movement activists.

Similarly, the effects of inter-field relationships also apply in my case yet was not the focus of my thesis. I will now briefly point out some important inter-field dynamics as the backgrounds of my field analysis. Regrading Chinese ENGOs' inter-field relationships, the most significant surrounding sphere is the political field. The state defines political legitimacy, institutional spaces, participation channels and legal financial resources for ENGOs. Various previous studies have thoroughly analysed the state-ENGOs relationships in China (e.g. see Lu, 2007; Yang, G. B. and Calhoun, 2008; Ho, 2008a; Shieh, 2009; Spires, 2011; Hildebrandt, 2013), which is one of the reasons why I did not expand on this discussion in my thesis. In many senses, we could claim that the field of ENGOs is dominated by the political field in China. Though the Chinese state is gradually giving NGOs bigger space in the past few decades, the state is still having strong shaping effects on different social organisations. Considering the possibilities of arrest or intervention by the police and government, ENGOs always need to consider the political legitimacy of their

actions and calculate the risks according to the state's stance on certain issues. Thus, most ENGOs do not engage with politically sensitive issues, such as some national infrastructural programmes or land right disputes. In addition, the state also largely controls ENGOs' access to communities, funding resources and media platforms, which powerfully shape ENGOs' strategies and developments. For instance, for the ENGOs focusing on local communities, they are required to gain the permit from the sub-district administrative to enter and work with the neighbourhoods. Through making the relevant regulations and the annual examinations on domestic and foreign foundations, the state also affects the operations of foundations, which are the main financial sources for ENGOs. Also, as part of the internet censorship in China, it is not uncommon that some ENGOs' social media accounts are shut down or suspended for a period of time by the state. Also, on pollution interventions, only the state owns the authority to evaluate the situation and to punish the law violators. To intervene with pollution, most ENGOs have to rely on the environmental laws and report the pollution to the state bureaus. The result always depends on the wills of the bureaus, the regulations on pollution and rule-of-law practices. For instance, the new law on air pollution and the upcoming law on soil pollutions, and the enforcements of these rules will obviously affect ENGOs' action scopes and strategies. Also, GONGOs could also affect ENGOs. With abundant financial and political resources, these organisations can work on larger environmental projects such as public interest litigation or add the curriculum of environmental education in public schools. Sometimes, GOENGOs are the supervision institutions and funders of ENGOs, and some of them provide ENGOs with the internal information of the government and guide ENGOs to avoid political risks.

In my following chapters, I do not explicitly discuss the state-ENGOs relationships, but the state has quite strong presences in my analysis on the intra-field dynamics. For instance, when I discuss the intra-field competitions in Chapter 4, I mention ENGOs' disagreements on 'to what extent environmental issues are political issues'. On this debate, 'being political' is largely defined by whether the framing would provoke the state's reactions. When I review the emergence of this field in Chapter 3, the trajectories of different ENGOs are embedded in the political shifts in China since the 1990s. The establishment of environmental foundations in the mid-2000s was enabled by the new laws in China. Also, regarding the policy advocacy activities presented in Chapter 5, ENGOs' motivations and strategies are heavily oriented by the signals from the state bureaus on certain issues.

Besides the political fields, other surrounding fields are important, and I will list a few here. First, Chinese ENGOs are also located in the realm of international environmental activism and are affected by international factors. Back to the 1990s, early Chinese ENGOs relied

heavily on foreign financial supports and guidance from Western ENGOs. International dynamics have also shaped some Chinese ENGOs' agenda, such as their active engagements in the topics of COP (Conference of the Parties, the UN Climate Change), carbon market and bio-diversity. Chinese ENGOs' legitimacies are also affected by Chinese government's political stances on these international issues. In comparison, in the later stage of developments, Chinese ENGOs gradually seek their own specific ways to deal with Chinese issues, and financially rely more on domestic foundations. There is also some resistance from Chinese ENGOs to international ENGOs in China. The latter are criticised for the lack of Chinese local knowledge and their elitist style. Second, another important surrounding field is the foundations in China. As will be presented in Chapter 3, the emergence of various ENGOs is embedded in the development of the philanthropy sector in China since the 2000s. As most ENGOs rely on domestic foundations, their strategies are therefore shaped by the foundations' preferences. On this point, Chapter 2 provides a concrete example of how ENGOs react to the foundations' expectations in their daily project operations. Meanwhile, the relationships between foundations and ENGOs are also co-constitutive. Some foundations invite ENGOs to make project evaluation criteria together, instead of simply directing or evaluating ENGOs, which will be mentioned briefly in Chapter 4. Third, another relevant field is the area of environmental science. In various cases, ENGOs' arguments on environmental pollution and degradation are based on the claims from academic institutions. Many ENGOs especially use a scientific discourse to frame the issues and their suggestions. And this field is supported by some scientists from academic institutions who offer ENGOs consultancies. Fourth, the field of media is also relevant. The supports from media to Chinese ENGOs were quite significant before the mid-2000s. Though most ENGOs have their own social media accounts nowadays, they still seek cooperation with traditional media, who can help to expand their influence.

Against the complex inter-field backgrounds, my inquiry especially focuses on the intra-field interactions among Chinese ENGOs and some organisational daily practices. But this does not imply that the inter-field dynamics mentioned in this section are less significant. I chose to focus on one dimension, largely due to the fact that there are already thorough discussions on the main macro-level factors, especially the state-ENGOs relationships in China. The existing literatures allowed me to focus on a more specific dimension, which is still rarely mentioned in this area. The drawback of having a selective inquiry is that I can only tell one part of the whole story. However, considering the complexities of Chinese ENGOs, my strategy is to focus on the intra-field dynamics, which helps me to specify my contributions. Meanwhile, it is important to acknowledge that the intra-field dynamics discussed in this thesis are embedded among various inter-field dynamics.

Besides the self-reflection on inter-field dynamics, I think another related discussion is the term 'organisation'. In this thesis, I treat each ENGO as one unit. This is reasonable, as each ENGO has their own mission, set of skills and values. And some important strategic decisions are made at the organisational level. However, it is also necessary to point out that there exist tensions inside each ENGO. Most ENGOs have several projects funded by different donors. In many senses, organisations are functioning as the combinations of different projects. The organisational development directions are also shaped by the project applications and developments. This could be another research task for the future.

5. Methodology

To understand the practices of Chinese ENGOs, I conducted ten months of ethnographic fieldwork in Beijing, China (September 2016 – July 2017, April 2018, August 2018). To be specific, I interviewed 38 local ENGOs (1-2 hours each), worked for 3 of them, participated in 15 ENGOs' salons and meetings, and also collected different ENGOs' published materials, including their annual reports, brochures and social media articles. By visiting different types of ENGOs and working with them closely, I wanted to understand their ideals, instrumental concerns and trajectories, which are much richer than their public profiles. In this project, I am trying to give different social actors a voice to express their own views and logics and show the complexity of this field. Based on this, I wanted to explore how ENGOs have arrived at the current situation, what would have been different and what is possible for the future.

- Sampling and Data

I chose Beijing as my fieldwork site, which is where the earliest ENGOs emerged. Due to personnel, funding and networking factors, various ENGOs have accumulated in Beijing since the 1990s. Obviously, Beijing cannot accurately represent the situation for the whole of China. Compared with other regions in China, the capital city has fewer heavy industries and thus fewer pollution victims and contentious accidents. However, there are still activist types of ENGOs in Beijing, who send their staff to other regions across the country to intervene in the cases of pollution victims. Similarly, with their financial, media and political resources, Beijing ENGOs also participate in the campaigns on the infrastructural projects outside Beijing. As most influential ENGOs and foundations are located in the capital city,

there are plenty of salons, meetings and workshops organised in Beijing, which are all precious opportunities for researchers to study ENGOs' dynamics.

In general, my samples cover different types of ENGOs and include most of the famous and influential ENGOs (see table 1 at the end of this chapter, List of ENGOs). The ENGOs in my samples work with diverse approaches, including community consciousness-raising activities, nature education for children, policy advocacy, scientific research, monitoring pollution data, legal assistance for pollution victims and exposing pollution incidents via the media. Their working areas cover various topics, including biodiversity, water pollution, air quality, soil pollution, waste management, etc. Most of these ENGOs have a team of 6-10 full-time employees, while 4 big ENGOs have more than 30 full-time employees and 4 small ENGOs have 2-3 full-time employees. The organisations' ages largely range from 3-25 years, and the annual budget for each ENGO ranges from RMB 100,000-300,000 (around GBP 10,000-30,000), while a few big ENGOs could raise the funds of RMB 3-5 million (around GBP 300,000-500.000) annually. All of my samples are local ENGOs, established by Chinese citizens. Meanwhile, many of these local ENGOs have foreign connections, such as using funds from foreign foundations, co-operating with international ENGOs, or participating in international environmental activities.

In terms of the interview sample selection, I followed the typical field theory approach strategies (e.g. Panofsky, 2014; Krause, 2017) and tried to maximise the coverage of different positions in the field. While I only had a limited number of samples, my samples included most of the specialised practices, which revealed the hybridity and oppositions in the field. My aim here was not to cover as many ENGOs as possible, but to present the general field structure and field effects, by studying how different actors orientate themselves in the specific settings (e.g. Eyal, 2006; Steinmetz, 2008). To do so, I firstly selected the ENGOs who are generally considered as prominent in this circle. For instance, some ENGOs are well recognised by their peers and the media, due to their special working methods, their successful cases and their big influence on corporates or government, or the fact that they were established very early. I tried to include most of these ENGOs. Also, I expanded my interview samples by snowballing. In particular, I asked my interviewees and contacts if they had worked with, or heard of, some ENGOs with distinguished features and approaches, and if they could introduce me to these organisations. Moreover, I also asked one big domestic foundation to introduce me to some ENGOs who had specialised or innovative practices. In general, the access to ENGOs was not particularly challenging. With the support of my colleagues in ENGOs, most of the organisations were willing to accept my interview requests.

Regarding the participatory observation, the sample selection process was a combination of access and organisational features. From October 2016 to July 2017, I was employed by Nature Lovers as an intern (2 days a week) and worked with different teams during the months. This organisation is one of the earliest ENGOs in China and has been well recognised as the leader in the circle. I entered the organisation through a formal application and a job interview, and the whole team was formally informed about my research purpose. From February 2017 to August 2017, I was also employed by Independent Rock as an intern (1-2 days a week). I interviewed this organisation in November 2016, volunteered for them several times and was then invited to join them from February 2017. Different from Nature Lovers which works on community-based projects and policy advocacy, this relatively young (7 years) ENGO specifically focuses on scientific research and has built a good reputation with their high-quality research reports. Lastly, I was employed as a researcher at Green Harmony from May to June 2017. While this ENGO has 1-2 independent environmental protection projects, it mainly provides service to some domestic and foreign foundations in the environmental department. To be specific, they facilitate donors to make funding decisions and to manage ENGOs' project progress by investigating different ENGOs' work, providing local ENGOs with training, and funding small ENGOs directly. I interviewed this organisation in October 2016 and then volunteered multiple times for them, and was eventually invited to work with them for two months. I will introduce my roles within these organisations in the next section.

- Data Collection and Analysis

In the interviews, I chose mainly to talk to ENGOs' project managers, or the directors in some smaller ENGOs. In some small organisations, with only 2-3 projects, the directors practically function as project managers. Particularly, the project managers' concerns, routines, judgements, taken-for-granted knowledge and logics are valuable data for this research. Compared with directors and board members, project managers have less power over ENGOs' orientation, yet the managers' practical concerns and daily work can powerfully shape the developments of projects and organisations. By designing, adjusting and operating the projects on a daily basis, these managers are converting the organisations' ideals into concrete actions. The outcomes of ENGOs' activities are profoundly shaped by the managers' judgements on the changing opportunities and risks, their understanding and evaluations of achievements and their procedures to control efficiency, budgets and key performance indicators (KPI). A manager's vision on the projects has various practical consequences, such as which groups of the public to engage with, which types of corporates

to monitor and negotiate with or what kind of public emotions are invoked. Interviewing the managers can reveal the historical trajectories of different organisations and projects, the instrumental concerns and the shaping forces of ENGOs' practices.

Accordingly, my semi-structured interview design focused mostly on project management practices in organisations' daily life. The key questions include: Why does your organisation work on environment protection in this specific way? How do you understand your organisation's goal and vision? How do you design your main projects? What are the main relationships to be managed in your projects? How do you position your organisation among the public, government and corporates? What are your financial sources, what are your strategies to expand financial resources and how do you independently pursue your goals? What are the main difficulties and coping strategies in project management? What qualities or values do you expect your team members to have? What makes an ENGO particularly successful and influential? How is your organisation distinguished from other ENGOs? How do you see the future development of your organisation and the circle of ENGOs as a whole?

Regarding the interview design, I constantly adjusted the interview structure based on each organisation's features and my own working experience in the field. I particularly benefitted from my working experience in ENGOs, which enabled me to use ENGOs' daily language to communicate with interviewees (e.g. see Eliasoph, 2011). For instance, when I interviewed a manager of a nature education project, I was able to quickly understand and discuss the practical difficulties of attracting children's attention, which I had also experienced in my own work at ENGOs. Similarly, as I had participated in the ENGOs' crowdfunding events, the managers and I could discuss the details of their crowdfund webpage designs. Knowing that I had interviewed and worked with other ENGOs, some interviewees were particularly interested in commenting on other ENGOs' work, which helped me understand their navigation among their peers. Some managers also expanded our conversations and talked more about the aspects not originally included in my interview design, such as their personal trajectories, organisations' personnel changes or the details of some concrete examples in project management. These parts of the conversations revealed managers' practical concerns and logical flows, which is also precious data.

Inevitably, like many research projects on Chinese society and politics, one challenge in my project was that some interviewees were suspicious about the research topic. In particular, some interviewees were worried that researchers from Western academic institutions tend to frame them as democracy fighters in China, which for one thing does not accurately grasp their real intentions and for another might bring them political risks. In my observation,

while most of the interviewees were open to talk about politics and their political beliefs, around one third of the interviewees were anxious or upset when the topic of politics was raised. To cope with this reaction of avoiding politics, after explaining my research intentions to the interviewees, I also used the techniques suggested by Gamson (1992), that researchers should read interviewees' political attitudes from specific details or cases, instead of direct discussions on politics.

Most of the interviews took place in the ENGOs' offices or cafes. Sometimes, a manager would invite me to join them for a day as a volunteer and we would go through the interview questions during the day. Sometimes, when I interviewed the same manager for a second or third time, we would go for a casual meal. I always presented myself as a researcher and an intern at ENGOs. Most of the interviewees considered me as a researcher as well as one of their colleagues. The trust between me and the interviewees could be easily built, particularly because of my working experience in ENGOs and the fact that I was usually introduced to new interviewees by someone they already knew. With this trust, many of my interviewees were relatively relaxed and presented me with a rich picture of their organisational life, including their progresses, complaints, internal frictions, confusions and self-critiques. Most interviewees agreed to let me record the conversations, with a few exceptions who allowed me to take notes instead.

Regarding the participatory observation, my intern jobs involved different peripheral tasks in ENGOs' daily work, ranging from administration, research and workshop organising. I had been very fortunate to work in ENGOs for several days each week, which provided me with an insider's identity and enabled me to grasp what the world looks like to these organisations (Delamont, 2004; Denzin, and Lincoln, 2011). With Nature Lovers (October 2016 - July 2017), my work included weekly social media editing and membership and volunteer management. Project-wise, I assisted in some community activities and participated in several brainstorm sessions for a new project's development. For another project on policy advocacy in this organisation, I provided administrative and research support to the team, in preparation for the ENGO policy advocacy workshop and policy advocacy toolkit. Overall, I participated on Nature Lovers' organisational level as a researcher as well as a team member, taking part in their training and team-building activities. With Independent Rock (February - August 2017) my role was as a research assistant in their projects, reviewing the literature on the topics of energy structures, the pharmaceutical industry and pollution, and air pollution and health. As a research-type ENGO, Independent Rock has always been keen to share their reports with think tanks, governments and other ENGOs. During the few months there, I also assisted in organising

several conferences and workshops. The team was very supportive of me and I was also invited to document their weekly meetings and the annual organisational meeting, during which they discussed their organisational vision and strategy. With Green Harmony (May - June 2017) I was hired to participate in a research project on the ENGOs working on the topic of marine conservation. The report was used to assist this ENGO and other foundations to make funding and training decisions. My main task was, under the instruction of this ENGO's director and the project manager, to collect and analyse the data of the relevant organisations. To be clear, none of the data collected in the Green Harmony research project will be used in my own research. My main interest in this working experience was to understand how donors evaluate and conceptualise the work of ENGOs and further make decisions on funding and training ENGOs. While working for the three organisations, I took field notes on various dimensions, including the tensions and consensus in brainstorm sessions on project designs, the standard project application and operation procedures, the angles of writing research reports, the techniques to manage social media accounts, the experience in organising community activities and the teams' emotional experiences. I was particularly interested in how these organisations interpret the issues and solutions in daily life, and how they utilise limited resources to respond to an urgent systematic crisis. Moreover, while ENGOs always emphasise the ideas of participation, pluralisation, empowerment and mobilisation as the key elements of their roadmap, how do they practise these ideas?

As mentioned above, I paid attention to ENGOs' specialised practices and the divisions among them. In the fieldwork, I was inevitably presented with the controversies and ethical dilemmas in the field, which demanded me to keep making reflections on my biases. At a personal level, should I applaud for those ENGOs who confronted the government for the pollution victims, or should I agree with the ENGOs who chose to de-politicise their actions in order to guarantee their long-term survival in an authoritarian regime? Or, for instance, with my social science training, I was personally far less convinced by some ENGOs' spiritual or emotional arguments than by those ENGOs who could present their values in a scientific discourse. To cope with personal biases, I took the challenge to resist my temptation to pick sides. Genuinely, I highly respect every ENGO in my samples. Regarding the fundamental disagreements among them, I tried to present diverse voices in this field, without judging which sides are right or wrong. In terms of data presentation, on the one hand, I stayed close with the research participants and used the terms mentioned by themselves, such as NGOs, civil society, pluralism, participation and empowerment. This naturalism strategy is useful as it can present us with the whole logic chains of the social actors, instead of mixing external judgements with ENGOs' own accounts. On the other

hand, I also kept my distance from my research participants by challenging their terms, assumptions and logical flows. One key task of this project was to study ENGOs' daily practices without heavy theoretical assumptions. With a field theory approach, I aimed to present the complex, hybrid and contextual specialities in this space and explore the actual functioning of this field. This distance from ENGOs enabled me to denaturalise and further examine certain key concepts, such as whether ENGOs are one group and whether environmental activism and civil society developments go hand in hand with democratisation.

Moreover, this discussion of term use is also related to the broad debate on studying China in English. I am aware that there are strong objections in using Western terms in Chinese studies, as many concepts did not travel well and the imposition of Western theories could 'bust' the empirical evidence from China (e.g. see the discussion in O'Brien, 2018). Meanwhile, the rejection of Western concepts, such as Chinese exceptionalism, also leads to various issues such as the isolation of a 'Chinese school' or hollowing out of the Chinese field (e.g. see the critiques in Guo, S., 2018). With the drawbacks of using Western terms in mind, I still used the Western framings and concepts in this project yet with critical reflections. While it is necessary to challenge a Western positivist universal tradition, it is also pretty important to bridge Chinese studies with the other parts of the world. As pointed out by Guo (2018), the production of knowledge is neither 'Eastern' nor 'Western', and the case of China can be 'boundary-spanning' (O'Brien, 2003) for the Western theories and concepts, especially when the researchers pay attention to the particularistic, historical and contextual factors of the context.

In this specific project, it was relatively easy to translate ENGOs' words from Chinese into English and to bridge the Chinese and English worlds together. Western readers might find Chinese ENGOs' narratives familiar, because they are quite similar to Western NGOs' framings. Due to specific historical reasons, most ENGOs frame their actions and strategies with Western terms, such as NGOs, project management, KPI, civil society and empowerment. This has also been considered as strong evidence suggesting that Chinese ENGOs are the result of the spread of global environmentalism. As mentioned before, with a naturalism strategy, I have used these terms in the ENGOs' own narrative. This enables us to get closer to their practices and to engage with the existing literature using these terms. I tried to maintain a critical view on these Western terms and the democratic assumptions. By examining and denaturalising the received categories of social life, researchers can get closer to the practices and explore the different possibilities (e.g. Calhoun, 1993). Also, I took the challenge to make no normative assumptions about civil society organisation. As already

mentioned in the literature review part, the connections between civil society and democratisation should be investigated empirically and not be assumed as logical and natural (e.g. see Yang, G.B., 2009). While I also called these organisations NGOs and civil society organisations, I haven't relied on the global civil society framework or a corporatist view. The term 'civil society organisation' is a shorthand to describe these agencies who work relatively outside the spheres of government or market in a specific institutional context. The democratisation effects or corporatism features of these organisations are not assumed. By using and examining these terms in China, I also showed the complexities of the Chinese context and the ENGO-state relationships.

In terms of confidentiality, my project in general is not classified as a politically sensitive topic. Many of my interviewees were quite open and did not mind disclosing the names of their organisations or themselves. However, I decided to hide their identities. For one thing, this qualitative research provides thick descriptions, which are relatively private and personal. For another, some of the participants explicitly wished to remain anonymous. To respect participants' privacy and to keep the naming approach consistent, I assigned fictitious names to all the ENGOs and my research participants. As explained in note 1, I addressed the individuals with 'nature names'. A nature name is a part of Chinese ENGOs' culture, which is perhaps to show their love for nature. Each employee chooses an object from nature as their nature name and calls each other by this alias, such as maple, grass or squirrel. In my project, by giving each participant new nature names randomly, I aimed to hide their real identities and also to keep this part of their subculture in my writing. Inevitably, due to my thick descriptions on some specific organisations, three or four famous ENGOs might still be identified by the researchers who are familiar with this field, which is a difficult trade-off in qualitative research (Dickson-Swift, James and Liamputtong, 2008; Kaiser, 2009). To cope with these cases, my principle was to ask participants to decide what data they had provided should be included (Wiles, Crow, Heath, and Charles, 2008). For these three or four famous leading ENGOs, the interviewees had specified which information was for researchers, and which parts were only to be considered as talks between personal friends. I only included the information permitted to be used for research purposes. Some other information about these organisations was quoted from their own published materials, which was not part of their internal organisational privacy. I did not assign fictitious names to the foundations mentioned in this research, as I only used their own published materials as my data. Some information about these foundations might lead to the deductive disclosure of some ENGOs' identities, so I deliberately kept the relevant information vague.

6. Dissertation Plan

Chapter 2 Community-based Projects: Producing Green Citizens or Happy Consumers?

The first empirical chapter will present a concrete example of the gap between ENGOs' aspirations and practices, which will help us to explore the actual functioning of these organisations. Specifically, this chapter explores how Chinese ENGOs practise their ideal of bringing an environmental culture through their community-based public participation projects. The idea of 'public participation' is quite significant in this area. Since the 1990s, early ENGOs have proposed the vision of creating 'green citizens' and changing materialist culture via the route of public participation. Nowadays, more than one third of ENGOs are practising this ideal and try to provide the public with the participation channels in their community-based projects. However, this environmental ideal begs for more empirical enquiries. In practice, how can ENGOs advocate environmentalism and community spirit against the dominant consumerism culture? How do ENGOs position themselves in relation to the public and manage their relationships with the community? How do they win funders' support with better community projects? To what extent can these organisations mobilise and organise the public to respond to the systematic environmental crises?

In my observation, instead of citizen education and mobilisation, these community projects in many senses provide urban middle-class consumers the option to spend their weekends in interesting, fashionable, relaxing and also 'morally correct' ways. Tracing the project designs and operations reveals the practical dilemma faced by ENGOs and helps to explain this gap between the goal of creating 'green citizens' and the practice of pleasing consumers. As professional NGOs, under pressure of project management, especially concerning the time budget and quantitative indicators, various ENGOs pay special attention to the number of participants and view the public as project consumers and thus rebrand 'environment protection' to beg for attention (e.g. natural education courses, summer camps, community painting clubs), with the techniques of 'consumer perspective' and PR logic (along with other toolkits). While ENGOs manage to invite people to participate in environmental activities, they specifically hide the political messages beneath and the urgency of the environmental issues, and also fail to build connections among citizens.

In this chapter, I provided an institutional explanation to the above entertaining trend of environmental protection, especially how external field forces, as well as daily procedures

and routines, shape ENGOs' judgements, focus and strategies. For the whole dissertation, this chapter also serves as an example to show how the field of ENGOs reacts to the broader trends of NGO professionalisation and specialisation in China, which will also be explored in Chapter 3 and 4. Moreover, the discussion in this chapter can engage with some broader discussions, particularly the effects of NGO professionalisation, the implications of everyday environmentalism, the relationships between everyday experiences, culture changes and citizen education.

Chapter 3 History of Chinese ENGOs: from the Tiananmen Square Massacre 1989

The previous chapter presented a concrete case of how Chinese ENGOs nowadays translate the broad ideal of environment protection into manageable community-based projects, and how ENGOs' practices are navigated away from the original visions. Building on this, Chapter 3 will zoom out and observe different types of ENGOs over a longer historical period. While ENGOs' practical logics are powerfully shaping their daily actions, where do these institutions come from? With a short history of three decades, how did these environmental organisations figure out the practical ways to engage with the systematic issues in a complex context? How did their accumulated wisdom and practical knowledge further shape ENGOs' actions today?

This chapter focuses on the historical trajectories which have led Chinese ENGOs to their current strategies and institutional practices. To put it in another way: how has the ideal of environmental protection been framed in China by ENGOs, and how do these organisations imagine and explore different versions of environmental protection? To do so, the chapter goes beyond the vague ideas and tracks the history of the ENGOs' field and the trajectories of the different ENGOs. Practically, 'environmental protection' is not a pre-defined pure ideal, and its meaning has been constructed concretely in different ENGOs' daily practices. At a field level, with various ENGOs' different interpretations on their shared cause, there exist diverse yet limited versions of environmental protection. The history of Chinese ENGOs in the past three decades can be seen as the process in which different positions gradually emerged in the field. The developing field structure provides field participants with a space for positions and possibilities, as actors orientate themselves by the field boundaries and meaning system (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). In other words, this chapter will present, in the specific historical context, how different actors came into the field, what symbolic and material resources they have brought to these fields, how these cross-fields dynamics further shaped the meanings of the field-specific capital and how

factors at different levels construct the specific versions of environmental protection in China.

Overall, the conclusion of this chapter challenges the popular argument that Chinese ENGOs are generally apolitical organisations. By reviewing the historical trajectories, I claim that Chinese ENGOs are political agencies in various ways. The earliest ENGOs, while only focused on community activities, wished to challenge the authoritarian regime by connecting individuals and organising society through NGOs. Also, the field has connections with the contentious right advocacy groups, especially through the ENGOs working on pollution victims' cases. However, there has also emerged a clear trend of depoliticization and the marginalisation of pluralism value in this field, led by various structural changes in the past 30 years. For the whole dissertation, this chapter shows how different ENGOs convert the shared high ideal of environmental protection into different concrete interpretations, which provides us with a clearer picture of how they work and function. Moreover, the discussion of this chapter also reminds us to examine the concepts of global civil society and ecological modernisation, especially to what extent these concepts are useful, considering the particularities of different contexts.

Chapter 4 One Big Family? The Structures and Dynamics in the Circle of Chinese ENGOs Constructing 'Environment Protection' in China

While the previous chapter discussed how different ENGOs developed in China affected by forces at different levels, this chapter will expand on the other dimension of the field's duality, which is 'the field of struggles'. As presented in Chapter 3, there are different interpretations of the shared cause in the field. How do ENGOs manage the disagreements and justify their specific strategies? With the controversies, how do they collectively explore the possibilities and the field's collective rules? Drawing on Bourdieusian field theory, this chapter treats the ENGOs' field as a battlefield and explores the tensions and dilemmas faced by agents in practice. With this perspective, the frictions among ENGOs are significant, which can reveal crucial dimensions of meaning-making and power hierarchies in the field. That is, the meaning system of the field is not directly defined by the macro-structure but is mediated or structured by the internal oppositions. In this sense, the field's stakes are generated inside the field among the field participants. Different actors position themselves along the divisions reflexively and manufacture each other in symbolic competitions. Furthermore, these contests lead to the redistribution of the field-specific capital, along with the maintaining or changing of field rules.

To understand the rules and functioning of the Chinese ENGOs' field, Chapter 4 mainly discusses what the field's key ethical dilemmas and controversies are, how ENGOs manage the controversies and how these contests shape the field rules and principles. The chapter will show that significant divisions emerged in the field in the past three decades, along which ENGOs orientated themselves. To gain more resources and field-specific capital, actors in the field differentiate themselves from others and crystallise their positions. Under specific power structures, some ENGOs could easily justify their views and practices, and some other ENGOs are structurally marginalised. Through these competitions, inclusions and dominations, the inner field laws are gradually formed, which define the possibilities and appropriateness of ENGOs' practices.

In conclusion, this chapter finds the diminishment of pluralism value in the field competitions. As a result of field divisions and struggles, the shared cause has gradually turned into fragmented competing ideals among different ENGOs over the past 30 years. The field structure of Chinese ENGOs, to a large degree, correlates with the broader power structure in contemporary China. In this field, the discourse of issue-framing, the recognised professional skills and working approaches largely represent the voice of the professionals, who are mainly urban middle-class groups with scientific/engineer training and who are also opposed to politicising environmental issues in China. Simultaneously, the discursive structure in this field consistently marginalises certain narratives on environmental issues, such as rural pollution victims' claims on environmental justice, and some ENGOs' political and cultural ambitions to build a strong civil society in China.

As will be shown in this chapter, a field perspective provides us with a special framework to observe the power reproduction in China. While the space is relatively autonomous and professionally defined, the field is a structured space and there are only limited options for agents. This field especially strengthens the depoliticising and technocratic discourse and marginalises pluralism values. Significantly, this correlation between the field structure and the broad power configurations in China is not simply a result of direct top-down state coercions but has been collectively produced by these professional Chinese ENGOs in the field.

Moreover, this chapter can engage with some broader discussions on the potential and future of environmental groups in China and around the globe. On the potential of environmental groups, some practitioners and theorists believe that these agencies can powerfully glue different sectors together to deal with environmental issues effectively. This chapter denaturalises Chinese ENGOs and does not consider them as a homogeneous group. The

field's internal divisions and power balance further reveal the limits of ENGOs to function as a hub bridging diverse sectors in environmental governance.

Chapter 5 Policy Advocacy: Environmental Democracy or Environmental Authoritarianism?

The previous two chapters focused on the field-level dynamics of ENGOs and discussed how the ideal of environmental protection has been translated into different competing interpretations in practice. Accordingly, this chapter zooms in to present another concrete case of the gap between ENGOs' aspirations and practices, and also to show how ENGOs interact with the external fields. As presented in Chapters 3 and 4, while many first generation ENGOs intentionally distanced themselves from formal politics, plenty of current ENGOs tend to actively use legally recognised ways to participate in policy advocacy. Chinese ENGOs' policy advocacy activities have attracted most academic attention in this area and triggered the debate on these organisations' pluralisation effects in China. Among the optimistic and pessimistic views, this chapter again stresses organisations' practices, and asks how ENGOs engage with the state institutions, specifically how ENGOs participate in the policy processes and explore spaces for civil society organisations, and to what extent ENGOs' advocacies can pluralise authoritarian China.

While plenty of ENGOs start with the ambition to strengthen environmental voices in policymaking and to pluralise environmental policy processes, practising policy advocacy in an illiberal context requires social actors to follow a specific practical logic, independent from their original visions. By presenting ENGOs' advocacy processes, I will first show how various ENGOs and environmental proposals are structurally filtered out in the realm of policy advocacy by the thresholds of resource, knowledge and social connections. Furthermore, those advocacy ENGOs are facing a practical dilemma: in order to maximise their voices in policymaking, they have to be subject to the authoritarian rules in the political field at the cost of their original goals and pluralism values. ENGOs' strategies and opportunity exploitations are deeply embedded in the Chinese political field's power structure, particularly the conflicts among political elites or different departments, the feature of 'rule of people' in China, and the 'guerrilla style' state campaigns (e.g. Heilmann and Perry, 2011). Accordingly, various advocacy strategies are in contrast with the pluralism principles in ENGOs' ideals, such as transparency, rule of law and accountability.

Overall, I argue in this chapter that Chinese ENGOs' participation in policy advocacy have limited democratisation or pluralisation effects, and instead have strengthened the

authoritarian state's legitimacy in environmental governance. Different from some optimistic views on ENGOs' effects, this chapter shows that the logic of policy advocacy in the Chinese political field does not necessarily go hand in hand with the value of environmental democracy. For the whole dissertation, this chapter provides an example to show how the field of ENGOs interacts with the government. Meanwhile, this case also shows ENGOs' agentic efforts to expand the institutional space by practising advocacies, while still remaining marginal players in the political field.

Furthermore, this chapter also invites us to examine the concept of 'participation' in the context of China, especially whether participation can lead to pluralisation in policy processes in the Chinese context. Moreover, ENGO-state interactions reveal the regime's resilience and strengths to absorb ENGOs' voices. Thus, it is worthwhile discussing whether China is building an environmental authoritarian mode. When the current regime shows the ambition to prioritise environmental issues and becomes more open to ENGOs' voices, how do we understand the functioning of ENGOs in the changing context?

Chapter 6 Conclusion

In the concluding chapter, I will review Chinese ENGOs' functioning in their specific context. Shaped by various forces at different levels, their organisational actions are the mediations between their subjective aspirations and the objective conditions. This gap between ENGOs' practices and their aspirations guides us to analyse ENGOs' actual experiences and functioning through different chapters. As observed in this dissertation, in the work of Chinese ENGOs, the ideal of 'environment protection' has been re-created into fragmented pieces, which is far from seriously and collectively responding to the systematic crises with a bottom-up approach. For a large part, 'environment protection' has been branded by ENGOs' projects as something relaxing, entertaining and fashionable. On another extreme, the shared cause is seen as contentious struggles against the government. Also, a very strong branch in the field interprets the ideal as a sophisticated neutral governance term which is exclusive to political and scientific professionals. Among the competing values and ethos in the field, the technocratic trends appear to be dominating while pluralism values are marginalised at this stage.

Moreover, the theme of Chinese ENGOs is closely related to some significant broader discussions, which will be explored in this chapter. First, the study on the field of Chinese ENGOs provides us with an entry point to observe and analyse Chinese society and politics.

Are we witnessing a maturing civil society in China? How do we understand the relationships between active civil society actors and a resilient authoritarian regime? How do we understand NGOs' pluralising and democratising effects? Second, though Chinese ENGOs have their own trajectories and characteristics, their developments are closely linked to environmental groups in other parts of the world. There are obviously many paralleling issues faced by both Chinese and non-Chinese ENGOs. A specific lesson drawn from my field analysis is the necessity to reflect on the symbolic struggles on environment protection framings in global environmental governance. To what extent can ENGOs be counted on to deal with environmental crises? From the perspective of organisations, how possible is it to challenge the death of environmentalism (e.g. see Shellenberger, and Nordhaus, 2009) and the depoliticisation of global environmental governance (Ford, 2003; Jaeger, 2007; Swyngedouw, 2011)?

The Arrangements of Chapters

My chapters do not follow the chronological order. The field history in Chapter 3 is located after Chapter 2, which discusses a particular current phenomenon in the field. I arranged the chapter order in this way, as I wish to firstly present a concrete example of the gap between ENGOs' aspirations and practices. I found it necessary to zoom in on the details of some Chinese ENGOs' daily life in the first empirical chapter. By presenting rich and engaging empirical details, readers can get a clear and general idea about the study objects and the methodology in this thesis. Following Chapter 2, I moved from the organisational level to the field level and reviewed the history of Chinese ENGOs in Chapter 3. The history of this area is pretty significant for the thesis, thus I did not further discuss some other ENGOs' daily practices after Chapter 2. By tracing different ENGOs' trajectories in Chapter 3, I also responded to some puzzles in Chapter 2, such as where did the ideas come from and how did the debates develop. Chapter 4 follows Chapter 3 naturally, which discusses how different ENGOs co-exist in the same space and how they are shaped by the field effects. After two chapters on field-level dynamics, I focused on policy advocacy activities in Chapter 5, which is another concrete example of some ENGOs' activities. As presented in this chapter, the background of ENGOs' policy advocacy activities is the field's division on ENGOs' political attitudes. While some ENGOs, who have collaborative positions with the government, see the values of policy advocacy, some other ENGOs still choose not to engage with formal politics. The field background in Chapter 4 allows me to introduce Chapter 5 more clearly and naturally. Though there are no specific theoretical discussions in Chapter 2 and Chapter 5, both chapters are integrated parts of the field analysis. Both chapters focus on one type of ENGOs' activities, which can reveal more intra-field and

organisational details. The phenomenon discussed in Chapter 2 is more of some ENGOs' reactions to the professionalisation trends in the whole field. Similarly, the advocacy styles presented in Chapter 5 are embedded in the field divisions and broader inter-field power relationships.

Table 1 List of ENGOs in this Research

Name (pseudonyms)	Summary of Vision and Mission*	Main Projects	Year of Est
	***To hide the identities, the information was translated and summarised by the author. Some organisations do not distinguish their visions from their missions.**		
Nature Lovers	Beautiful environment for everyone. Build channels for everyone to participate in environmental protection.	Natural education Policy advocacy Volunteer group activities	1994
Green Village	Harmonious society among governments, citizens and nature	Community building and volunteer group activities Traditional culture activities	1996
Green Home	Make everyone love nature Empower the public to participate in environmental protection	Volunteer group activities Community public lectures	1996
Green University	Empower young environmentalists	Organise saloons and meetings in universities Capability building for university students environmental organisations	1996
Love in the Wild	Record and protect the wildlife in China	Scientific research Cultural products (albums and movies)	2002
Global Green	Explore market-based and community-based models for environment protection	Green trade and agriculture	2004
Birds' Wings	Mobilise the public to participate in environmental protection	Information disclosure Policy advocacy	2004

Global Technology	Raise environmental consciousness	Produce research reports	2005
	Empower citizens to participate in environmental protection	Policy advocacy Environmental education	
Mountain School	Our new citizens: nature, minimalism and love	Environmental education	2006
Green Parrot	Green China and green lifestyle	Volunteer group activities Community public lectures	2006
Blue Sky	Boost multiple players to participate in environment protection	Collect and analyse environment information	2006
Green Explorers	Enable everyone to be an active environmentalist	Pollution intervention	2006
Love Forest	Let more people participate in environmental protection Boost the corporations among the government, corporates and the public	Monitor and intervene with pollution Support pollution victims Policy advocacy	2006
Young Greeners	A platform for young people to participate in fighting climate change	Organise saloons and meetings in universities	2007
Green Panda	Empower those who care about the environment Use science and ecological values to change the situation	Scientific research Community building activities	2007

Green Camera	Record Chinese biodiversity	Scientific research Cultural products (albums)	2008
Green Lab	Enable everyone to contribute to environmental protection through active learning and critical thinking	Produce research reports Investigate environmental disputes	2009
Green Moon	Love and treasure nature Action, happiness and sustainability	Environmental education Cultural products (handcrafts)	2010
Green Fashion	Healthy fashionable and environmental lifestyles	Community waste management Community public lectures	2011
Green Market	Fair trade and environmental protection	Organic food markets	2011
Wild Home	Protect the environment through protecting the wild animals	Produce research reports Policy advocacy	2011
Green Lizard	Spread environmental consciousness and green culture	Scientific analysis Environmental education Cultural products (movies and cartoons)	2012
Green Code	Explore new solutions for green transformations Boost the co-operation among the government, corporate level and the public	Produce research reports Policy advocacy	2012
Independent Rock	Provide critical voices and explore solutions to environmental crises	Produce research reports Policy advocacy	2012

Green North	Actions change the future and everyone has the right to enjoy a good environment	Monitor and intervene with pollution	2012
Source of Water	Boost the public consciousness to control the worsening pollution	Pollution intervention	2012
Victims' Stories	Give the pollution victims a voice	Pollution intervention	2012
Friendly Earth	Explore development modes for sustainable conservation lands	Study and support sustainable agriculture	2013
Happy Greeners	Educate young green citizens: individual, society, nature	Environmental education	2014
Green Harmony	Support the development of environmental organisations	Offer environmental organisations development courses, training and funding	2014
Oxygen Warrior	Immediately react to pollution, oversee and work together with the government	Pollution intervention	2014
Clean Home	Boost the collaborations among government corporates and the public on waste management and a low carbon economy	Community waste management	2015
Speak the Truth	A platform to discuss Chinese sustainable future	Produce research reports Produce social media articles to spread environmental knowledge	2015
Water wisdom	Use multidisciplinary methods to balance environmental protection and social economic development	Information disclosure Policy advocacy	2015

Green Heart	Environmental protection is at human heart	Environmental education Community public lectures	2016
Green Town	Green neighbourhood	Volunteer group activities Traditional culture activities	2016
Green Mirror	Spread environmental knowledge Empower the public to participate in environmental protection	Produce research reports	2016
Know Water	Build a network for the public to participate in environmental protection	Pollution intervention Policy advocacy	2016

Chapter 2 Community-Based Projects: Creating Serious Green Citizens or Happy Consumers?

'Thanks for a happy weekend!' (Participatory observation at Nature Lovers, 16-10-2016)

'Hope everyone had a good time!' (Participatory observation at Green Parrot, 20-01-2017)

From participating in different ENGOs' community activities, I especially remember the above two quotes from my field. Quote 1, 'a happy weekend', was from one of the most popular ENGOs' community projects: environmental education. I was struck and puzzled particularly by several details of this activity. This environmental education session was scheduled on a weekend day with heavy smog, exactly one of the days that people were advised to stay indoors with an air purifier. As an ENGO employee, I was supposed to assist with a two-hour public environment educational trip outdoors. We guided twelve 10-year-olds, walking through a beautiful river section in Beijing and teaching them some knowledge about plants, river quality and local environmental crises. Different from classes in school, our educational trip featured some interesting teaching methods. Water quality sampling and testing were designed as games for children. The journey was full of fun and laughter. Due to the very poor air quality, I wanted to point out the necessity of wearing 3M masks to protect the children from the polluted air. However, nobody wore one or mentioned it on this environment educational trip. The project was designed in a way that the kids were supposed to happily gain knowledge on this trip. Maybe wearing masks would make the project look less like a happy educational trip. Seeing energetic kids running happily along the beautiful river, I decided not to be a spoilsport. At the end of the journey, analysing the river quality test results was an important part of their education, but it was practically impossible to organise the excited kids to do this. We had to skip the reflection part and join them for another game. Later, we were thanked by the parents, mainly for giving them a good time ('Thanks for a happy weekend!'). The next day, my colleague put pictures of the kids' happy faces on social media. The team wanted to show the public that our environmental protection project could be fun. This helped to attract new participants for future trips.

Quote 2, 'a good time', was from another typical ENGO's regular community activity: public lectures in neighbourhoods. That day, I was invited to one ENGO's lecture, which was one of the many community activities co-organised by various ENGOs and

neighbourhood committees[12]. Before the lecture, people signed their names at the entrance and then collected a small gift. In order to guarantee attendance, activity organisers always use gifts to attract residents. Most people in the hall were senior citizens, chatting about their grandchildren. I was a bit worried whether they would be interested in this lecture called 'air pollution and citizens' responsibilities'. My concerns disappeared the moment the lecturer, the ENGO employee, greeted the audience with a passionate opening. To some extent, he resembled a professional talk show host and immediately caught the people's attention. During the lecture, he talked in a pretty cheerful tone and played several tricks to interact with the residents, such as quiz games and jokes. The senior citizens clearly enjoyed the games. To make the lecture comprehensible and provocative, the lecturer intentionally simplified the cause of air pollution as the result of rich people driving luxury cars and running factories. As explained by the lecturer later, this is an efficient way to convey the message to most residents. However, while the lecturer played various tricks to capture attention, the audience was getting bored when he started to get into the details of citizens' responsibilities. They even started making catcalls after 30 minutes, which forced the speaker to end the lecture early. When the residents left the hall, they were still laughing about the quiz games before. The speaker told me later that participants usually just expect fun and gifts in neighbourhood committee activities. When asking about some of the audience's lack of interest in environmental protection, the organisers' reaction was: 'Hope everyone had a good time!'

This chapter specifically focuses on Chinese ENGOs' community activities and how they make changes through these projects. Throughout the years, Chinese ENGOs have organised various community activities, including family trips, volunteering activities, university student camps, children's clubs and weekend markets. Different from policy campaigns or street demonstrations, community-based ENGOs work in an uncontentious way and focus on lifestyle advocacy and public consciousness-raising. With low political engagements and risk, this type of activity has frequently been practised by various ENGOs since the 1990s. During the first decade after the emergence of early ENGOs in China, most ENGOs focused on community activities. Since the mid-2000s, while many ENGOs started to participate in pollution research and intervention, organising community activities is still done by the highest number of organisations and attracts over one third of funding resources in the

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12 The neighbourhood committees are required by the government to organise a certain amount of community activities each year. Meanwhile, ENGOs need to deliver environmental lectures to various neighbourhoods as their community projects. Therefore, the two always co-operate with each other. Sometimes, the neighbourhood committees pay ENGOs for their lectures, while sometimes ENGOs provide the lectures for free and just use the neighbourhood committees' public rooms.

circle[13]. These community-based environment projects are considered as fairly significant in China, not just because of their history and quantity. According to the practitioners in these organisations, the community activities are the most accessible platforms and channels to spread green values, knowledge and beliefs to the public in China (e.g. interviews with Green Harmony, 22-03-2017, Nature Lovers, 08-10-2016)[14]. Some ENGOs claim that they are creating so-called 'green citizens' in these projects, which is an essential part of their vision. Therefore, some scholars, journalists and ENGOs believe that these community projects could kindle much-needed civic spirit in post-reform China (e.g. see Wong, 2005; China Dialogue, 2008; Sima, 2011; Zhao,H. 2017).

If we dig deeper about this ideal of creating green citizens, as discussed in the above two cases, raising environmental consciousness in community activities is by no means an easy task. The projects involve multiple complex factors and relationships, such as the participants' time, audience's interests, comprehensibility and ENGOs' missions. ENGOs' ideal of bringing an environmental culture into China through community projects begs more empirical enquiries. At a practical level, how can ENGOs advocate environmentalism and community spirit against the dominant consumerism culture? How do ENGOs position themselves in relation to the public and manage their relationships with the community? How do they win funders' supports with better community projects? To what extent can these organisations mobilise and organise the public to respond to systematic environmental crises? For the whole dissertation, the empirical investigation in this chapter will present a concrete case to show the gap between ENGOs' ideals and practices mentioned in Chapter 1. The discussion in this chapter will help us to explore the actual functioning of these organisations.

In this chapter, I argue that ENGOs' community projects, to some degree, provide urban middle-class consumers the option to spend their weekends in interesting, fashionable, relaxing and also 'morally correct' ways. Tracing the project designs and operations reveals the practical dilemma faced by ENGOs and helps to explain this gap between the goal of creating green citizens and the practice of pleasing consumers. Under pressure of project

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13 The statistics about the exact number and funding of community projects are not available. Using the data from the major domestic foundations' annual reports, it is safe to estimate that over 30% of the funding flows to this area every year since the 2010s and the number of organisations focusing on community activities is the highest among other sectors (Ford Foundation and CCIA, 2017; Alashan SEE, 2019). Usually, in the 2010s, the starting funds for these types of ENGOs range from 10,000-100,000 RMB, which is much lower than those of ENGOs involved in other areas.

14 It is considered that the environmental discussions on Chinese mass media, social media and textbooks are fairly thin and shallow (e.g. Stalley and Yang, 2006; Xiong, 2014; Lo, 2015). Thus, as argued by ENGOs, their community activities are seen as the most accessible channels for the public to participate in environmental protection.

management (especially quantitative indicators) and the time budget, various ENGOs pay special attention to the number of participants and view the public as project consumers. In an attempt to get the public's attention, they also rebrand environmental protection as interesting themes, such as natural education courses, summer camps or community painting clubs, using the techniques of consumer perspective and PR logic (along with other toolkits). While ENGOs manage to invite people to participate in environmental activities, they specifically hide the political messages and the urgency of the environmental issues. To a large degree, these citizen education and mobilisation activities are unlikely to build connections among individual citizens. Lastly, I provide an institutional explanation of the above entertaining trend of environmental protection, especially how external field forces, as well as daily procedures and routines, shape ENGOs' judgement, focus and strategies. By discussing the gap between aspirations and gaps, I am not arguing that ENGOs are not fulfilling their causes. My aim in this institutional discussion is to show how the specific institutional context makes certain ideals difficult or easy to operate, and makes certain practices seen as legitimate, reasonable, manageable and efficient. For the whole dissertation, this chapter also serves as an example to show how the field of ENGOs reacts to the broader trends of NGO professionalisation and specialisation in China, which will also be explored in Chapters 3 and 4. Moreover, the discussion in this chapter can engage with some broader discussions, particularly the effects of NGO professionalisation, the implications for everyday environmentalism, and the relationships between everyday experiences, culture changes and citizen education.

1. To Locate the Discussion: Beyond the Critiques of New Social Movement

Before I enter into the discussion on Chinese ENGOs' practices, I will briefly present a relevant broader discussion on the sites and agencies of social movements. As these ENGOs wish to change society through providing the public channels of participation, their ideal resonates the vision of new social movements or global environmental movements which stresses the connections between individuals' everyday life and broader social issues. In other words, the features of these community-based projects, which urge individuals to change their consumption habits and lifestyle, echo the individualisation and privatisation trends of the environmental activism in the West (e.g. see MacBride, 2011; Case, 2016).

The environmental movement is a typical new social movement (Dalton, 1994), which emerged in Western societies in the 1960s. Instead of stressing economic and political aspects, new social movements primarily emphasise value-driven claims, and social changes

in identity, lifestyle and culture (Melucci, 1980; Sutton, 2000; Macnaghten, 2003; de Sousa Santos, 2006). With radical democracy values (Schlosberg and Coles, 2016a), activists of new social movements insist on working outside the establishments and refuse to directly challenge the state (Melucci, 1984; Dalton, 1994). Thus, these movements are usually locally based, and loosely held by ideology-bonded networks (Falk, 1998; Castells, 2008). For instance, environmental activists and organisations always use unconventional activities to raise public environmental consciousness and encourage personal involvement in experiencing cultural innovation (Melucci, 1984; Dalton, 1994; Sutton, 2000).

With the trend of new social movements, new environmentalism of everyday life has emerged (Schlosberg and Coles, 2016b). To encounter the contemporary socio-ecological challenges, new environmentalism advocates proposed cultural solutions (Czarnezki, 2011). As they argued, everyday life must be the centre of efforts (Pettit and Sheppard, 1992; Meyer and Kersten, 2016). As one branch in new social movements, this trend also states, 'the personal is political'. That is, everyday forms of environmental behaviour are expressions of social movement participation (Buechler, S.M., 1995; Almanzar et al., 1998). For instance, there are various innovative activities in the new environmentalism of everyday life, such as the zero-waste movement (*the 5R's: refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle, rot*), green ethical shopping, natural education, new domesticity in crafting and also other small environmental tips (e.g. *50 Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth, Everyday 365 Environmental Tricks*).

These ideas are particularly significant for Chinese ENGOs. These organisations emerged in the 1990s, when society had just been shocked by the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. For civil society organisations, conventional social movement activities such as protests and assembly meant self-destruction. In contrast, the unconventional ideas of new social movements inspired them to explore a new route for society change. That is, changes can happen from the bottom through consciousness-raising activities (Workshop at Nature Lovers, 07-11-2016). By shifting the site of struggle to people's everyday life, they can make profound social changes without politically risking themselves. In other words, many Chinese ENGOs have been empowered by new social movement ideas, which showed them a pathway to make social changes in an authoritarian state. Under this circumstance, various community-based ENGOs have proliferated in China and focus on consciousness-raising and lifestyle advocacy. Throughout the years, they have become the agencies guiding the trend of everyday environmentalism in China. Many projects focus on introducing Western, new environmentalism ideas to the Chinese public, such as *Everyday 365 Environmental Tricks*, *Leave No Trace* and *Zero-Waste Movement*.

Regarding the effects of new environmentalism of everyday life, scholars have different opinions. On the one hand, some expect this new social movement trend to correct systematic errors. First, everyday environmentalism is a holistic and materially meaningful response to environmental crises (e.g. Zaman, 2015). This movement inserts individuals into wholly new material flows. It links new flows of energy, finance, technology and political communities together to further resist and create alternatives to the mega-circulations of the carbon industry (Micheletti, 2007; Walker et al., 2010; Schlosberg and Coles, 2016a). Moreover, new environmentalism deals with the issue of a 'lack of agency' in the environmental movement (Christie and Jarvis,2001; Macnaghten, 2003, Czarnezki, 2011). In an individualised society, environment images were experienced most intensely when they were connected to the 'personal' realm (Macnaghten, 2003). Engaging closely with the everyday life of a personal agency is the necessary starting point for any future collective action (Micheletti, 2003). Plus, these localist everyday environmentalism movements encourage individuals to think politically privately (Micheletti, 2003) and contain a strong justice component, addressing various issues such as racism and inequality (e.g. Hess, 2009; Alkonm and Agyeman, 2011).

On the other hand, some scholars seriously doubt the effects of new environmentalism of everyday life. For instance, it has been seen as a sign of citizens' retreat (Bauman, 2008), due to its inattention to conventional political actions (e.g. Washick, et al., 2015). Also, most activities in everyday environmentalism are considered as meaningless 'green' gestures which blurred the distinctions between politics and shopping/camping activities (Holzer, 2006). These gestures created more distractions than solutions for contemporary environmental crises (Case, 2016). With everyday environmentalism, environmentally conscious people lock themselves in optimism and reassurance (MacBride, 2011). For one thing, the lifestyle campaigns are still located in consumerism culture. These activities further fetishise market solutions while obscuring the structural causes (Bauman, 2008, Johnston and Szabo, 2011); for another, everyday environmentalism can only vaguely define a global or national agenda, while the solutions to environmental crises are clearly beyond the locality (MacBride, 2011).

From Chinese ENGOs' community projects, researchers can see both the potential of engaging more individual agencies in the green movements and the pitfalls of individualising environmental protection. By tracing how ENGOs design and develop their projects and organise the community participants, I wish to present a concrete case of everyday environmentalism advocacies. Based on this, I wish to explore, from an organisational perspective, how the ideas of new environmentalism are mediated by the ENGOs' routines and norms. Furthermore, from a field perspective I would like to see how

the new social movement ideas are linked to the wider social contexts through the mediations of organisational practices. Overall, these enquiries will lead us back to the project's central question, the functioning of Chinese ENGOS.

2. The Inspiring Theme: Creating Green Citizens

Perhaps the ideal and logics of ENGOs' community consciousness-raising activities can be revealed from a cartoon video made by several Chinese ENGOs together in 2016. The five-minute cartoon video was used several times in various ENGOs' public lectures, which briefly explained to the audience the causes and effects of Beijing's smog issues. The storyline in the cartoon video explained different sources of PM2.5 and specifically linked the smog with individual citizens' everyday routines, including transportation choices, shopping habits, and the consumption of clothes, toys and disposable products. Accordingly, ENGOs wish to make a difference in environmental governance by guiding various individuals in changing their lifestyles. That is, through consciousness-raising campaigns they can work on a micro-level and bring macro-level changes.

Of course, from a field perspective, different ENGOs interpret the roots or causes of the pollution in China differently. With different trajectories, some ENGOs blame state policy which prioritises the coal industry, some stress the weak legal system to punish the polluters, some point out the negligence of environmental bureaus in monitoring pollution, and some criticise the capitalistic mentalities of the government and society. Specifically, for most community-based ENGOs, which is a large group in this circle, the public's lack of environmental consciousness is either the main cause of pollution or the most valuable or hands-on aspect ENGOs should focus on.

For instance, the director or Green Parrot, a ten-year-old small ENGO focusing on delivering public lectures, summarised cause of the environmental crises as 'people's actions', instead of the whole society's economic and social arrangements. 'Why do we have the smog issues? People do not have public consciousness, and then they destroy the environment without concerns. To deal with environmental problems, we need civil order first' (Interview with Green Parrot, 20-01-2017). Similarly, Green Heart, a young small community-based ENGO which delivers public lectures and teaches residents refuse categorisations, also holds that the systematic level issues are rooted from individual consciousness. As the director commented,

People usually legitimate their unsustainable behaviours with 'collective karma'. That is, as everyone does bad things to the environment, it does not matter if I also do. You see, the root of our environment's problems is its 'human heart'. They need to feel responsible and care about the public issues (Interview with Green Heart, 15-05-2017).

Some other ENGOs also share this anxiety caused by the lack of public environmental consciousness in China and call the Chinese public 'apathetic bystanders and non-critical mass' (Workshop at Green Harmony, 22-03-2017), for example.

In accordance with issue framing, ENGOs' coping strategies focus on changing people's environmental consciousness. Back in the 1990s, the early established ENGO Nature Lovers proposed, 'Environmental issues are essentially human problems. Our working object is humans, instead of the environment. ENGOs are supposed to change people's minds'. As proposed by various ENGOs, their own role in environmental crises is to provide the education and participation platforms for the public to develop environmental consciousness. To be specific, in ENGOs' visions, they wish to create more green citizens in China, who have community spirit, civic impulses and awareness of the current environmental crises.

The idea of green citizens is especially important in grasping these community-based ENGOs' goals and logic. The term has frequently been mentioned by Chinese ENGOs in media interviews, publications, workshops and project introductions, which is a central concept to justify their work to themselves, their donors and the public. Obviously, the exact interpretations of this term vary among different community-based consciousness-raising ENGOs. While some understand the concept more loosely, some have developed different layers of meaning. To summarise, the meanings of green citizens among different ENGOs generally include three themes.

To begin with, citizens are daily consumers in the ecosystem, whose every action has environmental effects. Green citizens imply those individuals who view their daily activities with environmental consciousness, link their activities to the systematic issues, and live sustainable lifestyles (e.g. workshop in Clean Home, 19-04-2017; interview with Green Market, 21-02-2017). Typical green citizens' activities include refuse categorisation and recycling, taking public transportation, choosing eco-appliances, eating organic food, refusing to use disposable products and not dumping urban garbage in the wild.

Second, most of the community-based ENGOs recognise green citizens as agencies of values and discourse. For one thing, ENGOs expect green citizens to spread environmental values to their families and friends and thereby 'amplify the effect of ENGOs' consciousness-raising work (e.g. interview at Green Home, 03-03-2017). For another, ENGOs want green citizens to symbolically support ENGOs in their battle against the dominating global capitalism. For instance, when ENGOs are advocating for policy change or suing polluters, green citizens could pressure the companies and governments with public opinions (e.g. Participatory observation at Nature Lovers, 20-04-2017).

Third, some ENGOs, especially the older and larger ENGOs that have bigger mobilisation abilities, also attach certain political meanings to green citizens That is, green citizens can organise themselves collectively in a public sphere and respond to the public issues together. To put it in their own words, instead of just complaining and shouting about the smog issues, citizens can calm down, reflect on the systematic causes and act rationally (Workshop at Green Harmony, 29-03-2017). As clarified by Nature Lovers, the leading ENGO with a mission of building a green civil society in China, 'Ultimately, environmental protection is the responsibility of every community member, it is not just ENGOs' duty.' (Workshop at Nature Lovers, 07-11-2016). For some ENGOs, the public is not just the audience of environmental lectures, but more importantly, they are practitioners of environmental life and they are the political agencies to pressure the government and corporates to make a change. In other words, ENGOs' role is not to solve each concrete environmental issue, but to mobilise and guide the public to intervene with the pollution collectively. As commented by one foundation director on ENGOs' function in environmental crises, 'ENGOs must be able to guide citizens to actively defend their own environmental rights. Otherwise, considering the quantities of environmental issues, there would be endless work for ENGOs' (Interview with Birds' Wings, 29-11-2016). To be specific, green citizens are expected to have public consciousness and organising skills. As shown from some ENGOs' project designs and organisational visions, the so-called green citizens should be able to organise themselves in groups, participate in the political consultation sessions and hearings, and request the government to disclose pollution data through institutional channels. They could also test and report the water quality of their local rivers, report illegal sewage dumping in their local areas, and monitor fouling activities in their local parks (e.g. interview at Green Home, 19-03-2017).

To be clear, while ENGOs use the term green citizens quite frequently in their daily life, they do not usually conceptualise the three elements as I did. Some of them only stress one

or two dimensions, while most ENGOs mention and mix all three elements in their project designs, organisations' mission introductions and practices.

ENGOs' idea of 'green citizen' further raises some puzzles for us, especially the gap between ideals and practices and to what extent the aspirations can be translated into practice. On the one hand, the ideas and the logic presented by ENGOs resonate with the Western literatures and optimistic voices on everyday environmentalism and citizens' participation in environmental movements. As shown from the three elements, ENGOs expect the green citizens to be the agencies to carry out environmental practice in their material life, spread environmental consciousness in their social life, and intervene with pollution collectively in their public life. In other words, green citizens can be seen as responsible individuals who morally reflect their individual behaviours (e.g. Stern, 2000). Furthermore, they are empowered urban residents who have a critical perspective against the dominant capitalist discourse (Falk, 1998; Kaldor, 2003a; Castells, 2008; Anheier et al., 2012; Glasius and Pleyers, 2013). Moreover, regarding the third element, green citizens could be considered as the agency of a 'substantive democracy'. That is, ordinary local people can influence the decisions that affect their lives (Falk, 1998; Baker, 2003; Kaldor, 2008). The community project designs, which stress changing people's minds, could potentially raise public consciousness in general, which will counterbalance political cynicism in the neoliberal system (e.g. Castells, 2008:1; Skocpol, 2013; Glasius and Pleyers, 2013). Similar to various NGOs in the US, plenty of Chinese ENGOs also wish to make societal change through local close-to-home activities. Through these local civic activities, residents have the opportunities to understand the issues, to realise bigger systematic problems, and to gain the skills of self-organisation and advocacy (e.g. Tocqueville, 2003; Addams, 1926 in Eliasoph, 2011).

However, the above introductions on the meanings of green citizens, along with their logic and the resonance with Western theories, are still at an abstract level. The exact functions and practices of the community consciousness-raising projects beg more empirical investigation in the context of China. Several practical questions remain unsolved if we only focus on the conceptual and ideal discussions of these ENGOs. For instance, in practice, what are the political limits of green citizens in China? Affected by the specific political context, community-based ENGOs are especially distanced from the contentious participants in NIMBYism and local environmental protests (Johnson, 2010; Ran, 2015). Green citizens in their discourse are citizens who might be critical to the government yet do not confront the government. With these constraints, what are the potentials of green citizens in China? Further, for instance, how do ENGOs practically position green citizens on the spectrum of

environmental attitude? Advocating radical critiques on consumerism might risk isolating ENGOs from popular culture. How do ENGOs manage these practical concerns in community activities?

To put it in another way, as mentioned in the introduction chapter, the functioning of ENGOs is especially mediated by the organisations' daily institutions and practical concerns. The specific institutional context could powerfully shape the organisations' practical decisions and actions, in term of what is legitimate, reasonable, manageable and efficient. In this case, while the idea of green citizens in various ENGOs' community projects has its own coherent logic and theoretical base, this aspiration is practised by organisations. And these organisations are facing significant instrumental concerns, such as time management, project participants' interests and comprehensibility, donors' preferences and funding application procedures, the political constraints and the consumerism culture, etc. Thus, tracing ENGOs' organisational practices in community projects will enable us to go beyond the vague theoretical debates on civil society organisations and further explore the actual functions, limits and potentials of these community-based ENGOs.

3. Practice: Several shifts

In this section, I will show the practices of ENGOs' community activities, especially the routines, techniques and practical challenges of operating the idea of creating green citizens. By doing this, I will provide a concrete example of the gap between aspirations and practices mentioned in Chapter 1. Based on this, in the next section I will further analyse how ENGOs' orientations are shaped in a specific institutional context and how the gap between ideals and practices has been created, and what the implications of the gap are.

To fulfil the goal of creating green citizens, ENGOs started from relatively simple community activities in the 1990s, such as planting trees, picking up trash and watching birds (Tang and Zhan, 2008). Nowadays, various types of community activities have emerged, engaging the public in participation in environmental protection. The most popular form is natural and environmental education, which targets children, families and university students. The educational activities include camping, river walks, creative lectures and competitions. Also, community lecture is another important type of community activity. Some other organisations attempt to influence urban residents' consumption habits by establishing organic markets. Some ENGOs also organise different nature-themed exhibitions to raise public consciousness. Most of the ENGOs also use social media accounts to interact with the public and spread environmental consciousness.

Regarding these practices, there are some aspects that seem to mismatch their initial goal, which particularly puzzles me. I phrase these mismatches as shifts in this section, to grasp the practical tensions and challenges in ENGOs' project operations.

3.1 First Shift: from 'Environment' to 'Imagined Nature'

To begin with, the sites of many community activities puzzle me. While most ENGOs are initially concerned with people's living environment and the pollution issues in urban areas, their education activities take place somewhere miles away from their own local neighbourhoods. Usually, they guide people to places with natural beauty, including mountains, resorts in the rural areas, forest parks or beautiful river sections within cities (e.g. quote 1 at the chapter's beginning). Organisers particularly put a lot of emphasis on the attractiveness of nature, rather than on concrete urban pollution and overconsumption issues. For instance, on their social media accounts and other publications, ENGOs are keen to show the beauty of nature, the cuteness of free birds, the aesthetic values of the wildlife and the poetic sense of flowers and trees to the public through their education projects (e.g. interviews with Green Market, 21-02-2017, Green Fashion, 04-08-2017).

On the one hand, as presented above, most community-based ENGOs hold that environmental issues might provide valuable opportunities for raising public consciousness and civic spirit. To be specific, 'environment' or 'environmental pollution' in the urban context has social and public meanings, which call for human conscience and ethics, and citizens' collective negotiations and actions. Urban environmental problems may reveal the disguised repression and conflicts in cities (e.g. also see Swyngedouw, 1996; Swyngedouw and Kaika, 2000). On the other hand, if the educational activities take place in natural settings, instead of local polluted areas, then, how could the project participants sense and learn of the pollution issues? Why do many project designers decide to focus on natural beauty instead of local problems?

Parallel to my questions, there are pretty harsh critiques on these consciousness-raising projects by other ENGOs. The critiques are made especially by the ENGOs working on pollution intervention, who always tend to disagree with community-based ENGOs. For instance, as Mr Sand commented, 'Are they really serious about environmental protection? They just take people to mountains and rivers' (Interview with Mr Sand, 10-05-2017). Another quote presented the reasons for their criticism more clearly, 'They have a logic problem. They bring the students to beautiful rural areas. What can the students learn? Kids will only feel confused about urban life, as these projects cannot tell them how to change their urban environment' (Interview with Green Lizard, 17-02-2017).

While my questions and some other ENGOs' critiques challenge these community projects' logic and effectiveness, it is significant to point out that decisions on the environmental education sites follow specific practical logic in ENGOs and thus make sense from an organisational perspective. From the organisers' perspective, the theme of 'nature' has important educational values, which can be used in their project operations as a key resource to attract and recruit more participants from the general public, who might not be interested in environmental protection initially. In other words, 'bringing people into the natural settings' is a necessary entry point of a long-term educational process. As one manager of an ENGO, which mainly organises bird watching and hiking activities, explained,

> By bringing people into nature, we can make them slow down their pace and appreciate nature's beauty. Only in this way can urban people finally understand the values of environmental protection (Interview with Green Home, 19-03-2017).

Obviously, these project managers are still aware of the goal of creating green citizens, yet they also hold that the complex consciousness-raising processes need to start from building an emotional connection between nature and humans. As mentioned by a project manager of environmental education, it is difficult to directly organise the general public to discuss public issues and pollution, as environmental consciousness in China is pretty low, and the function of their community projects in natural settings is to bring alienated humans back to mother nature (Interview with Ms Squirrel, 28-07-2017). Other managers of similar projects largely agree with this view. As explained by another manager, 'Seeing the beauty of nature, people will spontaneously feel the necessity of environmental sustainability' (Interview with Green Lizard, 17-02-2017). Some even hold that this emotional and spontaneous connection between humans and nature is more effective than other types of environmental actions, such as persuasion, media exposure and protest (e.g. interview with Green University, 14-03-2017, Green Moon, 13-02-2017, Mountain School, 02-03-2017). To put it in another way, the project managers' intentions behind it all are to create the emotional resonance in loving nature, which further leads to motivation for environmental protection.

While there are supporters and opposers of these types of community activities, my position is that this practical logic of using the beauty of nature as a starting point for public education processes could generate other issues. Inviting the public to appreciate the beauty of nature could be a practical strategy to recruit more participants, which is not necessarily contradictory to the ideal of creating green citizens. However, in this practical strategy, two separate concepts get confused: 'environment' and 'imagined nature'. This makes the projects, to some degree, derailed from the original aspiration. To be specific, in ENGOs' community activities, organisers usually use the words 'nature' and 'environment' interchangeably or assume that 'the love for nature' can eventually lead to environmental

consciousness. Nevertheless, there are significant distinctions between the two concepts. The latter, 'environment', is a concept with relatively strong political and social implications. Of course, 'nature' also has rich political meanings. Yet in this context, 'nature' is used in a way similar to 'resorts' or 'green and pleasant land', which is antithetic to urban life. In other words, in this space of natural setting, it is mostly about pure beauty, peace and joy.

To be clear, the differences between environment and nature are controversial and involve bigger discussions. This chapter agrees that there should be no clear boundaries between the two concepts, as cities mean the urbanisation of nature (e.g. see Harvey, 1993). But the concept of nature in ENGOs' discourse, as shown above, is different from nature in ecologists' discussions (e.g. see Greider and Garkovich, 1994). In their projects, as mentioned above, nature refers to a specific imagined version of nature. While ENGO managers might sense the political meanings of nature, they present it to their participants in a way that nature is mostly linked to pure beauty, peace and joy.

Of course, the love of nature and the joy people get from it might potentially have mobilising powers. In fact, in my field, there are a few successful long-term consciousness-raising projects which had profound effects in recruiting loyal environmentalists. The participants later became long-term environmental education volunteers, and some even started their own ENGOs. Looking at the Western cases, some early environmentalists in the UK and the US before the 1960s movements were mobilised from hobby-like wildlife activities, such as the Sierra Club.

Yet, the successful cases in Chinese ENGOs are quite exceptional and there are significant conditions for their success, which I will discuss at the end of the chapter. However, in most cases, the discussion on nature in these projects clearly lacks political meaning. Several interviewees mentioned how they presented the values of 'visiting nature' to their audience: people can forget their daily city life problems, heal their wounds surrounded by beautiful nature, and have a break from their complicated, busy urban world (e.g. interview with Green University, 14-03-2017, Green Home, 19-03-2017). Beneath these statements is a subtle anti-urban sentiment, which expresses the desire for an idealised and romanticised long-lost, simple, organic rural social order (e.g. see Swyngedouw and Kaika, 2000).

This shift from the goal of raising environmental consciousness to the practice of appreciating the beauty of nature creates a dislocation of concerns. The focus on an 'imagined nature' cannot easily create the so-called green citizens. As will be further discussed in the next sections, limited by the project terms and time management, it is difficult for most ENGOs to organise other follow-up educational sessions in order to convert the emotional resonance of loving nature into serious discussions on civic spirit and

public consciousness. Usually, at the end of the activities, participants always thank the ENGOs for bringing them some good quality time. In a way, these participants are similar to environmental emigrants, except they cannot physically run away from polluted cities. In these happy trips, they can forget all their urban problems, repressions and struggles. However, during these activities, there is a lack of serious reflection on their local issues, citizens' duties or skills. Hence, to what extent these community projects can kindle civic spirit is questionable. In the following sections, I will present another example of the issues generated by the project operation techniques and also explore why the project operations follow a specific logic.

3.2 Second Shift: Make Environmental Protection 'Sexy', from Learning to Encounter Problems to Learning to Love and Enjoy

Another typical example to show the shift away from serious public-minded discussions is the narratives on environmental crises during these community activities. To be specific, in various community activities, the urgency and worrying facts about environmental crises have been hidden, while the concept of environmental protection has been framed as something fun and relaxing. While the previous section presents a case about the dislocation of concerns in outdoor consciousness-raising activities, the example in this section is more common in various types of community activities such as public lectures, organic markets, community waste-management workshops, etc.

A similar paradox can be observed in this example. On the one hand, these ENGO teams are obviously not deniers of the current environmental crises. Most of them are motivated by the cause to change the current situation. When staff talk about their work and personal career choices, they always highlight the dangers and worrying facts of pollution, which echoes Rachel Carsons' concerning tone in the modern environment movement. Also, in ENGO salons and meetings, ENGOs' staff are open to talk about Anthropocene and the coming crisis in the era (e.g. Workshop of Speak the Truth, 12-02-2017). On the other hand, as will be presented in this section, various pieces of evidence suggest that the same ENGOs' teams try to present a different picture of the current environmental situations to their project participants. As part of their project operation techniques, some ENGOs have recreated the story of environmental crises into something positive, easy-going and fun.

To begin with, many ENGOs intentionally avoid horrible pollution facts and data in their indoor and outdoor community activities. Instead, they tend to discuss environmental issues

positively. This has been considered as a smart move by some practitioners in the circle. As one manager of a community-based ENGO explained, 'Environmental problems already existed. What is the point of putting pressure on citizens? What is the point of making the public panic? We need smart ways to spread green knowledge and values' (Interview with Green Parrot, 20-01-2017). In terms of the so-called smart working method, one ENGO colleague's laptop sticker is particularly revealing, which says, 'make environment protection sexy!' Similar to the previous section, many ENGOs feel the necessity to engage with the public in a positive way. One manager's comment is helpful to grasp this trend: 'It is natural that people do not like to hear bad things' (Interview with Green Lizard, 17-02-2017). Many ENGOs' activities particularly stress the fun parts of the theme. In some outdoor activities, ENGOs' staff and the public did not mention or wear masks even on days with heavy smog (e.g. Participatory observation, 16-10-2016; 19-03-2017). The theme was to appreciate the beauty of nature, rather than to feel the pain from urban air pollution. Proposing to wear a mask would disturb the good mood. In this sense, raising issues is considered as something disturbing and unwise. To put it in another way, as perceived by many ENGOs, the Chinese public are generally overwhelmed by the powerlessness and frustration caused by daily pollution experiences. Thus, triggering public consciousness should not start by putting more pressure on the public but by mobilising them to enjoy partaking in environmental protection. To do so, ENGOs need to provide the participants with a pleasant experience.

Accordingly, this rebranded narrative on environmental protection has been used not only in community activities involving children or family, but also in activities for university students and adults. Many ENGOs are concerned that discussing political issues or struggles has negative effects on community activities. Some are worried that political discussions or analyses on the social and political causes of environmental issues could be considered as complicated, radical or disturbing for the public. One manager believed that the public prefers moderate activities to radical ideas, such as exposure, struggle or conflicts (Interview with Green University, 14-03-2017), and another manager asked, 'Can the public really understand you?' regarding the discussions on citizen collective actions and government duties in China (Interview with Green Parrot, 20-01-2017).

Second, this specific narrative on environmental protection can be observed from project design and operations, which stress the elements of fun and entertainment. To be specific, environmental protection has been re-branded and has gained other meanings, rather than problem solving or crisis response. 'Living a beautiful and colourful life' is the most popular term used in ENGOS' community projects (e.g. interview with Green Lizard, 17-02-2017, interview with Mountain School, 02-03-2017). With this brand, ENGOs further encouraged

residents to go camping and explore the wilderness, choose good-quality organic food, categorise domestic refuse and produce home-made ferment, make compost in neighbourhoods and build domestic gardens. On this specific narrative, I was especially struck when an ENGO director, an individual who cares about environmental crises and actively speaks out for ecological refugees, opened with a speech during an environmental education activity as follows: 'I am quite happy that many of you can join us today. At least, this is a chance for you guys to leave the working desk and have some physical exercise' (Participatory observation, 19-03-2017).

Accordingly, with a particularly worry-free environmental protection narrative, some organisations have not experienced much trouble in recruiting community activity participants. One manager who organises outdoor family educational activities said that it was 'health and happiness' that attract the participants (Interview with Mr Golden-Larch at Nature Lovers, 11-04-2017). Similarly, a manager working in neighbourhood refuse categorisation workshops commented, 'It is kind of easy to attract residents to our activities, because everyone wishes to live a beautiful life' (Interview with Green Fashion, 04-08-2017).

Third, this tendency to distance themselves from serious discussions and to approach with entertainment has been intensified by the specialised media work in some ENGOs. Following the worry-free environmental protection narrative, the media teams of some ENGOs further brand environmental protection as interesting practices with their professional techniques. For instance, one media manager in a big ENGO shared with me her logic to recruit more readers and participants for her organisation:

> When you get material, always think about how to make it interesting. People are only attracted by exciting things these days. What would catch their eye? Dramatic stories, beautiful, cute or funny pictures, and lively writings. These are our selling points. We expect the readers to find our social media account interesting, as they only have little fragmented time for our articles. The 3B principle (Beauty, Beast, Baby) can help you to understand 'drama' (Interview with Ms Snow, 02-16-2017).

This is not an isolated case, as on many ENGOs' social media accounts, 'having a colourful life' has become a dominant narrative. Some daily media routines can also reveal this trend. One of the ENGOs I worked for had a column for telling stories of individuals who practice environmental behaviour. The idea is to show the public how green citizens act in their daily life. Among the 50 issues, most reports emphasised how environmental habits provided them with more happiness, quality time and inner peace. The editor usually put these 'happy elements' in the title or in bigger fonts, as they are eye-catching and easier to catch readers. On many ENGOs' social media accounts, environmental protection is linked to a variety of fun and relaxing themes, such as physical and psychological health, family quality time,

friendship and a beautiful and colourful time. Accordingly, lots of ENGOs do not see their social media accounts as platforms to trigger serious discussions among citizens. Instead, they try hard to make their social media accounts look energetic, optimistic and fun. The dramatic stories, beautiful pictures and funny language are frequently used to catch readers' attention. Also, they keep their articles interesting and short. As a result, some articles published on these platforms are inevitably vacuous brain candy.

To be clear, in social media management, there are variations of issue framing among ENGOs. As will become evident in Chapters 3 and 4, the ENGOs focusing on community activities in this chapter are quite different from other types of ENGOs. For instance, the ENGOs working on pollution victims' cases specifically expose pollution crises and analyse the urgency of issues in their media, while the ENGOs working on policy analysis tend to present the data analysis on their social media.

Also, it is necessary to point out that some staff in these community-based ENGOs are aware of the shift from guiding citizens to discuss real problems to just attending fun and interesting activities. Yet, many of their concerns cannot be addressed in project operations. Indeed, some organisations introduce discussions on pollution and citizen duties in their projects. Yet these parts appear to be especially challenging, and they have been cancelled in different ENGOs. I will discuss the practical reason for this phenomenon in the next section.

To summarise, paralleling the previous example, this section provides another case to show the gap between the goal and practice of creating green citizens in some ENGOs' projects. Instead of mobilising public and political engagement in environmental protection, many ENGOs intentionally avoid serious discussions on pollution and try to make the atmosphere pleasant for the participants. This raises the question as to what extent these projects can guide citizens to organise themselves together to react to environmental issues in China, or in what way these projects can help to cultivate civic spirit or to trigger a green public sphere.

3.3 Third Shift: from 'Citizens' to 'Consumers'

In the previous two sections, I presented two examples, which appears to be paradoxical. While ENGOs have the goal of raising public consciousness on environmental protection, it is not clear how they can guide the participants to have critical discussions on public issues through these community projects. Instead, environmental activities are designed to be interesting and fun. Despite the internal and external critiques, various community projects

are still running this way. An important reason is that these seemingly paradoxical project designs are largely reasonable from an organisational management perspective. In other words, these project operations' logic makes a lot of sense in terms of ENGOs' daily practice.

This section will discuss how these practices are justified in ENGOs' routines, techniques and norms. Specifically, an important management tool, 'consumer perspective', has profound effects in shaping some ENGOs' orientations. Between the ideal of creating green citizens and concrete organisational actions, ENGOs use various techniques in order to efficiently translate the invested resources into values. I call consumer perspective a tool in this chapter, yet it can also be considered as a technique or a view. Some organisations explicitly use consumer perspective (*Yong Hu Si Wei*) as a theorised management tool, while some ENGOs adopt it as a view or a special thinking pattern, which will be shown in this section. To be specific, with a consumer perspective, ENGOs view the participants in their community activities as 'consumers' (*Yong Hu*), instead of 'citizens/citizens-to-be'.

From an organisational perspective, the purpose of this tool is to help organisations divide their work into separate procedures and to achieve the best performance in each procedure. In this case, the broad task of 'organising the Chinese public to respond to environmental crises collectively' has been divided into different steps. The first step is to attract more people into community activities. To do so, a quick way to engage more people is to attract potential participants with their needs. In other words, potential participants should be seen as consumers and the priority of the organisers is to satisfy these consumers' needs. Therefore, a subtle shift happened in the project operations. Instead of changing or mobilising participants to critically reflect on environmental issues, some ENGOs are playing the role of pleasing and taking care of the participants. This shift of role for the ENGO-public relationship has profound implications and can help us to answer the questions raised in the previous two sections.

3.3.1   Project Logic: Consumer Perspective

Consumer perspective is a management tool that originated from the business world. ENGOs learnt it from foundations, peers and NGO development consultants. Some adopt the view due to human resources' inflow from the private sector.

This tool in my field site can be clearly observed from a theorised training course provided by a major foundation to ENGOs (Participatory observation, 26-10-2016; Participatory

observation, 08-12-2016). The key for ENGOs' development is the triangle relationships between 'Consumers', 'Resource' and 'Me'. 'Me' refers to the team of ENGOs, which produce 'products'. For community-based ENGOs, their products are their projects and community activities. 'Consumers' refers to the users and beneficiaries of their products. For instance, the participants in ENGOs' community activities are ENGOs' typical consumers. ENGOs are supposed to understand and satisfy consumers' core needs. Maintaining friendly and loyal consumer relationships is crucial for the triangular relationships and ENGOs' development (Participatory observation, 26-10-2016).

To be specific, consumer perspective is a management tool to achieve a competitive advantage in a business context. It stresses the differences between a consumer's perspective and a supplier's perspective (Graf and Maas, 2008). To occupy a larger piece of the market, corporates should be driven by the former rather than the latter. While consumers have unmet needs, the suppliers come up with products and services to meet those needs at a price. It is an easy virtuous cycle (The Leading Partnership, 2015). The centre of the consumer perspective is the consumer value (CV), which means the value generated by a company's products or services as perceived by the consumer (Woodruff, 1997; Wang, Po et al., 2004). This view invites corporates to think beyond the material products and instead focus on the social meanings and values of their service. Notably, the consumers are not paying for what the products do, but the benefits a product or service brings them (Graf and Maas, 2008). In other words, the consumers' desired value is independent of the user-specific experience (Flint et al., 1997). This requires the suppliers to shift their focus from their original plans for the products to consumers' needs. For instance, a sports cruiser boat manufacturer should not simply focus on providing boats. The value of their company is offering a memorable boating experience that enhances the users' pride of ownership, feeling of security in water conditions and flexibility in extending the range of boating activities (Woodruff, 1997). By putting consumer values in the first place, corporates could increase consumer satisfaction and then make the consumer repurchase their products (Graf and Maas, 2008:12). Significantly, identifying and creating consumer value is an essential pre-requisite for long-term company survival and success (e.g. see Woodruff, 1997).

Various ENGOs accept or use this view or technique in their community activities, partly as a process of the NGO professionalisation trend in China. ENGOs are trained or forced to integrate foundations' efficiency-driven management logic. Also, some ENGOs use the consumer perspective in their project operations to deal with daily challenges they face in practice. A particular difficulty in community activities is to keep recruiting participants. Previous activities back in the 1990s have been stereotyped as 'dull lectures,' 'boring and depressing volunteer activities' and 'standing on the moral high ground' (e.g. interview with

Green Harmony, 17-10-2016, Workshop at Nature Lovers, 16-02-2017). With poor feedback from communities, ENGOs have less public attention and thus less funding from membership fees or foundations.

As interpreted by some current ENGOs, the reason for this 'dullness' is that ENGOs are distant from the community's needs. One current community activity organiser who is against simply educating the public without special fun designs, commented that they (ENGOs in the 1990s) talked to the public like they were morally superior, and no one would like to hear that (Interview with Green University, 14-03-2017). Another organiser also pointed out the differences between the perspectives of ENGOs and the public, 'It would not work if you just educated the public in the voice of a lecturer. The public is like frogs in warm water. Environmentalists can see the fire beneath the pot. However, the frogs just cannot see the danger. The public would not simply listen to ENGOs' (Interview with Birds' Wings, 29-11-2016).

Thus, many ENGOs sense the necessity to use diverse attention-seeking activities to attract participants. Some view consumer perspective as a tool to manage the ENGO-public relationships. That is, ENGOs must be aware of the public's needs and think from the public's perspective. One community project manager spoke highly of this technique and said that consumer perspective can force ENGOs to jump out of their small bubble and actively interact with the public (Interview with Mr Sand, 11-04-2017). Another manager also agrees that this logic makes much sense in their daily work. 'Logically, to influence the public, you need to understand who you work with. To start, try to draw the profiles of your consumers' (Interview with Green Lizard, 17-02-2017).

3.3.2 Project Operations: Consumer Value Learning and Delivery
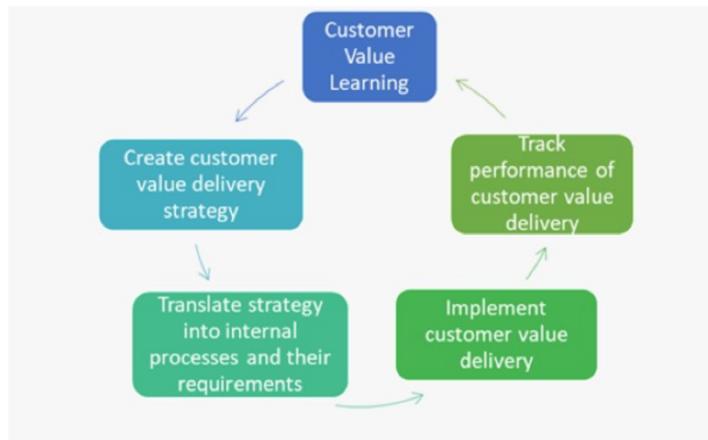
Figure 1 Working Procedures of Consumer Perspective (Woodruff, 1997: 147)

To utilise the tool of consumer perspective, the steps 'consumer value learning' and 'creating consumer value delivery strategy' are particularly important in shaping project designs and implementation (see Figure 1 above, Woodruff, 1997:147). As will be shown in this section, many community projects discussed in this chapter follow this logic to a large degree. Based on this, I will further discuss what has been missed in this linear project management mechanism.

As mentioned in the previous part, in order to change the public, many ENGOs start their project by analysing the objects they work with or learning what the so-called consumer value is. Some strictly follow the training courses on project management and study consumer values with preliminary investigations, interviews and questionnaires. Some draw consumer profiles which is similar to business models (see Figure 2 below). Some do not explicitly use the tools but design their activities with the awareness of the participants' features. When these ENGOs explained their project designs to me, the staff always started from the characteristics of the potential participants. After learning the features of these participants and the so-called consumer value, ENGOs try to deliver these values, in order to maximise their influence.
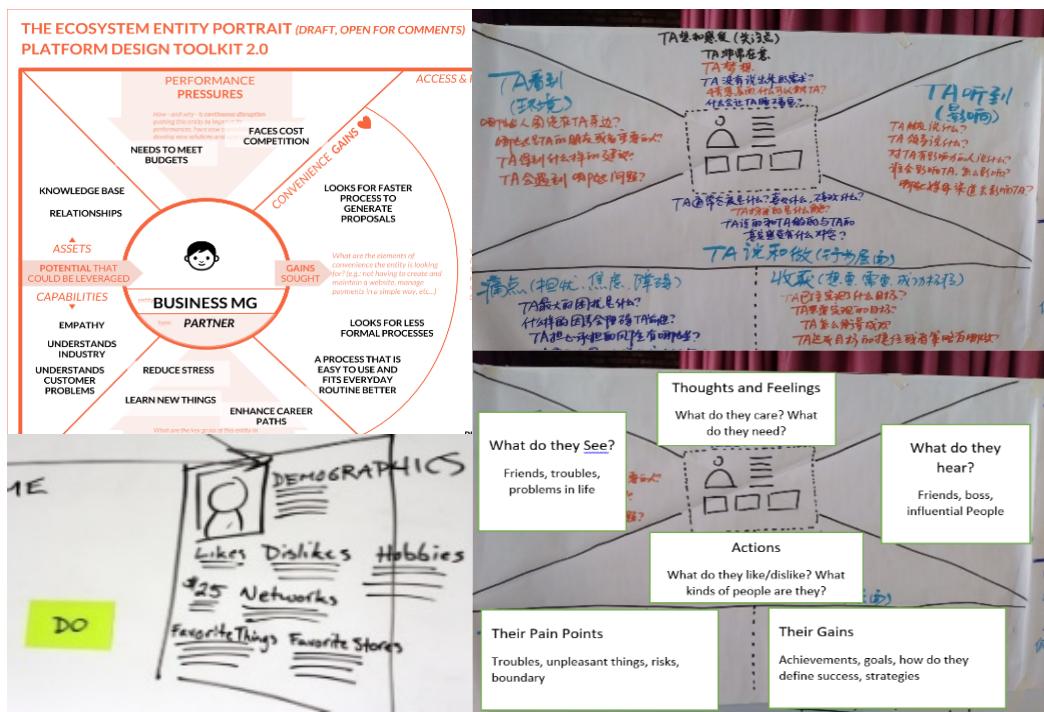
Figure 2 (Left) Two Consumer Portraits Models in Business;
(Right) Consumer Portrait by one Chinese ENGO in the field and translation

In project designs, ENGOs' judgements on the features and needs of project participants are crucial, which largely links to why ENGOs in these community projects tend to frame environmental protection in a positive and interesting way. To be clear, on the one hand, there exist different interpretations of the public's needs and skills among ENGOs. For instance, in the projects specifically targeted at doctors in hospitals and runners in marathon clubs, ENGOs expect their project participants to have relatively higher public consciousness. To use their words, it is generally assumed that there are lower communication costs with these participant groups. On the other hand, most community projects which are discussed in this chapter do not target any specific group yet work with the general public. To be specific, these ENGO teams tend to share relatively pessimistic views on the Chinese general public. In their assumptions, on average, the Chinese public has low environmental consciousness and it is pretty difficult to change their views[15].

This specific pessimistic judgement on the features of the Chinese pubic further shaped their community project design, which to some degree explains the puzzling phenomenon

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15 For instance, as shown by ENGOs' visions on the Annex in Chapter 1, while some ENGOs expect to empower everyone to be an active environmentalist, many ENGOs hold quite modest visions on the effects of public education and only expect to spread environmental consciousness through their projects.

mentioned above. To be specific, in many ENGOs' understanding, the Chinese public is not ready to be mobilised at this stage. It is pretty unrealistic to expect the Chinese public to actively and collectively participate in environmental protection. Many community activity organisers have strong doubts about the Chinese public's environmental awareness and civic consciousness. There are strong complaints from these project managers about this matter, represented by 'people are not familiar with the idea of environment protection and we need to let them understand what it is first' (Interview with Mr Dove-Tree at Nature Lovers, 01-03-2017), or 'the public does not understand environment problems as concerns of the common good' (Workshop in Nature Lovers, 07-11-2016). In other words, practically, ENGOs face a huge workload in order to create green citizens, because 'currently people are not used to thinking in the public interest' (Interview with Green Parrot, 20-01-2017).

Moreover, many ENGOs are frustrated not only by the low environmental awareness of the general public, but also by people's cognitive levels and learning abilities, which makes it more difficult to cultivate civic spirit in China. Some ENGOs directly gave up in changing the general public, as they hold that adults are too conservative to change their views and actions. Therefore, many ENGOs focus on children's education. According to them, 'we are not confident to change adults' consciousness and behaviours. Therefore, we put hope in educating children' (Workshop among ENGOs, 20-10-2016); or 'I prefer to educate children. It is much easier to influence children than adults' (Participatory observation, 15-10-2016). Surely, when ENGOs work with children, they cannot stress citizen duties or social factors in their projects. Besides adults and children, university students are ideal education objects. Can ENGOs push these groups more into growing environmental consciousness? In Chinese history, university students are usually active in social movements. Some scholars also expect these young adults to make a difference in environmental crises (e.g. Lu, H.Y. 2004 and Economy, 2004 cited in Stalley and Yang, D.P. 2006). However, in ENGOs' daily practices, as observed by the ENGOs working with universities, university students in contemporary China are too juvenile to shoulder responsibilities. One manager pointed it pretty directly, 'Yes, I know that we are talking about university students instead of children. The reality is that university students these days are immature. You cannot expect them to have high public consciousness' (Interview with Ms Squirrel, 28-07-2017).

This view on the public further links to why many ENGOs start with the goal of creating green citizens yet end up framing environmental protection as something interesting and fun for individuals. Through investigations, questionnaires or project reviews, ENGOs try to understand what different groups need in their spare time. Importantly, this way of thinking reveals a shift of roles. In these investigations on 'customer values', ENGO teams always

have this question in their minds: 'What can attract more participants in community projects?'. That is, these community activity organisers are not thinking primarily 'what needs to be done' in order to create green citizens. Instead, they are studying 'what the public wants to do' and 'how to satisfy their needs'. To a large degree, they treat the public as consumers and follow their current needs.

Based on the judgement that their working objects are lacking public consciousness and do not like complicated or negative discussions, ENGOs tend to guarantee their participants will have a good time. To be specific, as presented by these project managers, they put emphasis on the elements of 'having fun', 'being relaxed', 'friendship', 'family relationships', 'simple messages' and 'career opportunities' (e.g. interview with Green University, 14-03-2017; Mr Dove-Tree at Nature Lovers, 01-03-2017; Mr Golden-Larch at Nature Lovers, 11-04-2017). One manager from an ENGO working with universities proudly shared the multiple dimensions of their projects: 'Our activities mean a lot to participants: friendship, after-school life, psychological health and citizen responsibilities' (Interview with Green University, 14-03-2017). Many ENGOs try to meet the public's specific needs in their project designs, for instance.

> I tried to make my lectures interesting. No matter the influence of the lecture, people have already invested their time in us. Everyone is struggling in their life and they deserve to have a happy time (Interview with Green Heart, 15-05-2017).

> We did a preliminary investigation about university students' motivations to join environmental activities. The top three are quality time, individual ability improvement and sense of achievement. This requires us to design the projects as games for them (Interview with Ms Squirrel, 28-07-2017).

From a perspective of organisational practice, this also explains why ENGOs organise activities in natural settings and why they tend to frame environmental protection as something interesting. These project designs make sense in terms of project operations. Compared to serious and provocative discussions on citizen duties and social roots of environmental issues, these project designs with entertainment features are considered more realistic and grounded. As explained by one manager from an ENGO that mainly organises outdoor activities, 'the public does not have public consciousness on environmental issues. The first step is to link people and environmental issues. The link must be interesting and attractive, like a beautiful natural scene' (Workshop at Nature Lovers, 07-11-2016). Considering the public's practical needs, ENGOs are supposed to create a relaxing or entertaining atmosphere in their activities. Accordingly, their social media accounts should provide a pleasant reading experience for the readers, in order to attract more subscribers.

Another dimension to observe this 'consumer perspective' in some ENGOs' community projects is their consideration regarding 'what to avoid' in project design. Besides adding the

elements to satisfy participants' current needs, managers also need to be cautious about the elements which may scare away potential participants. One manager explained, 'You need to avoid risks, such as the risks of bringing them inconvenience or unpleasant feelings. By doing so, we make environmental protection more acceptable to the public' (Workshop at Green Market, 08-04-2017).

While ENGOs have their own long-term ideals, they still need to build connections with their participants and pay attention to the participants' needs and preferences. As seen by many ENGOs, besides lacking environmental awareness and public consciousness, the public in China are innocent and fragile, and need emotional comforts. To be specific, the fragile public are not agencies who are ready to encounter crises. Sometimes, they are the problem to be solved.

A typical example is the design of various educational projects on smog issues in Beijing. With regard to the smog issue, the public have been worried about the associated health threats[16]. In these community activities and lectures, ENGOs mainly introduce the causes and harms of smog and self-protection methods. However, many ENGOs do not really stress the topic 'how to make changes', as the projects are mainly designed to ease the public's anxiety. As explained by one manager, the public's anxious reactions to smog issues leave the ENGOs no choice but to first calm down the public. 'The public tends to be confused, anxious and angry in the face of the smog. We need to channel those strong emotions and calm them down' (Interview with Ms River, 29-03-2017). Another manager clarified the function of the education project (a series of public lectures) more explicitly, by saying it was designed as a placebo for the public to help them understand how to protect themselves in smog (Participatory observation with Nature Lovers, 29-10-2016).

In various other community-based projects, managers have clarified the risky elements in projects, based on their analyses of participants' features. These include 'discussing issues in negative ways,' 'engaging in political discussions,' 'time-consuming and intense activities,' 'inviting participants to explore and write reflections' and 'introducing complicated information' (e.g. participatory observation in Nature Lovers, 29-10-2016; interview with Green Home, 19-03-2017; workshop among ENGOs, 20-10-2016).

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16 For instance, *Under the Dome*, a hard-hitting film about air pollution in China had been viewed more than 300 million times in China in less than a week (Branigan, 2015). During the period, the health threat of air pollution became the hottest topic of conversation in China (Huang, 2015). Eventually, the state blocked Web access to the film.

The decision-making processes in some project designs revealed the difficult negotiations between long-term ideals and practical concerns, which forced managers to avoid some so-called risky elements in their activities. For instance,

> We used to ask participants to write down their thoughts after our river-walking activities. It was difficult to do so, as this required people to gain knowledge and gather information. After project reviews, we cancelled this part (Interview with Green Market, 11-04-2017).

> We once organised citizens to participate in research. But it was too difficult for them. The project ended up as a tour. What a waste of funding! It is better to just organise simple and interesting activities (Interview with Ms Squirrel, 02-03-2017).

To put it another way, this project management technique guides managers to pay attention to 'what participants want' and 'what might scare them away'. As a result, the logic of consumers' perspective naturally justifies various practices and avoids some significant questions, especially what ENGOs can expect the public to do in environmental crises through their community projects. Based on the seemingly fact-based judgements on the Chinese public, it appears to be a natural choice for ENGOs to constrain their long-term ambitions and take care of the fragile public first. To be specific, the general public, as understood in various projects, are vulnerable residents who need a break from their stressful urban life. Empowerment does not mean mobilising them to participate in public affairs but calming them down. Many managers mentioned the fragilities of the ordinary people in China, who may be working class or white collars, yet who are all struggling to survive and need some chill-out time during weekends (e.g. interview with Green Lizard, 17-02-2017, Green Heart, 15-05-2017). On reflection, it appears to be unrealistic to organise a brainstorming or self-reflection session during community activities. Another manager's argument revealed more explicitly the dilemma between pushing and attracting the participants: 'If they are rich enough, they just emigrate to unpolluted places. Only the vulnerable people still live here. Why would we put extra pressure on them by emphasising the problems?' (Interview with Green Lizard, 17-02-2017). With this logic, the project design appears to be more reasonable and natural. It makes more sense why ENGOs design outdoor activities in 'green havens' or the relaxing, entertaining and health-benefitting activities in weekends, and why the teams avoid intense or complicated discussions on environmental crises.

That is, while many ENGOs are working towards their long-term goal of creating a green civil society in China, they are also orientated by practical logic in their daily lives. Following a thinking pattern or technique of 'consumer perspective', a practical requirement for managers is to know what the public likes and dislikes before they engage more participants. By interpreting their working objects as fragile people lacking public

consciousness, ENGOs intentionally add amusement elements and avoid serious reflections in their activities. As a result, to what extent these projects can create the so-called 'green citizens' appears to be questionable.

4. The Gap between Ideals and Practices: What Can These Projects Achieve?

In the previous sections, it was presented how some ENGOs adopt and practice a consumer perspective in their community activities, or to be more specific, how some ENGOs start with the goal of changing people and end up primarily with satisfying people's needs. In their community projects, the framing of environmental protection turns out to be an interesting and fun theme. Considering these shifts, an important question emerged: what can these projects achieve?

On the one hand, what clearly cannot be denied are the changes brought about by these projects. In these activities, participants indeed have learnt how to categorise domestic refuse correctly and how to do DIY on domestic air purifiers. Residents have been presented with the advantages of some organic food and other environmentally friendly products. Children indeed have been informed that overconsumption and harming animals is wrong. Moreover, what also cannot be denied are the efforts of these ENGO teams. Framing environmental issues in a positive way by no means implies lower workloads. The community activity organisers have put a lot of effort into adding or avoiding different elements in their projects.

On the other hand, given the practical logic of project management, it is also necessary to examine the implications of these community projects, especially to what extent these activities can match the goal of creating green citizens. While some ENGOs' activities can bring some quality time for the participants, it remains questionable whether these projects can guide participants to think deeper about environmental crises and broader social issues. As shown in the previous sections, participation turns out to be a myth in many ENGOs' community activities. Attracting more participants is initially a means to an end, or a procedure for ENGOs to maximise their influence and engage more citizens in the relevant topics. However, when ENGOs focus on each project management procedure and emphasise the number of participants, the mean gradually becomes a goal. Many ENGOs believe that they can make social changes by attracting more participants into their activities. Even though people develop quite limited public consciousness in these activities, ENGOs at least manage to bring more participants to their activities, which can potentially make more

people aware of the environmental topics. Here, we can see a strong assumption on the idea of 'participation', which is emphasised in ENGOs' mission statements and practices. Many of them assume that 'participation' or 'bringing people into their activities' is the start of change, which implies participatory democracy, empowerment, emancipation and the possibility of collective actions. However, mere participation does not always lead to substantive democracy. In some cases, the concept is applied in a descriptive way (e.g. McQuarrie, 2013; Baiocchi, and Ganuza, 2016). Considering the meaning of 'green citizens' as proposed by these ENGOs, there are several dimensions of these projects worth discussing further.

One dimension is whether ENGOs can change society through hands-on projects. One issue in the project operations is that these projects focus largely on individuals or families, and barely stress to link individuals in society. While everyday environmentalism stresses the individual level, individual choice is only the starting point. In new social movements, to make broader changes, the individual ideas or activities must be communicated and amplified in networks (Holzer, 2006). This is also required by the nature of environmental crises. These social problems cannot be managed simply by the accumulations of individual actions, but need structural changes (Maniates, 2001; MacBride, 2011) such as collective lifestyle changes, collective pressure on pollution issues and energy structures. However, as shown in the above analysis, most activities mainly encourage individual lifestyle changes, which has been phrased as 'private-sphere environmentalism' (Stern, 2000). In many one-off activities, participants are not organised to know each other or to discuss or solve public issues in their neighbourhoods together, due to practical management reasons such as time management and activity quality control. As shown above, many activities are designed to provide participants with pleasant or relaxing experiences and the participants are not expected to express or communicate their views. The so-called 'environmental citizen activities', such as organising groups, petitioning or policy support (Stern, 2000) have been intentionally avoided. That is, while some ENGOs focus on producing projects which attract more participants, it is not accurate to say that they are organising the public to engage in environmental issues. Many community projects do not go beyond the private domestic sphere and do not pay attention to building connections among individuals. It is unrealistic to expect that these projects can directly inspire collective actions, trigger public debates or cultivate civic spirit.

Another dimension to examine is the match between problem and solution, and to what extent these projects can change individual participants. One potential problem in these projects is that ENGOs wrongly assume the automatic transformation from 'personal participation' to 'political' or 'social changes'; 'the personal is political', as is stated in new

social movements. However, there are significant conditions for it. Specifically, this requires individuals to go through serious and even painful processes. When ENGOs are aiming to create green citizens, their goal is specifically to change or challenge people's views on environmental issues, the boundary between public and private issues, citizen duties, truths and social justices. 'Kitchens, bedrooms, and secretarial pools can all be the sites to dig for political causality' (Enloe, 2011). As this phrase shows, 'being political' demands that individuals have difficult self-reflection and dig deep for self-realisation. That is, every person must be self-aware of their political motivations, strategies and impacts in new social movements (Johnston and Szabo, 2011). To do so, people should struggle to get access to the relevant sophisticated information (Czarnezki, 2011), take time to digest the complicated knowledge (Pettit and Sheppard, 1992; MacBride, 2011) and question the knowledge-production institutions (MacBride, 2011). Instead, in ENGOs' projects, their narrative is not about the interlocked structural issues, but how to have a beautiful and colourful life. Organisers also specifically avoid horrible data and complicated information in activities. Specifically, because of pragmatic management issues such as the quantitative indicator of the number of subscribers, many social media articles are produced as brain candy for readers. As Havel and Wilson (1985) point out, there are multiple ways to act against the domination, other than protests. However, this does not mean one should be uncritical of diverse types of civil society activities. Regardless of the forms of activity, the point is that through these different means, people can regain their sense of responsibility, civic self-awareness and courage to face the risks. No matter what form of activity, participants must go through a process of high-degree inner emancipation, after which they can 'live within the truth' and 'gain independent alternative political ideas' (Havel and Wilson, 1985). However, ENGOs generally create a cosy atmosphere during their activities[17]. As shown in the previous sections, participants in many projects do not need to make efforts in learning or thinking hard about relevant issues. In other words, individuals are not pressured or empowered in these activities to change themselves or learn to be political in these projects.

Besides the limited potential to change individuals, one pitfall of these types of community-based projects is to inhibit people in speaking the truth. While ENGOs aim at raising the public consciousness on environmental crises, they have made the crises more distant from the public and had further narrowed the public's environmental imagination. In the project designs and operations, participants are largely seen and treated as consumers, who are

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17 Creating a cosy atmosphere is one strategy of ENGOs. Sometimes, positive emotions indeed can empower participants and boost the morale (e.g. see Barker, 2001; Whittier, 2001). However, in this case, many people are attracted by fun and interesting activities. Participants are not motivated and united by the same cause. In this sense, ENGOs' emotion atmosphere management strategy is problematic.

supposed to enjoy the activities and, who, at this stage, do not need to shoulder the tasks of communicating issues and learning facts. Participants are primarily guided to explore the interesting aspects of environmental protection and to further develop an interest in environmental protection. In order not to disturb or upset their participants, ENGOs also avoid confronting pollution data or complicated facts. As a result, participants can hardly sense the urgency of resolving the environmental crises in these projects. For them, the solutions to environmental problems are limited to simple individual activities, such as abstract spiritual love for nature, individualised sustainable practices and self-protection from pollution. Participants seldom visualise themselves participating in policy advocacy, institutional reform or collective action.

As mentioned before, while ENGOs are building participation channels for the public to engage with environmental issues, the idea of participation turns out to be a myth in their practice. Many community-based ENGOs cannot depict a clear route leading towards their goal of creating green citizens. A lot of them leave the task to the valued future and assume an automatic transition from current interesting activities to broad social changes. Some managers explain that the current projects are just a first step to attract people's attention, and 'at the next stage, say, after ten years, people might take action in environmental protection' (Workshop of Green Harmony, 22-03-2017). Some expect that, as a result of the kids' projects, there might be a lot of green citizens in twenty years' time (Workshop among ENGOs, 20-10-2016). By assuming a bright future, some ENGOs easily justify their projects and do not need to seriously evaluate their effects at the current stage. However, empirically it still remains vague how they will achieve this in the future.

Against this vagueness, what is necessary is to evaluate the effects of these projects, especially the quality of their participation activities. To a certain degree, working with communities and individual life is an empowering and radical idea, which challenges the sense of self and brings new agencies to social movements (Dryzek, 2013). In practice, as presented in the previous sections, in many ENGOs' community projects, the environmental crises have been largely depoliticised. Many organisers assume the automatic transition from interesting participation activities to social changes. They have faith in their working method, yet do not have a route to realise their vision. If we evaluate the quality of their participation projects with the key dimensions of everyday environmentalism, we can see that many community activity organisers have skipped some crucial steps in new social movements, particularly networks among individuals, inner emancipations and reflections on power structures. Consequently, a disconnection between civic activities and political engagements has emerged in these projects. Moreover, by branding social change as a comfortable process, ENGOs even narrow the public's environmental imagination of current crises. It is

hard to expect these projects to generate green citizens, who will bring further, broader changes in China.

5. A Short Discussion: A Gap Between Aspiration and Practice

> A (me): 'I believe that if you want to create responsible green citizens, you need to let them go through a serious or even painful process'.
>
> B (Ms Squirrel, 28-07-2017): 'Yes, I agree with you on that. But tell me, how is it going to work? To raise the consciousness we must have project participants. To have participants, we must attract people with games and fun. No one will come to serious activities during precious weekends, and then no projects can begin. This is precisely a chicken-and-egg kind of problem. It is a circle'.

This conversation concisely summarises the dilemma faced by many ENGOs in their daily life. There are obviously practical reasons for ENGOs to frame environmental protection as a fun and interesting theme. In the previous paragraphs, I have shown a gap between many community-based ENGOs' vision and practice. While many ENGOs wish to create serious green citizens, they emphasise more on entertainment activities and avoid building connections among individuals or organising serious fact-based discussions on crises. With a consumer perspective, lots of ENGOs have marginalised the dimensions of citizen duties, civic spirit or the social and political causal factors of the environmental crises in their project designs.

Meanwhile, I have not explored what this gap can tell us. The gap is more of an entry point for us to observe the study objects' practical concerns, logic and implications, beneath their formal accounts. Using this gap, we can further explore what institutional contexts and trends have shaped many ENGOs' thinking and behavioural patterns. Many teams simply assume that entertainment is the only motivation to attract the public (e.g. Workshop of Organization Green Harmony, 22-03-2017). Most of them have optimism for their eventual influence in the future, yet they cannot clarify the route on the blueprint. This section will explore what institutional factors have shaped many ENGOs' collective irrationalities.

Regarding ENGOs' practical concerns, it is quite tempting to draw a conclusion based on some important background factors. For one thing, to explain Chinese ENGOs' apolitical actions, the threat of the government's repression is always a concern of ENGOs (e.g. see Tang and Zhan, 2008). However, this factor is not accurate enough to explain the project designs of these specific activities. Compared to other ENGOs' policy advocacy and rights defence activities, the consciousness-raising projects that were discussed in this chapter are

already relatively politically insensitive and thus attract much less state attention and surveillance. Considering the idea of green citizens proposed by ENGOs, most ENGOs are not driven by the anti-CCP political goals. Actually, some ENGOs have a strong desire to work together with the government. Creating good citizens is seen as the shared goal of environmental groups and the government. Indeed, in order to work in communities, many ENGOs have to work with the state bureaus, especially the neighbourhood committees. However, many neighbourhood committees are not monitoring the ENGOs, yet are supporting ENGOs in organising community activities. Many neighbourhood committees are also promoting the values of volunteerism and public consciousness, which does not contradict ENGOs' goal of creating green citizens. Logically, the threat from the state does not appear to be a major reason to shape some ENGO's project design. Also, another argument proposed by an ENGO manager is that the Chinese public dislikes to talk about public issues or politics, due to the collective memory of the Tiananmen Square Massacre (Interview with Mr Forest, 30-03-2018). Clearly, ENGOs' actions are embedded in the social and political history of China. Yet, the authoritarian context can partially explain why many ENGOs avoid discussing political topics or the government's responsibilities in their community activities, but the factor cannot explain why many ENGOs go to another extreme and add amusement elements in their projects. The factor of the authoritarian context is too vague to grasp ENGOs' project management practices. Moreover, NGOs' tendency to avoid politics or disturbing information has not only existed in China, but also in the Western democracies (e.g. see Eliasoph, 2011).

If we quote ENGOs' words directly, another quick answer is the neoliberalisation or marketisation trend in China. As shown in the previous sections, ENGOs have mentioned the significance of efficiency, the individualisation trend, the rise of popular culture which stresses individual self-care instead of public welfare, the urban housing crisis and the lack of social security. Considering these background factors, ENGOs have to treat the general public as vulnerable groups with low public consciousness. What is realistic is to engage with them by entertaining activities. While the post-Mao market reform is indeed a very significant social background, the broad trend of marketisation cannot satisfyingly explain ENGOs' specific project operations. The effects of marketisation in China are pretty complex and do not simply drive civil society actors to act in a certain way. It is difficult to use the neoliberal system to explain this case. For instance, while marketisation might lead to individualisation, with the development of economy and modern state-building Chinese people's consciousness on rights and law have grown rapidly in the late 20th century (Lei, 2018). ENGOs' pessimistic assumptions on the Chinese general public are not quite accurate. Various cases show that people have the skills and resources to build connections among

individuals and defend their civic rights in China. Considering the complexity in Chinese society, these specific project designs are not necessarily the only realistic way to engage with the public.

Instead of analysing at a macro level, this chapter stresses the significance of ENGOs' daily practices and explores what these practices can reveals to us. Their practical struggles, concerns and procedures can show us more concretely how these organisations make decisions and how ideas are mediated in practice. To be specific, this section argues that ENGOs' collective irrationality in community projects is the result of conforming to the institutions in the wider contexts, especially the funding procedures and allocations. That is, even though these projects are not effective in terms of creating green citizens, they are legitimate in the eyes of funders and NGO professionals (e.g. McQuarrie, 2013). For ENGOs, being incorrect and legitimate is practically more important than being correct and illegitimate. ENGOs gain more legitimacy by incorporating institutions in their organisations. This further increases their resources and survival capabilities (Meyer and Rowan, 1991). However, by doing so, many ENGOs reflect the myths of their institutionalised environment, instead of the demands of their work activities (Meyer and Rowan, 1991). As they incorporate institutions in the forms of procedures, routines and taken-for-granted knowledge, ENGOs can hardly review the conflicts between legitimacy and efficiency (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991).

5.1 Explain Irrationality: Incorrect Legitimacy is More Important Than Correct Illegitimacy

Currently, most ENGOs rely financially on domestic and foreign foundations. To gain funding, ENGOs need to make themselves look accountable in donors' eyes. Therefore, ENGOs must conform to the institutional rules created by foundations. In other words, ENGOs' judgements and behaviours are powerfully shaped by the flows of legitimacy and funding (Meyer and Rowan, 1983, 1991). From the perspective of donors, to manage large amounts of money and to control the results of funding decisions, most foundations prefer the projects with clear aims, quantitative indicators, replication potentials and innovations. In this evaluation system, the community activities with entertainment elements appear to be particularly legitimate. In contrast, the activities encouraging participants to self-reflect, build connections and learn how to deal with a crisis appear to be illegitimate. Eager to seek legitimacy, various ENGOs prioritise donors' expectations over efficiency calculation.

From the foundations' perspective, it is pretty significant to control the quality of ENGOs' projects. To do so, they have some selection procedures and preferences. First, most ENGOs must answer three key questions on funding application forms: What is the problem you wish to solve? What will you do to solve the problem? What values can you create? (Participatory observation, 26-10-2016). Foundations and NGO coaches usually force ENGOs to answer these questions, in order to help them clarify their logic and justify their projects. Donors will later choose projects based on the ENGOs' answers. Many ENGOs consider these procedures helpful (Interview with Ms River, 29-03-2017). As said by one employee, 'We are different from volunteers. As professional organisations, we need to clarify what problems we can solve and what visible results we can produce' (Interview with Mr Sand, 11-04-2017).

Furthermore, most foundations expect ENGOs to have quantitative indicators in their project evaluations, such as the population they have influence on, the number of exhibitions and the readers of their social media accounts. This is key information to prove the effectiveness of ENGOs' work (Interview with Green Harmony, 19-05-2017). Most donors need these indicators to evaluate projects. Sometimes, for projects funded by companies, donors expect ENGOs to translate the funding into public relationship values efficiently and they specifically need quantitative indicators with media values. Many foundations prefer projects with replication potential, so that organisations in the field can efficiently learn from good examples and successful experiences. This further requires ENGOs to design their projects with simple and clear steps.

Moreover, some foundations also emphasise innovation value. Typical innovative projects include those with new technology elements, such as social media, big data or artificial intelligence (Interview with Mr Sand, 11-04-2017). Other ENGOs seek to creatively combine environmental protection with other topics, such as lifestyle and entrepreneurship (Participatory observation, 22-04-2017).

According to these institutional rules, political engagements or deeper discussions on citizen duties and social issues appear to be illegitimate. There is not enough space for serious political discussion or reflection in this institutional environment. As required, the problem proposed in the application form needs to be clear and controllable. However, ENGOs cannot narrow the vision of 'creating green citizens' into one single problem. Similarly, it is difficult to evaluate the effects of political engagements or citizen education with quantitative indicators. Typically, successful projects include providing environment lectures for 20-30 neighbourhoods in one year or organising 30 natural educational trips in twelve months. The donors do not consider the depths of reflections on citizen duty or

political engagement as indicators, as it is difficult to hold the organisations accountable. Moreover, to cultivate civic spirit, one ENGO practically needs to work in one neighbourhood for at least several months, or even 5-10 years according to some ENGOs (Interview with Ms River, 29-03-2017). Clearly, most foundations do not have the patience for long-term projects, as most projects currently only have a one-year life cycle. Plus, organising empowerment activities and political engagement clearly involves complicated processes, which makes these projects difficult to replicate. Considering capital flow in the field, ENGOs are unlikely to propose community projects featuring citizen empowerment or political emancipation, which are usually considered unaccountable and illegitimate in donors' eyes[18].

In contrast, community projects with entertainment activities are legitimate in this institutional context. During project applications, these projects appear to be competitive, as ENGOs present them as short-term, controllable projects with clear quantitative indicators. Moreover, in these projects, ENGOs also show donors their motivation or 'entrepreneurship spirit'. In this field, several significant domestic foundations particularly emphasise the importance of the 'entrepreneurship spirit'. That is, ENGOs must be more ambitious and active in order to make a change. They should learn from businessmen who are always hungry for profit and use all means to reach their goals (Interview with Birds' Wings, 29-11-2016; Ms Squirrel, 28-07-2017). For instance, some ENGOs try to unleash teams' full potential, with quantitative indicators. That is, the staff only focus on quotas within each short period and pursue the clear goals with different means. Also, to seek target groups, ENGOs should not first ask who will be more likely to be green citizens. By asking this question, ENGOs put limits on themselves, as they will focus on a smaller group. Instead, they should start with finding the broad consumer base (Interview with Ms Squirrel, 28-07-2017). That is, ENGOs need to have the ambition to engage with wider populations in society. Influenced by training programmes, coaches and staff flows, many ENGOs seek their target groups as companies finding consumers. To increase project efficiency, some ENGOs 'lower the thresholds' (Participatory observation, 08-12-2016). Instead of interpreting environmental protection as a public issue, they present environmental

18 To be clear, foundations are not specifically against political engagement in China. As claimed by some foreign and domestic foundations, they wish to empower Chinese local people to explore and solve social problems (e.g. see Odendahl from Global Green Fund, in Jing Cao Tong Xing 2015). To do so, they fund some Chinese ENGO teams to do investigations, policy advocacy and research and provide legal assistance on specific cases. However, these are professional ENGOs with specific skills, such as chemical or geographical academic knowledge, investigative journalism experience or legal backgrounds. Instead, donors only expect community-based ENGOs to spread basic environmental knowledge or ideas to the public. For donors, this is an arrangement of labour division, which increases the efficiency.

protection as an easy activity or entertainment in daily life. This way, ENGOs can approach much larger groups in society. By presenting their projects as a choice of entertainment to the public, ENGOs try to integrate into the mainstream society and consumerism culture. As interpreted by some of them, this is an attempt to jump out of their 'small world' and adapt to the wider society, which is also encouraged by the foundations. Similarly, some ENGOs work with neighbourhood committees to deliver public lectures. This is considered a good chance to broaden the consumer base, even though neighbourhood committees usually just organise short, one-off activities.

However, as argued in section 4, these so-called competitive projects are legitimate externally yet inefficient regarding the initial goals (Meyer and Rowan, 1991). To gain legitimacy and resources, various ENGOs incorporated the external assessment criteria and conform to donors' expectations. Accordingly, for many ENGOs, the tool of 'consumer perspective' guides them to achieve the organisational vision step by step. Creating green citizens is an overwhelming task and the teams need to consider various issues simultaneously[19]. The management tool forces the staff to focus on one single question at each step: from 'what do your consumers want?' to 'how to satisfy consumers' needs,' and 'how to know and meet consumers' needs better '. This way, the abstract organisational vision becomes concrete goals in practice, which are clear, motivating and reassuring (e.g. interview with Ms Squirrel, 28-07-2017). As ENGOs also see these institutional rules as objectively helpful management tools, they can hardly make reflections on these routines (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991).

5.2 Critical voices from ENGOs?

In order to gain legitimacy and resources, many ENGOs are pressured to conform to the institutional rules in the wider environment, which makes their projects inefficient regarding the initial goals. From an ENGO's perspective, project management techniques, to a large degree, empower them to gain a sense of control in their daily life. Compared to the broad goal of creating green citizens, the concrete steps of attracting more participants not only bring them more resources, but also make their work more manageable. Some managers indeed feel that they are on the right track to achieve the long-term goals with professional management.

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19 Practically, raising environmental public consciousness involves fairly complicated environmental communication (Burgess and Harrison, 1998). The professionals must properly translate the scientific and political green discourses to the lay public, and further change people's sense of self (Barkan, 2004; Dryzek, 2013). Meanwhile, they also need to overcome political apathy and despair, which can be generated when they discuss negative matters with the public (Dryzek, 2013).

However, this is not the whole picture of Chinese ENGOs. There are multiple ways to run ENGOs in China. Also, there are indeed critical voices from ENGOs toward professional NGO management techniques. As mentioned in this chapter earlier, some ENGOs have voiced their doubts on the logic of these community activities and questioned whether the seemingly mundane entertainment activities can lead to significant social changes. Moreover, a few ENGOs' community projects present different ways to engage the general public in environmental protection. One old ENGO insisted on working in only a few neighbourhoods for years. The ENGO team frequently works with the residents and organises them to discuss and take actions together in solving public issues in their own neighbourhoods. Another ENGO outside Beijing guides the local residents that are interested in environmental issues to walk along the rivers. Rather than ending their activities after one or two hours, the ENGO team always organises the participants to collect rubbish and cook dinner together outdoors, which allows the participants enough time to get to know each other and talk more about citizen duties and environmental crises. Some other ENGOs organise or directly recruit the local residents in rural areas to join them in protecting wild animals. Some guide the local peasants to practise eco-agriculture and support them in promoting the eco-agricultural products. Besides, as will be presented in Chapter 3, various other ENGOs do not focus on community activities and thus engage with the public in quite different ways.

The community projects mentioned in the above paragraph present several alternatives to the quick one-off environmental education activities. In these projects, organisers engage with the public in a more meaningful way and guide them in discussing or taking actions in public issues. However, these projects are certainly the minority in the whole circle. There are significant pre-conditions for these projects and organisations to exist. The ENGOs, who have the luxury of working on one or two sites for several years, are usually big and famous ENGOs funded by the government, foundations or universities to explore innovative governance modes. In other words, these ENGOs do not need to compete with other community projects over donors. Their daily concerns are not centred around the pressure of efficiency or one-year project cycles. Some small ENGOs just prefer to maintain citizen self-organised groups, and don't request funds to maintain full-time professional teams and offices. Without financial pressure, these teams have the luxury of gradually building connections among like-minded people and discussing public issues together. Nevertheless, for the majority of professional ENGOs, they cannot easily avoid the battle of survival and funding resources. Their main practical concerns are inevitably centred around efficient management and the quantitative evaluation indicators of the projects. On the one hand, there are indeed some spaces to explore different ways to engage the public. However, the

main resource allocation procedures make it practically difficult for most consciousness-raising project managers to dig deep in citizens' education and empowerment.

6. Conclusion

This chapter was started by presenting a gap between the vision and practice in many ENGOs' community projects. In order to gain more resources, project managers tend to attract more participants and treat the participants as consumers who need pleasant experiences in environmental activities. As a result, the framing of environmental problems has been depoliticised and it is pretty hard to cultivate civic spirit in these community activities.

Moreover, this gap reveals important institutional contexts shaping ENGOs' thinking and behavioural patterns. Similar to the idea of everyday environmentalism, ENGOs start from hands-on community activities with the goal of organising civic life and mobilising broader environmental actions. Nevertheless, the agencies are subject to practical logic in their daily life, which are independent from the ideals. As shown in this case, many project managers have to consider the efficiency and funding application procedures, and thus try to make their projects more approachable or palatable to a wider public. The professional management procedures help ENGOs to focus on each step, starting with easy tasks, yet they also make them become devotees of the hands-on tasks and details. Consequently, the idea of everyday environmentalism is being stripped of its politics. Many studies on Chinese NGOs focus on the authoritarian context, which is valid. Meanwhile, it is also worthwhile to pay attention to NGOs' daily management tasks, which powerfully shape these organisations' routines, judgements, rationalities and behaviours.

Another theme that emerged in this chapter is civil society organisations' capabilities in empowerment and mobilisation. The gap between organisational aspirations and practices also reveals some tensions within ENGOs, especially their passion to engage with the public and create green citizens versus their pessimistic views on the general public. On the one hand, they are meant to empower and mobilise the public to make a difference in the real world, which is a social role assigned to themselves. On the other hand, they are organisations with limited resources, who are not immune to the powerless and pessimistic feelings about the future. In this case, behind ENGOs' positive framing on environmental protection are their pessimistic views on the Chinese public. The public is generally seen as the mass that is not ready to accept the issues, learn and discuss public issues or shoulder the

citizens' duties. ENGOs' low expectations of the public can also be seen from their vague visions for the far future. Without intending to expand this discussion here, I wish to point out some shared powerless feelings among ENGOs and their lack of confidence in their current influence. While being devoted to their daily work, some practitioners sometimes indeed raise the question of what the public can actually do for environmental protection and what difference the ENGOs can actually make. This feeling of powerlessness might be rooted in the un-matchiness between individual groups and the systematic level crises, and also the lack of collaborations and order in the governance system. Feeling overwhelmed, the organisations have to invest their emotions and hopes in a vague faraway future and rely on the professional tools to manage their daily life.

Chapter 3 History of the Field of Chinese ENGOs: from the Tiananmen Square Massacre 1989

> What is an NGO? We had no idea at all. If I had a second chance, I definitely would think more before starting an NGO. It was indeed a very risky choice (Interview with Ms Lime, 17-02-2017).

Ms Lime, a director of an ENGO working on community activities and nature education, shared with me her anxiety when she started her NGO in the early 2000s. Back then, she quit her job as a kindergarten teacher, because she felt passionate about the idea of an NGO. She thought that running an ENGO could be a way to save, in her own words, 'Mother Nature'. However, she was not sure how to make a living from an NGO and whether her husband's job at the government would be affected by it. Her worries reflected the poverty of both material and symbolic resources in this circle at its early stage. Back to the early 2000s, the first few ENGOs in China had been established for less than five years. As a whole, the process of setting up an ENGO generally lacked supporting networks, funding, standards and accumulated knowledge suitable for different types of newcomers.

While Chapters 1 and 2 depict the circle of Chinese ENGOs at its mature stage, this chapter will trace back the emergence of this field. In other words, who were the early ENGOs, how did they start their organisations from scratch, how did ENGOs carve out a relatively autonomous space together for the voice of environmental interests, and what trajectories led them to today's institutionalised practices? These historical trajectories have profound implications on these organisations' current patterns and future possibilities.

One popular answer to the above questions is that the emergence of Chinese ENGOs was led by the spread of global environmentalism (e.g. Mol, 2006, Xie, 2011). Despite the differences between Chinese and Western ENGOs, Chinese ENGOs had originated from the Western ideals of global environmentalism. This argument is supported by various pieces of evidence. Chronologically, Chinese ENGOs started to emerge in the mid-1990s. Just before that, the Chinese government signed the *Rio Declaration* in 1992, which prepared Chinese society to learn about the issues of the global climate crisis and environmental protection. As the fourth *World Conference on Women* in Beijing in 1995 contained an 'NGO forum', Chinese government officials started to learn about the ideas of NGOs for the first time. After the conference, the state allowed foreign ENGOs and environmental foundations to

enter China, which obviously boosted the development of Chinese ENGOs. Moreover, to discuss the environmental issues in China, early Chinese ENGOs relied heavily on the discourse of global environmentalism, such as climate change and civil society development. Accordingly, most of the early ENGOs established in the 1990s accepted Western funding and training, and the leaders of these ENGOs had received Western awards and prizes for environmental protection. It is fair to claim that Chinese ENGOs had imported important discursive and intellectual resources from Western ENGOs and Western foundations.

However, the factor of global environmentalism is not enough to explain the particularities and diversities of Chinese ENGOs at present. While global environmentalism are significant symbolic raw materials for Chinese ENGOs to explore, the trajectories of Chinese ENGOs have been shaped by various context-specific forces and their own agentic efforts. When Western ENGOs' experience is not enough in China, Chinese ENGOs need to seek a path themselves, in the specific Chinese context. In their developments, how did they orientate themselves, how did different actors in China bring different knowledge and resources into the equation? Also, how did their particular trajectories shape the existing framings and interpretations of environmental protection in China? And how did these existing framings affect the functioning of these organisations?

To engage in these questions, I suggest we analyse the field history of Chinese ENGOs, which reveals the development of their meaning system and the emergence of different interpretations of their shared causes over the years. As will be argued in this chapter, for Chinese ENGOs their shared causes have complicated meanings that are deeply embedded in Chinese history. The field-specific capital of Chinese ENGOs was formed throughout the years by different field-internal and field-external forces, along with ENGOs' agentic efforts. By tracing the developments of different framings on environmental protection, this chapter challenges the stereotype that Chinese ENGOs are generally apolitical organisations. Instead, these organisations have complicated relationships with politics and some of them have clear potential to be political agencies. Theoretically, the history of Chinese ENGOs shows that environmental protection is neither a pre-defined nor a universal concept. This invites us to further examine some global level concepts, such as global environmental movements, global civil society and ecological modernisation.

1. Field Theory and Chinese ENGOs' History

As was introduced in Chapter 1, Chinese ENGOs currently have a relatively autonomous space in China against the broader contexts. They claim authority in representing environmental interests. It is worthwhile to point out that ENGOs' authority or the field-specific capital has not been pre-defined yet has been formed throughout the years in history. In field theory, the field itself is a historical term. The habitus of the field is shaped by specific historical trajectories and organisational practices, instead of pure values or simply objective needs. Field theory, as represented by Bourdieu's historicism, aims at overcoming the polarisation between anti-empirical theoreticism and atheoretical empiricism in sociology (Steinmetz, 2011). In other words, different kinds of cultural and symbolic capital are deeply historical and are formed in complex relations between value, exchange value and prices.

To be specific, to review the historical developments of Chinese ENGOs, it is necessary to challenge the formalistic assumptions on environmental groups. In other words, from a field perspective, it is productive to pay attention to the nuanced motivations and strategies of these social actors. As Krause (2014) suggested, to get closer to actors' experiences and practices in history, it is significant to draw distinctions between humanitarian relief ideas, humanitarian relief practices and humanitarian relief fields. Similarly, Bourdieu clearly pointed out the difference between what art is and what is counted as art, or between what the judicial field and its purposes are and what is seen as the judicial field and what its exact functioning is. Likewise, in this project, it is necessary to go beneath the formal accounts of environmental groups and draw the distinctions between ideas and practices. The idea of environmental protection is pretty broad, yet ENGOs' practices and orientations are much narrower in practice. The current patterns of ENGOs' environmental protection activities are not simply generated by a broad idea, but are constructed through the social actors' daily practices, including their own selections, compromises and innovations. Beneath the assumed values and orientations are these organisations' specific motivations and different interpretations on their shared causes, and their nuanced strategies in different contexts. Discussing how environmental protection has been framed throughout history in this specific context would help us to further understand the exact functioning of these organisations in China.

To do so, a field theory approach first allows us to trace the sources of shared practices by studying the interactions between one field and other external fields (e.g. see Fligstein and

McAdam, 2015). Historically, the circle of ENGOs was not simply built surrounding one shared cause yet was populated and developed by various actors from different fields. As mentioned above, a field theory approach refuses to essentialise environmental groups and pays attention to the specific historical contexts from when these organisations emerged; In particular, going back three decades to see how different actors came into the field during specific periods, and how different actors brought different resources into the field and re-figured the external field capital and habitus inside this new arena (e.g. Steinmetz, 2008). That is, a field is a nexus of power situated between various fields and in broad social worlds. The emergence and development of a field are enabled by absorbing, combining and reconfiguring raw materials from different fields. In this chapter, I will also show the rich history of this field, which has been built by diverse actors. For instance, a large group of Chinese ENGO founders are like Ms Lime, who used to be a teacher, and have brought important routines, beliefs and skills into this field from their previous careers. Similarly, some other ENGOs' initiators and founders previously worked as civil servants, investigative journalists, engineers or social workers. Some were pollution victims themselves. Some actively engaged in low-carbon and climate change campaigns mainly due to their belief in Buddhist vegetarianism. All these different actors have brought specific judgements, beliefs, social connections, knowledge and skills to this shared space, and further collectively shaped the field's logic and rules.

Second, to trace this field's historical trajectories, it is also significant to recognise the agentic efforts and effects of these ENGOs. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the field of ENGOs is a nexus of power, embedded among surrounding fields. Importantly, the complexity and hybridity of this field are not an automatic result of the operations in the whole social system. Against a functionalist view, the field theory approach stresses the agents' roles in introducing and refiguring different kinds of capital and habitus in the field. That is, this analytical framework invites us to observe the under-determined features of the context. In other words, to some degree, space is available for the actors to exploit the opportunities and explore the use of raw materials. Though their choices are limited, they still can have certain arbitrary voices and actively participate in producing cultural meaning in the field (e.g. see Bourdieu, 1986-7; Martin, 2003; Fligstein and McAdam, 2015).

To be clear, this point on the under-determined context is not to deny the significance of the structural factors, yet to explain the dynamics at a meso-level. Various existing studies stress the pre-determined features of this context. However, with a mesoscale analysis, we can observe other shaping factors of the field's dynamics, especially the agentic efforts.

For instance, one popular assumption on this topic is that Chinese ENGOs are largely determined by the authoritarian context in China (e.g. see Ho and Edmonds, 2008) and each of these organisations is born to be 'a crippled child'[20]. As believed by the staff of some ENGOs and commented on by some scholars (e.g. workshop at Nature Lovers, 17-11-2016, e.g. also see Ho and Edmonds, 2008; Zhang and Barr, 2013), environmental activism in China must be de-politicised, non-confrontational and mundane and there is no alternative scenario in reality. Nevertheless, tracing back the history of this field, we can observe how plastic the concept of environmental protection really is. Instead of being an essentially apolitical term, it has been framed boldly as governmental negligence issues in 1988 and human rights issues by some organisations nowadays [21]. That is, while China has strict control over the civil society sector, there still is space for contentious activities (e.g. Lei, 2018). At a field level, there are different positions to explore, besides the overly representative image of apolitical and mundane styles.

Similarly, another example is the assumption that ENGOs' actions are determined straightforwardly by the objective demands of environmental situations, such as the technocratic problems to be solved. Again, it is assumed that agencies have a limited arbitrary voice about what should be done. Instead, with the focus on organisational practices, a field theory approach stresses the effects and implications of social actors' judgements and selections, besides the objective demands. The ability to match problems and solutions is not assumed. In this case, environmental problems in China and Chinese ENGOs cannot absolutely match each other. It is obviously impossible for Chinese ENGOs to respond to most of the Chinese environmental issues by following demand-supply logic. In contrast to the long-term and large-scale issue, NGOs only emerged from the 1990s and can only engage with a limited amount of issues. In practice, they have to use their own judgements and resources to find environmental issues, or define certain issues with an environmental angle, and then engage with this broad topic in their own manageable ways. In other words, ENGOs also participate in defining environmental governance necessities and focuses.

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20 'A crippled child' is a term borrowed from a workshop with one ENGO, when the staff reviewed the history of ENGOs in China. They meant that it was impossible for NGOs to thrive in China, because of difficulties such as changing the social structures.

21 Back in 1988, activists had already made environmental claims but daringly portrayed environmental issues as a problem of political freedom and directly accused the government of negligence (e.g. the case of Dai Qing and *Yangtze! Yangtze! 1988-89*). Nowadays, a minority of ENGOs still dare to boldly claim that environmental problems are human rights issues created by the corrupted political class (e.g. Green Explorers), despite the fact that they are not considered as rational ENGOs in the field.

Chinese ENGOs also play an important shaping role in establishing their standards, approaches and boundaries. ENGOs' practices are neither produced through obeying the rules nor through conscious aiming (Bourdieu, 1986-7). Though 'practicality' implies some freedom with conditions, there still exists space for agents to explore opportunities. The operations of environmental protection in China involve plenty of practical concerns, which makes this concept pretty complex; for instance, to what extent should or could environmental protection be political, how to draw the boundaries between ENGOs' activities and the 'small-minded' NIMBYism movement, what should ENGOs' goals be and what counts as successful environmental action (considering the impossibilities to solve the systematic environmental crises). The responses to these concerns are not given by the macro-level structure, but are produced gradually in ENGOs' daily management, active boundary drawings and cultural efforts (Bourdieu and Sayad, 2004; Bourdieu, 2008; Eyal, 2006). The meanings of environmental protection in this context have been shaped by ENGOs' participation, such as their specific interpretations on their missions, their comments and advice on other ENGOs' working approaches, their risk assessments, cost-benefit calculations, metaphors, collaborations and their publications of experiences and case studies. Significantly, these organisations gradually produced the collective imaginations and boundaries. Only certain voices or norms are considered as reasonable, while some other ideas are seen as radical or irresponsible.

To sum it up, to trace the history of Chinese ENGOs, a field theory approach could facilitate us to observe the hybridity and important trajectories[22] shaping the field structure and the field-specific capital. In other words, the framework guides us to discuss how different factors fit together when shaping organisational practices and how a shared space of possibilities or options was constructed and given to participants at different moments (e.g. Bourdieu 1992; Bourdieu 1997:454). Chinese ENGOs' discourse of environmentalism has been produced collectively as a result of the mediation of their diverse strategies, values and resources (e.g. Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). While habitus regulates the range of possible practice, agents can still select specific practices (Steinmetz, 2008). Embedded in the specific political and economic context, ENGOs internalise the opportunity structures and values, practically estimate their potential and limits, and further make strategies and

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22 In order to summarise the key trajectories in this field, I use the shorthand terms, such as the community-oriented ENGOs, or the engineer/scientist ENGOs, to label different groups and to characterise the different kinds of capital they have brought to the field. However, it is worthwhile to point out that realistically ENGOs cannot be divided neatly into three main groups. While they are landmark positions, many ENGOs are located between leading ENGOs. The next chapter will further present ENGOs' positions.

intervene with environmental governance in reality. Furthermore, these analyses can help us to explain the diversities and variations in the field, the legacies in the current structure, and to discuss the future potentials of these organisations. Significantly, the production and distribution of the environmental protection discourse among Chinese ENGOs in history is a key part in understanding the functioning of the environmental protection ideal in this circle.

2. First Generation: Are They Environmentalists? Environmental Protection as Community Activities

It is generally considered that the history of Chinese ENGOs started from the early 1990s, when the first three organisations emerged in Beijing. Over the next ten years, these leading ENGOs gradually defined environmental protection as a significant social concern and carved out a relatively independent space for ENGOs. In other words, ENGOs started to claim social organisations' authority to participate in environmental governance since then. To be specific, during the 1990s, environmental protection in China was mainly portrayed as an apolitical and mundane term. Environmental protection actions generally refer to green lifestyle advocacies in urban areas, such as nature education, summer camps, bird-watching groups, organic markets and public lectures. Meanwhile, land pollution disputes, cancer villages and other pollution victims are not considered as environmental concerns by ENGOs.

This part will explore the inner worlds of these early ENGOs by reviewing the organisations' history. It argues that, under the apolitical environmental discourse, ENGOs' interpretation of environmental protection in the 1990s was highly politicised. However, these political and democratisation meanings were, to some degree, lost and twisted in the field in the next decade. This reminds us that environmental protection in this area used to have rich political implications and meanings, which were gradually marginalised in the space of the next decade.

2.1 The Emergence of Chinese ENGOs: Environmental Crises and the Blood in 6.4

Usually, 1994-1995 is considered as the birth year of Chinese civil society and Chinese ENGOs. The first ENGO, Nature Lovers, was established in 1994. The other two leading ENGOs, Green Village and Green Home, were established in 1996.

However, the history of Chinese ENGOs has also been heavily affected by the Tiananmen Square protests and the massacre in June 1989. Tracing back this part of history is particularly helpful in accurately depicting the cultural meanings of their actions (Steinmetz, 2008). The history of the three leading ENGOs in the 1990s reveals the traces of this failed political freedom protest. To be brief, the key ENGO leaders were middle-aged Chinese intellectuals who supported student protests in 1989 and valued pluralism ideals proposed during 1980s China. After the massacre, some of them kept their ambitions of creating social changes in China, yet through a different route of establishing ENGOs. The features of these individual leaders later became part of the 'genes' of Chinese ENGOs, which can be observed from these early ENGOs' actions, priorities and routes.

The personal story of Ms Swan, one of the four founders of Nature Lovers, is quite revealing in terms of the historical context of the so-called birth of Chinese NGOs. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Nature Lovers is one of the earliest ENGOs in China, which has focused on community-building activities, environmental education and policy advocacy. Ms Swan's narrative will show us how agents in a specific context internalised the objective conditions and further skilfully produced new ideas, causes and desires. As with the other three founders, Ms Swan was one of the intellectuals in the 1980s, who actively engaged with the earliest post-reform public life in China, such as editing pro-liberalism journals and organising public debates. Besides being a university lecturer on World History in Beijing, Ms Swan was also an editor of several book series and journals, such as *Series into the Future* (1983-1988, forbidden in 1989, yet anonymous later) and *The Intellectual* (1988-1989, suspended). These book series and journals were the battlefield frontlines of the 'ideological emancipation' in the 1980s. On this platform, Chinese intellectuals introduced the latest Western books and ideas on science, politics and philosophies to China, and also initiated public debates (distinguished from state-organised public debates in the Mao era) on the most sensitive topics, particularly Chinese economic and political reforms (Workshop among ENGOs, 17-11-2016)[23]. When the Tiananmen Square protests started in April, Ms Swan actively supported the students and stayed with her students on the night of the massacre. Four months later, she quit her CCP membership and ended her career in the state system.

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23 Given the fact that the leaders of all three early ENGOs had been invited and funded by the US to learn about civil society organisations in the late 1990s, it is fair to also argue that early ENGOs adopted a civil society discourse by directly mimicking the NGOs in the US. However, tracing back the history of civic life in China in the 1980s, we can see that a discourse of a civil society development has deeper roots in China than simply mimicking the US NGOs.

The key ideas of Nature Lovers were largely based on the four intellectuals' reflections on the Tiananmen Square protests. The establishment of these early ENGOs was neither simply a result of an international norm spreading in China, nor just a reaction to environmental crises, but a specific response to state repression during the failed political freedom protests. As Ms Swan said more clearly in an internal workshop: 'There are two main ideas behind the establishment of Nature Lovers: the blood of 6.4 (4th of June) must not be in vain, and the emerging environmental crises.'

> The idea of Nature Lovers started from 1992. The atmosphere in Beijing was extremely depressing at the beginning of the 1990s. The feelings of emptiness and nihilism were spread across those who care about public interests. We were very anxious about this situation and felt that we had to do something! How to organise our society to overcome the feelings of emptiness together and to restart our public life. That was *our initial goal* (Participatory observations, workshops on 08-10-2016, 17-11-2016).

While most people were overwhelmed by the nihilistic feeling at the beginning of the 1990s, the four intellectuals were motivated to take actions to change the situation. As remarked by Ms Swan, the four founders of Nature Lovers were previously colleagues in journalism. Two of them were researchers at universities in Beijing, working in the areas of education equality and history. Another founder was a writer. They had experienced public life before 1989, and vaguely sensed that opportunities for some social organisations could survive here. Regarding their motivation, another founder of Nature Lovers once shared his view to media: 'People always think that intellectuals cannot do anything concrete for society. Why don't we build an organisation to start changing the situation?' There are also specific reasons why they narrow down the goal of restarting public life to the topic of environmental protection.

> Obviously, we must be creative and think up a public topic which was not politically sensitive. Therefore, we decided to focus on environmental protection. That was a new and pioneering concept in China back then. It had nothing to do with regime change, but it was really significant.

> 'As the previous editors of *Series into the Future*, we were deeply concerned with the emerging environmental crises. Also, we thought that environmental protection was a wide-range topic, which can engage different social groups, including civil servants, businessmen, lawyers, housewives, journalists, students and teachers.… Everyone can discuss and act on this area in their own way, as it does not require people to have complicated background knowledge or specific ambitions. We can simply start from easy

activities, such as planting trees or reducing consumption. In other words, this is a public sphere, without the thresholds of social class, educational background, identity or occupation. While public life in the 1980s was mainly occupied by intellectuals, this new public sphere could potentially combine people from different groups together (Participatory observations, workshops among ENGOs on 08-10-2016, 17-11-2016).

This part of the organisations' history shows the ideas behind their practices and further explains why, for first generation ENGOs, small community activities were especially significant and powerful, and why they rejected mimicking Western ENGOs' project management modes and advocacy activities. As shown from Ms Swan's vivid review, the primary concern of the early Chinese ENGOs' founders was 'the death of public life in China after 1989' instead of concrete environmental issues. While these leaders are devoted to the cause of environmental protection, environmental protection is more of a tool, or a suitable topic, to gather different people together and to further mobilise public life in China. It is not a sensitive topic, in comparison to the claims of political freedom in 1989. With environmental protection, it is not clear who you are mobilising or fighting against (Interview with Mr Forest, 01-08-2017; 30-03-2018; 14-08-2018).

In other words, the theme of environmental protection is more of a mask. Behind this mask hides a group of intellectuals with the ambition of political reforms in China, which can be traced back to the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. Accordingly, Nature Lovers' environmental protection actions are mainly community activities, such as bird-watching, family camps and children's clubs. To put it in another way, the focus is on people instead of on the environment. Ms Swan further explained how this mask can help guarantee that 'the blood of 6.4 (4th of June) was not in vain'.

> We learnt a painful lesson from 6.4. The biggest weakness of Chinese society is that we did not have social organisations that can connect individuals. There were no channels or institutions for public participation in China. On the one side was the powerful and tough authoritarian regime. On the other side, we only had a 'disengaged bunch', a mass made of separate individuals. …Thus, we started the process of 'society cultivation' by establishing NGOs. These small organisations can provide daily training to citizens. To reach bigger goals, you must connect yourselves with other people and reach agreements with them. Each NGO is a healthy cell of society, which links individuals and allows them to experience autonomous self-governance. These 'society cultivation' processes are necessary preparations for social and political changes in China (Workshop among ENGOs, on 17-11-2016).

The other two leading ENGOs in the 1990s also shared similar views to Nature Lovers, to some degree. Though they do not have a very clear political message, their ambitions are clearly beyond solving the concrete environmental issues. For them, environmental protection is deeply connected with the themes of community building and broader social changes.

In the case of Green Village, the founder used to be a researcher of philosophy and had no background in environmental governance. Back in the 1990s, she worked on philosophy for a Chinese research centre and accidentally learnt of the environmental crises in China. With a philosophy background, her view on the causes and solutions of the problems is rooted in the broader social structure. There are also two themes intertwining in this organisation's emergence. The founder considers dealing with environmental problems as her lifelong cause. Meanwhile, in her opinion, environmental issues stem from the crisis of modernity and especially the breakdown of community in China. The topic of environmental protection is more of an entry point for them to engage with the broader crisis of culture and social structure. As introduced by one project manager,

> We are an ENGO, but environmental protection is only a starting point. From this topic, people can pay attention to public affairs and eventually we aim to rebuild the community in China, especially the mutual trust among atomic individuals. … During the past 30 years, we kept exploring a cultural remedy for various issues in Chinese society, especially environmental protection (Interview at Green Village, 20-04-2017).

Accordingly, Green Village has focused on community environmental consciousness-raising for more than 30 years regardless of the field changes. They usually spent years working in one single neighbourhood, organising residents to learn about refuse categorisation, a green lifestyle and having regular community governance discussions.

Also, a third major leading ENGO, Green Home, stresses that the aim of community building is more than directly solving environmental problems. This organisation was established by a resigned journalist, who also did not have the background of environmental governance. In the following three decades, their main activities have been weekly river walks. In these projects, local residents are organised to learn about river pollution and local history, to collect garbage, and sometimes to report pollution issues to local environmental bureaus by phoning the pollution report hotline. To be clear, though their organisation in Beijing primarily focuses on community activities, the leader herself, as an individual, has also conducted long-term investigations and reports on Chinese river pollution and the social

and ecological issues caused by the famous Three Gorges Dam project in China. Regarding the community activities, the founder and leader explained,

> Our focus is beyond environmental protection. In my opinion, the best ENGOs should be those who can really mobilise volunteerism in China. This is a real and long-term contribution to our society. In the post-reform era, we particularly need volunteerism in China. Among all the topics, environmental protection is the most suitable area to cultivate volunteerism. Everyone is involved in these types of issues, whether rich or poor. We can find real volunteerism in this area. Isn't this the real volunteerism? People care about their home and making our home better together (Interview with Green Home, 03-03-2017).

As discussed above, Chinese ENGOs started to emerge in the 1990s, yet environmental protection is not their only concern or final goal. On the environmental issues and governance, early ENGOs only have vague visions for a better future, instead of concrete strategy routes and agendas. The ideal of environmental protection is more of a suitable theme to trigger people's interests in public affairs and to build connections among individuals in China. It was some Chinese intellectuals' attempt to seek another route to bring social and cultural changes after the Tiananmen protests. The priority for these early Chinese ENGO leaders was to organise individuals into groups and train them with self-governance skills. In their belief, an active civil society is the most effective solution to the environmental issues and other social issues in China[24]. Also, importantly, these activities were considered as powerful and safe. The political risks in China are particularly uncertain[25], especially after the Tiananmen Square massacre. This required NGOs to cautiously impose self-censorship. In this context, environmental issues were framed as lifestyle problems, which are apolitical and not politically sensitive.

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24 As mentioned above, this idea was also rooted from their association activities in the 1980s and 1990s, when they had the chance to learn about Western theories and social organisations.

25 To be more specific, (1) according to Chinese Law, all NGOs, or as we call them in Chinese, social organisations, are supposed to register with the Civil Affairs Department and to be supervised by a Chinese governmental or semi-governmental institution. Otherwise, the organisations are illegal. (2) The Chinese government sometimes punishes CSOs by shutting down their organisations and making arrests. It also happens to ENGOs' staff. Many arrests were made based on other laws or accusations, such as inciting subversion of state power, revealing state secrets, picking quarrels and provoking trouble. (3) Also, sometimes, the state changes policies extensively and eliminates certain NGOs (rectification reviews), which happened several times in the 1990s and 2000s. That is, previously legally registered organisations became illegal all of a sudden.

2.2 Environmental Protection as Community Activities

The personal and organisational trajectories of early ENGOs further shaped the meaning of environmental practice. In NGOs' management and daily practices, these early groups gradually proposed concrete interpretations for the cause of environmental protection. To be specific, environmental protection is mainly a topic of urban community governance. It was framed as a mild and apolitical area, which does not directly involve political and economic struggles, or social justice issues. Environmental protection campaigns mainly refer to consciousness-raising advocacies in urban communities.

The two aims of early ENGOs were inherent in the project designs at this stage, when the first generation dominated the circle. Firstly, to engage with environmental crises, ENGOs encourage citizens to care about environmental problems and try greener lifestyles, such as taking public transport and reducing disposable items. In the long term, when more people adopt green lifestyles and further influence other people around them, ENGOs will be guiding society in dealing with the environmental crises (Interview with Ms Ice at Nature Lovers, 18/10/2016). Secondly, in terms of the goal of community-building and citizen education, ENGOs guide residents to care about and discuss public affairs. During these processes, individuals can make connections and gather together to solve problems collectively, such as refuse categorisation in their own neighbourhood. That is, ENGOs wish to train citizens with self-governing skills and strengthen Chinese civil society.

Early ENGOs cautiously drew the boundaries for environmental protection and focused particularly on community activities. While China in the 1990s had witnessed several serious environmental crises (e.g. sandstorms, flooding and desertification), ENGOs specifically focused on small-scale community activities, such as public lectures in neighbourhoods, camping and river walking. Environmental protection meant 'the three old things' in the 1990s: tree-planting, bird-watching and garbage-collecting.

Several cases typically show early ENGOs' emphases on community-building to solve concrete environmental issues. When questioned about the efficiency of these community activities in dealing with environmental crises, the manager explained to me that the main values of tree-planting and river-walking are not to directly solve environmental problems. In these activities, early ENGOs expected people to discuss environmental issues, and to reach agreements on solutions (Interview with Ms Ice at Nature Lovers, 18/10/2016).

Another typical example is 'the battle in Hoh Xil'. Early ENGOs particularly distinguished themselves from Western ENGOs and rejected contentious acting styles. To depoliticise their social cause, they emphasised the cultural aspect of environmental issues and avoided the topics of social justice and corruption beneath the environmental issues. In one of its environmental consciousness-raising activities, Nature Lovers' team revealed the suffering of the wild Tibetan antelope in Hol Xil. Unexpectedly, university students across the country were widely mobilised in the late 1990s. Various students proposed to join 'the battle in Hoh Xil' by fighting against poachers in Hoh Xil. At that time, Mr J, Nature Lovers' other founder, wrote a public letter to students and demobilised them. In the letter, he reasserted that,

> Environmental protection is about daily small activities, such as recycling. The most valuable thing the youth can do is to have a green lifestyle and to further influence their peers, rather than to join a battle (Workshop at Nature Lovers, 08/10/2016).

Likewise, early ENGOs' emphasis on changing people over changing the environment can be observed in other project designs and personnel inflows in the first decade. For instance, Nature Lovers used to have a non-violent communication workshop, which trained participants how to express their views on environmental protection calmly and find common ground with other people (Participatory observation at Nature Lovers, 10/2016-07/2017; interview with Ms River, 30/03/2017; 15/08/2018). The project design directly echoed the ambition of society cultivation through training people, instead of directly intervening with pollution issues. Similarly, all three leading ENGOs actively participated in the reconstruction work after the Sichuan earthquake in 2008. Along with some educational NGOs, some leading ENGOs initiated a 'Green Ribbon' campaign for fundraising and blood drives (Yang, G.B. 2008). Green Village also initiated a project in the area, helping to build eco-houses and eco-stoves and, importantly, to organise the local families to work together on disaster reduction. As reviewed by Ms Swan from Nature Lovers, one of their main values in Sichuan was to train volunteers how to actively build connections with each other and work together without government instructions (Workshops among ENGOs, on 17/11/2016). Echoing the main aim of educating citizens during this trip to Sichuan, the team built connections with the volunteers from some NGOs in the area of education, and invited one or two of them to work with Nature Lovers, as the organisation specifically values the skills of educating and changing people (Interview with Ms River, 30/03/2017; 15/08/2018). Accordingly, in the first decade, the majority of Nature Lovers' staff had no academic background in environmental science or governance. Most of them had majored in

politics, literature or psychology. As stressed by the founders, their main working object was humans, instead of the environment. Thus, the team needed to know how to mobilise and organise public life, instead of technical scientific knowledge.

Early ENGOs usually do not work with pollution victims, even when approached by desperate victims. Some other ENGOs criticised this choice as cowardice (e.g. interview at Green Explorers, 01/04/2018). However, as emphasised in this chapter, based on the personal and organisational trajectories of early ENGOs, this ethical choice is not simply a passive retreat, but also a strategic choice. From the perspective of early ENGOs, the individual incidents and sufferings are too narrow, and their vision is to cultivate a broad green civil society in China, which might solve these issues at a deeper structural level. This interpretation can be observed from Green Village and Green Home's critiques on Western ENGOs:

> By partaking in lobbies and protests, Western ENGOs are only dealing with the symptoms of environmental crises. But we choose to engage with the roots, which is the social structure and community-building. Changing people's minds in the long term is more fundamental than policy advocacy and protests (Interview at Green Village, 20/04/2017).

The organisation's reservations to contentious actions has been referred to as mild environmentalism and female environmentalism by some scholars and journalists (e.g. Ho, 2001). Importantly, the 'mildness' is not simply a resignation or a depoliticisation attempt, if we interpret it in the specific historical context (Steinmetz, 2008). Beneath the mask of mild environmentalism lies the Chinese ENGOs' ambition of broader social changes.

2.3 Expansion and the Shaping Effects

This community-oriented model of environmental protection has dominated the circle for ten years since the mid-1990s. The three early leading ENGOs have influenced various newer ENGOs. For one thing, environmental protection is relatively new to Chinese society. While some people had a passion for environmental protection, they did not know where to start and how to translate their passions through NGOs and make concrete changes. In addition, Chinese politics is uncertain and thus confusing for social organisations. It is unclear for NGOs where the regime's red lines are and how to avoid the state's attention. As the three leading ENGOs all have political connections (e.g. personal relationships with

government officials), it is generally considered that their actions will be safe for the social organisations in an authoritarian state.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, most newcomers in the circle were the students or followers of the three main ENGOs. Nature Lovers was particularly influential. The organisation has established over 20 volunteer groups across the country and guided each group to work in a similar way. Moreover, Nature Lovers incubated over 30 independent environmental groups including some ENGOs (Participatory observation at Nature Lovers, 10/2016-07/2017). Similarly, Green Villages and Green Home also provided this area with 'new blood'. Various young people worked for the two organisations and later established their own ENGOs (e.g. Participatory observation at Independent Rock, 02/2017-08/2017; Participatory observation at Green Harmony, 05/2017-06/2017).

Moreover, there were rarely divisions among ENGOs during this period. The main ENGOs collaborated closely in some public campaigns on green lifestyles, such as *26 Degree Air Conditions,* and *A Day without Car*. In the first ten years, there were around twenty famous active ENGOs in Beijing and most of them focused on environmental education in communities and universities.

The dominance of this interpretation of environmental protection further shaped the future development of this circle, in at least three ways. First, this depoliticised and community-oriented interpretation on environmental protection won ENGOs the state's tolerance and carved out a space for them to exist. As one of the leaders Ms Swan said, they sensed that it might be possible to establish social organisations in China in the 1990s, and further explored the possibilities. Early ENGO leaders were mainly intellectuals with political connections, such as professors, journalists and NPC delegates. With these backgrounds, the early leaders skilfully depoliticised the theme of environmental protection on the surface. They specifically attached 'community-building' and 'volunteerism' to 'environmental protection'. In other words, they found a way to channel their ambitions of changing social structures through environmental protection activities. Compared to the political freedom demands made at the Tiananmen Square protests, ENGOs' lifestyle advocacies did not raise state suspicion or lead to repression. As a result, the environment realm became one of the most active and developed areas of Chinese civil society (Ho and Edmonds, 2008; Hildebrandt, 2013).

Second, as had been expanded on in Chapter 2 and mentioned in this chapter, the idea of community building has remained among ENGOs, yet has gradually lost its original

meanings throughout the 30-year history. Today, influenced by early ENGOs and funding structures, over half the ENGOs in China have environmental education projects in communities. However, nowadays ENGOs put more emphasis on entertainment than on citizen responsibilities, self-reflection and community spirit in their project management. Early ENGOs mainly focused on one to two neighbourhoods and their core volunteer groups for several years. Back in the 1990s, many of them also relied on their membership fees and further assisted community self-governance. In contrast, nowadays most ENGOs rely on environmental foundations and have been shaped by the professionalisation trends. With efficient project management (e.g. time budget, quantitative indicators) as one significant goal, ENGOs are supposed to affect more neighbourhoods within a short period. To produce 'better' projects, more ENGOs tend to organise one-off activities in different neighbourhoods, as donors expect them to maximise the number of participants of each activity. Also, particularly influenced by the so-called consumer perspective and PR logic (along with other toolkits), various ENGOs tend to view the public as project consumers and rebrand 'environmental protection' in an attempt to get their attention (e.g. nature education courses, summer camps, community painting clubs). As ENGOs shift their focus particularly to the public's desires for entertainment and relaxation, they are, to some degree, providing the service of organising activities to the public, rather than stressing the knowledge and inspiration on environmental protection and citizens' responsibilities. Moreover, as ENGO teams intentionally avoid discussing pressing issues, participants can hardly sense the urgency in resolving the environmental crises. As a result, the solutions to environmental problems are narrowed to simple individual behaviours instead of reactions at a community level. This creates a disconnection between community activities and political engagements. Accordingly, some of the early leading ENGOs have been marginalised in this circle, in terms of funding distribution, reputation and influence. For instance, Global Village and Green Home did not change their organisational structures and working approach in this professionalisation trend. As will be expanded on in Chapter 4, as a result, their projects cannot easily fit the main environmental foundations' evaluation criteria, which makes them struggle financially. Instead, Nature Lovers experienced a difficult reform in 2008 and introduced professional project management in their community projects afterwards. Having the recognition and support of the key environmental foundations, the organisation has continued to be a leader in this area.

Third, this dominant mode in the 1990s, which was to be admired and studied, also triggered its own challengers. Since the mid-2000s, with the changes of economic and political opportunities in China, various newer ENGOs have been established. The previous dominating model has been challenged by different ideas and logics. With the emergence of

the field and different field positions, the meaning of environmental protection has been contested. Two other main branches especially challenged the value of community-building and citizen education activities. For them, environmental protection means to solve concrete environmental problems efficiently. The political meaning of environmental protection, as proposed by early ENGOs, has been gradually marginalised in symbolic competitions among ENGOs. For various ENGO teams of the second generation, community activities are generally considered as inefficient, ineffective and for 'lower-skilled' ENGO teams.

3. Second Generation: Is Environmental Protection About Solving Problems? And What Are the Problems?

3.1 Second Branch: Environmental Protection through Scientific Evidence and Analyses

Since the emergence of early ENGOs in the mid 1990s, China experienced various social changes, which inevitably shaped Chinese ENGOs' trajectories. Since the mid-2000s, different newcomers had emerged, who gradually enriched the social and political meanings of environmental protection. One active and special branch particularly focused on pollution intervention and stressed the significance of science in solving pressing environmental issues.

This second branch was mainly established by professionals[26] with academic backgrounds in environmental science, environmental governance and management. Most leaders of this second branch used to be the students of early ENGOs, yet gradually proposed a different perspective on environmental protection. While early ENGOs expect to solve environmental crises with consciousness-raising activities in communities, this second branch particularly stresses the consciousness of problem-solving. The manager of the leading ENGO of this branch, Blue Sky, explains:

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26 Lei (2018) and Lorentzen (2014) had more detailed discussions on the term 'professionals' in China, which is part of China's post-Mao modernisation project. To pursue socioeconomic development, the state needs capable professionals and citizens who are educated and have the knowledge and skills to participate in the tasks designated by the state. Importantly, to make the institutions work, the professionals should have at least some basic legal knowledge and be able to communicate with the state or media.

We think that environmental education (the mode of Nature Lovers) is important. But we can only see its effect in 20-30 years. Practically, we must have the consciousness of 'problem-solving', as we have urgent crises right now (Interview with Blue Sky, 30/11/2016).

To be specific, while the early ENGOs consider environmental issues as a systematic crisis rooted in cultural and structural problems, organisations of the second branch portray the environmental crises, which they will deal with, as concrete issues, such as exceeded heavy metals in rivers and soil, abnormal Air Quality Index (AQI) caused by illegal pollution emissions, and exceeded Dioxin emissions from waste incinerations. Further, while early ENGOs rely on consciousness-raising and lifestyle changes, the second branch emphasises direct interventions with pollution (e.g. interview at Blue Sky, 13/12/2017). For them, ENGOs are particularly valuable when they investigate the sources of the pollution, analyse the possible solutions and efficiently stop the exceeded emissions with their professional knowledge and approaches.

In the following sections, I phrase this branch of ENGOs as engineer/scientist ENGOs, which is shorthand to characterise their key features and values. Science, truths and rational debates are the terms frequently used by these ENGOs to explain and justify their working approaches. Also, this branch of ENGOs usually has employees with academic backgrounds in environmental science. They especially use scientific data and evidence to intervene with environmental governance. However, it is worthwhile to point out that these engineer/scientist ENGOs are fairly different from academic institutions or professional think tanks. For instance, while these teams are famous for their relatively higher education level in the circle of ENGOs, only a few team members had completed PhD-level academic training. While these engineer/scientist ENGOs are keen to write research reports on pollution, their primary purpose is not academic innovations or academic reputations, but successful pollution intervention. While some of them refer to themselves as think tanks, they also point out that their work is not limited to thinking, but thinking and doing (e.g. interview at Green Code, 22/11/2016). Similarly, while their investigations and research reports can provide important raw materials about environmental disputes, they do not have the large amount of scientific capital owned by influential scientific institutions, such as the scientists who published the UN report on climate change in 2018 and triggered the Extinction Rebellion movement, or the scientists who proposed sustainable diets on Lancet which led to fierce debates in academic circles. Different from pure scientific institutions, besides investigatory skills, each ENGO of this branch is required to have various different skills and experience, including fund-raising, media, public engagements and policy

advocacy. Their emergence and development since the mid-2000s have largely shaped the environmental governance structure in China.

3.1.1 Second Branch: The Emergence of the Engineer/Scientist ENGOs

This part will start by tackling the question: why did the engineer/scientist ENGOs emerge in the mid-2000s? To be specific, why did they challenge the previous model of ENGOs and shift the focus from community building to concrete pollution issues? Who are they and how do they work? As will be shown in this section, the emergence of engineer/scientist ENGOs is not an isolated phenomenon but deeply embedded in some overlapping historical processes in China, including the reform and professionalisation of the Chinese philanthropy area and the changes of the funding structure, personnel inflows, shifts in the framing of environmental issues in China and also technological developments.

At a personal level, the teams of this second branch's trajectories are quite different from early ENGOs. Mr Birch is a pioneering and inspiring figure among environmental groups, whose organisation Blue Sky has been recognised widely as a landmark in the field. Being 10-15 years younger than the leaders of the first-generation ENGOs, Mr Birch grew up in Beijing and witnessed the rise and fall of Chinese civic life. Different from the first-generation leaders, Mr Birch's journey in environmental protection was not started by general concerns on political reforms and democratisation yet initiated from concrete river pollution issues. Graduated from one of the top universities in China, Mr Birch first became a journalist for a foreign newspaper in China. Through writing reports on the no-flow events in the Yellow River, he realised the seriousness of Chinese environmental governance issues and further studied the situations of various rivers in China. His book on the Chinese water crisis was published in 1999 and was considered as a Chinese version of *Silent Spring* by domestic and international media. Readers and environmental groups turned to him and asked him for solutions to the water crisis, and many of their questions were also the questions he had been asking himself. After working as an environmental consultant for a short period of time, he was invited to further study in the US in 2004, where he focused on environmental governance institutions and law. Learning the Western environmental governance processes, he was especially inspired by the role of public participation when pushing for institutional changes. With knowledge on environmental governance history and working experience in the media, he soon realised that the power of information could be the lever to move or change the current social and economic system. To be specific, through information disclosure, corporates might, under the pressure of public opinion, adopt

environmental protection standards. In 2006, with a very small team, he started his organisation Blue Sky. Their first project was to build a water pollution database, which accumulated the data about water quality and pollution across the whole country. Quoting and assembling the data from various official sources, they made the first Chinese Water Pollution Report, which was designed to be convenient and readable for the public (Interview at Blue Sky, 13/12/2017). Today, the organisation has built several databases on pollution, covering the areas of air quality, water quality and some industries. Importantly, the team especially stresses the value of truth and scientific investigation. The credibility of the information they provide to the public has always been the first priority of their work. More than an organisation disclosing information to the public, Blue Sky wishes to analyse the databases and contribute professional suggestions to environmental governance, as shown in their vision, 'Co-operation between companies, government, NGOs, research organisations and other stakeholders and leveraging the power of a wide range of enterprises to achieve environmental transformation'. The energy brought to this circle by this organisation and Mr Birch will be further introduced in the following sections.

Likewise, several other engineer/scientist ENGOs have similar logic and trajectories. Compared to Mr Birch who started as a journalist, these ENGO teams' professional backgrounds are more distant from social science and political science. Most of the team members completed domestic or international master's degrees in environmental science or engineering. One important commonality among these ENGOs is that they wish to use their academic and professional knowledge to solve real issues in society and contribute to public welfare. For instance, to start with some typical cases, Independent Rock was established in 2012 by a team with master's and PhD degrees in environmental governance and chemistry. Their vision specifically mentions that they are pursuing an environmental decision-making scheme built on rational criticism and procedural justice. By conducting research on the risks and benefits of energy structure reform, Independent Rock wishes to join or even organise the rational and scientific debates on environmental protection. Similarly, Green Code, a close peer of Independent Rock, was initiated in 2012 and hired employees with international master's degrees in environment governance. As shown in their mission, their rationale is to use strategies to bring different sectors together and to contribute to the Chinese green transformation. The specific role of this organisation is to contribute rigorous thoughts and analyses on Chinese environmental governance, including the challenges of electricity industry reforms, and the economic and social risks of biodiversity crises. Also, Green Panda was initiated by a conservation biology professor in 2007 and Global Green was established by some former civil servants working in environmental governance. Both organisations invite scientists to work with them and try to explore solutions to

environmental crises with scientific research and market logic. Similarly, Green Camera was started in 2008 by a group of biology graduates who conducted and documented background investigations in various areas in China. Green Lab was established by a PhD graduate in environmental science in 2009, who wished to voice scientific perspectives and analyses in environmental disputes. Green North, which will be mentioned again in the following sections, was established in 2008. Though the leader was a middle class man without a major in environmental science, the organisation is a close partner of Blue Sky and also hires employees who can conduct rigorous pollution investigation.

On the one hand, viewing the personal trajectories, I agree that the emergence of these engineer/scientist organisations has a transhistorical dimension. Several of them are pioneering explorers in China, who contributed innovations and new ideas to this circle. Due to their creative working approach, Blue Sky was visited by some US government officials who came to Beijing to study them. Due to their innovative analyses, Independent Rock was invited by other countries to write reports and comments on their energy reform. On the other hand, the emergence of this second branch is largely historical and is embedded in broader social changes in mid-2000s China, especially in some important domestic and international social conditions.

First, to start with, the biggest institutional conditional factor for the thriving engineer/scientist ENGOs was the modernisation and professionalisation of the philanthropy area in China, which changed the funding structures and operational standards of the entire organisation. Since the 1990s, Chinese ENGOs have long relied on foreign funds, which stably contributed tens of millions of RMB annually (Ford Foundation and CCIA, 2017). Since the mid-2000s, due to the rise of domestic foundations, the total pool of funds for Chinese ENGOs has dramatically expanded and foreign funds are now occupying smaller percentages. For instance, the biggest domestic foundation alone donated 58 million RMB to Chinese ENGOs in 2016 and 134 million RMB in 2018 (Alashan SEE Foundation, 2017, 2019). In 2018, six domestic foundations contributed more than 300 million RMB to Chinese ENGOs, including the Alashan SEE Foundation, Lao Niu Foundation, Vanke Foundation, China Green Carbon Foundation, Mangrove Wetlands Conservation Foundation and the Qiaonyu Foundation. All of these important domestic ENGOs were established between 2004 and 2012. All the ENGOs mentioned above have been mainly funded by these foundations.

Their establishment in the mid-2000s was directly enabled by the change of law in the philanthropy area in China in the mid-2000s. Prior to 2004, nearly all Chinese foundations

had been established by the government (Deng, 2015). Since the official promulgation of the *Regulations on Foundations* in 2004, the Chinese government started to allow private foundations to be set up for the public good. According to official statistics (Deng and Tao, 2017), between 2004 and 2012 the amount of private foundations increased six-fold. There were fewer than 1,000 foundations in China in 2004 and almost 5,000 foundations in 2015. As mentioned previously in this paragraph, most of the large foundations for environmental causes started during this period, enabled by the law revision. As pointed out by Lai et al. (2015) philanthropy in China was officially modernised in 2004, which provided a legalised channel for the new wealth to engage in philanthropy.
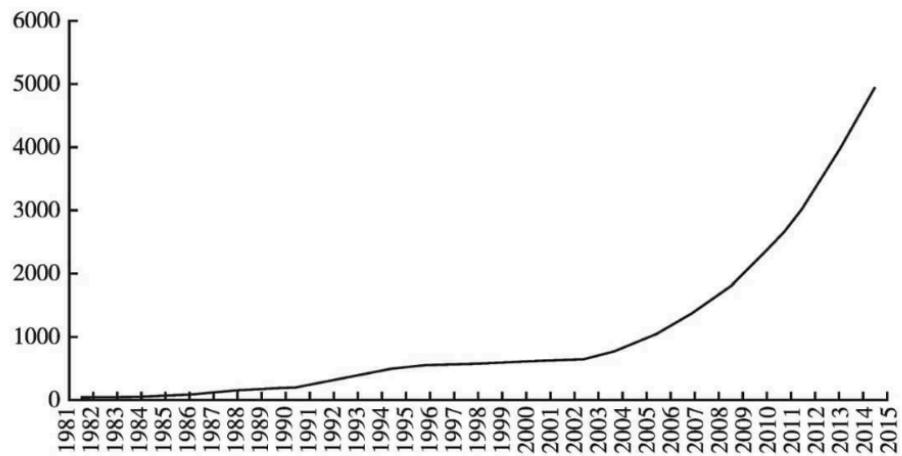

Figure 3 The Total Amount of Chinese Domestic Foundations (1981-2015)
(Source: Deng and Tao, 2017, *The Development of Chinese Foundations: An Independent Research Report*)
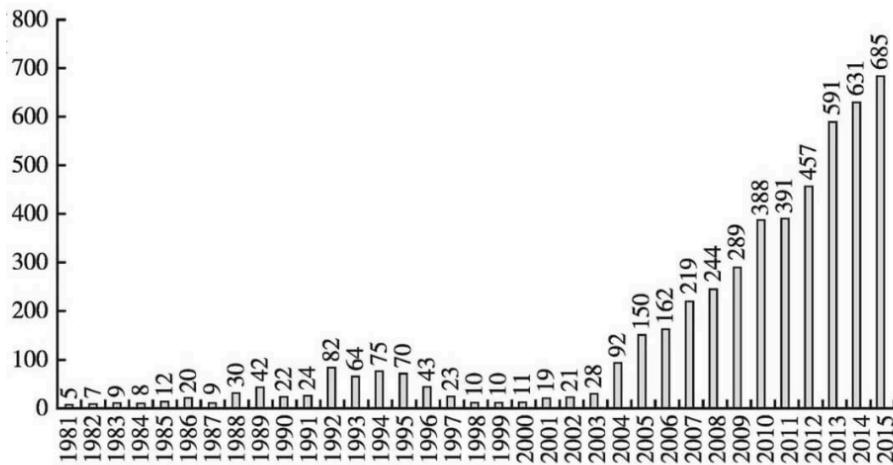
Figure 4 The Amount of Chinese Domestic Foundations Established Each Year (1981-2015)
(Source: Deng and Tao, 2017, *The Development of Chinese Foundations: An Independent Research Report*).
Most of the important foundations for environmental protection mentioned in the above paragraphs were established between 2004 and 2012. The year of establishment: Alashan SEE Foundation (2004), Lao Niu Foundation (2004), Vanke Foundation (2008), China Green Carbon Foundation (2010), Mangrove Wetlands Conservation Foundation (2012), Qiaonyu Foundation (2012). All of these important domestic ENGOs was established between 2004 and 2012. All the ENGOs mentioned above have been mainly funded by these foundation.

Another institutional change in the mid-2000s was triggered by the Sichuan Earthquake in 2008, which was considered as 'the Year of Civil Society'. The huge disaster led to a tremendous surge of volunteers, civic associations, enterprises and media across the whole country. As Shieh and Deng (2011) argued, NGO participation in the aftermath of the earthquake stimulated pressure on the government to provide a more encouraging policy environment for NGOs. In 2009, MOCA began drafting new regulations in Charity Law, which later lowered the threshold for the registration of NGOs and private foundations.

Second, along with the legal changes, the growing pool of funds further led to professionalisation trends among Chinese ENGOs in the mid-2000s, which especially benefitted scientist/engineer ENGOs. With the establishment of numerous new NGOs and foundations, donors and governments gradually introduced professional management regulations within the NGOs. The huge size of some of the foundations in this area, which fund around 30-80 projects per year (Ford Foundation and CCIA, 2017), demands that donors manage ENGOs professionally. Compared to ENGOs' attempts to learn professional NGO management skills in the previous decade (e.g. Spires, 2011), the professionalisation trend turned out to be more systematic and thorough after the mid-2000s (e.g. Shieh and Deng, 2011; interview with Ms River, 30/03/2017; 15/08/2018; participatory observation at Green Harmony, 05/2017-06/2017). As a result, ENGOs are supposed to frame their visions and concerns within the discourse of NGO professional management, to show their abilities to efficiently use the funds and create visible changes (Participatory observation at Nature Lovers, 10/2016-07/2017). To be specific, in order to justify the funds, ENGOs need to

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clarify the problems and come up with the matching solutions (usually within a one-year project cycle), and explain these explicitly to the donors (Interview with Ms River, 30/03/2017; 15/08/2018). As will be discussed more in Chapter 4 on funding competition, this professionalisation trend has largely given the scientist/engineer ENGOs more credit. These ENGOs' problem-solving consciousness and their proposals to solve concrete pollution issues clearly resonate with donors' needs for professional management and efficiency control.

Third, in accordance with the previous two points, the philanthropy modernisation and NGOs professionalisation trends in the mid-2000s further led to the change of human resources in this field. To be specific, the financial resource structure and job descriptions have changed in the circle, which allows more young and middle-aged professionals in environmental science to join this field without making huge personal financial sacrifices. Early ENGOs usually paid their staff a humble salary, due to their limited financial resources and the charitable cause. In terms of the values or ethical principles of most community-oriented ENGOs, their jobs have heavy moral meanings, and their employees should prioritise public interest over personal financial gains (Interview at Green Village, 20/04/2017). If we use the data from the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Human Resources and Social Security (2018), the average monthly salary in Beijing in 2017 was 8,467 RMB, and the average salary of two leading community-based ENGOs in my samples were 4,000 RMB and 6,000 RMB. Against this value on voluntary financial sacrifice, in the new professionalisation trend, NGOs' work is valued as a 'normal' job and staff also earn decent salaries that match their contributions (e.g. interview at Green Code, 22/11/2016; Global Green, 09/08/2017). This means that engineers or scientists can work for ENGOs without sacrificing personal financial gain. The average monthly salary of the engineer/scientist ENGOs could be as high as 8,000-10,000 RMB. Some offer a higher salary, as much as foreign profiting corporates, in order to attract skilful professionals in environmental science and governance. In other words, the professionalisation trend has provided favourable financial and cultural conditions to attract environmental scientists or engineers to work for NGOs, and therefore also contributed to the emergence of the second type of ENGOs.

Fourth, zooming out, the rise of new ENGOs and a framing of problem-solving have been encouraged by the state's new discourse on environmental protection, which gives the topic priority and legitimacy. The narratives on environmental issues from the media and government have been changed in China since the 2000s, particularly after the natural disasters in 1998. Environmental issues are no longer simply luxury post-modern lifestyle concerns of middle-class people, but catastrophes faced by the whole society (e.g. Wong,

2005; Yang, G.B. 2005; 2008). The reporting of environmental accidents, disasters and routine cases of pollution breaching standards have been regularly practised in China (Mol and Carter, 2006), though the framing is largely technocratic and apolitical. In the 11th five-year plan (2006–10), China for the first time set forth 'hard' environmental and energy efficiency targets. As observed by some practitioners in the field, since the issues of sand storms and floods have been included in the environmental discourse, the discussions on lifestyle and waste management in neighbourhoods have been relatively marginalised to a certain degree (Interview at Green Explorers, 01/04/2018). Accordingly, the long-term agenda of community-based social cultivation appears to be lame when environmental issues are framed as urgent crises, as could be seen from the earlier comment of Blue Sky's manager: 'We can only see its effect in 20-30 years.' (Interview with Blue Sky, 30/11/2016). Thus, with a new problem formulating, this second group particularly stresses the significance of solving concrete issues efficiently. Plus, engineer/scientist ENGOs can practically monitor pollution and assemble pollution data across the country, which has been enabled by the state's environmental information disclosure regime since 2007.

3.1.2 Second Branch: A New Framing on Environmental Protection

Distinguished from the first generation ENGOs, the engineer/scientist ENGOs followed quite different trajectories and emerged under specific social conditions. Accordingly, this new branch of organisations has framed their shared cause differently. Specifically, as mentioned above, these groups have always stressed the significance of problem-solving consciousness. As will be shown in this section, the engineer/scientist ENGOs particularly focus on the technocratic dimensions of environmental governance with a problem-solving mentality and the discussions on society-state relationships appear to be apolitical. Since the mid- and late-2000s, this group has gained a significant share of financial resources and reputations among ENGOs. With the rise of a new branch, the field has witnessed symbolic oppositions and competitions.

First, as mentioned previously, the second group disagrees with the early ENGOs and brands environmental protection as concrete technical pollution problems, such as abnormal AQI in Beijing. The first generation ENGOs see the roots of environmental crises as the weak civil society or the lack of connections among individuals, which requires decades of social structural reorganisation. In contrast, motivated by concrete urgent environmental issues and facilitated by scientific and engineering knowledge, the second branch narrows down the broad environmental crises into concrete pollution issues, which are more manageable for the teams and more likely to be solved within a few years. In other words, the concerns of

engineer/scientist ENGOs are relatively isolated from the themes of civil society cultivation or community governance. Accordingly, ENGOs' specific role is to deal with pollution issues efficiently with their professional skills. To do so, embedded in this field that was dominated by community-based ENGOs since the 1990s, it takes cultural efforts of this second group to distinguish themselves from other ENGOs, and cautiously draw the boundaries between ENGOs' work and other social issues. As said by one manager, 'In order to deal with an environmental crisis efficiently, we must clarify our focus and cut out irrelevant parts. Pollution victims are not included in our concerns, as victims have other goals, which are complicated, while our only focus is to stop the illegal emissions immediately (e.g. interview at Green North, 23/07/2018).

To be clear, this boundary between ENGOs and communities by no means suggests a lack of care from the engineer/scientist ENGOs. Most of them are motivated by public welfare yet believe that the most efficient way to serve the public's environmental interests is to rely on professional knowledge instead of public engagements. According to the manager of Green Lab, sometimes the public generally lacks scientific knowledge and is 'paranoid' about certain relatively harmless phenomena, such as substation radiation, which suggests the significance of a scientific and rational voice (Interview at Green Lab, 27/02/2017; 01/08/2017). An ENGO employee said: 'The public's role is to report pollution issues to us. We will then take care of the issues in a professional way. Usually, the public can only express their dissatisfied emotions, while we can use evidence and data to rationally negotiate with the government and factories' (Interview at Green Code, 22/11/2016).

Second, this problem-solving mentality and framing also leads to distinguished working values and ethical principles. For various engineer/scientist ENGOs, the key credential for ENGOs is the capability to solve concrete environmental problems, instead of cultivating volunteerism or community building. To justify their values, many ENGOs of this group stress the practical and quantitative results of their work, such as how many cases they were involved in, how many factories with illegal emissions they have assisted to be shut down, or how much incorrect pollution data they have spotted in the government monitoring system. These types of working achievements are particularly treasured by the engineer/scientist ENGOs and have always been stressed in each organisation's yearbooks, brochures, websites and social media accounts. It is also worthwhile mentioning that the donors of these ENGOs generally share a similar view. An important criterion to evaluate ENGOs is whether the organisation has the capability to solve problems. No matter how, you must solve problems (Interview with Green Harmony, 05/05/2017). Furthermore, in terms of working ethics affected by scientific and engineering training, being objective and

professional in the problem-solving processes is particularly emphasised. As believed by the engineer/scientist ENGOs, being objective and using rigorous scientific methods is technically significant for problem solving and can also help them practically to avoid environmental dispute escalations or other related complex social disputes, such as pollution victim compensation. Thus, to manage the complexities of environmental crises, the engineer/scientist ENGOs especially stress a neutral, technical and scientific discourse in their daily work, instead of a civil society discourse, empowerment of community, public participation and self-governance. Accordingly, as will be presented more in depth in Chapter 4, with different trajectories and positions, the engineer/scientist ENGOs tend to consider early ENGOs' community activities as unprofessional and inferior projects which cannot deal with urgent concrete environmental crises (e.g. interview at Birds' Wings, 29/11/2016; Green Code, 22/11/2016).

Third, another distinguished feature of the engineer/scientist ENGOs' problem-solving framing is the relatively apolitical view on state-society relationships. In practice, to some degree, largely pressured by the worsening environmental conditions, this branch tends to prioritise efficiency over civil society development. Embedded in the specific and social structure, the two concepts sometimes appear to be opposite of each other in ENGOs' daily work. For the engineer/scientist ENGOs, the priority of environmental protection is to efficiently stop the pollution, instead of cultivating an independent civil society. Some think that civil society development in China is way beyond their capabilities and ambitions. To solve concrete environment issues practically, these ENGOs do not particularly stress the boundaries between the state and social organisations. As long as problems can be solved quickly, they don't mind if they play the role of government assistants, or when the government take their credits (e.g. interview at Global Green, 09/08/2017; interview at Green North, 23/07/2018; interview at Green Code, 22/11/2016). To deal smoothly with disputes, they tend to depoliticise the issues and simplify them as technical problems, such as the corporates' cheating behaviour or the technical errors of the official monitoring system (e.g. interview at Blue Sky, 13/12/2017). To some degree, as will be shown in the following examples, these ENGOs express their full respect for the state and further strengthen the legitimacy of the government, instead of stressing the independence of civil society.

This third feature of the problem-solving framing also invites us to engage with another discussion. If most of the engineer/scientist ENGOs are motivated to solve concrete issues and do not have ambitions to pluralise the Chinese regime, would they change through working for ENGOs? Would working in ENGOs provide these environmental governance

professionals the political education which generates their civic and political consciousness? Can the forms of NGOs facilitate the rise of a green civil society in China?

3.1.3 Second Branch: Engineer/Scientist ENGOs' Practices

With specific trajectories and framing, the engineer/scientist ENGOs have also distinguished working approaches and mechanisms, which have a profound influence on this field's real functions. In this section, the typical working procedures of the second branch ENGOs will be shown, which can further facilitate us in observing their practical logics, instrumental concerns, working values, principles and orientation. To be specific, in terms of working approach, I will introduce what key resources they rely on, how they use their resources to mediate between different relationships and push for concrete changes and how they collaborate with their peers in bigger pollution intervention cases. The typical working mechanisms can be generally summarised as an 'investigation-negotiation network'.

To begin with, the key resources of the engineer/scientist ENGOs in pollution interventions are their independent investigation reports. Smaller ENGOs always investigate local pollution, such as a polluted river section or abnormal AQI in an area during a specific period. They usually start investigations followed by their teams' own observations, or local residents' reports. After gathering the pollution evidence and data with professional equipment, they trace the source of emissions based on follow-up investigations on suspicious factories (e.g. interview at Green Code, 22/11/2016; Interview at Green North, 23/07/2018). Larger ENGOs usually play the leading role and monitor pollution on a broader level (e.g. interview at Blue Sky, 13/12/2017; Interview at Global Green, 09/08/2017). For instance, Blue Sky monitors the pollution situation across the state with its two big data platforms. One platform shows the consistency between the government pollution monitoring system and the corporate voluntary pollution monitoring system (updated several times a day). The other platform provides general environmental quality data for the public on social media, such as a local air quality index and a local water quality index. The public can further comment on this, based on their own experience of the air and water quality. When Blue Sky finds some serious illegal emission cases through their platforms, they usually conduct on-site investigations and intervene with the pollution. Besides, some other ENGOs' investigations (e.g. Green Code and Independent Rock) are sometimes less empirically-based and focus on case studies of environmental governance from other countries, such as the American coal industry reform in the 20th century, the pros and cons of developing shale gas from the experience of the US, the carbon market from the

EU, the environment and economic gains of wind energy in the UK, and the economic effects caused by air pollution in the US. By reviewing and comparing other countries' experiences, these ENGOs wish to contribute to the rational discussions on Chinese environmental policies.

However, though these reports follow basic scientific standards, the scientific values of these empirical investigations are constrained by the institutional and technical challenges. On emissions and air quality monitoring, ENGOs' investigations are largely enabled and simultaneously constrained by the government's environmental governance scheme. ENGOs can use the pollution data from the monitoring database due to the state's pollution data disclosure plans since the 2000s (Wang, 2018). Yet, the available data and criteria from the state are sometimes not enough for engineer/scientist ENGOs to conduct thorough investigations. For instance, ENGOs can only use the official AQI (Air Quality Index) measurements to evaluate the pollution. However, the official measurements only cover the situations when AQI is below 500, which means that more serious air pollution cannot be accurately presented with AQI. Also, technically, it is challenging for both government and engineer/scientist ENGOs to track the polluters in the case of soil pollution, due to the hysteresis effect of soil pollution. Sometimes, in extreme cases, the on-site investigation not only requires scientific data collection skills, but also wisdom and courage, for instance, when factories hide the points of discharge and therefore the official environmental protection bureaus are not able to punish the illegal emissions. Two ENGOs from my samples used to send their employees to work undercover in these factories (Interviews at Love Forest, 27/07/2018; Oxygen Warrior, 17/08/2018).

Second, with evidence of pollution and illegal emissions, these ENGOs usually produce reports, and then negotiate with the local governments, especially local environmental protection bureaus, or corporates that the reports are based on. In terms of the forms, these investigation reports can be as short as a media article or as drawn out as a book (e.g. interview at Green Lab, 27/02/2017; 01/08/2017; participatory observation at Independent Rock, 02/2017-08/2017; interview at Global Green, 09/08/2017). Some are made for publication purposes while others are only available to the government. In general, by writing the reports, these engineer/scientist ENGOs aim to clarify the pollution issues and responsible factories with relatively objective evidence and also to propose possible solutions. Usually, local environmental protection bureaus are motivated to use these reports to monitor and regulate illegal emissions. Some corporates, mainly due to public relations effects, are also affected by these pollution investigation reports and are willing to make changes when the reports are spread widely across media and social media.

To maximise their effects and also to avoid controversies, the engineer/scientist ENGOs have gradually developed certain professional standards or routines to control the report qualities over the years. For instance, a professional report is supposed to be 'objective and rigorous' (e.g. interview at Blue Sky, 13/12/2017). It is necessary to follow some standards similar to scientific reports, such as including the source of data, the times and locations of pictures and the possible errors of their own data (Participatory observation at Independent Rock, 02/2017-08/2017; Interview at Speak the Truth, 23/02/2017; Interview at Green Code, 22/11/2016; Interview at Green Camera, 21/11/2016). As explained by the manager of Blue Sky, they don't have much authority in society. Thus, when showing the government and factories their reports, there cannot be any mistakes (Interview with Blue Sky, 30/11/2016). Similarly, some ENGOs include a policy analysis part in their reports and some of them specifically mimic professional think tanks' writing style and discourse, such as stressing the scientific basis of the reports and having arguments cautiously (Participatory observation at Independent Rock, 02/2017-08/2017). As Mr Stream, one ENGO leader, commented,

> Why do the governments and corporates always take our reports seriously? Because we have professional standards. We guarantee that every report is objective and neutral. We are not radical environmentalists. Instead, we only speak based on objective truths. We showed our investigation processes in the report and it is difficult to challenge our evidence (Interview with Green North, 23/07/2018).

These reports are ENGOs' important tools to intervene with pollution efficiently. To be specific, the engineer/scientist ENGOs approach the local environmental protection bureaus and make complaints about local illegal emission with their report or urge the factories to meet the emission standards regulated by law.

As mentioned in the previous section, in order to efficiently stop the pollution, the engineer/scientist ENGOs usually have an apolitical stance on state-society relationships. To deal with the cases, they tend to win the government's support and usually adopt a co-operative attitude with the government and depoliticise the issues. For instance, while the illegal emissions and pollutions are partly due to environmental bureaus' negligence, most ENGOs in this branch choose not to blame the government but instead show their understanding to these offices. 'Environmental bureaus also have their own difficulties. They don't have enough human resources to monitor all the factories in their area' (Interview at Oxygen Warrior, 17/08/2018); or 'it is pretty inconvenient for them to directly shut down the factories, which are important local taxpayers' (Interview at Global Green, 09/08/2017). To avoid confrontations with the government, the engineer/scientist ENGOs

tend to present themselves as technocratic assistants for the government. 'When we find pollution issues or some errors in the government's monitoring system, we ask them if we can assist in correcting some possible technical errors' (Interview at Green Code, 22/11/2016).

Furthermore, to practically avoid ENGO-state confrontations and serious institutional challenges, ENGOs only selectively issue complaints to environmental bureaus and avoid attacking big national companies, which are even more powerful than environmental bureaus. 'We understand that environmental bureaus cannot punish some state-owned companies. But on the other hand, they can still punish some other smaller factories' (Interview with Blue Sky, 30/11/2016). In terms of bargaining power, even though media exposure and making complaints to superior environmental bureaus are two powerful bargaining tools, they seldom use them (Interview at Green North, 23/07/2018; Interview at Love Forest, 27/07/2018). In the understanding of the engineer/scientist ENGOs, maintaining a good relationship with the government is important for solving pollution issues efficiently.

With the awareness to cautiously maintain a collaborative state-ENGO relationship, some ENGOs have built trust with local environmental bureaus over the years, which further encouraged their current working approaches. Some environmental bureaus directly use ENGOs' investigation reports to manage local pollution, though they do not give the ENGOs any credit (e.g. interview at Green Code, 22/11/2016; participatory observation at Independent Rock, 02/2017-08/2017). From these ENGOs' perspective, they, ENGOs, are using the government's administrative power to regulate and punish illegal pollutions. Thus, ENGOs usually do not mind when the government takes the credit for their work, as they always prioritise the efficiency of pollution intervention (e.g. interview at Global Green, 09/08/2017; interview at Green Code, 22/11/2016). This working method is seen as part of their accumulated wisdom over the years, 'It is most efficient to co-operate with the government to stop the illegal emissions, because governments have the administrative power' (Interview with Green North, 23/07/2018; Interview at Oxygen Warrior, 17/08/2018; Participatory observation at Independent Rock, 02/2017-08/2017).

Third, in some specific cases, the engineer/scientist ENGOs collaborate with each other within their own network, such as the campaign against the company Apple. After several famous cases, these ENGOs have gradually established several networks, such as the Green Production Chain, including 30-40 ENGOs across the country and the nationwide Good Air Monitoring Network, including around 20 ENGOs. In general, these ENGOs collaborate on

several levels. To begin with, they have labour divisions. To push the Apple China headquarters to regulate their downstream processing plants' illegal heavy metal emissions, some ENGOs constantly monitor the factories via the government database; some ENGOs conducted on-site investigations across different provinces and gathered first-hand data, particularly secretive discharges which did not show in the government monitoring system. Then, these ENGOs wrote reports and negotiated with the company and local environmental bureaus (Interview at Blue Sky, 13/12/2017; Interview at Oxygen Warrior, 17/08/2018; Interview at Global Technology, 22/03/2017; Interview at Green North, 23/07/2018). Moreover, these ENGOs gradually built reaction centres and networks. If some ENGOs from Beijing travel to other provinces to intervene in local pollution cases, there are local ENGO partners to assist them, particularly through information sharing and follow-up investigations (Interview at Love Forest, 27/07/2018). Furthermore, financially, some leading ENGOs also outsource some projects to smaller local ENGOs to carry out pollution investigations and interventions (e.g. interviews at Birds' Wings, 29/11/2016; Knowing Water, 21/02/2017; 26/02/2017; 18/05/2017; 19/08/2018).

In summary, the engineer/scientist ENGOs have grown into a major challenger since the mid-2000s due to various changes of social conditions in this period. The emergence of this branch has created significant divisions and dilemmas in the field. As shown above, though the first generation ENGOs and the engineer/scientist ENGOs share the same cause, the two branches have different backgrounds, values, beliefs, political stances and interpretations on their shared cause. While early ENGOs consider environmental protection as a cultural attempt to change social structure and solve systematic environmental issues, the second branch views environmental protection as solving concrete technical issues with professional scientific skills. The divisions are especially obvious when we compare the leaders of each branch, Nature Lovers and Blue Sky, which helps us to characterise the ideal types. Various other ENGOs are largely structured along this important division on the meaning of environmental protection and locate themselves in between the leaders' extreme positions. Moreover, sharing the same space yet with fundamental disagreements, ENGOs in this field inevitably started field battles and further shaped each other, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

To be clear, while the engineer/scientist ENGOs usually hold a relatively apolitical and collaborative stance towards the government, I am not suggesting that these ENGOs are simply conformists in China. This is linked to the discussion mentioned in the previous section: though these engineer/scientist ENGOs did not start with political ambitions, the experience of working in ENGOs politicised these professionals. On the one hand, seeing

their daily work and typical working approaches, I argue that these ENGOs are very likely to be the political agencies to pluralise the CCP regime. Moreover, the problem-solving framing and technocratic focus clearly narrow down and depoliticise the broad environmental crises. This is why I argue in Chapters 3 and 4 that the rise of the second group in the Chinese ENGOs' field led to a clear depoliticising trend. On the other hand, I also wish to point out the complexity of these ENGOs' political positions and beliefs, which is beyond the scope of this chapter. I will mention briefly here that though stressing the technocratic dimensions of environmental governance, the engineer/scientist ENGOs are also critical of the CCP regime regarding both its governance skills and institutional system. There are indeed some ENGOs in my sample that warmly welcome Xi's power and adopt a strong nationalist voice, yet the engineer/scientist ENGOs usually do not have a clear or passionate pro-CCP voice. Some of them are frustrated by the dominance of the authoritarian voice and the regime's lack of transparency. Some of their project designs inevitably show some critical annotations towards the government, such as Blue Sky's platform which allows the public to compare the official air pollution data and their real experiences, or the publications of some of their undercover investigations which show the negligence of some official bureaus. As argued by many of them, though it is not necessary to overthrow the CCP regime, environmental governance in China would have been better if the regime were more open to critique, more honest about the problems and more transparent overall (e.g. Blue Sky, Independent Rocks, Green Code). This frustration is also linked to the discussion on ENGOs' policy advocacy in Chapter 5, that some engineer/scientist ENGOs explicitly promote the values of rule-of-law, transparency and multiple party participation in environmental governance in China. Thus, though not mainly motivated by political ambitions, the engineer/scientist ENGOs have, to some degree, developed a critical attitude towards the government. However, as argued in Chapters 3-5, this political and critical voice is still relatively weak in their daily practices and their technocratic focus and approaches have strong depoliticising effects in the field. Affected by various political and social reasons, their frustrations on the institutional constraints in China have not grown strong enough for them to change their working methods and prioritise the goal of institutional change over the goal of stopping pollution immediately. Thus, we should be aware of these professionals' critical thinking, yet not directly assume their roles as pluralising or democratising agencies.

3.2 A Third Branch: Environment Protection as Contentious Movements

Despite their differences, the above two branches – the community-oriented ENGOs and the engineer/scientist ENGOs – generally share some tacit agreements. In terms of strategy, both branches largely agree that ENGOs in China should act collaboratively with the Chinese government. Since the mid-2000s, paralleling the rise of the engineer/scientist ENGOs, a third branch of ENGOs emerged, who directly challenged this agreement.

The third branch, which I named with the shorthand phrase 'the activist ENGOs', poses some fundamental questions to all ENGOs: what counts as proper ENGOs, and how to interpret the shared cause of environmental protection. Their own position on these questions is that ENGOs should use contentious methods to pressure the government on politically sensitive issues, particularly the cases of pollution victims. On this point, they disagree with the first and second branches, which stress the principle of keeping harmonious relationships with the government. In other words, while the first and second branches tend to hide or de-emphasise the political meanings of their actions, the third branch clearly points out the political and social conflicts beneath the environmental problems. Specifically, in terms of the strategy, they define environmental protection as an adversarial wrestling game. For them, escalating the political and economic conflicts are effective ways to reach their goals. To be specific, they usually frame environmental pollution as corruption and negligence problems.

> NGOs have limited power to change the state and the market economy. To make a difference, ENGOs should act as a sharp needle piercing into the system. We are small but we can make the stings feel painful. Therefore, we can force the state to face and deal with environmental issues (Interview with Green Explorers, 13/08/2018).

To use their words, as ENGOs have limited resources, the focus of these organisations should be on 'the centre of the tornado', such as serious pollution threatening public health and radical hunting of certain species, which are 'real' environmental issues that are threatening the survival of human and animal (Interview with Mr Wind, 13/08/2018).

As a branch also belonging to the second generation ENGOs that emerged in the mid-2000, the activist ENGOs share the similar social conditions and some affinities with the engineer/scientist ENGOs. Both branches stress the problem-solving consciousness, especially the efficiency of solving and intervening with pollution. However, the two branches are distinguished by different sets of values and approaches. While both branches

conduct empirical investigations on pollution, they analyse and use the reports quite differently. As the engineer/scientist ENGOs usually negotiate with the government and corporates privately or publicly, the activist ENGOs in general hold that grassroots ENGOs are supposed to keep pressuring the government to solve issues without making any compromises (Interview at Green Explorers, 13/08/2018; Interview at Victims' Stories, 16/08/2018). Their disagreements with the engineer/scientist ENGOs can be seen from their relatively radical critiques: 'The ENGOs, such as Blue Sky, keep themselves distant from the centre of the issues and are thus too slow in solving environmental issues' (Interview with Green Explorers, 25/04/2018); or 'The issues are urgent, and you need to mobilise society instead of slowly doing research' (Interview at Victims' Stories, 16/08/2018).

3.2.1   The Emergence of a Third Branch

As with the other two branches, the emergence of the activist ENGOs is a result of multiple overlapping historical processes in China, including the shifts of environmental framing in official discourse, changes to the funding structures and channels in China since the mid-2000s and the 2010s, and the developments of online contentious public spheres in China. As mentioned before, the activist ENGOs and the engineer/scientist ENGOs, emerging at the same time, share some significant contextual conditions, yet rely on different opportunities and follow different trajectories.

At an individual level, like the second branch, the leaders of the third branch were also the students of the first generation ENGOs, yet later differentiated themselves from the early community-based ENGOs. Though early ENGOs' seemingly narrow focus on community activities has been criticised and questioned, these organisations' seminal roles in this field should be not be ignored. They accumulated and bridged people who were passionate about the topics. The leading ENGO of this branch, Green Explorers, was established in 2006, with the vision to empower individuals to have the courage and ability to solve difficult environmental issues. Like Nature Lovers in the first branch and Blue Sky in the second branch, Green Explorers also functions as a platform and an incubator, which trains newcomers and builds networks among themselves.

To a certain degree, the emergence of the third branch is a direct attempt to carve out a route different from the community-based ENGOs. The initiator of Green Explorers, Mr Wind, used to be a student of the community-oriented ENGOs. He has been particularly critical to

the first branch of ENGOs' political positions and working approaches. He further sought to differentiate himself from others, with his own specific strengths.

> I was only a journalist in the 1990s and more of an observer in this circle. Back in those days (early 1990s), I was quite curious about the idea of ENGOs. I was a student of Nature Lovers and joined their activities. Gradually, I found that they were not really solving environmental problems. Pollution victims knocked on their door and the organisation turned them down, saying that these are not the ENGOs' concern. How can they consider themselves as ENGOs, if they do not solve these real issues? … I approached those victims and helped them through media exposure. After several successful cases, I gained a reputation and had my own followers (Interview with Mr Wind, 01/04/2018).

After several famous cases, Green Explorers has gradually established its reputation among pollution victims and ENGOs. Nowadays, there are more than 50 organisations in their nationwide network. The successful expansion of the activist ENGOs is led by both agents' innovations and objective conditions. As introduced by Mr Wind, there are mainly three sources of recruitment for their branch, which include pollution victims, university graduates and individuals who are passionate about environmental rights. For the first type, when Green Explorers and other peer ENGOs are approached by pollution victims, they aim to help these victims to seek justice and also empower them to define their own interests in the long term. Specifically, they fund and train some pollution victims to establish their own ENGOs in the local area. For the second type, university graduates are a major group of recruitment candidates. Since the mid- and late-2000s, university students in Beijing have been exposed to different types of ENGOs and have been able to participate in different activities. Some of them particularly agree with the activist ENGOs and thus are encouraged and trained to start their own ENGOs. Mr Sand from Know Water and Mr Euphratica from Oxygen Warrior are both students of Mr Wind. Both ENGOs maintain good relationships with all branches, yet particularly agree with activist ENGOs' values and approaches. Third, by skilfully bridging environmental justice and rights defence (*Wei Quan*) in China, the activist ENGOs also attract some individuals who are passionate about public welfare and environmental rights in their group. These individuals, like Mr Maple from Victims' Stories, have always wanted to do something for the vulnerable in China. The activist ENGOs provide them with a channel and working methods to engage with Chinese injustice issues.

Beyond the individual level, the development of the activist ENGOs since the mid-2000s has been embedded in some broad trends. To begin with, as mentioned above about the emergence of the engineer/scientist ENGOs, the broad narrative on environmental protection in China has changed since the 2000s. The focus of the official discourse and public opinion

on this theme has shifted from lifestyle choices to natural disasters, hazardous ecological crises and pollution. The media reports on industrial emissions and environmental hazards have increased in this period, which has raised public concerns on this area (Zhang, Mauzerall, Zhu, et al., 2010; Tilt and Xiao, 2010). The Songhua River event in 2005 was considered as the most important industrial disaster, which highlighted the vulnerability of key drinking water resources, and triggered vigorous responses from the State Environmental Protection Administration. Also in this period, the 2008 Beijing Olympics and Western criticism on Beijing's air pollution triggered public awareness on environmental issues which led to another round of government efforts on air pollution abatement (Zhang, Mauzerall, Zhu, et al., 2010). The shift of the broader narrative provides a favourable condition for some environmental groups to bridge environmental issues with public health, human rights and social injustice. As explained by some of them, when the environmental concerns and narratives in China gradually started to include the issues of the cancer villages, public health crises and species extinction, some ENGOs started to view those ENGOs focusing on green lifestyles as irrational and petty (e.g. interview at Green Explorers, 07/06/2017; 01/04/2018; 13/08/2018; interview at Knowing Water, 21/02/2017; 26/02/2017; 18/05/2017; 19/08/2018). For them, the issues of human health and species extinction appear to be fundamentally much more urgent and significant than lifestyle discussions.

Second, the mid-2000s were witnessing another trend in China: the rise of a novel and vibrant contentious online public sphere in China (Lei, 2018). Various public opinions have been triggered online in China and the netizens communicate and collaborate together to push the government to be accountable. As the activist ENGOs rely heavily on the internet and social media to expose pollution and pressure the government, this trend in China has provided them with the key resources and platform. To be specific, as shown in the chart below (China Internet Network Information Centre, 2007, 2009, 2019), China has entered the internet era since 2005, with the internet users increased from 100 million in 2005 to 828 million in 2018. Affected by the post-1978 economic reform, media marketisation since the late-1990s, expansion of netizens since 2005 and the rise of the consciousness of right and citizen (Lei, 2018), the online public sphere in China appears to be contentious, where netizens are more likely to disagree with the state's political agenda, claim citizens' right to oversee the government, and believe in their influence on governments (Yang, G.B., 2009; Lei, 2018). In particular, netizens frequently use the discourse of law and rights to defend their own interests and request the government's accountability. While these beliefs and this consciousness have long existed in China, the ideas have been boosted further by the mediating factors in the mid-2000s, especially via the internet and social media platforms.

For the activist ENGOs, the rise of an online contentious public sphere offers them a precious chance to connect to people who think similarly and who share the same concerns and injustices across the country. This public sphere also provides them with the platform and a huge audience to their media-exposed cases, which are their key leverage to pressure the government. Furthermore, as will be introduced later, with the rise of the online crowdfunding trend, the internet and online public sphere has become the activist ENGOs' main fundraising platform.
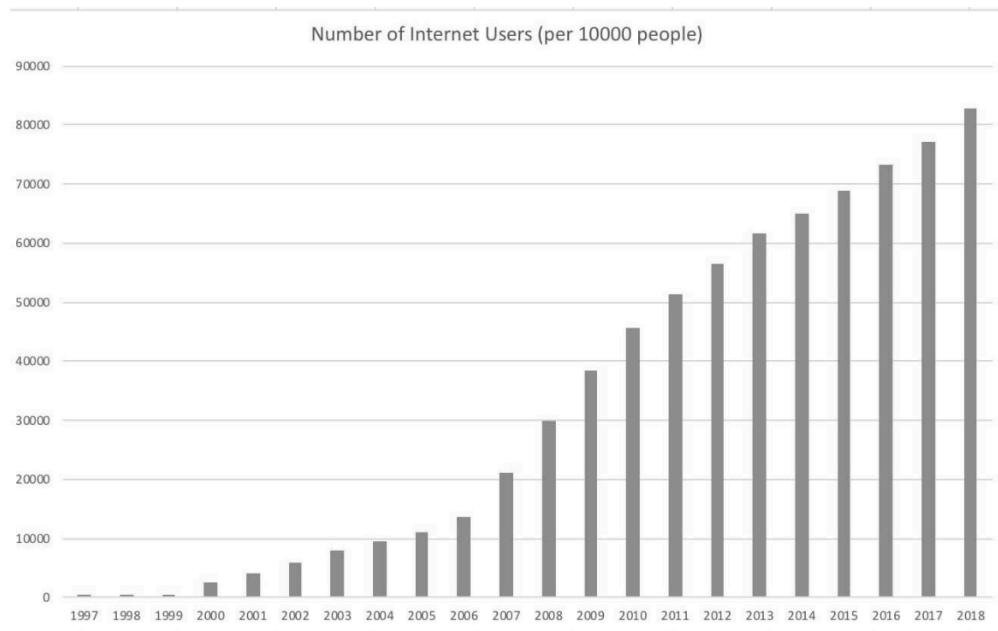
Figure 5 Number of Internet Users in China, 1997-2018.
Source: China Internet Network Information Center (2007, 2009, 2019)

Third, in terms of the funding opportunities, the activist ENGOs have also largely benefitted from the modernisation and professionalisation of the philanthropy sphere in China. These ENGOs also seek funds from the domestic ENGOs that emerged since 2004. Though the second and third branch ENGOs both seek funding from some of the same foundations, there are some differences in terms of the funding structure. First, the activist ENGOs usually work with smaller foundations which stress social justice and social innovation yet do not necessarily focus on environmental protection. Compared to the second branch, the third branch ENGOs have less funding in general. For instance, the activist ENGOs have been funded by the Narada Foundation, which was established in 2004. The foundation emphasises social equality and justice, appreciates Green Explorers' innovative approaches to intervene with pollution incidents efficiently, and have funded ten Green Explorers' peer organisations, totalling 1 million RMB since 2013, which specifically includes funds for

immediate reactions to pollution (Narada Foundation, 2018)[27]. The China Biodiversity Conservation and the Green Development Foundation have funded various activist ENGOs, ranging from 15,000 RMB to 150,000 RMB for each project (CBCGDF, 2018). The Water Foundation, established in 2008, has been a close partner of this branch of ENGOs, and funded 100,000-500,000 RMB for each project (Water Foundation, 2017). Furthermore, this branch of ENGOs also collaborates with the Ai You Foundation, which focuses on children welfare yet also encourages social innovation (Ai You Foundation, 2019)[28].

Another key difference between the second and the third branch is that the latter relies heavily on online crowdfunding. The trend of crowdfunding has emerged in China since the mid-2000s. The Tencent Foundation in China started to explore online charity since 2007 and became the biggest online crowdfunding platform in China. In 2016, the platform raised 800 million RMB (Tencent Foundation, 2017) and environmental protection ranked the third among all the fundraising topics. Since the mid-2010s, the Tencent crowdfunding platform, along with other main domestic foundations, initiated the annual crowdfunding day 'Tencent's 9.9 Philanthropy Day'. In 2016, this event raised 600 million RMB (China Development Brief, 2018) and environmental protection projects gained over 20 million RMB. As the funding distribution in crowdfunding is effected largely by netizens instead of foundations, various activist ENGOs seek funding from this source, especially at the start-up stage and especially when their projects are declined by foundations due to politically sensitive reasons.

Fourth, to be brief here, the third branch's developments were also due to the opportunities that emerged in the special power configurations in China, such as the tensions between local governments and the central government, anti-corruption campaigns, the reforming petition system and Xi's new policy on environmental governance in 2018 (e.g. interview at Oxygen Warrior, 17/08/2018). Scholars have used the institutional fragmentations and lack of governance resources (e.g. Howell, 2003; Mertha, 2009; Spires 2011) to explain the existence of NGOs which are unregistered and sometimes contentious in China. These opportunities clearly provide the space for the activist ENGOs to pressure the local governments.

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27 Since 2017, Green Explorers have changed the structure of their network. Smaller ENGOs have become more independent.

28 The collaborations were ended in 2018 due to some personal scandals.

3.2.2 Alternative Interpretations on Environment Protection: the Political Issues Beneath Environmental Crises

As mentioned before, since the mid-2000s, the activist ENGOs have developed into another major branch in the circle and gained a significant share of reputation, media coverage and financial resources among ENGOs. One of the biggest changes brought by the activist ENGOs was another alternative interpretation of ENGOs' shared cause.

First, with special backgrounds and trajectories, the activist ENGOs phrase 'environmental crises' essentially as social justice issues. In the face of the urgent human and animal suffering caused by pollution, ENGOs are supposed to transform environmental discussions into social justice claims. To put it in another way, the third branch provides a clear political interpretation of the cause of the environmental issues: deeper political and economic conflicts. ENGOs should focus on the real environmental issues which are urgent toxic pollution or illegal hunting issues causing the suffering of humans and animals. Beneath these issues are deeper social justice issues in Chinese society, such as corruption, inequality and the government's negligence to people's suffering. As explained explicitly by one ENGO, 'The environment is not an apolitical theme, but contains high potentials of social mobilisation' (Interview at Knowing Water, 18/05/2017).

Second, to be clear, though the activist ENGOs are not afraid to politicise environmental issues, they are different from early ENGOs and they do not always use the discourse of civil society or pluralism to justify their work. Different from the leaders of the first generation ENGOs, who are mainly public intellectuals and have long-term social change plans, the practitioners in the activist ENGOs are mainly motivated by urgent pollution and social injustices. For them, the goal of building a civil society is too ambiguous and cannot help with the current issues directly. Instead, ENGOs at this stage should focus on the concrete urgent environmental justice issues one by one. The prioritisation on solving concrete issues over civil society building can be seen in one quote from an ENGO, which discussed the limits of abilities and time versus urgency of issues: 'It was unrealistic and arrogant for ENGOs to talk about civil society or broad social changes in China. What we can really do is to solve pollution cases one by one. We are quite grounded and mostly concerned with the pollution issues and the sufferings of victims' (Interview at Source of Water, 18/08/2018).

Third, in accordance with their different interpretation of 'environmental protection', the activist ENGOs emphasise different ethical principles and practical skills. For one thing, regarding the principles in their daily work, ENGOs from this group put little weight on the codes of conduct for NGO management, which are mainly set by the foundations. In some extreme cases, such as the position of Mr Wind, the founder of Green Explorers, the rules of NGO management are explicitly contested. For various ENGOs from the other two branches, these management rules bring NGOs legitimacy and efficiency. For the activist ENGOs, these standards constrain their potential and creativity. For another, the rule of 'evidence-based reports' is not necessarily respected in every case. Though most pollution intervention ENGOs, including the engineer/scientist ENGOs and the activist ENGOs, propose the principle of speaking based on facts, to what extent this principle is operational varies in different cases, which creates an ethical dilemma for ENGOs. Practically, the pollution and its effects in some cases can be quite obscure and unstable. Even though the pollution victims are suffering, and the pollution effects are obvious, it takes time and resources to generate rigorous comprehensive investigation reports, especially if the investigation results are going to be included in policy advocacy or legal activities. In the face of this dilemma, the activist ENGOs usually prioritise the efficiency of pollution intervention. They tend to agree that it is still proper to use the illnesses to form an argument and pressure local governments, even when the links between the villagers' illnesses and local pollution have not been proved clearly (Interview at Victims' Stories, 16/08/2018). Similarly, on animal protection, while other branches tend to use biological investigations, photography and educational campaigns to intervene with illegal animal trades, some activist ENGOs buy protected animals from criminals directly. The purchase practices have been considered as appropriate, as it is an efficient way to protect these animals (Interview with Mr Wind, 13/08/2018). In terms of skills, while the other two branches are generally keen to build on their standard professional skills, the activist ENGOs do not believe in handbooks or a set of institutionalised skills. Environmental protection is a complicated wrestling game with the local interest of shareholders, and ENGOs should creatively use various practical skills to pressure the other wrestlers (e.g. interview at Oxygen Warrior, 17/08/2018).

3.2.3 Alternative Working Approaches: Contentious Struggles in Urgent Situations

In accordance with the distinguished trajectories and issue framing, the activist ENGOs have followed and accumulated different sets of knowledge and experience. Their typical working procedures on pollution intervention can be summarised as media exposure, pressuring the government and network support.

First, the activist ENGOs usually start their actions by exposing pollution or extinction issues on their own social media accounts. By writing and circulating influential social media articles, they wish to reveal the moral hazards and consequently create striking effects. As mentioned above, the branch puts a lot of weight on their media exposure capabilities. Each organisation has their own social media accounts and connections with the mainstream media. Among themselves, they also have frequent training workshops, discussing how to produce and circulate more influential social media articles.

To be specific, to maximise their influence on social media, several techniques and angles are significant in their practices. For one thing, a common technique shared among these ENGOs is to make each report fairly short and update follow-up reports frequently. The function of their online articles is not to comprehensively and rigorously analyse the situation, but to keep stimulating society to pay attention to the issues (e.g. interview at Victims' Stories, 16/08/2018). Each report needs to clearly and powerfully express one single message, which is more likely to attract public attention.

For another, as instructed in their workshops, their media reports tend to use mobilising and striking tones and images such as the pictures of the so-called 'milk rivers', pollution victims' skin deceases and the bodies of dead animals. Accordingly, while the engineer/scientist ENGOs tend to constrain their subjective interpretations and emphasise the objective evidence in their investigations, the activist ENGOs express their strong views on the pollution situations. In particular, their comments in the reports focus on themes like 'the weight of life', and 'the sufferings of innocent villagers' (Participatory observation at Green Explorers' Network, Internal Online Network, 04/2018-08/2018). Obviously, seen from the perspective of the engineer/scientist ENGOs, these investigation reports are highly controversial, as it is difficult to prove the link between pollution and skin deceases, or to clarify the seriousness and causes of milk rivers (Interview at Green Lab, 27/02/2017; 01/08/2017). Yet for the activist ENGOs, these images and comments are valuable resources to cause moral panic and to mobilise the public to pay attention to the urgent issues (Participatory observation at Green Explorers' Network, Internal Online Network, 04/2018-08/2018).

Moreover, regarding the specific angle of their media reports, the activist ENGOs usually take a critical view of the government. In the case of waste incineration, the second branch focused on analysing the combustion degree, composition and possible negative effects, and how the government, waste companies and local residents can work together. Differently,

the third branch argues from a social justice dimension and directly blames local government for ignoring the interests of nearby neighbourhoods (Participatory observation at Green Explorers' Network, Internal Online Network, 04/2018-08/2018). Also, in other cases, the activist ENGOs usually start their reports with a striking title, such as 'a question for the environmental bureau' (Participatory observation at Green Explorers' Network, Internal Online Network, 04/2018-08/2018) and directly pressure the local governors and environmental bureaus with strong emotion. For instance,

> Local government should love and protect their own villagers. The government is their sky. However, in this area, the lives of local people are ignored by the officers… Why do they allow pollution to happen? We will keep tracking this event… (Social media, Victims' Stories, 08/2018).

Second, after attracting society's attention by media exposure, the activist ENGOs usually issue complaints to the local governments following the official complaints procedures, and pressure them to intervene with the pollution immediately. If the bureau refuses to reply to them, the activist ENGOs usually use online campaigns to pressure the government to start a conversation. Those relatively mature activist ENGOs have already built some connections with local governments, especially local environmental protection bureaus, who usually respond to ENGOs' complaints quite soon. On dealing with pollution and compensation, different from the second branch which seeks to reach agreements with the government, ENGOs of this branch tend to threaten the government with constant media exposure (e.g. interview at Oxygen Warrior, 17/08/2018). To a large degree, they have limited trust in the government and consider it is necessary to take an opposite position to the state. Thus, they usually refuse to compromise with the government. For instance, the government always demands the ENGOs to delete their social media articles before the two sides work together on the pollution issue. These requests are usually rejected by the activist ENGOs, as an ethical principle. Mr Wind's words explained the logics behind this ethical principle:

> Environmental governance is a wrestling match. If the state is the only wrestler, there is no game. And the state does not need to act properly. But we confront the state and become a second wrestler. Even though we are small, we are a wrestler and we can give the state pressure. As the game begins, we can attract public attention (Interview with Green Explorers, 01/04/2018).

Third, ENGOs of this branch are aware of the risks they are facing. Many of their staff have been arrested by police, due to their media exposure activities, criticisms on the government and their support on politically sensitive local petitions. In response to this, the third branch

usually starts a media war within their own network, escalating issues and pressuring the local governments to release their colleagues. Different ENGOs, on their own social media accounts or through mainstream media, constantly write and circulate articles on the same issue, accusing the government and calling for society's attention. Despite the fact that the local government can delete some social media articles, ENGOs can still continue to spread the message by writing different articles and using different accounts. As explained,

> When our colleagues were arrested, we started media wars immediately and attracted public attention. With more public attention, the environmental issue became a social issue. We increased the tension between citizens and state in a very short time and created a crisis for the government. Usually, the government got clever and released our colleagues (Participatory observation, 04/2018, interview with Green Explorers, 01/04/2018).

To be clear, though the activist ENGOs can pressure the government to intervene with pollution and release arrested ENGO staff, it does not mean that there is no limit for these organisations, or that China is a safe place for contentious activists. As mentioned in the previous sections, there are specific political opportunities in China, which allow ENGOs to act against certain local governments, such as the tensions between local governments and the central government, anti-corruption campaigns, the reforming petition system, and also Xi's new campaign on environmental protection. However, if the activist NGOs are working with foreign media or foreign human rights organisations, provoke the central government or work on extremely sensitive issues such as labour issues, the NGOs are highly likely to face more pressure from the state. In comparison, when NGOs target the local government, even if this is about their corruption issues, there is a way for NGOs in China to pressure that government and negotiate arrests, especially in the areas of environmental protection, AIDS, gender and poverty reduction (e.g. Spires, 2011; Hildebrandt, 2013).

In summary, there are various distinctive features which differentiate the third branch from the other two branches. Not just relying on different resources and skills, the activist ENGOs challenge the other two branches regarding their interpretations on their shared cause and their action logic. Specifically, environmental issues must be understood as social and political injustice issues, and it is necessary to contentiously pressure local governments. The symbolic divisions are particularly obvious between leaders of each branch, while other ENGOs are largely structured along this important division and locate themselves in between the extreme positions. As will be expanded on in Chapter 4, sharing the same space yet with fundamental disagreements, the three branches have fierce symbolic battles among themselves, which can manufacture these organisations and the field structure.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I aimed to unpack the concept of 'ENGOs' in China, by tracing back the history and trajectories of this field. As a field among different external forces, the development of Chinese ENGOs has been embedded in multiple overlapping historical processes in China, including the civic life practices in the 1980s, the modernisation of the philanthropy area, the emergence of the internet and of a contentious public sphere in China, and the shifts of broader discourse on environmental protection in the country. Chinese ENGOs are neither simply the groups devoted to environmental protection, nor the organisations with the aims of overthrowing an authoritarian regime. In this sector, the actors with diverse trajectories have interpreted the shared cause quite differently. While some wish to expand their civic life through small community activities and advocate pluralism values, some focus on the technocratic dimension of the issues, and some are highly critical to, and willing to engage with, the broader social injustice in the country. The historical review of this field is valuable, as it helps to explain the technocratic tendency, the contentious activities in the current time and the complex meanings of community activities. Similarly, to further understand this field's current features and future potentials, it is also worth discussing the international influences and the current domestic dynamics, including the state-society relationship in Xi's era, and the new big players in the field, such as establishments of the Alibaba Foundation and the Paradise Foundation, which donate millions of RMB to this field and propose to use commercial logic to deal with environmental issues. Another significant question is how different ENGOs share the same space and how to understand the diversity in this field. The next chapter will discuss how different ENGOs collectively explore the field's rules and how different actors can combine their efforts to deal with environmental crises.

Chapter 4 One Big Family? The Divisions and Dynamics in the Field of Chinese ENGOs

> They (Green Explorers and their followers) are putting us in a really awkward situation. People may consider us unsympathetic. But the public does not know the details. We cannot help these ENGOs. Why did they get arrested in the first place? The arrests were totally avoidable. Yet they always intentionally provoke the government. This is not only irresponsible of their own staff, but also irresponsible of all ENGOs (Interview with Mr Forest, 30/03/2018).

Mr Forest, from Nature Lovers, told me about the dilemma they faced as a result of an incident involving another ENGO, Green Explorers. His complaint revealed the complex internal relationships and power dynamics in this field, which will be discussed in this chapter.

Back in 2017, Ms Willow, a young ENGO employee, was arrested by the local police. In her late 20s, Ms Willow had been working for Chinese ENGOs for three to four years. While her own focus was on animal rights, she had actively engaged with the network of Green Explorers – a leading Chinese ENGO mainly working with pollution victims and generally holding a confrontational stance against the state, as introduced in Chapter 3. Ms Willow goes to Green Explorers' workshops frequently and also supports pollution victims on social media. One day, she was approached by a villager from her hometown in South China, complaining about the local pollution, health concerns and the negligence of the local government. Using Green Explorers' typical working approach, Ms Willow went to the area, immediately posted the pictures of the polluted river section, commented on it as 'the milk river' and referred it to the local government (#milkriver#@local government @local environment bureau). The local government immediately told her to remove the pictures from her social media, which she refused to do. Three days later, she was arrested due to 'spreading rumours to create trouble'.

Her friend contacted Green Explorers. The organisation and its followers soon started the media campaign to release Ms Willow, as they had done for other colleagues many times. For a few days, ENGO employees from around 20 organisations kept posting messages

about Ms Willow on social media. 'Urgent! Our young female ENGO employee was arrested illegally by the local police. Please help us and circulate this message on your social media immediately! Together, we can pressure the state to release her!' Even though some posts were removed by the social media companies, they kept writing new social media articles about Ms Willow's story. Pressured by this campaign, the local police released Ms Willow after three days, while the local government had previously stated online that she would remain imprisoned for at least ten days.

As a layperson outside the circle of professional ENGOs, I intuitively found Ms Willow's story moving, shocking and anxiety-provoking. Her story, presented in the media campaign, could easily suit the public profile of daring civil society fighters in authoritarian China, which is not unfamiliar to both Chinese and foreign audiences. Fighting for justice and democracy, civil society activists sacrifice their personal safety and are tortured brutally by the powerful state. In this campaign for Ms Willow, her beautiful smile and sweet personality were especially mentioned, which further intensified the contrast between the brutal authoritarian regime and a fragile, innocent and genuine young woman. Seeing these messages and articles, I was quite tempted to show them my support.

However, I did not further repost Ms Willow's story on my social media. Having been in this field for months, I had sensed the tensions among ENGOs. Supporting Green Explorers' campaign would inevitably offend my friends from some other ENGOs. Looking closely, there is a clear line dividing my ENGO friends in this campaign. While supporters of Green Explorers kept posting the message anxiously, staff from other ENGOs consistently remained silent.

On this collective silence, a few days later some of them explained this without me asking them. Mr Forest, from the quote at the beginning of this chapter, told me their position to distance themselves from this campaign. 'The Green Explorers and their followers are putting us in a really awkward situation ... We cannot help these ENGOs ... Yet they always intentionally provoke the government.' He went on to explain further: 'Ms Willow has possibly been used as a tool, which is disgusting! When a young woman, rather than a middle-aged man, gets arrested, the story is more disturbing for the public, and this is good for their crowdfunding campaigns… these activist ENGOs are confusing the newcomers and young people regarding how to be proper ENGOs' (Interview with Mr Forest, 30/03/2018). His comment also echoes Blue Sky's general position on Green Explorers' contentious actions. As another leading ENGO in this area, which emphasises the significance of science in environmental governance, the manager regrettably described Green Explorers'

contentious actions as 'making unnecessary and irresponsible sacrifices' (Interview with Blue Sky, 30/11/2016).

The above fieldnote only reveals a short piece of the complex relationships in this shared space. Though sharing the same cause, several staff from different organisations used the strong word '*eryuwozha*' (a swamp of intrigues and struggles for power) to describe the relationships between ENGOs (Interview at Green Fashion, 04/08/2017; Green Lab, 27/02/2017; Knowing Water, 21/02/2017). In the incident of Ms Willow's arrest, a few details appear to be particularly puzzling, especially for someone outside the circle of professional ENGOs. Why was there a lack of solidarity among Chinese ENGOs when an environmentalist was arrested? Why can those ENGOs who challenge the state at the risk of their own safety not win the sympathy or even the respect from other ENGOs? Why is challenging the state considered irresponsible for some ENGOs, and why is escalating conflict with the government seen as a long-term organisation development strategy for others? In Chinese ENGOs' practices, what counts as necessary or unnecessary sacrifices, and which judgements on the political risks are fair and rational?

These puzzling questions are closely related to some important discussions. ENGOs' professional perspectives and practical concerns in their own circle are much more complex and richer than the general public profile, which simplifies them vaguely as organisations loyal to the environmental interests. To deal with the questions mentioned above requires us to see the Chinese ENGOs' field as a relatively autonomous and professionally defined space, which has its specific universe of meanings distinguished from common sense understandings. As shown in Chapter 3, there are diverse narratives and framings on their shared causes in this field. Practically, how do different ENGOs share the same field, cause and label, and how do they manage the disagreements and controversies among peers? Specifically, how are the shared accounts or values contested inside the field? This question is closely related the project's central inquiry: how is the idea of environmental protection functioning in the circle of Chinese ENGOs and what are the exact influences and future implications of these organisations?

While Chapter 3 reviewed how the field has emerged situated among various social forces and trends, this chapter will focus on the dynamics inside the field. As pointed out by Bourdieu, field has its duality. A field is both a field of forces and a field of struggles. As shown in Chapter 3, the field of Chinese ENGOs is shaped by various forces inside and outside the field itself. Meanwhile, field rules and field-specific capital are also formed at the mesoscale among ENGOs themselves when they are jockeying together in the game. In

other words, as will be stressed in this chapter, the field structure and stake are also shaped by internal opposition. The field's inner laws have also been built through internal battles. As shown in the previous chapters, with different trajectories, resources and skills, actors in one field inevitably have divisions in terms of the exact definitions of the stake and the proper way to pursue the goal. That is, the field-specific capital is not only the shared goal of actors, but also the object of struggles among actors, who compete with each other to define the cause and working approaches (e.g. Krause, 2017). These competitions further shape the meaning system of the field, particularly the specific annotations of the cause, and the legitimacy of certain action models. The chapter will utilise the Bourdieusian field theory to analyse how different actors reflexively take positions along the divisions and try to maximise their own voices in the field, how some actors' voices become dominating or marginalised throughout years, and how the authorities have been constructed in the field's battles. By discussing the moral and practical dilemmas and the symbolic struggles in the field, I can show the rich meanings of the shared cause and further discuss the functioning of this field.

In conclusion, this chapter finds that, as a result of field divisions and struggles, the shared cause has gradually turned into fragmented competing ideals among different ENGOs over the past 30 years. Among the three-decade field battles, there emerged a trend of pluralism value diminishments. Looking at it from the field's internal power structure, the field has been dominated by professionals' framings who tend to de-politicise environmental issues and conform to the state's governance agenda. Meanwhile, this field consistently marginalises and alienates certain narratives, such as social justice and the rights defence of pollution victims, along with the political and cultural ambitions to build a strong civil society in China. That is, in spite of being a relatively autonomous and professionally defined space, this field of Chinese ENGOs largely correlates with the broader power structure in contemporary China. The field especially strengthens the depoliticising and technocratic discourse and marginalises pluralism values. In other words, the field as a whole can rarely pose serious challenges to the current regime. Significantly, this correlation between the field structure and the broad power configurations in China is not simply a result of direct top-down state coercions but has been collectively produced by these professional ENGOs in China in their field.

Moving beyond this chapter, the discussion here also invites us to think further, considering the field's fragmentation and polarisation, to what extent ENGOs can organise different sectors together and respond to environmental issues, and how possible it is to achieve a broad and comprehensive environmental framing, in contrast to the current narrow and

competing narratives. If this field cannot offer actors abundant symbolic resources and normative orders to intervene with the current social structure, can the organisations in the field bring different kinds of capital from other fields and further change the field structure in the future? What lessons can Chinese ENGOs contribute to the global environmental movements, especially regarding the dilemma of depoliticisation? Moreover, theoretically, the discussion in this chapter can further enrich the concept of Chinese ENGOs' 'self-censorship' (e.g. see Ho, 2008), which can be seen as neither explicitly conscious nor unconscious actions, but as the interplays between objective conditions and subjective intentions (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

1.   Bourdieusian Field Theory and Chinese ENGOs' Field Order

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, Bourdieusian field theory stresses the internal struggles of the field. In the Bourdieusian sense, field is an area of structured, socially patterned activity or practice whereby actors or organisations in different positions struggle for the shared field capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Martin, 2003). The stakes of the field, while obviously affected by broader social forces, are generated from inside the field. The field's rules, capital and power dynamics are structured by the field's internal oppositions among actors. The social actors who jockey in the field can collectively shape the game's rules and stakes. In Chapter 3, we have seen the diverse trajectories, skills and approaches of Chinese ENGOs. In this chapter, with the Bouridieusian field theory, we will treat these diversities differently. The divisions and differentiations among ENGOs in this circle are crucial for understanding the rich meanings of environmental protection for ENGOs in their practices. To put it in another way, the disagreements among Chinese ENGOs are not simply symbolic frictions. Beneath these divisions are the symbolic tensions, ethical dilemmas and the structural fragmentations in this field, which helps us to analyse these organisations' current behavioural patterns and future possibilities. While Chapter 3 shows how different claims of environmentalism emerged in the field in the past three decades, Chapter 4 will focus on how the claims and authorities are distributed among organisations in the shared space (e.g. see Krause, 2014).

To begin with, at a meso level, Bourdieusian field theory helps us to break with the 'misconception' (Bourdieu, 1996) that Chinese ENGOs are a homogenous altruistic group. In the Bourdieusian sense, even though ENGOs are not directly in economic competition,

this circle is also full of contestations and power struggles, as different organisations are pursuing interests in a distinctive and symbolic way (Bourdieu, 1986-87, 1996; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). That is, the past 30 years have witnessed not only an institutionalisation and standardisation trend in this circle, but also 'intensified divisions' (Krause, 2014) among ENGOs. Throughout the years, with different trajectories, different ENGOs have developed diverse and competing rationales in this shared space, and different groups have their own unique strengths and weaknesses. Fundamental disagreement has emerged among these organisations, especially with the interpretation of their shared cause. For instance, as mentioned in Chapter 3, while the earliest ENGOs interpret environmental protection as low-carbon lifestyles and civil society cultivation channels, other ENGOs define the same phenomena as political struggles among classes, negotiations among interest groups or science and technology innovations. For example, ENGOs hold diverse and competing positions regarding ENGOs' relationships with the government, which is a crucial political and ethical choice for their organisational developments. Accordingly, different organisations rely on different combinations of intellectual resources, skills and logics, which they draw from this specific field and the external surrounding fields (e.g. Krause, 2014; Panofsky, 2014). That is, the meanings of the shared cause are contested and distributed among different organisations. While sharing the same label and cause, different ENGOs have diverse values, resources and approaches, which motivate them to expand their own framings and strive for the authority to define the field-specific capital for their own interests (Bourdieu, 1986-87, Panofsky, 2014). Some ENGOs tend to judge others as 'irresponsible', 'improper', 'guerrilla' groups and both sides put in efforts to ridicule each other and to distinguish themselves from each other. Through the disputes and competitions on the shared ideal, ENGOs gradually clarify the values and worthiness of their causes (Bourdieu, 1986-87, 1996), or the eigengesetzlichkeit/autonomy, the purification or rationalisation of the field's purpose. Consequently, certain voices can dominate this space while other voices are marginalised or never emerge (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

To be specific, field actors' jockeying and competitions can shape the field stakes and rules, as these actors are subjected to field effects and affected by their peers. Bourdieusian field theory holds a relational view. That is, each organisation exists in relationships and needs to seek references from the field. Their causes, values, passions and efforts only make sense in the specific universe of meanings (e.g. see Bourdieu, 1996; Panofsky, 2014). Practically, to act in the uncertain and complicated context, ENGOs relied heavily on the field's existing norms and institutions and references from their peers. To put it in another way, the field and their peers provide each player with the sense of how to act properly, or whether their organisational actions are reasonable. By mimicking or opposing their peers, ENGOs

reflexively take their stance and pursue their cause in their own way. Located in one shared space, actors are inevitably affecting each other. Each organisation is expected to take a stance in response to other ENGOs' actions and the field's controversies, which will shape each ENGO's orientation and action. For instance, as quoted at the beginning of this chapter, 'They are putting us in a really awkward situation. We cannot help, as they are irresponsible.' When a staff member from a contentious ENGO is arrested by the state, all ENGOs are forced to take a position on whether to support this 'controversial' protest. Also, for instance, the emergence of activist ENGOs was not only led by the structural and external-field factors mentioned in Chapter 4, but also shaped by existing ENGOs' working principles. As the founder of Green Explorers explained, which was quoted in Chapter 3, 'I found that Nature Lovers were not really solving environmental problems. Pollution victims knocked on their door and the organisation turned them down, saying that these are not ENGOs' concern. How can they consider themselves to be ENGOs if they do not solve these real issues? I approached those victims and helped them through media exposure. After several successful cases, I gained a reputation and got my own followers.' (Interview with Mr Wind, 01/04/2018).

While each ENGO is pursuing their own organisational goals or practice their own version of environmental protection, they are also inevitably competing with each other to define the field-specific capital in symbolic battles. While completing their daily tasks and projects, ENGOs are also seeking to accumulate more capital, resources and reputations in the field to further benefit their own models, values and organisations. From a field perspective, ENGOs' cultural efforts to justify their approaches can be seen as their efforts to strive for more authority in the field. They are genuinely pursuing their specific interests as specialists or professionals in symbolic production (Bourdieu, 1996). The monopoly or authority to define their shared cause, or the field-specific capital, is both their goal and their weapon (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). To be specific, ENGOs compete with their peers and seek their recognition through some fundamental questions, such as what should be ENGOs' focus, what should be the key resources and skills to rely on, what relationships should be prioritised for ENGOs, and what innovations are allowed and not allowed. To gain more attention and recognition, organisations tend to crystallise their positions and adjust their actions accordingly. To gain more symbolic and material resources, each actor takes their position in relation to their peers and clarifies their stances by distinguishing themselves from other peers. In this way, actors manufacture each other and create field rules collectively. The symbolic differentiations and competitions powerfully shape how ENGOs view the legitimacies, possibilities and costs-benefits of different working approaches, and further affect what kind of work the organisations will or will not do.

That is, these competitions among actors on different positions further shape the field structure and the meanings of the field-specific capital. Over the years, field players collectively created certain field-specific rules, which powerfully shaped the actors' judgements, attitudes, rationales and actions (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). A structured space provides actors with the boundaries and categories of thinkable, unthinkable, reasonable, natural, and scandalous (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). For instance, in the early 2000s, when the field was mainly dominated by ENGOs focusing on civil society cultivation and community activities, it was difficult to justify contentious actions, and the scientific credentials were not especially treasured. Different field structures and meaning systems draw different boundaries and benchmarks for actors. The field structure and rules further shape the actors' strategies and actions with field effects.

Importantly, seen from a field perspective, the power balance among different principles and diverse interpretations on the shared cause can be accounted for by the long-term distributions and competitions of the field-specific capital on different positions. These capital struggles can further explain the inclusion, domination and exclusion in the field. Certain ENGOs, with more capital and authority, find it much easier to legitimise their views as a reasonable and responsible ENGO (e.g. Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Calhoun, 2003). Some voices are systematically empowered in the field structure and can dominate the field, while some voices are excluded or never emerge. For instance, Mr Cloud, the leader of Independent Rock, pointed out this inequality reproduction in the interactions among ENGOs.

> In this circle, there is a huge cost for innovation. Donors, or foundations, always encourage innovation. ENGOs are expected to use innovation to deal with the challenging environmental crises. But not everyone can innovate. … Practically, in this system, in order to propose innovative working methods, you need to have enough information to know what the new positions of the government officers are, to what extent the donors can accept risky ideas, and whether you have extra human resources and time to design new projects. Most small ENGOs are overwhelmed by their current projects and are always stressed by unknown government positions. And they have to follow the bigger ones (Participatory observation at Independent Rock, 02/2017-08/2017).

To sum up, a field perspective uses capital competitions and accumulations to explain the power structures and potential in this field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Through analysing field divisions and competitions, we can further discuss how the field-specific capital is defined, what the main orientations are in the field and what the field's possibilities were and are during different periods. By tracing the field capital distributions and

competitions, this chapter can reveal the field's boundaries, the competing principles and the power balance among ENGOs. This will enable us to engage with some broader discussions such as to what extent Chinese ENGOs are political agencies to bring democratisation changes, and to what extent Chinese ENGOs are different from Western ENGOs. As said before, the field is a locus of relations of force (Bourdieu, 1986-87) and players are affected by the forces internal and external to the field. While Chapter 3 presents a dynamic history of this field affected by factors at different levels, Chapter 4 will show the internal struggles of the field and how these dynamics shape the field's functioning.

To be specific, section two and section three will present two significant disagreements among ENGOs, which define the field's centre and boundaries. For one thing, the past three decades have witnessed the expansion of the engineer/scientist ENGOs branch. The idea of solving concrete environmental issues with science and technology has been widely accepted in the field. The ethos of these ENGOs – such as being rigorous, objective and effective – are generally considered as positive. In contrast, the community-oriented ENGOs' working approach has been largely disqualified and criticised as emotional, inefficient and unprofessional in the field. For another, triggered by activist ENGOs' attempts to politicise environmental issues, both community-oriented and engineer/scientist ENGOs have actively policed the field rules and guarded the boundary of environmental issues, especially by ridiculing the rationality and integrity of the activist groups.

2. The Expansion of Engineer/Scientist ENGOs: Focusing on the Environment or Humans?

2.1. Engineer/Scientist ENGOs: An Alternative Understanding of 'Green Heroes'. 'We All Make Contributions, but Who are More Important and Effective?

2.1.1 Coping with the Existential Challenges from the Previous Dominators: If You are Distant from the Community, are you Legitimate ENGOs?

When engineer/scientist ENGOs emerged in the mid-2000s, this circle had been dominated by the community-oriented model for over ten years. Influential leaders' humanistic and

cultural interpretations were considered as textbooks for new organisations and references for recruitment. Most newcomers in this area addressed the leaders from early ENGOs as their teachers. The innovations brought about by the second branch came with symbolic costs and moral stakes: with their own distinctive values and working approaches, these newly emerged ENGOs directly faced existential challenges from the previous dominators. Especially considering their emphasis on technology and their distance from neighbourhoods, can engineer/scientist ENGOs be counted as proper ENGOs? Though collaborations between the two branches exist, symbolic tensions are inevitable. A typical critique from early ENGOs is that engineer/scientist ENGOs are only 'making superficial efforts, instead of engaging with deeper causes' (e.g. interview at Green Village, 20/04/2017). Instead, as argued by the early ENGOs, community-oriented organisations are real grassroots social organisations who are close to communities and engage with the cultural and political roots of environmental issues.

In response to the legitimacy challenges, engineer/scientist ENGOs' efforts to justify themselves have profoundly destabilised the field. This second branch has not only provided an alternative mentality and the logic of a 'green hero', but has also turned the previously unquestioned principle of working closely with the communities into controversial ideas and created hierarchies in this circle in favour of their own branch. As a result, the second branch has added a new angle to the field, and gradually blurred the boundary between ENGOs and professional think tanks, which potentially depoliticises the field. As discussed in Chapter 3, the expansion of engineer/scientist ENGOs is embedded in multiple overlapping historical processes, including funding structures, personnel inflows and the broader framing of environmental issues. Meanwhile, as will be presented in this section, the rise of this branch among other ENGOs has been enabled both by the structural conditions and by their own efforts.

To begin with, in response to the critiques from the early ENGOs, particularly that of a lack of community connection, the second branch gradually redefined a new image of environmental heroes, who are sober, calm and can effectively serve the wider public interest with the tools of science and technology. As introduced in Chapter 3, these ENGOs have a specific trajectory and thus have relatively distinguished ethos, values and views on ENGOs' functions. Most of the teams have the academic background or training in environmental engineering or governance. When they think of environmental crises, the key factors to consider are mainly pollution sources, emissions and regulations. From their perspective, it is not necessary for ENGOs to work in the neighbourhoods like the early

ENGOs. ENGOs' authority should come from their skills in solving concrete environmental issues.

> Isn't it ridiculous to say that NGO teams must go to neighbourhoods with a smile on their face every day? Going to the neighbourhood without solving any issues means nothing! The point is to solve concrete issues (Interview at Green Code, 22/11/2016).

When I asked about the debates on 'who are the real grassroots NGOs', the manager of Green Code, an ENGO focusing on energy structure research and policy advocacy and research, immediately responded with excitement, as if she finally got a chance to defend them. The quote above clearly reflects a specific type of ENGO which stresses the role of hard science. Her inaccurate understanding of the community-based ENGOs also shows us the difficulties for the two branches to understand and recognise each other.

Moreover, not only to deny the necessities of working in and with the neighbourhoods, engineer/scientist ENGOs intentionally distance themselves from the communities. To a certain degree, in their narrative 'distancing from the community,' it is not only acceptable but also necessary, considering the efficiency brought on by labour division. For instance, on the biggest annual crowdfunding event in China (9.9 Charity Day), to introduce themselves to the general public, the engineer/scientist ENGOs intentionally refuse to use the subjective or humanistic arguments or languages, such as 'love earth mother', or 'love home'. To raise more funds, their main selling points are 'science', 'big data' and 'evidence and truth' (Participatory observation at Independent Rock, 02/2017-08/2017).

In their science- and technology-centred narrative or logic, the previously unquestioned community-oriented working approach, such as living and working together with the residents, became problematic. Some engineer/scientist ENGOs draw distinctions between 'working for' and 'working with' ENGOs. They argue that due to the public's lack of scientific knowledge and professional equipment to evaluate the situations, ENGOs should mainly work for, instead of working with, the public (Interviews at Green Lab, 27/02/2017; 01/08/2017; Green North, 23/07/2018).

The distinctiveness of their science- and technology-centred logic could also be seen from their uneasiness when engineer/scientist ENGOs try to engage with the public. Some engineer/scientist ENGOs also wish to mobilise the public to join the public debates on environmental governance. However, with specific capital and positions in the field, they find it difficult to approach the public. The social media manager of Independent Rock

explained this dilemma to me. On the one hand, if ENGOs want to engage with the broader public, the articles published on social media have to be easily readable. On the other hand, the specific value of their organisation is to provide deep, critical and rigorous thoughts to society. In order to prove their specific value and draw the attention of the experts in the area, they always have to analyse issues with a scientific discourse (Participatory observation at Independent Rock, 02/2017-08/2017).

Third, to justify their positions, engineer/scientist ENGOs' discourse appears to be quite aggressive, which assumes scientific solutions as the only objective way to solve issues, and further inevitably devalues the work of community-oriented organisations. On some specific issues, the two branches are particularly sensitive to each other's claims and positions, as they sometimes work on the same issues. With their science- and technology-centred logic, some engineer/scientist ENGOs harshly discredit community-oriented ENGOs and accuse them of having unscientific claims and misleading the public. For instance, in the case of Dioxin emissions in waste incinerations, some engineer/scientist ENGOs explicitly expressed their anger to community-oriented ENGOs and wished they had never intervened with the accidents. Specifically, some community-oriented ENGOs were criticised for providing the public with black-and-white answers regarding the risks of Dioxin and waste incinerations (Interview at Green Lab, 27/02/2017; 01/08/2017).

2.1.2 Discursive and Institutional Expansions: Weapons in Symbolic Battles

Engineer/scientist ENGOs' self-justifications and attacks on other ENGOs are not only at a discursive level but are also practised through institutional channels and the normative system. In particular, by exploiting the NGO professionalisation trend since the mid-2000s in China, this branch has managed to powerfully expand their problem-solving logic and science- and technology-centred narratives across the field. By pushing for the formalisation and the neutralisation of their values and working approaches, this branch gradually gained the monopoly of the field-specific capital and a strong voice in defining effective ENGOs' contributions. As a result, the community-oriented ENGOs which do not work with problem-solving logic, have been discredited, de-contextualised and marginalised in the field, which will be elaborated on in section 2.2.

First, the expansion of the second branch is largely enabled by the fact that their problem-solving logic particularly suits most foundations' standards and expectations. This match between their logic and the broader institutional setting of the funding system has brought them several significant advantages in the field. As these organisations can easily win the donors' recognition and appreciation with their project proposals, skills and work, they have gained not only stable financial incomes, but also the significant positions to impose influence on donors' preferences, along with the symbolic and financial power to tutor other ENGOs through outsourcing, training, networking and incubation.

To be specific, regarding engineer/scientist ENGOs' advantage in applying for funds, as mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3, ENGOs are generally supposed to prove that they can efficiently utilise the funds and create visible concrete changes within the professionalisation trend since the mid-2000s (Participatory observation at Nature Lovers, 10/2016-07/2017). Before the mid-2000s, many of the early ENGOs relied on their awards, membership fees and special government funds as their main financial income, which allowed them to have certain freedom with their project management procedures or donors' preferences. After the mid-2000s, the funds from foundations had become most ENGOs' primary source of income, and ENGOs had to take the foundations' preferences and rules into consideration. This new trend has benefitted and disempowered different ENGOs. To be specific, donors from foundations usually require ENGOs to explicitly clarify the exact problems and the exact matching solutions, usually within a one-year project cycle (Interview with Ms River, 30/03/2017; 15/08/2018, Participatory observation at Green Harmony, 05/2017-06/2017). On the project funding application form, each applicant is required to answer the questions: 'What is THE single environment problem you want to solve' and 'What is your logical route on how to solve the problem?' (Participatory observation at Green Harmony, 05/2017-06/2017). As significant domestic foundations in this area particularly evaluate projects with efficiency and visible changes on concrete environmental issues (Participatory observation at Green Harmony, 05/2017-06/2017), it is pretty convenient for engineer/scientist ENGOs to justify their values within this framework of NGO professionalism, as they can easily quantify their influence and convincingly prove their efficiency with concrete indicators, such as how many factories they have monitored and how many pollution indicators they have used in investigations.

Accordingly, besides the managerial dimensions, engineer/scientist ENGOs could easily win the foundations' recognition, also due to the new, broader framing of environmental issues. As introduced in Chapter 3, since the 2000s, owing to the outbreaks of various environmental accidents, public attention has shifted to pollution and other ecological

disasters. Environmental protection was no longer centred around lifestyle choices or consciousness-raising activities. Foundations are especially eager to respond to the central and urgent issues in this area. As said by the director of the Alashan SEE foundation in 2016, foundations in the coming years would especially invest in pollution interventions and ecological restorations (Ford Foundation and CCIA, 2017), which matches the key working areas of most engineer/scientist ENGOS. Foundations' recognition of this type of ENGOs can also be observed from the important awards in the area. For instance, among the ten winners each year of the SEE Eco-Environmental Protection Awards from 2015 to 2017 (Alashan SEE, 2015, 2017)[29], six to seven ENGOs focus on pollution intervention, ecological research and policy advocacy, while a few other winners work on media exposure and environmental education. Also, Ford Conservation and the Environmental Grants China Awards cover various categories. For the category of environmental pioneers, the majority among the seventeen winners in 2018 are ENGOs with research and investigation skills that work on pollution intervention and ecological conservation (Ford Foundation, 2018).

Moreover, engineer/scientist ENGOs skilfully exploit their influences on donors and ENGOs' collaboration networks to multiply their influence across the field. As most domestic foundations in the environmental areas were only established since 2004, the foundations usually invite ENGOs and NGO management coaches as consultants to improve their funding allocation system. Some influential engineer/scientist ENGOs, such as Blue Sky, have been invited to be the consultants of some large funding programmes (3-5 million RMB/year) for the environmental foundations for years. As two to three key environmental foundations in China fund over hundreds of projects, the consulting opinions from these leading engineer/scientist ENGOs are also important in shaping the downstream project designs in the whole circle. In other words, engineer/scientist ENGOs can justify their working values and methods through the funding system.

From the funding applicants' point of view, the involvement of big engineer/scientist ENGOs in donors' decision making sends clear signals with regard to which types of projects have more chance to gain funds from certain funding pools. To increase the chance of receiving funds, some smaller ENGOs follow the guidelines to design their projects. For those ENGOs sharing similar values or having connections with big engineer/scientist

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29 The award list of 2018 does not show the same pattern, yet this does not mean the foundations changed their preferences. As clarified by the committee, the awards in 2018 are especially dedicated to the actors working on bio-diversity.

ENGOs, funding application appears to be a process with a strong sense of certainty. For instance, knowing that there were several experts from Blue Sky in the funding committee of one programme, the team of Independent Rock felt very confident about their own project application, as they believed that their research-driven project was highly likely to be recognised by the committee (Participatory observation at Independent Rock, 02/2017-08/2017). Similarly, this sense of certainty has been shared by the ENGOs that were directly incubated or guided by big engineer/scientist ENGOs, who are likely to gain funds due to their incubators' influence on funding committees (e.g. interview with Ms Soil, 07/07/2017; interview with Young Greeners, 21/05/2017).

Besides being models for other ENGOs, the leading engineer/scientist ENGOs also strengthen their values by directly providing their allies with the sense of certainty through directly offering them financial and technological support. As mentioned in Chapter 3, in some large investigation and campaign projects (e.g. Apple China, pharmaceutical industry investigations), Blue Sky and some other large ENGOs sometimes play the role of funders and outsource part of their projects to smaller ENGOs. Similarly, besides outsourcing, they also work in some large investigation and monitoring projects through collaborative networks (e.g. Green Production Chain, including 30-40 ENGOs and Good Air Monitoring Network, including around 20 ENGOs). For smaller or new ENGOs, integrating in the networks of large engineer/scientist ENGOs appears to be an obvious, strategically sound choice. The problem-solving logic and science- and technology-centred narratives suggest a bright future for ENGOs' development trajectories, especially considering the relatively big and stable funding resources, convincing proof of influence and the dominance of scientific discourse across society (e.g. see Medvetz, 2012). Through outsourcing and collaboration networks, the second branch has gradually strengthened their values by supporting and assimilating those ENGOs sharing similar logic and methods.

Second, to strengthen ENGOs' abilities to respond to environmental issues, engineer/scientist ENGOs also actively construct the conduct standards in the field. By further specialising their own science and technology skills, this branch is standardising a set of more concrete definitions of 'professional ENGOs' and the so-called 'effective contributions'. By formalising science and technology skills as professional ENGOs' basic standard skills, engineer/scientist ENGOs are inevitably discrediting other ENGOs and constructing a hierarchy in the field. Being highly critical of the cultural approach, engineer/scientist ENGOs specifically tend to distinguish themselves from the community-oriented ENGOs. Various scientist/engineer ENGOs collectively push for deeper institutionalisation and higher standards of ENGOs' so-called professional performance,

such as rigorous and objective data collection procedures and quality, the academic and scientific credentials of their investigation reports and the accuracy and efficiency of the big data systems. For example, as an important symbol of their professional level, engineer/scientist ENGOs are gradually pushing themselves to follow the standards of professional think tanks or research centres. In their investigation reports nowadays, they provide not only photos of on-site investigation, but also effective data, investigation methodologies, logical analyses and sometimes consistent referencing and comments from experts in research centres (e.g. interviews at Blue Sky, 13/12/2017; Speak the Truth, 23/02/2017; Participatory observation at Independent Rock, 02/2017-08/2017). Academic journals such as *The Lancet* are quoted in their reports and analyses. Meanwhile, to increase their scientific credentials, these ENGOs specifically seek to hire people with an academic background in environmental science and governance, preferably with a master's degree from abroad, even though they need to pay them a salary as high as the profit sector (Interviews at Green Code, 22/11/2016; Global Green, 09/08/2017).

Importantly, these so-called professional standards are not simply framed as preferable conduct but advocated as necessary standards. That is, ENGOs' credentials to participate in environmental governance rely heavily on their scientific investigations and reports. In contrast, with these technological optimistic standards, community-oriented ENGOs' consciousness-raising claims and residents' pollution complaints appear to be emotional, irrational and vague. From the perspective of engineer/scientist ENGOs, the scientific attitudes, evidence and analyses are the only reasonable and objective base for ENGOs to intervene with environmental governance. In the face of complex situations, rigorous scientific procedures and analysis with seemingly neutral scientific discourse provide Chinese ENGOs with the credit to have reasonable conversations with the governments and factories, which is the proper starting point to solve issues efficiently.

The domination of science-based logic can also be seen from other ENGOs' actions. Some community-based organisations also attempt to include scientific elements in their community activities, such as using professional equipment to test and report water quality and introducing a scientific discourse in their community education lectures (e.g. participatory observation at Nature Lovers, 10/2016-07/2017; interview at Green Home, 03/03/2017). The key motivation comes from the belief that scientific arguments or experiences can make their voice more plausible for the public. However, due to their specific field positions and capital, it is pretty difficult for these community-based ENGOs to strengthen themselves with a scientific discourse or approach. For one thing, the community-oriented ENGOs usually cannot afford accurate testing equipment, and their

own teams lack the knowledge to provide complicated scientific lectures (e.g. interview at Green Home, 03/03/2017). For another, there are higher costs for community-based ENGOs to learn from engineer/scientific ENGOs. Practically, it is difficult to fit scientific discussions and analyses into community activities, which are meant to be approachable. As explained by one manager, 'the public cannot understand the complicated causal mechanisms of the smog. But if you tell them it is the guys who run factories and drive Rolls Royces that caused the smog, this makes sense to the residents.' (Interview at Green Parrot, 19/01/2017).

Meanwhile, engineer/scientist ENGOs also have to pay symbolic costs when they push for these professional standards. When they try to standardise this conduct, they are also blurring the line between ENGOs and professional think tanks. Some of their staff have complained about the lack of 'civil society feelings or passion' within these organisations. 'We do data collection and analysis every day and earn a decent salary, which is similar to working in a corporation' (Interview with Ms Soil, 07/07/2017). Though with symbolic costs, the criticism on the scientific logic is not strong across the field and most of the employees believe that a scientific-technocratic logic is the most reasonable way to deal with the environmental crises.

To sum up, the circle of Chinese ENGOs has witnessed the rise of engineer/scientist ENGOs since the mid-2000s, who powerfully disturbed the previous field structure and shaped field rules. By exploiting the NGO professionalisation trend which stresses project management and efficiency, engineer/scientist ENGOs, together with key foundations, have aggressively asserted and expanded their problem-solving logic and science and technology narratives. Through institutionalising and formalising their science-technology-centred working skills and the seemingly neutral scientific discourses, this branch of ENGOs has also concretely defined the standardised features and skills of professional ENGOs, which have further discredited and marginalised other types of ENGOs. As will be further expanded on in the next part, even though engineer/scientist ENGOs are not explicitly depoliticising environmental issues intentionally, their rise and the changes of field gradually led to the diminishment of other narratives and the pluralism values in this circle.

2.2 Community-Oriented ENGOs: The Marginalised Role in the Field. 'Can You Productively Translate Your Passions for Community-Building into Concrete Results?'

2.2.1 Confusion and Self-Doubts

With the rise of the engineer/scientist ENGOs since the mid-2000s, community-oriented ENGOs have been gradually marginalised in the field. The marginalisation can be observed from several dimensions. First, facing strong symbolic challenges, the early ENGOs turned out to be confused about the previous dominant model, especially how to simultaneously balance the two inter-related tasks, community-building and environmental protection. Second, with the professionalisation trend and other framings on environmental issues, early ENGOs' working values and approaches were criticised as idealistic and were no longer self-justified. The community-based ENGOs are pressured to justify their project design with the framework of 'problem-solving' and to show how they can directly solve concrete issues. Third, in order to gain recognition, community-oriented ENGOs further specialised their skills in consciousness-raising and community work. To deliver professional education lectures, they especially invest time to learn the skills or theories of child psychology and social work. As a result, early ENGOs' focus is gradually being distanced from the central urgent topics in this area such as air pollution and water security, which have more public attention and funding opportunities.

As mentioned above, though early community-oriented ENGOs symbolically attacked other branches, they also have experienced symbolic crises, which were deepened by the field effects. After ten years of development, the community-oriented model was facing serious legitimacy issues. In this model, there is always a kind of tension around urgent environmental issues and long-term cultural solutions. As shown in the history of early ENGOs, these organisations have been mediating between two tasks, solving environmental issues and building a strong civil society, which has created a paradox for them. Since the 2000s, the broader context has changed, and the public attention on environmental topics focuses mainly on environmental accidents, pollution and ecological disasters. Under these circumstances, the team of early ENGOs has turned out to be more devoted to the cause of environmental protection. Some ENGOs' staff and followers started to doubt to what extent community activities can effectively contribute in solving the urgent environmental crises (e.g. interview with Mr Gourd, 23/10/2016; also see Liang C.J. and Kang X. eds. 2005).

With high expectations on their influence in environmental governance, they found their small-scale community-based work logically and practically problematic. For instance, Liang, the charismatic leader of this circle since the 1990s, left the 'Liang's Question from Heaven' in the 2000s:

> If we have not made a difference in environmental governance, what is the value of our work and why are we still trying?

After Liang passed away in 2010, his followers continued to quote 'Liang's Question from Heaven' for years (e.g. Participatory observation at Nature Lovers, 10/2016-07/2017), which reflects the anxiety and confusion around the early dominant model. Nowadays, even in some early community-oriented ENGOs, the value of community-building activities is not substantively recognised or appreciated. With the legitimacy question among themselves, it has become pretty difficult for the small-scale community-based ENGOs to justify their contributions to the environmental crises. While some early ENGOs didn't survive due to lack of funding and human resources, some other community-oriented ENGOs have been working with consciousness-raising activities for years. However, the community-building approaches are doubted in daily life. Some of the staff specifically expressed their frustrations about not being able to see visible changes brought upon by their activities and they are worried for the future of their organisations, and some staff have already proposed to give up on the route of community-building (Participatory observation at Nature Lovers, 10/2016-07/2017; interview at Green Home, 15/03/2017). The self-doubts among early ENGOs were led by various contextual factors, including the shift of environmental narratives towards urgent crises in China, the professionalisation trend and also the expansion of the problem-solving values and logic. Further, this confusion and lack of confidence suffered by community-oriented ENGOs led to their gradual marginalisation in the field.

2.2.2 Disadvantaged: Difficulties in Selling Their Projects in the New Institutional Settings and Attempts to Seek Another Direction

Second, when there is a strong NGO professionalisation trend in the field, community-oriented ENGOs have also experienced difficulties in convincingly proving their values to the main domestic foundations. While it is relatively easy for engineer/scientist ENGOs to show their project values through the funding application procedures, community-oriented

ENGOs are devalued or deskilled in the professionalisation trend. As mentioned before, on the project funding application form, each applicant is required to clarify the single issue they wish to deal with and their matching solutions. Furthermore, applicants are expected to finish each of their projects within a single year (Participatory observation at Green Harmony, 05/2017-06/2017). Obviously, these organisations are disadvantaged when having to present themselves in front of the donors within this problem-solving and efficiency framework. It is pretty difficult to narrow down ENGOs' cultural approaches as solutions to concrete issues. Moreover, community-building projects usually demand much longer periods than the one-year project cycle. Pressured to fit into the funding application framework, many of these ENGOs have tried to provide clear route maps (e.g. interviews with Green Home, 03/03/2017; Birds' Wings, 29/11/2016). They have to follow the linear logic and turn the community-building model into one-year projects which can directly solve concrete issues. In these practices, the vision of civil society development has been gradually marginalised.

Ms River, a former project manager, resigned from her organisation exactly due to this reason. As she explained, her project was initially designed to bring government officials, schoolteachers, residents and factory representatives together to discuss local river pollution. To simply bring various interest holders together took the team several months. Building trust and having constructive conversations of course would take a much longer period. Though time-consuming, the project design was loyal to the organisational vision. However, the original project plan was suspended after one year. 'No one wanted to fund it, as it was considered inefficient and I did not have the support from some of my colleagues', says Ms River. 'Nowadays, the same project has been turned into a shallow natural education project, which is easy to operate' (Interview with Ms River, 15/08/2018).

Similarly, other community-oriented ENGOs are also constrained by resources. Green Home, another leading community-oriented ENGO, has struggled financially for years. Even though their river-walking project is famous across the country, they found it difficult to gain support from environmental foundations (Interview at Green Home, 15/03/2017). Meanwhile, Green Village can still focus on working in one single community for several years. They are not relying on environmental foundations, however. Instead, the organisation chose to seek funds from government or community-development foundations and focused on exploring an innovative community governance mode (Interview at Green Village; 20/04/2017).

Third, in the competition to prove the organisations' valuable skills, while the engineer/scientist ENGOs attempted to standardise scientific methods, the community-oriented ENGOs reacted by specialising their distinctive skills and credentials. However, due to the field structure and unequal capital distributions, these efforts consequently marginalised this group. To be specific, the community-oriented ENGOs have experienced a deeper institutionalisation trend within their own group. Instead of being self-organised groups, the ENGOs are developing specific skills for natural education and other neighbourhood activities. To improve their projects, they are especially keen to learn skills from the disciplines of social work and child psychology. The job applicants with work experience in kindergartens or social work are particularly favoured, and books on social work and child psychology are put on their shelves and used for project designs (e.g. participatory observation at Nature Lovers, 10/2016-07/2017; interview at Green Village, 20/04/2017). For instance, to convey the idea of 'limited water resources on earth', skilful natural education ENGOs can design special games for children and make the abstract concepts comprehensive based on their knowledge of child psychology (Interview with Ms Mint, 17/02/2017). To efficiently work together with the neighbourhoods, Green Village has developed their own community working methods, which draw upon social work theories, such as when and how to intervene with local community self-organisation (e.g. interview at Green Village, 20/04/2017). Also, for example, as argued in Chapter 2, various ENGOs have developed different techniques to attract more participants.

At a field level, ENGOs' specialisation efforts come together with polarisation in the field, and the community-oriented ENGOs are gradually isolated. The early ENGOs, such as Green Village and Green Home, found themselves quite distant from other active ENGOs. Focusing on lifestyle campaigns, the early ENGOs rarely engaged with the central discussions in the area, such as the urgent urban pollution issues. Some community-based ENGOs stopped competing for funds from environmental foundations and instead seek funding from community-development foundations. Noteworthily, natural education ENGOs also set up their own separate forums to provide mutual support and develop specific professional skills (Interview with Ms Mint, 17/02/2017; Participatory observation at Nature Lovers, 10/2016-07/2017). This inward-looking perspective further distances this branch of ENGOs from other environmental forums focusing on pollution interventions, media exposures, water governance, waste management, etc. While it was mainly the early ENGOs who introduced the topic of environmental crises to the Chinese public, these ENGOs gradually lost the limelight and now engage less with contemporary urgent environmental crises (e.g. interview with Ms River, 30/03/2017; 15/08/2018; interview with Mr Sand, 18/05/2017).

As a result, in this institutionalisation trend, most of the community-oriented ENGOs are facing a paradox, which has also been discussed in Chapter 2. On the one hand, quantitively, the community-oriented ENGOs are still flourishing. Various new and old community-oriented ENGOs can find ways to fit into the new project management framework (e.g. interview with Ms Jade, 27/07/2018; interview at Birds' Wings, 29/11/2016). For instance, they can use the language of professional project management to justify their consciousness-raising activities, such as the quantitative evaluation criteria. On the other hand, qualitatively, these organisations are facing challenges from two sides. For one thing, as pointed out in Chapter 2, the values of these projects are questioned regarding the community-building effects. For another, at a field level, the community-oriented ENGOs are considered as inferior to scientist/engineer ENGOs. As commented by the director of the biggest domestic environmental foundation, the community-based ENGOs can only facilitate other problem-solving ENGOs by raising public consciousness (Interview at Birds' Wings, 29/11/2016). Indeed, while engineer/scientist ENGOs are proactively engaging the pressing pollution issues and situating themselves among the government, media and factories, the community-oriented ENGOs tend to emphasise their specialised skills in natural and environmental education. While their contributions are generally recognised by donors and engineer/scientist ENGOs, their specific value is to facilitate or supplement the engineer/scientist ENGOs to solve concrete environmental issues.

In other words, as shown from Ms River's frustrations on the project design, community-oriented ENGOs nowadays have largely lost the independence of their logic. Rather than glue society together and further engage with broader social issues, community-oriented ENGOs are playing marginal and facilitating roles in responding to concrete environmental issues. In the field, they are considered as low-skilled organisations which do not have problem-solving consciousness, and thus need professional training (e.g. participatory observation at Green Harmony, 05/2017-06/2017). Back in the 1990s, as presented in Chapter 3, early ENGOs started from environmental education activities. According to them, ENGOs' activities should have no thresholds, and anyone should be able to participate in these activities. In contrast, two decades later, in a professionalised field, these consciousness-raising activities are criticised for lack of focus, professional knowledge and thresholds.

To sum up the first main field division, the field structure of Chinese ENGOs since the mid-2000s has witnessed both the expansion of engineer/scientist ENGOs and the gradual marginalisation of community-oriented ENGOs. To benefit from the field structure, the

engineer/scientist ENGOs have actively exploited the professionalisation trends and funding systems. To a large degree, they have standardised their problem-solving and science-technology logic in the field. With the expansion of engineer/scientist ENGOs' values and methods, community-oriented ENGOs are constantly facing the legitimacy challenges to prove their own values and skills in the field. In the symbolic struggle to win recognition, the two branches have crystallised their positions, which has further deepened the symbolic divisions in the field.

3. Resistance of Activist ENGOs: We All Make Sacrifices, But Whose Sacrifices Make Sense?

3.1 The Challenge from the Activist ENGOs: What Are 'Real Environment Problems'?

Paralleling the competition between community-oriented and engineer/scientist ENGOs, another key division has emerged in this field at the same time, powerfully shaping the possibilities and diversities in the field. The development of activist ENGOs since the mid-2000s inevitably posed a series of controversial questions to all ENGOs: without engaging with the politics, can ENGOs really make a difference? Are environmental issues inherently political? Should ENGOs explicitly politicise environmental issues and engage in contentious struggles?

As mentioned before, with the trajectories of investigative journalism, the connections with pollution victims and the opportunities of the social media platforms, the activist ENGOs introduced another set of values and working methods to the field. As introduced in Chapter 3, they particularly stressed exposing the political roots of environmental issues and engaging with pressing issues with contentious approaches.

However, the emergence of this new voice has not diversified the field or pushed the field to move towards a political or contentious direction. The disagreements among the organisations triggered heated debates and symbolic struggles. As a result, the field has been structured by deepened divisions and polarised positions. The community-based and engineer/scientist ENGOs strengthened their self-censorship and the activist ENGOs also crystallised their critiques on apolitical actions and NGOs management rules.

Though the activist ENGOs do not appear competitive regarding their quantity and financial resources, this branch of ENGOs has disturbed the field structure by introducing different working logics. The activist ENGOs directly challenged the legitimacy of community-oriented and engineer/scientist ENGOs by arguing the necessities of contentious struggles against government. The previously widely shared common sense in this field – the necessity to avoid confrontations with the government – has become problematic or controversial. This symbolic challenge also led to several practical challenges for other ENGOs, including state-ENGOs relationship management and staff recruitment.

In this symbolic battle, the activist ENGOs have competed for recognition especially through ridiculing other types of ENGOs and challenging the existing field rules. By asking why other ENGOs turned down the pollution victims, the activist ENGOs initially started their groups out of the absence of contentious groups within this field. Frustrated by other ENGOs' working logics and approaches, the activist ENGOs proactively introduced intellectual resources from other fields, especially from labour rights activism and education rights activism (Participatory observation at Green Explorers' Network, Internal Online Network, 04/2018-08/2018). The community-oriented ENGOs and the engineer/scientist ENGOs have put plenty of effort in to hide or avoid the political and moral tensions in environmental issues. In contrast, the activist ENGOs explicitly challenge this tacit agreement and specifically expose the uneasy moral panic in the environmental problems. This moral panic, such as ongoing human suffering and social injustice, becomes key resources for activist ENGOs to exploit and to further develop their own source of authority. In their framework of urgency, these previously unimaginable activities became reasonable, and the previously unproblematic assumptions became debatable.

To begin with, the activist ENGOs have explicitly phrased NGOs' case choices as ethical decisions. In a narrative focusing on moral panic and urgency, the ongoing human and animal suffering are self-evidently assumed as the priority, or to use their words, 'the centre among all environmental issues' (Participatory observation at Green Explorers' Network, Internal Online Network, 04/2018-08/2018). In comparison, the focus on environmental consciousness and illegal emissions appears to be 'petty' or 'peripheral' (Interview at Green Explorers, 01/04/2018). Of course, their working methods involve political risks. Yet, for the activist ENGOs, the risks and sacrifices are not only manageable but also necessary, which defines their features and shows their devotion to their causes. Meanwhile, both community-oriented and engineer/scientist ENGOs are challenged, in terms of their authority to represent society's voice, due to their non-confrontational methods and values

(e.g. interview at Green Explorers, 07/06/2017; 01/04/2018; 13/08/2018; participatory observation at internal social media groups, 04/2018-08/2018).

The activist ENGOs also disturb the field by re-defining proper ENGOs' working methods. Politicising the environmental issues and confronting the government also becomes a political and moral choice, instead of something absolutely impossible in China. While it was generally assumed by most non-contentious ENGOs that there is almost no space in China to confront the government, the activist ENGOs have made the contentious methods one of the choices to consider in the field. As shown in Chapter 3, some controversial strategies and approaches are particularly treasured by the activist ENGOs. Believing in the power of conflict escalation, the activist ENGOs have developed their skills especially in 'putting themselves in the tornado and politicising environmental issues' (e.g. interview at Green Explorers, 07/06/2017; 01/04/2018), such as writing striking and mobilising media exposure stories or managing the staff arrest incidents within their networks. While acknowledging that some of their actions are risky and some of their arguments are not rigorous, most activist ENGOs are confident about their own values and believe that their bold actions can pressure the government to act immediately.

The symbolic challenges from the activist ENGOs created some practical difficulties for other ENGOs. For one thing, the competition on ethos has been translated into the competition for human capital. With their specific values and working methods, the leading activist ENGOs have accumulated various followers, including new graduates or individuals keen for public welfare. The community-oriented and engineer/scientist ENGOs have clearly sensed this threat from activist ENGOs and thus the necessities to defend their own values. As the leader of Nature Lovers puts it, 'The activist ENGOs are confusing the newcomers and young people, regarding how to be proper ENGOs' (e.g. interview with Mr Forest, 30/03/2018). Another challenge faced by the non-activist ENGOs is how to manage their own relationships with the government. With their contentious styles, the activist ENGOs inevitably draw unwanted state attention to this area. Considering previous state actions, it is likely that the Chinese government could be provoked by some activist ENGOs, and further initiate a state campaign or regulation changes to constrain the whole circle of ENGOs. The non-contentious ENGOs obviously could also be affected by the regulation and policy changes. This explains why the third branch has usually been criticised as irresponsible ENGOs. Also, for example, as shown in the case at the beginning of the chapter, the community-based and engineer/scientist ENGOs are put in 'an awkward position' when ENGOs' staff get arrested. Located in the same field, these organisations are forced to take a stance in these cases, particularly whether they support or disagree with these activities. By

agreeing with the arrests, non-contentious ENGOs must take the symbolic cost, as they appear to be unsympathetic. By supporting the activist ENGOs and showing support to the arrested staff, they are directly confronting the government, which contradicts their own values.

With specific trajectories and opportunity structures, the activist ENGOs have developed in China, triggering the debates on the politicisation of ENGOs' work in the field. The next two parts will introduce how community-oriented ENGOs and engineer/scientist ENGOs guard their values in the field and how activist ENGOs gradually distance themselves from this field and approach the external fields.

3.2 Community-Oriented and Engineer/Scientist ENGOs: Policing the Field Order with 'Professional Conduct': Heroic Actions, or Integrity Issues?

As argued in this chapter, Chinese ENGOs are by no means an integral community. From a field perspective, there is little chance for the activist and non-activist ENGOs to collaborate, or to find a middle ground. From the community-oriented and the engineer/scientist ENGOs' point of view, the activist ENGOs appear to be threatening. The emergence of this branch has made previous unproblematic assumptions into controversies. And they are forced to take a position on the politically related dimensions of environmental protection. The non-activist ENGOs can no longer take it for granted that pollution victims or the political tensions beneath environmental issues can be ignored. To further benefit from the field rules, these ENGOs are motivated to seek more authority in defining their shared cause and the interpretations of the so-called 'proper' or 'professional' ENGOs.

In response to the challenges from the activist ENGOs, other ENGOs are motivated to guard the boundary between non-contentious and contentious organisations, or to explicitly clarify what they are not. By doing so, they are trying to monopolise the authority to define what proper ENGOs are, or which ENGOs should be recognised as trustworthy civil society actors. By doing so, they especially crystallise their own behaviour, and impose stricter self-regulation and self-censorship, in terms of avoiding any confrontation with the government. By phrasing their own conduct as proper standards, the non-activist ENGOs criticise activist ENGOs' work as 'destructive and irresponsible' behaviour and exclude them from the circle of so-called 'proper ENGOs'.

Regarding the standards of being the so-called rational, responsible and accountable ENGOs, the non-activist ENGOs mainly clarify their position on two significant dimensions. First, how should ENGOs interpret the political context and manage the NGO-state relationship or the interpretations of the political context? Or, how should ENGOs position themselves among government, corporates and communities? Second, should ENGOs strictly follow the professional NGO management procedures? Through these debates we can observe how the non-activist ENGOs have polarised their positions in the field.

For the first dimension, the activist ENGOs' working approach has forced other branches to explicitly reassert their position that they work in a non-confrontational or collaborative way with the government. The community-oriented and engineer/scientist ENGOs actively guard and strengthen their uncontentious narratives, through discursive attacks, specialisation and networking. Based on their judgement on the politically constraining context, ENGOs must be 'reasonable and responsible' and cautiously adapt to the specific political context. Following this logic, in order to defend the communities in the long term, it is constructive to avoid politically sensitive issues by drawing a line between environmental and social issues (e.g. interview at Green North, 23/07/2018). To bring broader changes, especially considering the fragile political and social legitimacy of NGOs in China, it is necessary to work according to 'proper procedures', such as showing respect to the state authority, having evidence-based neutral reports on environmental issues, following NGO project management rules and financial transparency principles (e.g. participatory observations at Nature Lovers, 10/2016-07/2017; Green Harmony, 05/2017-06/2017). By doing so, ENGOs can not only avoid destructive arrests and repression, but they can also gain the opportunity to have rational and productive conversations with the government. This way, they are able to defend society in the long term (e.g. interview at Green Code, 22/11/2016; Green North, 23/07/2018). In contrast, the activist ENGOs are seen as irrational and irresponsible. While the government can quickly react to some technocratic environmental issues, the activist ENGOs' activities, such as media exposure and campaigns, unnecessarily complicate the situations (e.g. interview at Green Fashion, 04/08/2017; Green Lab, 27/02/2017; 01/08/2017). Moreover, other leading ENGOs question the integrity of the activist ENGOs' 'heroic' self-representation. Provoking the government is not a daring action, but a 'nasty strategy' to draw media attention at the expense of their staff's personal security and ENGOs' reputations (Interview with Mr Forest, 30/03/2018; 14/08/2018).

Besides symbolic attacks, the leading ENGOs also crystallise their actions and impose their models among ENGOs. An important part of their working model is how to successfully

collaborate with the state. To institutionalise their models and working methods, both of the leading community-oriented and engineer/scientist ENGOs organise training workshops and conferences to share these experiences, such as how to approach and work with government officials. Believing in the benefits of collaborating with the government, bigger ENGOs also share their contacts in the government with other ENGOs to encourage collaborating practices. When more ENGOs in the field agree to practise and standardise their collaborative attitudes and methods with the government, the non-contentious ENGOs are discrediting the activist ENGOs as irrational organisations and also strengthening the boundary between themselves and the activist ENGOs. Of course, most of the activist ENGOs are excluded from these training workshops and resource-sharing networks, considering the incomparability of the two sides' values. While some non-contentious ENGOs regard themselves as formal armies, they call the activist ENGOs 'guerrillas' to describe and criticise their contentious approaches.

For the second dimension, the non-activist ENGOs compete against the activist ENGOs by looking for the authorities to define the field rules, especially the perceived proper ENGO management conduct. By crystallising their positions in support of the NGO professionalisation trend, the non-activist ENGOs are devaluing and marginalising the activist ENGOs who do not strictly follow NGO project management procedures. Taking a polarised position, many non-activist ENGOs frame the practices of project administrative procedures as integrity choices. In other words, it is considered as ethical conduct to follow the NGO management rules, especially budget planning and operational procedures, financial transparency rules and the principles of being neutral and objective. The two branches have shown a strong determination to follow the strict and detailed management rules, even if some of them feel exhausted by the time-consuming rules, such as planning the detailed budgets in advance, collecting all the receipts for public transport, etc. (e.g. participatory observation at Green Harmony, 05/2017-06/2017; interview at Birds' Wings, 29/11/2016). A significant reason to respect these rules is to gain accountability, and it is a crucial symbolic resource for ENGOs to raise funds and win recognition from donors and the public. By emphasising professional conduct, the non-activist ENGOs always criticise the activist ENGOs for being unprofessional and normatively problematic, especially when they lend money to pollution victims with their project funds. These practices, regardless of the special circumstances, are considered as problematic, and they break the project management rules and prove the ENGOs as unaccountable.

This disagreement on NGO professional management conduct has further divided the two sides. The activist ENGOs are highly critical of the management rules[30]. Meanwhile, the non-activist ENGOs accuse them of being unaccountable and exclude these ENGOs. The polarisations in the field can be observed from several main critiques against the activist ENGOs, including the credibility of pollution reports, financial management and human resources management. For instance, as part of their typical working methods, the activists usually exaggerate their pollution investigation conclusions, in order to raise more attention and solve the issues more efficiently. From the perspective of the engineer/scientist ENGOs, this practice largely weakens ENGOs' accountability and credibility in general and thus is ethically problematic. Professional ENGOs should follow rigorous data collection procedures and scientific methods, instead of drawing striking conclusions (e.g. interview with Green Lab, 27/02/2017; 01/08/2017). For another, as explained by the activist ENGOs, they usually react to urgent pollution accidents, which requires them to have high autonomy and flexibility regarding budget management. In many cases, the activist ENGOs do not disclose detailed budget reports. As criticised by the leading ENGOs from the other two branches, the lack of financial transparency leaves a space for corruption in the whole field, which harms the reputations of the ENGOs as a whole. By making bold critiques, the non-activist ENGOs keep themselves far away from the activist ENGOs and guard their own principles. The non-activist ENGOs specifically avoid any connections with the activist ENGOs, due mainly to their lack of professional standards for investigation reports and financial budgets. According to them, messy management can bring accountability issues, and thus many ENGOs dare not collaborate with the activist ENGOs (e.g. interview with Mr Forest, 30/03/2018).

3.3 The Activist ENGOs: Failed Disciplining Efforts

Through setting models, training newcomers and affecting foundations, the non-activist ENGOs have tried to establish themselves as good professional ENGOs, and clarify the boundary between themselves and the so-called irrational, contentious activist ENGOs. These disciplining efforts have not forced the activist ENGOs to change their positions and working methods. There is clear resistance against the professionalisation and depoliticisation trends in the field. When the activist ENGOs criticise their positions and distance themselves from other ENGOs, the field is further polarised.

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30 This is related to the fact that these ENGOs mainly conduct contentious campaigns (which cannot follow the normal one-year project cycle). Also, they largely rely on crowdfunding, which does not require them to strictly follow the project management rules.

Many activist ENGOs have clearly sensed the isolation and exclusion pressures from other peers. The recognition crisis further drives them apart from other ENGOs. Among the samples, both smaller and bigger activist ENGOs expressed their feelings of alienation in the circle of ENGOs, especially the attitude towards political engagements in environmental governance. As felt by some of them, talking politics makes no sense in the circle of ENGOs (e.g. interview with Mr Sand, 18/05/2017). Some younger activist ENGO staff feel there is a dearth of peers who can understand them.

These disagreements on values have eliminated the chances of collaboration between different ENGOs. Back in the mid-2000s, such collaborations did occur, but over time they became fewer and fewer. One typical case where values clashed was the collaborated campaign on ENGOs' entitlement to participate in an environmental lawsuit. The campaign was initiated by the leaders of the three branches, yet one – Green Explorers – withdrew from it. The activist ENGO held that every citizen should have the right to litigate the polluter, while the other leading ENGOs, such as Blue Sky, proposed that only certain qualified organisations should be granted the litigation right. The team from Green Explorers was furious about the 'conservative views' of the other ENGOs (Interview with Green Explorers, 13/08/2018).

In symbolic competition, the activist ENGOs have further strengthened their non-compromising and politicising positions, and also specialised their own skills. The other branches' attempts to universalise their conduct did not close the controversy in the field. The activist ENGOs keep challenging the ideas of what does and doesn't count as environmental issues and what ENGOs' integrities should be. The debates in the field have facilitated this branch to clarify what they are not. The activist ENGOs embrace the stigmatising labels of being destructive guerrillas and attach other meanings to the terms in their daily discourse. As commented by Green Explorers' leader, 'The circle of ENGOs has suffered from malnutrition… there are no nutritious thoughts to mobilise and empower organisations to do real stuff' (Interview with Mr Wind, 01/04/2018).

Regarding the 'malnutrition' in the field, the leading activist ENGO is frustrated about the lack of models of proper ENGOs. The logics and strategies of community-oriented and engineer/scientist ENGOs are too weak to bring any real changes. For one thing, even when the engineer/scientist ENGOs keep improving their scientific research skills, the possibility of solving the issues still mainly depends on the government's willingness (Interview at Green Explorers, 01/04/2018). The pitfall is that collaborating and negotiating with the

government only gives the state more time to refuse or procrastinate about their interventions. Realistically, with society's attention shifted to elsewhere, the governments usually have little incentive to intervene with pollution, considering the relevant economic programmes (e.g. interview at Source of Water, 18/08/2018). In contrast, ENGOs' real mission should be to expose issues, raise public attention and pressure and oversee the government to intervene with pollution immediately. For another, the position conforming to professional management rules and accountability is seen as irrational. The other two branches waste too much energy in obeying the strict NGO management rules. As pointed out by some activist ENGOs, the so-called accountability is mainly towards the foundations. The donors from the domestic foundations are mainly Chinese entrepreneurs who have a vested interest in the status quo. Practically, most foundations usually would not fund the groups who dare to confront the government and solve real issues.

In accordance with their critiques on other branches and on 'malnutrition in the field', the activist ENGOs also approach other external fields. They proactively engage with NGOs or activist groups from the areas of poverty reduction and labour rights, who share similar values and working approaches with them (Participatory observation at internal social media groups, 04/2018-08/2018). The leading activist ENGOs also expand their values by incubating and supporting smaller ENGOs and building their own collaborating and training networks. In their networks, they are keen to develop the institutionalised practices and techniques of intervening with pollution and pressuring the government, such as exaggerating data, the timing of media exposure, and the care of the pollution victims (Participatory observation at Green Explorers' Network, Internal Online Network, 04/2018-08/2018). Newcomers can directly access training and instructions within their network.

This branch of ENGOs could survive and develop in the field dominated by the professionalisation trend, partly due to their risk management techniques, such as targeting mainly the local government, posting their activities on social media, registering multiple social media accounts in case some are blocked, and avoiding talking to the foreign media. Moreover, their development is also embedded in the broader institutional context. For instance, a few foundations, especially from southern China, appreciate the activist ENGOs' efficiency in dealing with some pressing issues and grant them flexible funding, which does not request ENGOs to operate based on projects. Also, as introduced in Chapter 3, with the institutional and technological developments of crowdfunding platforms in China, the activist ENGOs rely more and more on crowdfunding, which enables them to be relatively independent from foundations. Broadly, the expansion of their working methods is also dependent on the growing online public sphere in China, where netizens can be connected

and mobilised to oversee and pressure the government. However, regarding financial income and institutional support, the activist ENGOs overall have fewer resources and lesser reputations in China. Due to financial and risk reasons, employee turnover in the activist ENGOs is much higher than in other branches.

To sum up, besides the debate on the cultural or scientific solutions on environmental issues, the field has also been structured by another axis since the mid-2000s. Different ENGOs are polarised along the issue of the political relevance of ENGOs' practices. The activist ENGOs have attempted to redraft the field rules and delegitimatise other branches, by defining the centre of environmental issues as the urgent human and animal suffering and the injustices beneath environmental issues. ENGOs should engage with sensitive and political dimensions with contentious activities. In response, the community-oriented and engineer/scientist ENGOs have imposed stricter self-regulation and advocated more concrete professional management rules for Chinese ENGOs. Through these disciplining efforts, they aim to criticise or ridicule the activist ENGOs as radical or illegitimate organisations, and of course to neutralise and standardise their collaborative and non-politicising stance. In the field competition, each side has gradually crystallised their own position, which has led to deeper divisions in the field. Overall, while the activist ENGOs are resisting the technocratic narratives, they have been gradually marginalised in the field. Pressured by the strong trends of depoliticisation and professionalisation, the activist ENGOs have distanced themselves from other branches and the main environmental foundations. However, this marginalised group has brought important symbolic resources in the field, against the dominant discourses.

4. Conclusion

To capture the field dynamics, I focused on the field of forces in Chapter 3 and the field of struggles in this chapter. As this chapter shows, while sharing the same cause and space, different ENGOs have fundamental disagreements with each other. The concept of environmental protection in practice has been turned into competing ideals. The patterns and orders of the field are not directly dictated by the macro structures, but also created at the field level by actors collectively in these competitions. Different actors exploit the institutional conditions and struggle to gain more capital, resources and recognition in the field against their competitors. During the process, actors are also manufacturing each other, by distancing from and associating with certain peers, and taking or crystallising their own positions. The position distributions of different actors further shape the boundaries and dominating trends of the field. As shown in this chapter, the engineer/scientist ENGOs,

embedded in the favourable funding and political structure, have skilfully standardised the scientific-technocratic narratives in the field. Inevitably, their narratives challenged other branches' legitimacy and the community-oriented ENGOs are pressured to shift away from the pluralism ideas and the pressing discussions on environmental protection. Similarly, the non-activist ENGOs' collective attempts to guard their shared agreement on the non-confrontational stance further have excluded activists ENGOs, and gradually ridiculed the politicising voices in the field.

At a field level, with the shared cause becoming narrowed for different branches, the chance for collaboration among different types of ENGOs is also narrowing. With fierce struggles, the field is structured by divisions, polarisations and controversies. The available positions in the field imply the diverse yet limited possibilities in the field. Judging by the polarised positions in the field, we can observe that the field is witnessing the diminishment of pluralism values, the loss of connections with political and contentious discourses, and stronger NGO self-censorship. On the other hand, though it is pretty difficult for the community-oriented and the activist ENGOs to justify their values and methods, they are important resistant forces in the field counterbalancing the dominant technocratic and bureaucratic trends.

Over the past three decades, there have been growing quantities of organisations, increasing funding pools and specialised management standards and rules in this circle. However, considering the field's fragmentation and polarisation, it is questionable to what extent ENGOs can organise different sectors together and respond to environmental issues. With the controversies and competitions, the field is not an integrated community united by a high ideal, but structured by competing narrow interpretations on environmental protection.

Chapter 5 Policy Advocacy: ENGOs and the State

> Increasing ENGOs' policy advocacy capabilities is a long-term development strategy. By participating in formal politics, ENGOs are shifting their focus from the peripheral issues to the central discussions in the country. We are also expanding our space within the system and strengthening the principles of rule-of-law and pluralism (Internal meeting at Nature Lovers, 23/08/2017).

In the above quote, the policy advocacy team of Nature Lovers clarified their project goal in a meeting, when they were preparing an ENGO policy advocacy workshop. Different from other early community-oriented ENGOs, Nature Lovers is famous for their successful policy advocacy cases, which is more or less a result of the personal factors of their leaders. Since the Spring of 2017, this leading ENGO had been drafting the textbook and preparing for a one-week policy advocacy workshop for 30 ENGOs across the country.

This ENGO's self-organised training workshop on policy advocacy reveals a broader emerging trend in the field, which was not imaginable back in the 1990s. As explained in Chapters 3 and 4, early ENGOs stress the necessity to distance themselves from formal politics. 'Working in communities is more effective and important than lobbying the government,' as said by Green Village's leader (Interview at Green Village, 20/04/2017, similarly see Ho, 2001).

In contrast, 'policy advocacy' as a working approach nowadays is welcomed by various ENGOs. According to Zhan and Tang (2011), half of the ENGOs in Beijing are primarily engaged in policy advocacy[31], which in this chapter is defined as any attempt to influence government decisions through both direct and indirect means, such as contacting the government, developing creative policy solutions, knowledge construction/coalition building, pressure/lobbying (Reid 1999 in Li, Tang, and Lo, 2016; Gough and Shackley, 2001 in Hsu and Hasmath, 2017). Several famous ENGOs' policy advocacies were celebrated as big

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31 It is necessary to point out here that ENGOs in Beijing cannot represent the situation in the whole of China, in terms of policy advocacy. As commented by several of my interviewees, with more personal connections, information, and more open-minded officials, it is easier to accomplish policy advocacy in Beijing than in other places. Sometimes, local ENGOs also seek help with policy advocacy from ENGOs in Beijing. Zhan and Tang (2011) also mentioned that the majority of ENGOs in China are still focusing on traditional activities, such as education.

triumphs by many actors in the field, such as the anti-dam campaign on Nu River (2003), ENGOs' waste management policy proposals (2011-2012) to the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), and ENGOs' participations (2015-2016) in the public hearings during the revision of the new Chinese environment protection law.

Some ENGOs hold that the ENGOs' policy participation symbolises a new stage for ENGOs, who are more professional and influential (e.g. see Green Book of Environment, Li ed., 2017, written by several Chinese ENGOs). While Green Code holds that 'policy advocacy' enables them to translate their research results into influential policies (Interview at Green Code, 22/11/2016), Independent Rock agrees that policy advocacy is a concrete route to change the real world, especially for the ENGOs focusing on research (Participatory observation at Independent Rock, 02/2017-08/2017).

Besides the goal of maximising ENGOs' influence, various Chinese ENGOs put emphasis on policy advocacy due to its institutional implications. As quoted at the beginning of the chapter, ENGOs are also expanding their space in the system when they participate in policymaking (Internal meeting at Nature Lovers, 23-08-2017). According to some ENGOs, policy advocacy in China could potentially expand the institutional space in the authoritarian regime, which allows more voices to enter the policy processes. Furthermore, pluralism could make environmental governance more accountable, transparent and effective (e.g. interview at Blue Sky, 30/11/2016; Green Book of Environment, 2017: 14, Li ed., written by several Chinese ENGOs). This optimist view from some ENGOs resonates with some academic arguments that Chinese ENGOs' policy advocacies suggest the 'growing-up' of this area (e.g. Han, Swedlow, Unger, 2014; Hsu and Hasmath, 2017), and a new level of involvement in environmental governance (Zhan and Tang, 2011, Teets, 2017). Through policy participation, Chinese ENGOs started to increasingly exert bottom-up pressure to attain a greater degree of deliberation, transparency and accountability in policymaking (Han, 2014; Teets, 2017), which has had significant democratisation and pluralisation implications (Yang, G.B. 2005; Li, Tang, and Lo, 2016; Zhang, 2018).

However, ENGOs' policy advocacy practices are much more complex than a straightforward positive story, which implies the simultaneous achievements of two mutually supportive goals, including solving environmental issues and pluralising the policy processes in China. First of all, regardless of its significance, policy advocacy is only one of the recent emerging working approaches in the whole field of Chinese ENGOs. While some practitioners and academia consider it as the symbol of a new stage or future, policy

participation is still embedded in the field's internal oppositions, like all other working methods. Inside the field, the idea of policy advocacy is not a natural choice for most actors, but instead involves ethical dilemmas, cost-benefit calculations, funding and time investment, and thus is contested among actors. Understanding the opinion and resource distributions inside the field is helpful in analysing the concrete meanings and implications of ENGOs' policy advocacies, and the functioning of the field of Chinese ENGOs. Second, related to the previous point, it is important to stay close to ENGOs' practices and explore the exact functions of these activities by breaking up some assumptions. The optimist view on ENGOs' policy advocacy more or less assumes the automatic coherence between policy participation and pluralisation. This assumption is also widely shared in other parts of the world. As criticised by Baiocchi and Ganuza (2016), participation, regardless of its forms, is seen as an intrinsically good thing and its democratising effects have been taken for granted. In this case, despite some so-called successful policy participation cases, it is problematic to expect a more pluralistic system in the near future, especially considering the increasing authoritarianism and stronger censorships on society in Xi's China (e.g. see Steinhardt and Wu, 2015; Zinda, Li, and Liu, 2018). The important question is not the existence or quantity of participation practices, but whether the participation activities can practically address the key questions of power, inequality and politics in the specific context (e.g. see the reflections on 'participation' from Fraser and Honneth, 2004; McQuarrie, 2013; Baiocchi and Ganuza, 2016).

Paralleling with other chapters' inquiries, this chapter asks by what practical logic Chinese ENGOs' policy advocacies are guided and what the implications of these activities are. While these policy participants claim the goals of solving issues and pluralising the system, the effects of policy advocacy are largely independent from the aspirations. Obviously, considering the specialities of the political context, ENGOs' policy advocacies must have certain Chinese characteristics, and the gap between aspirations and practices is inevitable. However, with a field approach, the specific value of this analysis is to reveal the negotiations between ideals and practices and to explore the exact functioning of certain activities. Besides the claimed goals, the implications of these policy advocacies are practically mediated by multiple practical and instrumental concerns, specific dilemmas and challenges. To understand the exact meanings and implications of ENGOs' policy participation, it is necessary to study the actual mechanisms, strategy calculations, rationalities and self-positioning of ENGOs in these activities. Following the discussions in Chapters 3 and 4, ENGOs' policy advocacy can be seen as an emerging trend embedded in the field's competitions and divisions. A field perspective reveals the controversies, capital distributions and field rules behind this contested working approach, as well as how the

ENGOs are shaped by the broader power relationships between fields. Based on these analyses on actors' practical logic and field dynamics, I will further discuss whether these policy participation attempts can respond to environmental issues as well as pluralise Chinese policy processes. Or to put it another way, whether some skilled organisational entrepreneurs can engage with the rules and meanings in both the ENGO field and the political field and address the power monopoly and political elitism in an illiberal regime.

Overall, I argue in this chapter that Chinese ENGOs' policy participations, despite their aspirations for institutional changes, have limited democratisation or pluralisation effects. The interactions between the two fields have largely strengthened the authoritarian state's legitimacy in environmental governance, instead of opening up more space for different social actors to participate in policymaking. It appears difficult for ENGOs to bring changes in power relationships, as their mentalities, judgements and imaginations are largely shaped by the power structure and practical dilemma. To maximise their voices in policy processes, ENGOs have to strategically prioritise the government's needs and values and follow the power dynamics and rules in the political field. Their case selections and proposals are largely embedded in the existing policy frameworks. Regarding the strategies, many advocacy ENGOs rely heavily on political elites and state-led campaigns, which to a large degree guarantees the advocacy results, yet at the cost of transparency, rule-of-law and pluralism values. As a result, ENGOs, to some degree, function as the facilitators for the government to reach its policy goals. Though they participate in policy processes, they hide the political tensions or accountability issues, and pose limited challenges to the state's legitimacy. This practical logic of policy participation does not necessarily go hand in hand with the value of environmental democracy. Considering the newly proposed national goal 'ecological civilisation', the state appears to be more proactive in tackling environmental issues and absorbing ENGOs' proposals, and further dominating the environmental governance. On the one hand, this chapter provides a case showing the resilience of the Chinese regime and environmental authoritarianism. On the other hand, the agents' efforts should not be negated, who by frequently using the prescribed political participation channels[32], have explored the boundary for civil society actors, and made NGOs a relatively regular and legitimate player in the Chinese political field.

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32 While there existed various prescribed participation channels in China since the 1950s, these channels have rarely been used. The instructions on these participation channels, such as the steps and the red lines, are pretty vague. For decades, most social actors have been suspicious of these channels and consider these opportunities are rhetorical or decorative (e.g. in the case of the Hundred Flowers Campaign in 1956, people were encouraged to use the prescribed channels to make critiques on the CCP, yet were punished harshly afterwards).

1. Background: Attempts to Pluralise Chinese Politics and Existing Institutional Spaces

Considering several famous transnational environmental policy advocacy networks, policy advocacy is seen as a typical mission for ENGOs to voice environmental interest and guard democracy values (e.g. see Wapner, 1996; Lipschutz, 1997; Mol, 2006; Xie, 2011). In China, policy advocacy is not a natural choice in history. Its emergence in the field is due to the combination of agentic explorations, and some actors' reactions to the shifting opportunity structures, personnel inflows and organisational trajectories.

In China, ENGOs' policy advocacies include different formal or informal activities to influence government decisions, such as sending proposals to the NPC and CPPCC sessions, talking with officials in academic or professional conferences, attending public hearing sessions, and participating in drafting policies, and media campaigns. For instance, to suspend the construction of the Nu River hydropower dam in 2003, several ENGOs used their personal political resources to send proposals to the NPC and CPPCC sessions, along with letters to Wen Jia Bao, the then premier (prime minister) of China. Between 2011 and 2012, several ENGOs sent proposals to the NPC and CPPCC sessions on waste management, which successfully pushed new standards of municipal solid waste incineration. Between 2015 and 2016, ENGOs seized the opportunity of the public hearings and the public comment period to voice their suggestions for the new environment protection law. They also approached the relevant officials through the legal academic meeting (Lin, 2015). As a result, the new law entitles more ENGOs to be the subject of litigation in environmental legal cases. Similarly, other ENGOs also expressed their opinions on landscape planning in 2005 and waste management from 2013 to 2018, through attending public hearings and sending proposals to the government offices. Another typical example is an advocacy for bikers and green transport in Guangzhou. The ENGO sent a bike to the then mayor and talked him into making changes to urban road planning in 2012 (Lvziku, 2018).

Importantly, as mentioned before, these ENGOs' policy participations usually have two-fold goals. While they wish to solve environmental issues through policy advocacy, they also wish to pluralise the policy processes, which can guarantee better environmental governance in the long term. As will be introduced more in the following parts, the major policy advocacy groups are engineer/scientist ENGOs, who advocate for some moderate pluralising institutional changes in China. As mentioned in Chapters 3 and 4, the engineer/scientist

ENGOs usually stress the problem-solving consciousness. Indeed, compared to the early ENGOs and the activist ENGOS, the engineer/scientist ENGOs are distinguished by their technocratic emphasis. However, this does not mean that this branch of ENGOs has no political reflections. Though these ENGOs do not engage with environmental victims or social structure changes, they criticise Chinese institutions. As concluded by several big ENGOs together, 'Environmental issues are not isolated, which requires a more accountable and transparent environment evaluation system and judicial system.' (Green Book of Environment, Li, ed. 2017: 14). Many of them do not use the term 'democratisation' or 'democracy' directly and prefer to quote the United Nations' 'good governance' discourse and stress 'pluralisation'. From their perspective, in order to deal with environmental issues effectively, China needs a more plural political system which is more accountable, transparent and rule-by-law. For instance, Blue Sky is a typical believer in a 'check-and-balance relationship' between government, corporates, the public and ENGOs, which can lead to a better environment (Interview at Blue Sky, 30/11/2016).

These policy participation attempts are not only triggered by agents' consciousness but are embedded by structural factors at different levels. Despite the existing institutional constraints, there are indeed some favourable conditions for social actors to participate in formal politics in China. Legally, there are various prescribed participation channels, such as the rights for citizens to make proposals to the state through the NPC and CPPCC delegates, to make complaints to central or local environmental bureaus and to participate in government consultation sessions. Plus, as Mertha (2009) observed, Chinese authoritarianism is characterised by 'fragmented authority' (e.g. see also Ran, 2015), which provides NGOs with different entrances to participate in the political processes (e.g. Howell, 2003).

Regarding the enabling conditions for policy participation at a micro level, ENGOs' policy advocacy started from the mid-1990s, which were more of isolated individual cases. Early ENGOs' policy participation largely relied on the charismatic leaders' personal social capital. For instance, while Nature Lovers focused on community activities, this ENGO made proposals to the NPC and CPPCC every year, as one of its founders was a CPPCC delegate. Since the mid-2000s, with the professionalisation trend the charismatic leaders' influences have dropped in the field. Policy advocacy became a more accessible choice for other ENGOs, besides the political elites in the field, which was caused by several macro level changes.

At a macro level, China has especially showed more ambition to green the state since the 2010s. As Zinda, Li, and Liu (2018) commented, few other governments have brought environmental consideration to such a central place at high-level discourse. 'Environmental interest' gradually became an independent interest in the state system (Ran, 2015; Lin, 2015). Back in the 1980s to 1990s, the CCP's key policy goal was to guarantee the balance between economic growths and environmental protection. In contrast, 'ecological civilisation' has become an independent national development goal since 2017[33]. Premier Li also declared 'a war on pollution' in 2014. Paralleling with the CCP's official emphases on environmental interests are the bureaucratic and legal reforms, which especially empower the environmental agencies in the state system. While there was only an Environmental Protection Committee in China in 1984, the agency has been gradually updated during the years and finally became the Ministry of Environmental Protection in 2008[34], which has gained far more resources and administrative powers to regulate social and economic developments. When the topic of environmental protection gained more weight in the national ideology as well as in the political and administrative systems, various government bureaus expressed determination and incentives to solve environmental issues, instead of repressing relevant suggestions and advocacies, which provided more space for ENGOs in policy participation. Though different government bureaus' motivations to work with ENGOs are complex, these broader shifts in national policies make ENGOs' claims on environmental interests more compatible with governments' concerns. Moreover, as ENGOs mainly make policy suggestions to make alliance with the central and local environmental protection bureaus (EPBs) (e.g. Zhan and Tang, 2011), the administrative changes since the mid-2000s have given EPBs more power in policymaking, which also empowered ENGOs. Accordingly, the new *Chinese Environmental Protection Law*, or the so-called 'toughest

33 13th NPC, 1987, 'deal with the environmental issues brought by Chinese populations'; 中共十三大（1987）环境保护，解决人口带来的环境问题，解决经济发展代来的污染问题.
14th NPC, 1992, 'environmental protection is a basic national policy… environmental protection serves economic development '; 中共十四大（1992）环境保护是基本国策，环境保护服务于经济发展.
18th NPC, 2012, 'ecological civilisation: environmental issues is a test for CCP's governance capabilities; 中国十八大（2012）生态文明，环境问题是对执政能力的挑战.
19th NPC, 2017, 'ecological civilisation: speeding up reform of the system for developing an ecological civilisation and building a beautiful China… ensuring harmony between humankind and nature' 中国十九大（2017）生态文明建设' 加快生态文明体制改革，建设美丽中国'.

34 The department in charge of environmental affairs in China has been upgraded from Environmental Protection Committee in 1984 to State Environmental Protection Administration later, to State Council Environmental Protection Committee in 1998, and finally to the Ministry of Environmental Protection in 2008.

environmental protection law in history', came into effect in 2015, providing EPBs and ENGOs clearer indices, stricter standards and penalties and stronger legal weapons to deal with environmental disputes. As pointed out in a salon meeting among ENGOs (Participatory observation, 12/02/2017), even in the context of Xi's strong man politics, more ENGOs' active policy participations emerged. This paradox might be explained by the above discursive and institutional changes in the past decade.

At the field level, several influential ENGOs, who believe in the long-term profound influence of policy participation, are expanding this working method through sharing experiences, providing training, offering investigation support and sharing their contacts with officials. With abundant financial resources, some leading ENGOs also established policy advocacy teams. Policy advocacy has been practised more frequently by actors in the field. This type of participation is no longer only available for the actors with special political and social capital. The next section will discuss how the actors navigate the opportunities, orientate themselves and participate in shaping the environmental policies.

2. Policy Participation: Pluralising the Regime through Environmental Policy Advocacies?

In many senses, Chinese ENGOs' policy advocacy activities have contributed to better environmental governance, such as solving concrete environmental issues, or the symbolic value of adding social actors' voices in the policy processes. While there are different ways to evaluate the implications of these activities, I will focus on the pluralisation effects of these participations. In the field of ENGOs, policy advocacy is a distinguished working approach. By engaging with the formal politics, some ENGOs position themselves between the ENGOs' field centre and the political field. The two-fold goals of these activities clearly suggest the ambitions of bringing long-term institutional change, which is a distinguished part of the field's meaning system. Taking a field approach, this section will explore ENGOs' policy advocacy practices, especially the practical concerns, strategies, resources and implications.

2.1 Filters from the Two Fields: Shaping Policy Proposals

As argued before, policy advocacy is not a natural choice for Chinese ENGOs. While more favourable conditions have emerged, only some ENGOs have participated in policymaking, and this working method has remained controversial in the field. A field perspective guides us to study the potential of this type of activity in relation to the field's diversities and power configurations. While the idea of policy advocacy is usually linked with pluralism, empowerment and inclusion, the participants of policy advocacy are filtered by capital ownership. As will be shown in this part, behind several famous policy participation cases are unequal capital distributions, exclusions and dominations.

2.1.1   Prescribed Participation Channels: Who Can Practically Use Them?

> To be honest, policy advocacy is pretty easy. You just need to find the delegates (from the NPC and CPPCC), and let them know that you have a proposal (Internal meeting at Nature Lovers, 23/08/2017).

Ms Tulip, an employee in charge of policy advocacy at Nature Lovers, shared her view when the team prepared the 'ENGO Policy Advocacy Workshop'. The idea of this workshop is to help ENGO peers to 'overcome their fear toward policy advocacy and believe that everyone can do it', which would 'bring more voices in policymaking' (Mr Forest, 23/08/2017).

Indeed, by principle, various ENGOs are entitled to participate in policymaking. However, there are also some important visible and invisible thresholds, preventing the majority of ENGOs to practise policy advocacies successfully. While the policy advocacy training workshop was designed to equalise the advocacy skills among ENGOs, it cannot change the unequal capital distributions among ENGOs, which makes policy participation an exclusive game for big ENGOs or famous engineer/scientist ENGOs.

To begin with, various ENGOs have been filtered out due to the lack of social capital or social connections with government officials. In contemporary China, social actors' initial access to the policymaking is largely based on personal connections (Han, Swedlow, Unger, 2014; Teets, 2017). This is embedded in the mistrusts between the Chinese state and NGOs (e.g. see Spires, 2011). The government officials generally suspect NGOs as regime challengers. Considering the structural barriers, personal connections with social or political

elites appear to be a necessary condition for social actors to have influence on policy processes in an ordered manner. In most cases, such social capital is gained through the ENGO leaders' personal networks (also see, Tang and Zhan, 2011). The trust among the individuals guarantees the absence of political threats and also makes the policy network persuasive (Zhan and Tang, 2011; Teets, 2017; Hsu and Hasmath, 2017). The cases of Love Forest and Global Green are revealing, who proposed relatively provocative policy suggestions to the government in the areas of environmental protection law and China's climate policies. Both point out the significance of the personal trust between some politicians and ENGO leaders, who had previously worked for the government. When it was suggested that Love Forest stop their advocacy by an official from their supervisory institution, the ENGO leader gained that official's support thanks to her personal reputation. 'I calmed him down and assured him that I know the Party rules very well and will cause no trouble or unhappy frictions' (Interview at Love Forest, 27/07/2018). In contrast, some ENGOs, such as Independent Rock who, relatively, lack personal connections with officials in the area, cannot smoothly start policy advocacy, even though they have investigated in one area and prepared policy suggestions for years (Interview with Mr Forest, 23/08/2017). Regarding the significance of social capital, Independent Rock considers having a connection with the government as one key indicator of organisation capabilities. Similarly, Green Code distinguished themselves from other ENGOs due to their connections with the policy makers (Interview at Green Code, 22/11/2016).

Second, another threshold is an ENGO's technocratic abilities, or whether the ENGO can offer technical knowledge and skills in their advocacies. In the illiberal political structure, the position available for ENGOs is mainly limited to the consultative role (e.g. Teets, 2017), and the government mainly recognises ENGOs' unitarian values, such as their consultative roles (e.g. see Ho, 2001; Teets, 2017). Thus, the ENGOs' key leverage to enter the policymaking processes is their technological expertise, and their communications with the government are restricted to technocratic dimensions. For instance, Green North, Green Code and Global Green, who do several advocacies each year, all mentioned that the government, especially the EPBs, does not have enough human capital and thus accepts the support from social organisations, who have relevant skills and knowledge (Interview at Global Green, 09/08/2017; Interview at Green North, 23/07/2018; Interview at Green Code, 22/11/2016)[35]. For officials, especially EPB officials, who need useful information and

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35 This is also confirmed by the statistical records. For instance, the Ministry of Environment has only about 300 employees at the Ministry, 30 people in each of the five regional inspection offices, and if you include affiliate agencies and institutes, the total number of personnel may reach

assistance from ENGOs, the opinions of the ENGOs with specific technical knowledge and skills are usually considered as valuable. For instance, in the successful advocacy on new standards of municipal solid waste incineration, one key factor, as reflected by ENGOs, is that the advocacy organisation gathered a large amount of information on waste incineration during several years to prove the urgency, and proposed further solutions to the government (*Textbook of ENGO Policy* Advocacy 2018). Similarly, in Nature Lovers' advocacy in the *Wildlife Protection Act*, the CPPCC delegate was actually persuaded by various scientific evidence from a wildlife expert of a national research centre, and who volunteered to work together with Nature Lovers on this advocacy (*Textbook of ENGO Policy* Advocacy 2018). Accordingly, what has been excluded in the prescribed policy advocacy is the ENGOs stressing the non-technocratic dimensions, such as the cultural approaches and the contentious argument. The government usually ignores or represses the voices from these social actors. For instance, different types of ENGOs participated in the famous Nu River anti-dam advocacy, voicing the issues of local communities, ecological disasters and cultural protection. Eventually, the government only talked to one anti-dam group, made up of some academics and some ENGOs. The conversations were strictly limited to the scientific evidence on how the dam could potentially harm local geological configurations (*Textbook of ENGO Policy* Advocacy 2018).

Third, besides the thresholds of social capital and professional technocratic skills, policy advocacy is also a luxury activity in terms of funding, which is difficult to fit into the ENGOs' daily management. While at the beginning of this section, Ms Tulip said: 'To be honest, policy advocacy is pretty easy', policy advocacy practically demands a large amount of time, money, human capital and social capital costs. In the West, social actors' policy advocacy activities usually demand large amounts of financial resources (Smith, 2000; Weible, 2006; Mosley, 2010). Similarly, Zhan and Tang (2011), in their quantitative study, found that ENGOs with better financial resources are more capable of policy advocacy in China. For instance, in the successful case of pushing for new standards of municipal solid waste incineration, the organisations had completed three reports in four years and tried to negotiate with officials more than 50 times. One high-level official, who has a liberal position and encourages ENGOs to actively participate in policymaking, is highly critical to the view which assumes policy advocacy as an easy task. 'To make a difference, you need to do research, build trust, win attention and find the best opportunity window… You might need a team to do this for years' (Interview 13/03/2017). However, foundations mainly fund projects and seldom fund policy advocacies. Thus, ENGOs have to generate enough funds,

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approximately 2,600. In comparison, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has more than 17,000 employees, not including outside contractors (Teets, 2017).

besides the funding of their projects, to cover the costs of investigation, technological capital and human capital in policy advocacy. In contrast, most ENGOs in their daily life cannot afford the extra human resources and time to investigate, draft proposals and lobby continuously for years. For ENGOs in my field, which is also confirmed in the study of Hsu (2010), ENGOs are overwhelmed by project management routines, fundraising, keeping the human capital in the organisation and managing volunteers in their daily life. Different from Western lobby groups, Chinese ENGOs seldom have the foundations' funding to support policy advocacies (Li, Tang, and Lo, 2016). As a result, only a few big ENGOs with sufficient funding and human and social capital manage to participate in policymaking.

To sum up, despite the existing optimist views among academia and practitioners on policy advocacy, this working approach is highly exclusive. Considering the power structure and practical conditions, ENGOs who actively participate in policymaking are seen by governments mainly as professional consultants. The participation channels are mostly available for big engineer/scientist ENGOs, who have the personal trusts of officials and extra financial support to prepare policy participations and who are also capable of contributing technological knowledge to environmental governance. In contrast, those ENGOs who do not have connections with politicians or straightforward technocratic suggestions find it either difficult to start policy participation, or never get a reply after sending out their proposals to the government bureaus.

2.1.2 Reactions from the Field of ENGOs: Who Chooses to Use the Participation Channels?

While the previous part introduced the thresholds or the structural conditions for ENGOs' policy participation, this part focuses on this working approach in relation to the field structure. In other words, the dynamics of policy advocacy are not only determined by the structural possibilities, but also shaped by the field's specific meaning system.

Briefly, despite the academia attention on policy participation, the field of ENGOs as a whole is far from a policy advocacy or lobby community. In other words, the field is not entirely orientated by the government bureaus' needs in environmental governance. The emergence of a policy advocacy trend in the field by no means implies a new development stage of the group. Within the field, different ENGOs' motivations for policy participation are embedded in the field's internal divisions. And this developing trend further intensifies

the existing oppositions in the field. While some are excited to engage with the formal politics and expect to bring institutional changes, some other ENGOs are intentionally distancing themselves from the government or policy discussions. Before digging deeper into ENGOs' policy proposals and advocacy techniques, I aim to firstly present who can and who are willing to achieve policy advocacies in the field, which is important when it comes to revealing the meanings and implications of these activities as well as the field's potential.

As mentioned before, despite the widely recognised pluralism values and the optimist view on policy participation, the working approach policy advocacy is controversial inside the field. The prescribed participation channels are not universally recognised as valuable opportunities by field actors. As introduced in Chapters 3 and 4, this field has been divided along varying political attitudes, issue framings and ethos. Besides the practical concerns on resources, some ENGOs also refuse to engage with formal politics for ethical and political reasons. For some field actors, especially the activist ENGOs, policy advocacies established through collaborating with the government imply a betrayal to environment interests and public interests. Different from the ENGOs attempting to build a connection with officials, their position represents a deeper mistrust towards the whole political system. As interpreted by some ENGOs, collaborating with the government via policy advocacy means an agreement that ENGOs would not expose the negligence and corruption issues beneath the environmental problems. Without the exposure pressure, the government has 'no incentives to immediately respond to the environmental problems' (e.g. interview with Green Explorers, 01/04/2018). Thus, their methods are more confrontational, including media exposure, petitions and complaints, which are distinguished from the participation channels prescribed and encouraged by the state. For another, some other field actors, especially some community-oriented ENGOs, have reservations about policy advocacy, borne out of disappointments with formal politics. Some of them are critical about the whole political and social system featured within the marketisation trend, and thus call for a cultural approach and community-building activities. For them, having conversations with the government through policy advocacy are only marginal attempts, compared to the task of managing the environmental crises or changing the broad development agenda. ENGOs' key task should be to build a strong society with public-minded citizens who can really pressure the state (e.g. interview with Green Village, 20/04/2017).

Thus, regarding policy advocacy, most practitioners are big ENGOs, especially the engineer/scientist ENGOs, who only occupy one corner of the field. Besides the so-called professional investigating skills favoured by some EPBs, these field actors are also active in policy advocacy due to their trajectories and field positions. Most of these teams are urban

middle-class professionals who have high education degrees and believe in ordered political participation and trust the government's determination in dealing with the environmental issues. The emerging policy advocacy trend has made their crystallised position more visible. As claimed in the *Textbook of ENGO Policy Advocacy (2018)* that was drafted by several teams, 'environmental governance is inherently high-technological, complicated and uncertain, which requires ENGOs to have solid professional skills and knowledge'. In other words, environmental protection is interpreted as essentially a technocratic issue, and professional ENGOs' role is to represent the public and present the issues through a 'scientific' and 'rational' discourse that the government is willing to listen to and the conversations should be constructive and efficient (e.g. interview at Green Code, 22/11/2016; interview at Green North, 23/07/2018).

To put it in another way, the emerging ENGOs' policy advocacy is another contest among ENGOs to define the political meanings of their shared cause and the proper ENGO-state relationships. While the main participants in policy advocacy stress the technocratic dimensions of environment protection and ENGO-state collaborations as widely acknowledged norms, some other actors further distance themselves from the state and make bold arguments against policy participation. In this sense, the trend of policy advocacy is embedded in the field structure and deepens the divisions, especially along the pole of political attitudes. A field perspective helps to reveal that policy participation is a powerful yet extreme voice in the field, while other ENGOs' positions are not represented in this widely celebrated trend. In other words, in these ENGO-state interactions, some political positions and arguments have been filtered out. As a result, most policy proposals entering the political field from ENGOs are featured by the collaborative attitudes with the government, as well as the respect for the law, state authority and existing policy frameworks.

2.1.3   Policy Proposals: 'Not to Make Trouble'

> In this system, no one dares to do something real. ENGOs and delegates are behaving like kindergarten kids. If you play the game right and give friendly critiques, you get sweets; if you challenge the kindergarten teacher, you get the cane. People are still busy with making proposals, but they prefer to have sweets (Interview 13/03/2017).

The same high-level official that is quoted above, who has a liberal position and encourages ENGOs to actively participate in policymaking, harshly criticised ENGOs' policy advocacy as a kids' game. His comment reveals an important dimension of power relationships in

policy advocacy, which is agenda-setting. The idea of participation sometimes could be practised quite descriptively, such as the activities forging the pleasantness of easy, dismissive critiques (e.g. see Ferguson 2015). Affected by the structural challenges and organisational positions in the field, the case selection of ENGOs' policy participation largely follows a practical logic, which prioritises what is manageable and what is likely to form collaborations with the government instead of what the important and urgent environmental issue is. In other words, the agenda of ENGOs policy advocacy activities largely follows the state's needs and policy preferences, instead of ENGOs' autonomous concerns.

Ideally, as claimed in the *Textbook of ENGO Policy Advocacy* (2018), ENGOs' policy advocacy should be initiated by ENGOs' own primary concerns and special knowledge on certain topics. Through policy advocacy, ENGOs could influence the state as autonomous actors within their specialised areas and carve out a pluralistic space for civil society's voices. Practically, the policy participation agendas are embedded in the structural conditions and field divisions. As introduced in the previous two parts, the state generally has unitarian expectations of ENGOs while the ENGOs who are active in policy participation stress the values of social order, NGO-state collaborations and technocratic discussions. Sometimes, the authoritarian regime opens up room for advocacy where they judge that it will serve party-state interests (Hildebrandt and Turner, 2009). In response, many ENGOs are eager to form collaborations with the state and thus they especially read the signals from the state and focus on the state-approved advocacy areas. Though the state does not directly use ENGOs' service as in a typical corporatist system, ENGOs' advocacy agendas are largely orientated by the state's needs. They mainly focus on the areas which are likely to be compatible with the state's agenda and the guiding principle is 'not to make trouble'. From their perspective, conforming to the state's interests can practically maximise the success rate of advocacy. Similar to the above metaphor of teacher-kids relationships in a kindergarten, the state utilises both 'carrot' and 'stick' to control the ENGOs' advocacy activities and guide the social actors to be compatible with the state's agenda.

To be clear, I am not arguing that Chinese ENGOs' policy advocacies are essentially different from the policy participations in the rest of the world. The social actors in the West also need to consider their opportunity windows and calculate their success chances, and there were also cases of confrontations and arrests in China. With acknowledgement of the complex situation, I wish to present an explicit feature and practical technique in this area. In this illiberal system, where the state monopolises most political legitimacy and resources,

most ENGOs have strong incentives to collaborate with the government in policy participation, despite their goal and confidence in their pluralisation effects.

To be specific, in order to get their voice heard, one of the most frequent strategies in the field is to 'jump on the bandwagon' (*ceng re dian*), which means to fit the state's current interests and focus. That is, ENGOs not only censor themselves to avoid political risks, but also actively conform to the state's policy agenda and shift their own organisations' focus. Some ENGOs' advocacy plans generally lack independence and are heavily affected by state policy shifts. For instance, several ENGOs for waste management in Beijing became much more active in advocacy after receiving the signals from the state. As briefed by them, 'We found that Xi and the central government decided to deal with the waste issues. We were so excited about it and immediately wrote a letter to Beijing EPB, wishing to work together. ... We got a very encouraging reply.' (Workshop among several ENGOs, 08/04/2017). Similarly, though the famous case of the Nu River anti-dam advocacy seemed to be confrontational, the rise of the anti-dam coalition was not entirely caused by ENGOs' devotion to their cause but was also largely encouraged by the signals from the government. Some officials showed the ENGOs the internal divisions inside the government on this issue (Han, Swedlow, Unger, 2014), which assured ENGOs the relatively safe space to open up the debates.

In some more obvious cases, ENGOs' policy participation agendas are entirely orientated by the state's shifting needs. One organisation in my samples used the phrase 'to jump on the bandwagon' to explain the establishment of their organisation, which focuses on 'the black and odorous water body' and was initiated mainly due to Beijing EPB's new plan on this issue in 2016. As explained by the leader: 'Technically we can work on various governance topics. But as 'the black and odorous water body' is a new state focus, we have more chance to gain funding and government trust if we work in this area' (Interview with Mr Sand, 18/05/2017). Another emerging new trend in the field is that some ENGOs' advocacy focuses on biodiversity, affected by the state agenda. As China is making its new rules on conservation of lands and is also preparing to play a key role in the UN biodiversity framework (2020), several big ENGOs started to work on biodiversity, though have no previous experience or skills in this area. As explained by an ENGO staff member in charge of policy advocacy, the decisions were made mainly due to the promising opportunity window, or again the technique of 'jumping on the bandwagon' (Interview with Ms Quince, 15/08/2018).

Indeed, some ENGOs appear to have more independent advocacy plans and the feature of orientating themselves by the state's need is less obvious. For instance, Independent Rock and Green Code prefer to explore new pioneering areas which the state has not paid attention to, such as shale gas and green finance. From their point of view, by digging deeper in their own focus, it is easier to guarantee the quality of their research work and establish their specific reputations in the field, which are also valuable leverages to influence the government. Meanwhile, it is worth pointing out that many of their explorations are still based on their interpretations of the state's short-term or long-term policies and are largely compatible with the state's agenda. Some of their explorations focus on the policies of the West, which are seen to be introduced in China soon. Some organisations are closer to the government and are having pilot experience or policy research approved subtly by the government. For areas that the government has interests in yet no clear policy orientation, these organisations help to explore different solutions, such as a market way to deal with conservation areas, where the government cannot afford to make mistakes (Interview at Global Green, 09/08/2017).

Along with 'jumping on the bandwagon', ENGOs generally have the guiding principle 'not to make trouble' in practice, which implies that their advocacies are unlikely to disturb the state general programmes. After the anti-dam advocacy of Nu River, ENGOs seldom built anti-dam coalitions, as the anti-dam campaign on Nu River is a special case where the officials exposed the government's internal divisions and invited ENGOs to join the debate. In many areas, though critical voices exist, there are no explicit policy advocacy efforts, such as the development of Xiong'an New Area in China: a central government programme that is seen as a threat to the regional water system; the waste incineration stations in Beijing which the government just invested 4 billion RMB into, and the nuclear power development in China. Some residents' local environmental protests appear to be spontaneous and independent from the state's preferences, such as the PX accidents and anti-waste incineration. In these cases, most tend to distance themselves from the protests or try to play a neutralising role by facilitating rational conversations between the government and residents. Plus, most ENGOs' advocacy proposals do not directly criticise the current situations from the ENGOs' standing but point out the distance between the status quo and the existing laws and policies. ENGOs are mainly pushing the government to keep better consistency among policies or to keep the promises made in the environmental laws. In other words, the critiques that are made are based on the legitimacy of the existing state laws or policies. For instance, typical expressions can be found in Nature Lovers' advocacy proposal on the *Wildlife Protection Act:* 'The revised draft is not consistent with the national strategy of ecological civilisation building and the five-in-one model' and 'As the Minister

of the Department of Environment Protection said in 2015, biodiversity is an important symbol of ecological civilisation.' (Participatory observation, the samples of ENGOs' proposals to the CPPCC, 2016).

On the one hand, ENGOs' policy participations could contribute first-hand data and valuable analyses and they indeed take part in the policymaking processes as social actors, which implies pluralisation effects in China. On the other hand, the current practices are constrained or largely follow the practical logic of 'not making trouble' in the political field. The state does not always manage ENGOs with 'sticks' but also provides them with 'carrots' for the participation opportunities to have an influence. For those ENGOs who believe in participation and collaboration, to fully use the opportunity windows they plan the advocacy in a way that is orientated by the government's needs. Though they are indeed making contributions to environmental governance, the question is to what extent these policy participation practices can introduce new topics, change the state's priorities and open up a debating space for controversial topics. In these dimensions, the pluralising potential of ENGOs appear to be limited, considering the lack of an independent advocacy agenda and the practical techniques.

2.2 Translating the Advocacy Efforts into Policy Results

In the last section, I mainly showed that, affected by some structural conditions and organisational trajectories, ENGOs' advocacy agenda appears to be orientated by the state's needs. More than self-censorship or risk avoidance, many ENGOs do not prioritise their own primary focus or concerns, but specifically follow the state's policy trends in order to maximise their voices in policy processes. In this section, I will shift the focus to ENGOs' strategies and techniques in their policy advocacy practices. Based on the features of their practices, I will further discuss the implications of these activities, which have distinctive goals and constitute a special part in the field.

In principle, the involvements of civil society organisations in politics should lead to greater transparency, accountability or the public visibility of stakeholders' bargaining positions (Bernauer, Gampfer, Meng, and Su, 2016). However, ENGOs' policy participations lead them to practical dilemmas between their means and ends. In order to maximise the chances of successful advocacy, the organisations must tone down their pluralistic claims and goals, and play by the practical rules in the political field, such as relying on individual political

elites, joining state-led campaigns or working in a non-transparent way. By doing so, some of their actions inevitably contradict the pluralistic values mentioned by themselves.

In the specific power structure of the Chinese political field, the goal of solving environmental issues and the goal of pluralising policymaking appear not to be necessarily coherent. While ENGOs are making contributions to effective environmental governance through policy advocacies, many of their actions reproduce the state's monopoly and legitimacy, as will be shown in this section.

2.2.1 A Short-cut to the Power Centre: Political Elites and State-led Campaigns

'Ride one's coattails' (*bao da tui*) is a joking way by the ENGOs themselves to describe one of their strategies in policy advocacy. While they are using the prescribed participation channels, such as sending proposals or attending public hearings, it is also assumed as necessary that ENGOs have to simultaneously target individual officials and borrow their power to have influence on policymaking. As mentioned above, having personal connections with officials is one of the conditions for ENGOs to win a government's trust and get access to policy circles. Moreover, having personal connections with political elites or high-level officials is a short-cut for ENGOs to engage with the power centre, which may bring immediate policy changes (e.g. also see Zhan and Tang, 2011; Han, 2014). In this sense, ENGOs are also exploiting the features of 'rule of people' in the Chinese political system and using their coalition with political elites to voice their opinions in policy processes.

For instance, as reviewed by Buesgen (2008), Han, Swedlow, and Unger (2014) and Teets (2017), having high-level officials in their advocacy network, such as former Premier Wen Jiabao, and former vice-minister of the State Environment Protection Administration (SEPA) Pan Yue, is the key external factor to explain the successes of some advocacies between 2004 and 2006. These high-level officials could personally jump across the bureaucratic hurdles and put dozens of megaprojects on hold at the cost of upsetting investors or other officials, or trigger so-called 'environmental storms' to revaluate projects' environmental effects, or simply introduce new official evaluation standards, such as a 'green GDP' in some pilot areas. While these actions and successful advocacies have profound positive effects on environmental protection in China, what remains questionable is how transparent and plural the policy processes are.

Accordingly, regarding the techniques of 'riding one's coattails' and playing by the rules in the political field, ENGOs' policy participations are usually embedded in the internal government power struggles and ENGOs often try to make use of them in these struggles while pursuing their own goals. This way, ENGOs ally with some high-level officials and advance their voices. For example, ENGOs' advocacy against the Nu River Dam was especially triggered by the conflicts between state agencies (Han, Swedlow, Unger, 2014). SEPA's opposition to the dam-building project first opened a space for the debate (Buesgen, 2008) and ENGOs' activities were largely encouraged by their allies in the government. Also, in Nature Lovers' and Love Forest's advocacy to adjust the *Environmental Protection Law*, the two organisations were encouraged by officials to voice their positions on certain clauses specifically to show support to one branch of officials. According to my colleague Ms Hibiscus' notes on this advocacy in 2015, before the ENGOs wrote the suggestion letter, they were approached by officials from the Supreme Court in an informal meeting. The officials suggested that the ENGOs should express their views on certain causes. As explained by one Supreme Court official, some clauses were very controversial among officials in the Supreme Court and among different state agencies, and thus ENGOs could help to adjust the law by expressing their opinions.

The suggestion letter was responded to very positively by the government and the advocacy was a big success in the field. To be clear, building political coalitions with some politicians in advocacies is a commonly used strategy across the world. What is relatively special in China is that ENGOs mainly have coalitions with political elites and rarely build alliances with public opinion or other social actors. While having a short-cut to the power centre can sometimes help to efficiently solve issues, the problem is to what extent these advocacy practices can carve out more institutional space for plural voices in policymaking. I have no reason to doubt ENGOs' genuineness when they express their wishes to pluralise policy processes through their policy participations. But it is also true that many ENGOs are very uncritical of the authoritarian features of the Chinese political system, such as rule-of-people, or lack of transparency, and use these features to advance their own voices. Some of their advocacies have contributed to a positive image of the government who are willing to work with social actors to improve the environmental governance. This has further strengthened the government's legitimacy and monopoly in environmental governance, instead of empowering social actors.

A similar example is ENGOs' active participations in the state-led campaigns, or the so-called 'environmental storms', which again provide a short-cut to the power centre and a chance for ENGOs to 'ride one's coattails' to advance their voices. For instance, between

2016 and 2018, China launched two rounds of high-profile environmental inspection. The central government sent central inspection teams across the country to inspect local environmental governance and hear local people's grievances, which lead to the shut-down of hundreds of factories and the removal of various officials. Despite some critical voices in the field, ENGOs generally welcome the 'environmental storms.' Some actively work together with the inspection teams and local governments by spotting pollution issues and proposing solutions. As the inspection teams explicitly welcome reports and proposals, many ENGOs' attempts received positive government replies, which have been considered as advocacy victories. Similar to the techniques of following policy trends and relying on political elites, ENGOs in these state-led campaigns are using the authority of the central government's inspection teams to advance their voices. This reveals a practical dilemma in ENGOs' policy participation. On the one hand, these state-led campaigns are a precious chance for ENGOs to voice out their concerns and solve environmental issues. On the other hand, these state-led campaigns are also likely to strengthen the authoritarian governance style in China. From a legal and long-term perspective, these campaigns are part of the state's guerrilla style governance (e.g. see Heilmann and Perry, 2011). That is, when the state fails to implement the existing laws and guarantee effective governance in certain areas, the regime usually starts non-institutional campaigns to intensely regulate the sector during a specific period, which maintains the state legitimacy as well as policy flexibility. In other words, these state-led campaigns do not suggest check-and-balance relationships between the state and the society. After these campaigns finish, ENGOs' are not substantially empowered and have not gained more long-term institutional space to voice their concerns.

In this part, with mainly two techniques and some examples, I aim to show the authoritarian features of some ENGOs' policy participation. Embedded in an authoritarian political system, ENGOs are inevitably facing multiple structural challenges to deliver their goals of pluralising the policy processes and improving environmental governance. To participate in the policy processes, most ENGOs have to cope with or exploit the existing illiberal rules in the political field, and tone down the pluralistic claims. Many of them consciously or unconsciously prioritise the possibilities of voicing environmental concerns yet make compromises on pluralistic values and the goal of institutional changes. In this case, social actors' participation in policymaking do not necessarily challenge the existing power structure, especially in a populist authoritarian regime, which can reproduce the legitimacy by inviting social actors' contributions and voices (e.g. see Tang, 2016).

2.2.2 The Deal to Work with Governments: Labours, Credits and Visibility

This section provides another example to show the practical dilemma between ends and means in ENGOs' policy advocacy. While their participations symbolise diverse actors in policymaking, they are not effectively dealing with the transparency of accountability issues in the system. The advocacy organisations become part of the policymaking black box. To include their epistemic knowledge and normative beliefs in the policy processes, ENGOs have to make compromises with the government, which usually makes the policy participations lack transparency.

Though ENGOs could have conversations and discussions with the government on some issues, ENGOs rarely have any control over their advocacies. A high degree of discretion over the advocacy results remains inside the government (e.g. see Yang, G.B. 2005). Most ENGOs can only send the proposals yet cannot track their suggestions in the policy processes. Importantly, in many cases, a precondition of ENGO-government collaboration is non-publicity, which largely reduces the pressure faced by the government in the policy processes. Considering the power relationships, civil society organisations would sometimes tone down transparency demands in exchange for privileged access to decision-making venues or forego transparency for the sake of efficient problem-solving (Bernauer, Gampfer, Meng, and Su, 2016).

For instance, in various advocacy cases, ENGOs' credit or contributions have been taken by the government. Several organisations in my field, such as Global Green, Green Code, Water Wisdom, Blue Sky and Green Town, mentioned that they had contributed greatly in government policymaking, including participation in calculating the national emission reduction targets (13th NPC), drafting the official criteria and standards to evaluate the environmental effects of seafood, and investigating and reporting some companies violating the environmental laws or making plans for the waste management of a local town in Beijing. However, the ENGOs' contributions in policymaking have rarely been recognised in public. Importantly, most of them are not criticising the fact that their credit has been taken by the government. Though these ENGOs expect their policy participation will bring pluralisation effects, the idea of pluralism has been marginalised in their practices, which request them to focus on the power negotiations with the state and the goal of solving concrete environmental issues. As claimed by Global Green (Interview, 09/08/2017): 'There is no point in claiming whose credit is whose. ENGOs should care about whether the issues

have been solved, not the individual organisation's reputation.' Or, 'We don't care whether our name is on the new policy... we are simply borrowing the government's administrative power to manage the environmental issues' (Water Wisdom, 08/08/2017). In front of the general public, most of these policies were mainly presented as top-down decisions of the government or the state-society collaborations led by the state. Some significant questions about power and sovereignty remain non-transparent for the public, such as who made the decision, which interest holders participated in the policymaking, what data the made decisions were based on and who had been consulted.

The power imbalance between ENGOs and the government in policy advocacy can also be observed from some participation details. While the government acknowledges its weaknesses and accepts ENGOs' assistance in certain areas, the power relationships between the state and society largely remain the same and ENGOs are mainly the marginal actor, playing consultant roles in the processes. ENGOs barely have any bargaining power over the state and the results of policy advocacy are largely dependent on the government's willingness. Even for ENGOs with privileged access to the policymakers, in the unidirectional and non-transparent system these organisations sometimes cannot get clear explanations when their proposals are suddenly rejected or negated (e.g. interview with government official, 13/03/2017). Like some government think tanks, ENGOs have access to the policymaking black box and can voice their suggestions. However, if they attend the internal discussions, all participants from social organisations must be chosen by the government. Besides, all the discussions need to be held in confidence, which does not expose the negligence and weaknesses of the government and gives ENGOs quite limited leverage to demand the government's accountability and transparency. On the one hand, the advocacy ENGOs appear to be privileged to have access to the policymakers and the ENGO-state collaboration mode seems to be an efficient way to influence the government. On the other hand, there is only limited space for ENGOs to push for institutional changes and pluralism norms in policy participation, considering the government's dominance in the political field.

As shown in the previous and current parts, ENGOs have limited leverage to bargain with the government when they engage with formal politics through the prescribed participation channels in China. They have to play by the existing rules of the political field in order to get access to the policymakers. As a result, their participation further serves the government and contributes to reproducing the domination of the state in this area. While some advocacy ENGOs keep mentioning the goal of bringing institutional changes, the pluralising effects of policy participation are more of a rhetoric or an automatic assumption about the so-called

participation activities. In practice, considering ENGOs' other goals and the limited access to the political system, building a more plural system becomes a marginal goal. In these advocacies, the state is skilful in absorbing the suggestions and critiques while making no substantial changes. Policy advocacy appears to be an exclusive activity for those ENGOs who have the privileged access to policy makers and who can play the specific political game in China. While ENGOs are becoming active in the political field, these organisations are largely following the field rules. The characters of rule-of-people, non-institutional guerrilla state-led campaigns and non-transparency have not been challenged yet reproduced. In ENGOs' advocacies, the state's authority and legitimacy have been further strengthened, while some plural values are relatively compromised.

3. Discussion: The Quality of Participation and Environmental Democracy

This chapter starts with the rising trend of policy advocacy in the ENGOs' field and proposes to examine the pluralising effects of ENGOs' policy advocacies. As analysed in this chapter, the optimistic arguments on ENGOs' pluralising effects in policy participation are largely based on the assumed coherence between the goal of solving environmental issues and the goal of pluralising the Chinese political system. The field structure and power relationships reveal that the coherence is not obvious in this case and ENGOs' policy participations have limited institutional implications.

Though ENGOs' policy advocacies are unlikely to bring regime change, the question is to what extent these participation activities can make the policy processes more pluralistic, or to what extent these advocacies can contribute in making a more pluralistic, transparent, accountable governance system for effective environmental protection. In many senses, these activities have pluralistic implications, as the social actors could send their opinions, positions and suggestions to the state system and gradually become frequent players in the policy processes. Meanwhile, as argued in this chapter, the rising policy advocacy trend in the ENGOs' field is not a sign of the state's weakness or pluralistic institutional changes yet symbolises the state's strong dominance in this area.

To begin with, though the state offers participation channels to social actors, the state is the main rule maker. When ENGOs use the prescribed participation channels, the state has the monopoly on legitimacy and the decision-making power. As a result, various voices have been filtered out in this type of participations. Most participants are the ENGOs who are

trusted by officials and hold non-confrontational and technocratic views. If we see policy advocacy as a process where different social actors exchange knowledge and normative beliefs (e.g. see Sabatier and Weible, 2007), the policy participations discussed in this chapter barely involve public opinion and especially empower the technocratic professionals. The state could further utilise these ENGOs' expertise in environmental governance, which is seen by the ENGOs as a precious chance to scale up their organisational influence (e.g. interview at Green Code, 22/11/2016; Interview at Global Green, 09/08/2017). These features of policy participation in this case reflect the resilience of the Chinese authoritarian regime, which can absorb civil society's voices while maintaining its legitimacy and monopoly of power (e.g. see Heilmann and Perry, 2011). As Heurlin (2009) and Schwartz (2004) observe, different from other authoritarian regimes, CCP is not paranoid about the rise of civil society in China, yet has the confidence to work together with, and use, civil society organisations. The regime provides diverse channels for ENGOs to participate in policymaking and to voice their concerns and ease their anxieties. Also, with ENGOs' technocratic support, the government can better solve environmental issues and gather more local information. Moreover, ENGOs' participation in policymaking also suggests a picture of a pluralising regime, which increases CCP's legitimacy. In these state-ENGOs interactions, the government appears to be more accountable and responsive to civil society actors (Christoff, 1996 and Eckersley, 2004 in Zinda, Li, and Liu, 2018). Meanwhile, these participation practices are unlikely to bring substantial institutional changes, as the participation rules are heavily disciplined by the state. These participations are in a safe or comfortable zone for the government, in which the social actors believe in collaboration, hide the political conflict, and tolerate the illiberal rules in the system.

As shown in this chapter, most ENGOs in policy advocacies practically prefer to collaborate with the government and compromise pluralistic values in policy advocacies. While they hold the ambition to bring more pluralistic elements into the Chinese governance system, many of them celebrate the exclusive ENGO advocacy club and skilfully rely on political elites, using the opportunity of non-institutional state-led campaigns and working in the non-transparent policy processes. In other words, these organisations agree with the pluralistic values and identify themselves as the agencies of these values in China. However, embedded in the specific context, these organisations do not necessarily fight for these values in practice.

On this point, a field perspective reminds us not to take the discursive claims at face value or judge their actions with theoretical assumptions. A productive question is what makes some choices easier or more difficult in practice, or how the structural possibilities shape the

negotiations between ideals and practices. ENGOs' ideals for institutional changes triggered a series of puzzles, such as how to practise pluralistic participations in an illiberal regime; without substantively pluralising the institutional settings, how possible it is to effectively solve environmental issues in the long term? As shown in this chapter, participation activities do not automatically lead to pluralisation. Practically, in ENGOs' advocacies, pluralisation is not their only goal. Not just to pluralise the policy processes, ENGOs also need to maintain their political legitimacy, manage their financial resources and solve concrete environmental issues. However, tensions exist between different goals in the Chinese context. The pre-condition for the state to accept the ENGOs' voices in policymaking is the ENGOs' recognition of the state's monopoly in governance. That is, ENGOs are facing a practical dilemma. To better protect the environment, many ENGOs believe in the necessity of having a more pluralistic and liberal political system or policy process. On the other hand, to deal with current environmental issues, ENGOs have to obey and practise the illiberal rules of the current system. In practice, the goal of institutional changes is usually subject to the goal of solving environmental issues. For various ENGOs, the cost of challenging the illiberal rules in the political field is too high and provoking or confronting the government is counterproductive for environmental protection. Collaborating with the government and serving the government's needs in policy advocacies is generally seen by some ENGOs as a feasible and ethical option.

Moreover, the dilemma faced by ENGOs in their advocacies invites us to further think about the mode of environmental authoritarianism. While environmental discourses have democratic features, effective governance does not necessarily go hand in hand with democratisation. As Ho (2001) holds, when the Chinese government shows the determination for environmental governance, ENGOs have less autonomous space to play an influential role. As shown in this chapter, while these organisations can participate more in environmental governance, they are mostly making technocratic contributions under the CCP leadership. China may explore an authoritarian pathway of ecological modernisation and present a prototype of a 'sustainable development state' in which government, firms and civil society are mobilised around a national project (Zinda, Li, and Liu, 2018).

Furthermore, the trend of policy advocacy reveals the field structure and unequal capital distribution among ENGOs. While the rising trend of policy participation is seen as a sign of ENGOs' stronger capabilities, the policy participations mainly empower the big engineer/scientist ENGOs in the field and deepen the field controversies. The line between participants and non-participants of policy advocacy is largely correlated with the existing symbolic divisions in the field. Most participants are the actors believing in the problem-

solving logic as well as the power of technology and science. More ENGOs' active participation in policy advocacy suggests the expansion of the technocratic and collaborative positions in the field. Many policy advocacy practices are based on the belief in state-society collaborations and the disapproval of confrontational actions. As claimed by some ENGOs, 'Participation is important, but we need a good order for effective participation' (Interview at Love Forest, 27/07/2018), or 'Protests are no longer necessary, as environmental protection has been included in the governance processes' (Interview at Independent Rock, 20/10/2016). Accordingly, for many advocacy ENGOs, the discussions on responsibilities and political conflicts could be counter-productive in terms of solving environmental issues. For instance, when some big ENGOs are organising policy advocacy training workshops, environmental protection has been defined within the UN's governance framework, which refers to the processes 'to reconcile different interests and reach collaborations…' (*Textbook of ENGO Policy Advocacy,* 2018).

Another important dimension worth further discussion is ENGOs' agentic efforts and the long-term implications of these policy participations. Though ENGOs cannot change the main rules in the political field, their key value is to construct the concrete meanings of participation in China. To a certain degree, these non-state actors will help the state to practise deliberation or socialist democracy in a more genuine form (Han, 2014). As mentioned before, there have always existed various prescribed participation channels in China. However, most social actors have not used these rights over decades, due to the vagueness of the clauses and the political uncertainties. By frequently using the participation channels, such as contacting the NPC and CPPCC delegates, writing petitions to officials or joining the public hearings, ENGOs are gradually exploring the space for social actors to participate in formal politics in China. In this sense, through their practices, they have assigned concrete and practical meanings to 'participation' and 'advocacy' in authoritarian China. To borrow one employee's comment, 'don't let the door rot. The door is actually always there and let's use it' (Ms Hibiscus, internal meeting at Nature Lovers, 23/08/2017). As with various issues on participation quality, ENGOs have made themselves a regular player in the political field and the prescribed political channels are no longer just decorations in China.

Conclusion: ENGOs, Civil Society and Environment Protection

1. To Recap the Story: Chinese ENGOs' Ideals and Practices

To recap, Chinese ENGOs represent important social responses towards the worsening environmental crises in China. The circle has developed rapidly since the 1990s and includes over 8,000 organisations nowadays. Thousands of environmental protection projects are initiated and operated by these ENGOs each year, covering the areas of consciousness-raising, pollution intervention, nature conservation, policy advocacy and litigation.

The authority of these ENGOs to represent environmental interests has been widely recognised. With growing reputations, this space is mediating between the general public and the worsening environmental crises. The ENGOs are recognised as professional institutions who are devoted to the cause and have specialised knowledge and skills in the area. Through these organisations, hundreds of millions of RMB are raised from foundations, government and the public, and further put into the problem areas. By mobilising public awareness, monitoring the factories and working with or pressuring the government, Chinese ENGOs make themselves present in various domains of social and economic life and claim their authority in environmental governance.

By engaging with different sectors, ENGOs are advocating their own distinctive interpretations of environmental protection, along with their values on social governance and justice. Symbolically, the sphere of ENGOs offers purer versions of environmental protection in the broad social worlds. The meanings, knowledge and standards on environmental protection, as well as the imagination for the future, are concretely produced in this space. The circle of these agencies has collectively laid a specific foundation for morality and epistemology in environmental governance.

This dissertation tells the story of this increasingly important sector. With this sector's rapid developments, are we going to have a more democratic and greener China? Can ENGOs lead society into a brighter future, in which humans have more control over their fates? As I am writing this chapter in the summer of 2019, the world is concerned with one of the worst Amazon forest fires in history and the term 'ENGO' has been frequently mentioned. On this

international crisis, Brazil's far-right government was specifically blamed for attacking ENGOs by various European countries[36]; French President Emmanuel Macron called for more ENGOs' involvements in saving the Amazon[37]; famous ENGOs, such as the WWF and Greenpeace, were quoted by mainstream media as professional voices to comment on the fire situation[38], and the general public was encouraged to donate money to ENGOs in response to the crisis[39]. This is not an isolated case, and the optimistic assumptions and recognition of ENGOs can also be observed in various other cases. Likewise, in Chapter 1, I also mentioned that Chinese ENGOs are expected by donors and the public to guard the public interests, and deal with the systematic ills with their expertise and professional approaches. However, would the world simply be a better place when the ENGOs grow stronger? By putting more resources into the sector of ENGOs, can we be saved from the environmental crises? Certainly, 'ENGO' is not a magic word and how ENGOs make a difference requires concrete empirical investigation.

My inquiry starts from these vague assumptions on ENGOs' functions. In Chapter 1, I particularly stressed the so-called gap between Chinese ENGOs' aspirations and practices, which is an entry point to observe the practical logics and meaning of their work. Regarding this gap, the point is not to question whether these organisations have betrayed their ideals, but to invite us to reflect on the common-sense assumptions of these organisations, along with the existing rhetorical labels, categorical pre-judgments and theoretical assumptions. By drawing the distinctions between ideals and practices, we can go beyond the formal accounts and explore the exact functions of these institutions. To put it in another way, the concept of the gap is mainly used to grasp the negotiations between the pure ideals and hybrid realities, and to discuss what material and symbolic factors have caused the hybridity.

As introduced in Chapter 1, to break with the previous assumptions and categories, this project's core tool is field theory, especially the branches of neo-institutionalism and Bourdieusian field theory. The field theory approach allows us to combine both the external and internal factors, or structural conditions and agentic efforts, in the discussions. As shown in the empirical chapters, this circle has been embedded among other external fields in the

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36 https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/aug/23/amazon-fires-what-is-happening-anything-we-can-do Ironically, Brazil's president, Jair Bolsonaro accuses ENGOs of setting fires in the Amazon to embarrass the Brazilian government after it cut their funding.
(https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-latin-america-49429541/amazon-fires-president-jair-bolsonaro-suggests-ngos-to-blame)
37 https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-g7-summit-amazon/frances-macron-says-real-ecocide-going-on-in-amazon-idUKKCN1VD2AY
38 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-49443389
39 https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/aug/23/amazon-fires-what-is-happening-anything-we-can-do

specific historical contexts. The fields' dynamics have been affected by the organisations' trajectories and innovations.

Going beyond the vague assumptions on Chinese ENGOs, the empirical chapters have explored the concrete working mechanisms of these organisations, including how they frame the environmental issues and propose solutions, how they accumulate resources, judge risks, evaluate their effects and make strategies, what ethos or principles they follow, and how they share the same space. In terms of the implications for these organisations, a field perspective triggers important discussions on the possibilities and structure within this field. To be specific, the field analysis enables us to answer what counts as 'environmental protection' by Chinese ENGOs and to further examine whether the existing interpretations cover the significant environmental problems in reality. Looking back, this field approach explains the structural and agentic factors in history which have shaped the main trajectories of ENGOs and the current meaning system in the field. Looking forward, the field's power structure reveals the available paths and the dominating ethos in the circle, which hints at why certain positions are especially difficult to emerge or develop in the field. The critical view on this field's history and features invites us to discuss what the key epistemological contributions of this field are in the broad social world, what roads have been closed in the past decades, what would have been different and what the future possibilities in this field are.

Guided by the field theory approach and the above research questions, in Chapter 2 and Chapter 5 I presented two concrete cases of the so-called gap between aspirations and practices in Chinese ENGOs' work. In either community advocacies or policy advocacies, ENGOs' practices are especially shaped by the practical logics in their daily work, which does not necessarily correlate with their original ideals. While these organisations claim their causes and authority in representing the environmental interests and correcting the systematic ills, the organisations also must survive first. They have to gain legitimacy, financial resources and seek further developments in China. Of course, the gaps between ideals and practices are inevitable. The main value of this analysis on the gap is to present how the negotiations between pure ideals and instrumental concerns happen and what the implications of these negotiations are in practice. As shown in both chapters, in practice most ENGOs are positioned in the debates between 'what is manageable or realisable' and 'what is important or necessary in the face of the urgent crises'. While ideals are largely stemmed from the normative values and the necessities in crises, the organisational visions, strategies and management are orientated by various practical concerns and uncertainties which are independent from the real environmental issues, such as organisational financial

resources, political legitimacy, human resources and turnover, media resources, the preference of activity participants, policy advocacy opportunities, etc. When ENGOs are pursuing their ideals, their original motivations are mediated by practical logics, and the distribution of resources, energy and priorities does not necessarily prioritise the urgency in the crises or accurately reflect the ideals.

As shown in both Chapter 2 and 5, even the so-called civil society organisations have relative political and economic independence from the state, they do not pursue their goals in a vacuum. The concept of global civil society stresses the symbolic similarities and connections across different actors beyond the national boundaries. Still, different civil society organisations' developments are deeply historical. Their developments are entangled with complex domestic or local political, economic and cultural conditions.

To be specific, in ENGOs' community advocacies, as discussed in Chapter 2, various ENGOs initiated their community consciousness-raising projects with the goals of cultivating civic spirit and mobilising the public to respond to the worsening environmental crises. However, ENGOs are also embedded in the specific funding structure which stresses efficiency, project management and competition. In practice, to gain more financial resources and to maximise the project efficiency, project managers tend to attract more participants. To do so, they conform to the participant's preferences and treat the participants as consumers. In other words, to attract more consumers, many activity organisers design their projects as approachable or palatable to more populations. Practically, this means that more entertainment elements are added while the serious discussions on crises and citizen duties are avoided. Consequently, many ENGOs' community projects function as an option for Chinese urban consumers to spend their weekends in interesting, fashionable, relaxing and also 'morally correct' ways. That is, the idea of everyday environmentalism is being stripped of its politics and the calls for civic spirit have been marginalised.

Accordingly, as presented in Chapter 5, ENGOs' policy advocacies are also subject to a practical and adaptive logic. With the ambition to strengthen environmental voices and pluralise the relevant policy processes in China, many ENGOs actively use legally recognised ways to participate in policy advocacy. There are several noteworthy features which remind us to be cautious about the optimist argument on ENGOs' pluralising effects. To begin with, in this field, various ENGOs and environmental proposals are structurally filtered out in the realm of policy advocacy by the thresholds of resource, knowledge and social connections. Regarding the advocacy practices, most ENGOs are facing a dilemma between the practical rules in Chinese politics and the pluralism values. To get access to the

policymakers, ENGOs have to be strategic. Many of them rely heavily on individual politicians and exploit the feature of 'rule of people' in the political system to affect the policymaking. Similarly, in a specific governance system, many ENGOs can only advocate their policy proposals during the state-led campaigns or the so-called 'environmental storms'. These campaigns are usually considered as a typical example of the guerrilla-style state governance in China (Heilmann and Perry, 2011). To some degree, ENGOs' participation in these state-led campaigns inevitably contradicts the value of 'rule of law'. Similarly, as an exchange with the policymakers, ENGOs cannot afford to respect the principles of transparency or accountability. Many proposals of ENGOs are kept confidential, and the government takes full credit for some ENGOs' investigations and proposals. As a result, many of the ENGOs' advocacies have, to some degree, strengthened the state to gain more legitimacy and a power monopoly in environmental governance. The logic of policy advocacy in the Chinese political field does not necessarily go hand in hand with the value of environmental democracy. While some Chinese ENGOs have pluralisation goals, they practise in a way that contradicts several important pluralism values.

While Chapter 2 and Chapter 5 each focus on a specific type of ENGO activity, Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 mainly present the dynamics and complexity of this circle at a field level. By tracing back the history of and depicting the competitions in the field, the two chapters show where the practical logics or institutions come from, how different visions and strategies have emerged over the years, how different ENGOs collectively explore the shared rules and mutually manufacture each other. With a historical and relational view of these organisations, both chapters combine structural and agentic factors in explaining ENGOs' behavioural patterns. The field of ENGOs by no means stemmed from abstract ideals yet is a nexus of power situated among other fields and external forces. From a field perspective, the development of the ENGOs' field means the process in which the field's actors have drawn materials and symbolic resources from other external fields and introduced these materials and resources into this field. The field's emergence and development have been embedded in complex historical processes. Meanwhile, the ENGOs' agentic efforts are not negligible as they have introduced and translated capital from other fields into their own field.

To be specific, in Chapter 3, the concept Chinese 'ENGOs' has been unpacked. 'Environmental protection', instead of being a pre-defined pure ideal, has been constructed concretely in different ENGOs' practices and trajectories. The emergence of this field has been embedded in multiple overlapping historical processes in China, including civic life practices in the 1980s, the modernisation of the philanthropy area, the internet and the emergence of a contentious public sphere in China, and the shifts of the broader discourse on

environmental protection in the country. Shaped by the specific and complex history, there emerged diverse yet limited ways to translate the broad ideal of environmental protection into manageable project designs. With different trajectories and different interpretations on their shared cause, some ENGOs work on small community activities, some specialise in scientific investigation and pollution intervention, and some aim to turn environmental disputes into social issue disputes and engage with broader social injustices. The rich history of this circle suggests complex implications and potential. For one thing, the historical trajectories of Chinese ENGOs show that these organisations could function as political agencies in various ways. The earliest ENGO clearly showed the passion to cultivate a Tocquevillian-like civil society in China counterbalancing the dominant political and economic powers. The engineer/scientist ENGOs have visualised multiple pollution issues and encourage the public to explore and speak the truth, powerfully challenging the state's monopoly in depicting the reality. The activist ENGOs explicitly seek to politicise environmental issues and connect with the contentious advocacy groups, which has brought new ideas and methods into this field. Meanwhile, the field trajectories also remind us to caution the technocratic and de-politicisation trends in this space.

In Chapter 4, I have shown how different ENGOs share the same space and discussed how the field structure affects the possibilities of future environmental governance. Instead of being an integral community, Chinese ENGOs have fundamental disagreements among themselves. Though sharing the same cause, in practice the organisations are facing different ethical dilemmas in terms of working areas, issue-framing and methods, which forces each of them to take a position in the field. As shown in the chapter, the key symbolic divisions or controversies in the field are inscribed in the local historical context, such as the legacy of community-oriented cultural approach and the state-NGO relationship management, and NGO professional procedures. This specific case also reveals that the local order is not directly dictated by the macro-structure yet is also created by field actors collectively at a mesoscale. To be specific, sharing the same label yet disagreeing with their peers, different ENGOs are motivated to claim more authority in defining the shared cause in their own way, as gaining more capital implies more recognition and resources. To do so, different actors are keen to expand their values and modes, specialise their skills, and reflexively take positions by distancing from and associating with certain peers. During these processes, field actors are manufacturing each other and also shaping the boundaries and internal oppositions of the field's meaning system. Consequently, the field is witnessing deepening divisions and specialisation over the years. Symbolically, this means that the field's meaning system has been gradually polarised and the broad ideal of 'environmental protection' has been turned into competing narrow interpretations. Various energies have been spent by field actors to

govern the extreme voices, and the field structure has been dominated by stronger players. Considering its internal oppositions, the field as a whole is unlikely to function as a hub bridging diverse sectors in environmental governance.

From the competitions among ENGOs, we can also observe the unequal capital distributions in the field. As shown in Chapter 4, under field effects, some ENGOs could easily justify their views and practices, while some other ENGOs are structurally marginalised. A typical example of field effects is certain ENGOs' relatively successful attempts of standardisation and universalisation in the field, which further forms the inner laws and defines the possibilities and appropriateness of ENGOs' practices. Some stronger players in the field, such as big engineer/scientist ENGOs, embedded in the favourable funding and political structure, have skilfully standardised the scientific-technocratic narratives in the field. In contrast, the evaluation criteria and the symbolic challenges from the engineer/scientist ENGOs have marginalised the community-based ENGOs and pressured them to shift away from the pluralism ideas. The standardised interpretation of the so-called proper rational ENGOs' practices also have ridiculed the activist ENGOs. Due to their relatively extreme positions in the field, this group has been weakened by the field's main funding structure yet meanwhile strengthened by the new crowdfunding trend.

As concluded in Chapters 3 and 4, the domination and polarisation in the field suggest the diminishment of pluralism values, the loss of connections with political and contentious discourses, stronger NGO self-censorship, and technocratic and bureaucratic trends. Though this space is relatively autonomous and defined professionally, the field structure is also embedded in the broader structure and thus there are only limited options for the actors in the field. Meanwhile, despite the limited options, the complex dynamics of the field also reminds us to keep an open mind to the field's possibilities. While the polarised positions make collaborations difficult, controversies in the field are not necessarily negative phenomena. The competitions and disputes show the diversities and the resistance forces against the field's dominating power. Though it is difficult for the community-oriented and the activist ENGOs to justify their values and methods, the existence of them shows important voices counterbalancing the strong technocratic and bureaucratic trends. To imagine what is possible for the future or what would have been different, researchers should take into account the various political, economic, legal and cultural factors throughout history. For instance, had the framing of environmental protection turned into urgent disaster reduction across the country, would the activist ENGOs' values have been considered as rational in the field? Had a large amount of funding existed for long-term

community-building projects, would the community-oriented ENGOs stress the pluralism values again?

I presented Chapter 5, ENGOs' policy advocacy, after Chapters 3 and 4, with the purpose to show how the ENGOs' practical logics are also shaped by the power relationships among different fields, and how much autonomy the field experiences. ENGOs' complex and practical relationships with the state have been mentioned through Chapters 2-5. In these empirical chapters, I tried to break with the theoretical and common-sense assumptions on civil society organisations or NGOs. Using the concept of a gap, I suggested to slow down and to carefully observe the organisations' practices and to further examine the existing framings and term uses. As shown in the chapters, it appears inaccurate to define Chinese ENGOs either as contentious democratic fighters or conformist/corporatist organisations. On the one hand, Chinese ENGOs have contributed great agentic efforts in developing this circle by creatively introducing and refiguring different resources, ideas and skills in the field. However, the possibilities of their actions are still subject to the broader political and economic conditions, along with technological development and discursive framings. Another advantage of this analysis is to show the power reproductions and struggles more concretely. While China is indeed a politically constraining environment for social organisations, the repressions or confrontations do not happen frequently in the field of ENGOs. Instead, the power engagements between the regime and the ENGOs are more subtle, such as ENGOs' self-censorship, the field actors' attempts to govern the contentious or radical voices, the boundary management between environmental issues and social issues, ENGOs' and the government's efforts in maintaining collaborative or harmonious relationships, etc. Overall, to critically analyse Chinese ENGOs, this dissertation argues the necessity to draw attention to organisations' practices, which reveal significant negotiations between pure ideals and practical concerns.

Moreover, the main arguments in this dissertation could also briefly engage with two broader debates on the roles of ENGOs and environmental governance, which allows me to further contextualise this study and to reframe the dissertation's key contributions. For one thing, is China having a maturing civil society? For another, at a global level, are social actors effectively responding to the global environmental crises?

2. A Maturing Civil Society in China?

To begin with, the history and dynamics of Chinese ENGOs are closely linked to the broader discussion on the development of Chinese civil society, especially the democratising effects of this emerging sector. As mentioned in Chapter 1, I refer to ENGOs as civil society organisations and use a broad definition of civil society, which is a sphere where people act beyond the spheres of state and market, and organise themselves to respond to the crises affecting their own life (Falk, 1998; Kaldor, 2003a; Castells, 2008; Anheier et al., 2012; Glasius and Pleyers, 2013). In order to break with the theoretical assumptions on civil society, I start from these organisations' daily practices, instead of their political goals or democratising effects. After exploring ENGOs' practical logics and methods, I now will shift to the broader discussion on Chinese civil society development and its political implications. While it is debatable whether it is accurate to use the term 'civil society' to study contemporary China, the relative independence and effects of the rising social organisations in China should not be negated (Salmenkari, 2013). Only counting the registered institutions, there are over 8,000 environmental social organisations in China and 837,268 domestic social organisations in different areas[40] (China Social Organisation Centre, 2019). As Schwartz (2004) observes, it is not difficult to identify a civil sphere of social and economic life separated from the state in China. How do we understand the social and political implications of this sphere's development and how can the story of Chinese ENGOs help us to understand the changes in contemporary China?

To introduce the background of this broad debate, the key controversy is whether the term civil society should be used in studying the social and political characteristics in post-Mao China; more specifically, whether the social organisations or volunteer groups in China can be regarded as civil society actors who function as political agents to bring democratic transformations in China. On the one side, there exist optimists, who believe in Chinese civil society or NGOs' potential to bring social and political changes. This optimist view has been embedded in the specific historical context, which can also reveal its theoretical limits. As Howell (2007), Salmenkari (2013) and Hsu, J.Y. (2014) comment, today's China studies have the normative aspirations of the so-called civil society actors, which are informed by the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe in the late 1980s. In these 1989 events,

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40 As introduced before, 'social organisation' is an administrative concept in China, which refers to various types of organisations, including foundations (基金会), social groups (社会团体) and private non-enterprise units (民办非企业单位). Private non-enterprise units (民办非企业单位) have been referred to as social service organisations (社会服务机构) since 2016 in the Charity Law of 2016.

the non-state actors played key roles in supporting democratisation. Similarly, as observed by Spires (2011), drawing on Western history and extending Tocquevillian theories, various studies on China make a natural connection between civil society and transitions to democracy. That is, NGOs' roles as the facilitators of citizen participation and democratic changes (e.g. Diamond 1994) can also be applied in the context of China. Considering the economic reforms and increased number of NGOs, it is quite tempting to argue that China is experiencing an 'associational revolution' as defined by Salamon and Anheier (1997). Though most studies did not explicitly clarify the routes toward regime changes and social political transformation, the democratic hopes are evident among various studies (e.g. Saich 2000; Wu, 2002; Ma, 2005; Li, Tang, and Lo, 2016). For instance, some recent Chinese NGOs' dynamics have been interpreted as increased bottom-up pressures and more possibilities for democratic changes, such as some NGOs' democratically-orientated discourse, NGOs' stronger professional investigation skills and policy advocacy capabilities, and some NGOs' confrontational working methods (e.g. Yang, G.B., 2005; Buesgen, 2008; Zhan and Tang, 2011; Han, 2014; Hsu, J.Y. and Hasmath, 2017; Zhang, 2018).

On the other side, there are mainly two types of critiques towards the view that NGOs as civil society actors can be the agents for democratisation. For one thing, theoretically, it has been pointed out that assuming civil society actors as democratic agents is a mechanical application of Western theories in the Chinese context, while the idea of civil society is quite broad and general (Salmenkari, 2013). For example, Habermas uses the idea of public sphere to characterise civil sphere, which can refer to both an independent bourgeois public sphere and a space between society and state (1991). In contrast to Habermas' Western liberal modern, Gramsci's definition on civil society stresses the cultural domination of elites, which helps to maintain the hegemonic social orders (2009). For Kaldor, civil society refers to the activities and groups from the community, which guard the rule of law, active citizenship and substantial democracy (2003a, 2003b, 2008). Compared to Kaldor, Pearce's definition has less concrete normative meanings and only broadly implies a non-purposive arena of human interaction as an agency for social change (1997). Drawing heavily on the Central and Eastern European transformations around 1989 negates various dimensions of civil society and adds too many normative assumptions on the actors. Meanwhile the state-society interpenetrations and interactions are ignored (Huang, 1993). For another, empirically, one main critique is that the idea of civil society is distant from Chinese reality, as Chinese non-state actors are rarely separated from the state (e.g. Chamberlain, 1993; Hsu, J.Y, 2014). As part of the critique about the optimists, some scholars seek a middle ground to critically use the civil society framework in China. For instance, Teets (2013, 2017) uses the concept of 'consultative authoritarianism' to depict the lack of political implications of

Chinese NGOs, who can participate in policy formation yet cannot bring substantial political change. Also, Spires (2011) proposes the term 'contingent symbiosis' to describe the interdependence between NGOs and the state, as well as the precarious existence and weakness of NGOs, who cannot be the natural agents of democratisation.

In my opinion, the idea of 'civil society' could be a productive tool to analyse the rapid changes in current China, if the Western terms are used critically. While the Chinese state indeed has strong control over society, it is nihilistic to argue that no civil society definition can describe Chinese society. The total separation between state and society rarely happens in reality, it didn't even occur in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1980s, or England in the 17th and 18th centuries (Yang, D.D.H. 2004). Refusing to conceptualise a relatively independent society means to ignore plenty of recent events in China, such as the large number of social organisations and the critical online discourses in China. As mentioned above, there are multiple dimensions and definitions on civil society, which is not limited to the 1989 events (Huang, 1993). These concepts could be productive in analysing the phenomena in China. To critically engage with the discussion on civil society development, it is necessary to take account of the breadth of the civil society ideas and also pay attention to the microscale and mesoscale dynamics, instead of starting with strong theoretical assumptions.

As the circle of ENGOs is one of the most vibrant civil society sectors in China, my case can join the discussion on China's civil society development and its implications. The field analysis in the chapters clearly shows that there are multiple types of civil society actors in the circle. While some confront the state and have explicit political goals, some collaborate with the state and depoliticise the cause. There is a complex and mixed picture regarding ENGOs and Chinese civil society. On the one hand, this field of ENGOs reveals the rising and maturing civil society in China, which pluralises the power structure and counterbalances the regime. On the other hand, civil society actors generally lack the capacities and intentions to confront or overthrow the regime at least in the short term. To discuss broader social and political transformations, we need to observe the dynamics over a longer historical period in the future.

To expand on the above argument, on the one hand, with either an internalist or externalist view, the field of ENGOs shows that there indeed exists a space in China similar to Habermasian liberal civil society, in which individuals have rational and critical public discussions, form public opinions and check the absolutist power (Habermas, 1991). As shown in the chapters, some ENGOs have explicitly adopted a democratic discourse,

featured by the values of rule-of-law, transparency, social justice and pluralism. In terms of ENGOs' practices, with or without intentions, various ENGOs' actions practically function as a space to safeguard the community and counterbalance the market and state power. Indeed, as I argued in the chapters, depoliticisation and technocratic trends emerged in the field and some ENGOs' operations deliberately hide the political messages. Meanwhile, in practice, most actions and operations have multiple dimensions and hybrid features. Plenty of Chinese ENGOs' actions show the features of an embryonic liberal civil society, with profound social and political implications. As observed by Schwartz (2004), back in the early 2000s, Chinese NGOs mainly conducted the tasks attributed by the state. Nowadays, as shown in my chapters, ENGOs have much stronger capabilities and more complex relationships with the state.

For instance, several large ENGOs' online databases on air quality and pollution have empowered the general public with environmental information. Up to May 2018, one of the most famous database apps made by an ENGO had been downloaded 1.38 million times in China. The hashtags 'the war against smog' and 'clean sky' had been read online over 22 million and 62 million times respectively by September 2017 (Ali Cloud, 2017). Despite the ENGOs' technocratic style of data analysis, by collecting, organising and presenting the official air quality data to the public, these ENGOs provide a base for critical public discussions and the formation of public opinions. Similarly, ENGOs' online media campaigns, volunteer groups and community-building activities have facilitated public-minded individuals to build connections and provided the public with the important channels to oversee the government. When the activist ENGOs pressured the government to release their arrested staff, they heavily relied on netizens' participation, during which the ideas of citizen duties and social justice were mobilised. Moreover, both the campaigns for pollution victims and policy advocacy represent non-state actors' critical views on the state development agenda and their deep readings of the injustices in the system.

ENGOs' democratic and pluralistic effects to some degree also resonate with other civil society actors in China, such as the HIV/AIDS NGOs which have powerfully reshaped the discourse on the patients (Wan et al., 2009; Wilson 2012), or the labour NGOs which explicitly challenge the current urban citizen regime (Hsu, J.Y, 2014). These domestic NGOs, as organisational entrepreneurs, play a significant role in introducing the topics, organising the discussions and mobilising social attention and resources. They enable individuals to participate in public discussions, rethink the current social arrangements and practise their self-organising skills. In the long term, these practices could make the

governance more plural, transparent and accountable (Bernauera, et al., 2016; Hsu, J.Y. and Hasmath, 2017).

On the other hand, it is necessary to point out the complexity of the picture. ENGOs' democratising effects in some cases do not imply a powerful integrated sector which will substantially challenge the regime and bring political transformation. My chapters have shown different faces of the story of Chinese civil society, especially the multidimensionality of civil society and the CCP regime, as well as the complicated roles played by ENGOs.

Regarding the first point, as shown in the field story, the effects of ENGOs are mixed. This concrete case reveals a broader phenomenon in contemporary China, which is the tension between a depoliticised public sphere concerned with public goods, and a politicised public sphere resonating with the liberal model, as observed by Howell (2007). While some ENGOs' actions suggest democratising effects, some ENGOs' practices are distant from political disputes and rural pollution victims, representing a typical urban middle-class professionals' position. The political attitudes in the circle vary from conformists and mild critiques to regime challengers. The radical critical voices are largely ridiculed and governed inside the field. In contrast, the intellectual elites or technical professionals in this circle found it much easier to justify their voice in front of the government, foundations and the public. Considering the internal oppositions and marginalisation among ENGOs, the growth of many NGOs does not automatically imply a strong joint and inclusive force to challenge the regime.

Another complex against the optimist argument is the feature of the Chinese regime. Considering the hybrid characters of this regime, we can see that the state is both challenged and strengthened by NGOs. Some scholars reasonably categorise China as a post-totalitarian communist regime, in which the government monopolises political discourse and social interest articulation (Yang, D.D.H. 2004). However, zooming in on the details of power relationships, China cannot be simply labelled as a post-totalitarian or authoritarian regime with no space for dissenting voices (Ho, 2007; Spire, 2011; Zhan and Tang, 2011). ENGOs' field story has shown the multiple dimensions of the state-society relationships in China. Some scholars go beyond the concept of authoritarianism and propose to use 'adaptive governance' (Heilmann and Perry, 2011), 'green authoritarianism' (Zinda, Li, and Liu, 2018), 'consultative authoritarianism' (Teets, 2013) or 'pluralised state corporatism' (Zhang, 2018) to conceptualise the CCP regime. To be specific, while the threat of repression is always there, hostility is not the key word to describe the daily interactions between the

Chinese government and NGOs. As shown from the ENGOs' case, the CCP regime has strong skills to absorb the critiques from society, utilise the labour of NGOs to provide public welfare, quickly start campaign-like reactions to correct social injustice and let certain populations feel represented, exploit the ambiguity of the laws and thus legitimise the state's shifting positions on certain issues (e.g. Heilmann and Perry, 2011; Zinda, Li, and Liu, 2018).

Moreover, another complexity is that while ENGOs have some democratic effects as mentioned above, their contributions to civil society development should not be overemphasised. The development of civil society in China is a long and broad historical process, which could not simply be cultivated by NGOs' agentic efforts. NGOs' emergence and developments are also embedded in this broader social transformation. To put it in another way, while civil society actors can make a difference to some degree, their actions are largely enabled by some significant favourable conditions in the context. For example, considering the trajectories of the community-oriented ENGOs, the engineer/scientist ENGOs and the activist ENGOs, it is obvious that these institutions cannot emerge or thrive in China without the conditions of an emerging stronger society, including the 'societalisation' in China in the late 1970s (Huang, 1993), the voluntary and state-encouraged associational life in the 1980s, such as professional associations, trades associations and intellectual 'salons' (Yang, D.D.H. 2004; Howell, 2007), the emergence of a new educated generation with professional knowledge and a consciousness of rights and rule-of-law (Yang, G.B, 2003), marketisation of media and the evolving online critical public sphere (Lei, 2018), etc. Though the social conditions for NGOs are not completely ideal, such as the relatively weak rule of law and the social legitimacy of NGO goals (e.g. Spires, 2011), the above favourable conditions in the post-Mao era have provided ENGOs with the necessary institutional space, the financial resources, human resources, media platforms and technologies and public-minded netizens and residents.

That is, despite ENGOs' impressive agentic efforts, innovations and influences, their emergence and developments largely rely on overlapping historical processes in China. Looking forward, the question is whether these agencies can bring bigger social changes. Lu (2007) argues that Chinese NGOs generally cannot tackle the broader political and social issues, while some other scholars propose more concrete criteria to evaluate NGOs' potential, such as the abilities mobilise national campaigns (Ho, 2001), the sociability, especially 'horizontality' (Salmenkari, 2013) and the social integration and skills to intervene with the overall exercise of power (Calhoun, 1993). With these criteria and a field perspective, the weaknesses or lack of agentic powers of ENGOs can be observed in the

chapters, such as the polarisation or the focus on local governance. A safer way to describe the roles of ENGOs in Chinese civil society development is that these organisational entrepreneurs clearly are the practitioners and catalysers of civil society in China. While they can mobilise resources and explore different possibilities, their emergence, development and future potential are also dependent on the broader conditions in China, which are mixed with various opportunities and constraints.

To sum up this section, ENGOs' development clearly represents a rising society in authoritarian China, which can function as a sphere to counterbalance and oversee the state. Meanwhile, the picture is quite complex, considering the intense competitions between different co-existing civil societies in China and the sophisticated authoritarianism in China. While some civil society groups have more pluralising effects, some other actors contribute to maintain the current social order. Though the elitists or technocratic professionals' voices are overrepresented, there is also a space for the dissenters and the vulnerable in China to express their critiques. Civil society actors such as ENGOs mainly facilitate the development of civil society in China by building connections among individuals, triggering public discussion, providing participation channels or spreading the democratic discourse, yet their future potential is defined by various factors at different levels.

While there are large conformist groups in Chinese civil society, a contesting space between the state and society has been opened in China. What we are witnessing now is the co-existence, collaborations and contests between a resilient authoritarian regime and thriving civil societies in post-Mao China. On the one side, the authoritarian state cannot regulate the rising society with corporatist strategies (Howell, 2007), yet is able to balance the expansion of civil society with sophisticated controls. On the other side, different civil societies can challenge and oversee the state in various cases yet cannot organise the broader society into a joint force to confront the dominant power in society. Considering the complexity, it is still early to predict regime changes or social transformation in contemporary China.

3. Society's Reaction to Environmental Crises?

The story of Chinese ENGOs is not simply about the social transformations in China yet is closely linked to the environmental groups in other parts of the world. There are obviously many paralleling issues faced by both Chinese and non-Chinese ENGOs. A specific lesson drawn from my field analysis is the necessity to reflect on the symbolic struggles of environmental protection framings in global environmental governance.

It is generally considered a success that non-state environmental actors have entered the global governance system and have allied with international organisations and governments and left-wing parties (e.g. see Wapner, 1996, or see the analysis in Shellenberger and Nordhaus, 2009). The future is promising, as the environmental actors have pushed for a global development agenda which takes into account the environmental topics. Meanwhile, as shown by Chinese ENGOs' field struggles, environmental protection is not an objectively predefined concept, but a plastic ideal embedded in complex history. The visibility or representation of certain framings or discourses reveals the results of power struggles among different groups, such as technocratic professionals and rural victims in the case of the Chinese ENGOs field. For global environment governance, besides the typical image of ENGOs which push for UN and governments' actions, there are various types of environmental discourses. Dryzek (2013) divides the existing discourses into several types along the categories 'reformist vs. radical' and 'prosaic vs. imaginative'. While some actors claim problem-solving or sustainability, others stress the urgency of survival threats and fundamental social changes. To be specific, among different discourses, some so-called dark green groups have been ridiculed as eco-terrorists and egalitarian ecologies are regarded as radically impossible (Swyngedouw, 2011).

On this point, a field analysis reminds us of the fact that the current mainstream or a widely shared framing on environmental protection is not necessarily rational or effective, yet a result of power domination and marginalisation, which could be violent to certain groups. What is urgently needed is not to discuss institutions' capability building, but to reflect the injustice and dominations among environmental actors, by challenging the existing categories and discursive structures.

As shown in my chapters, a trend of depoliticisation and technocracy has emerged in the field of Chinese ENGOs especially since the mid-2000s, seen from the funding structures and the list of awards winners. Meanwhile, the community-oriented ENGOs or the activist ENGOs are regarded as ineffective, unprofessional, radical or irresponsible. The vision of mobilising authentic grassroots community responses is considered as slow and unrealistic by many ENGOs and foundations. The field structure of Chinese ENGOs resonates with a broader trend in the world. Environmental protection has been dominated by a technocratic discourse worldwide, which is considered as the death or stagnation of environmental protection (e.g. see Latour, 2004; Shellenberger and Nordhaus, 2009). Both in China and the world, this trend threatens to narrow the boundaries of environmental protection and

democracy, and thus further weakens environmental actors (e.g. see Flinders and Wood, 2014).

The mainstream discourse, which stresses a reformist position and the collaboration with international organisations and governments, appears to be widely recognised and considered as rational, as it seems logical to put the global crises in the global governance system. However, considering the power dynamics, this global environmental governance framework or the so-called international public sphere (e.g. see the critiques made by Jaeger, 2007) functions as a subsystem of world politics, rather than actors opposing the system from outside. In the context of most leading international organisations, 'governance' is defined as a managerial term. When ENGOs enter this global environmental governance framework, they have to incorporate the logic of managerism and help to organise 'orderly' participation of civil society actors in the problem area (e.g. Sealey-Huggins, 2016). The political debates on the issues by actors at different levels are largely replaced by the meetings among technical and administrative experts. What has been removed are political contentions, ideological divisions and particular political demands (e.g. see Swyngedouw, 2011). With environmental protection framing narrowed down and depoliticised, various local voices and intersectional issues have been excluded and it is unlikely that the global governance framework can tackle the systematic crises.

Ford (2003) refers to this gradually dominating discourse of technical-rational knowledge as a global hegemony. Under the domination, the voices of some so-called radical NGOs and grassroots movements, which emerged out of the direct experience of the local crises, are not recognised, especially by the professional epistemic communities. A typical example is the operations of the global governance framework on climate change, which especially demands the opinions of experts in chemistry, economics and policy. Meanwhile, the emerging climate justice movements, which challenge the elites' dominations on climate issue framing, vividly revealed the complexity of the issues. Under the managerial framing of climate issues, many inseparable justice struggles are largely ignored or excluded, such as colonial history, aboriginal rights, land rights and gender and race equalities (e.g. see Brand et al., 2009; Bond, 2012; Chatterton et al., 2013; Sealey-Huggins, 2016). On the Carbon Market Watch website, various local actors have posted the injustices they experienced under the global carbon management framework, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), such as ruined local farms on the conservation lands or the local mafia who benefitted from the UNFCCC recovery programme. However, as shown on the website, the campaigns are officially responded to by UNFCCC in a

bureaucratic way, claiming that the issues are beyond the scope of UNFCCC (Carbon Market Watch, 2017).

ENGOs' attempts to seek a unified framing and to integrate themselves into the global governance framework inevitably implies the rise of hegemonic politics, which operates without adversaries and hides under the cover of 'deliberative democracy' (e.g. see Mouffe, 1999). For environmental groups, to change the chessboard instead of just playing chess with the existing rules, it is necessary to reflect on the current values and framings (e.g. see Latour, 2004). This reflection could be especially benefitted from by critical theories, which remind us of the violence of categories, discursive structures and common sense (e.g. see Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Butler, 2002). In this case, it is productive to ask some questions on global environmental governance in a way that is similar to my enquiries about Chinese ENGOs. For instance, how is the mainstream framing developed? How are common sense and shared institutions formed in history? Whose voices are structurally strengthened and whose are excluded? What positions or political clashes could possibly emerge and why? As suggested by Mouffe (1999), through the de-universalisation of political subjects, we can further observe the power struggles and dominations beneath the consensus and recognitions. As shown from the field story of Chinese ENGOs, controversies among peers are not necessarily problems to overcome, yet can reveal the complex power structures which shape the meaning system. Based on this, we can further imagine different futures.

Furthermore, on the future of global environmental groups, this discussion on the meanings and framings is especially timely. In recent years, the rapid changes in the world have been particularly visible, represented by rising populism and strongman politics in various countries, unstable economic situations and new urgencies, such as migration and regional conflicts. The new changes lead to the reorganisation of resources, attention and relevant debates in the international public sphere, which brings both challenges and opportunities for different environmental groups. There is a growing number of climate change denial voices in the world represented by people such as President Trump, also a new generation of global youth environment movements that started from London in 2018; there are new reports on climate change urgencies and new global powers showing their ambitions to be climate leaders. It is important to observe how different environmental actors make allies, mobilise resources and reframe the causes in the face of new changes, and how these dynamics shape the discursive structures on environmental issues.

Moreover, besides the competitions among different framings and topics, another dimension of competition and domination is the tension between domestic and international

environmental voices. As shown in my chapters, international environmental actors clearly have provided raw materials for the field of Chinese ENGOs, and shaped their resources, issue-framing and strategies. Meanwhile, another topic I have not explored is the tensions between the general global civil society networks and the global particularities. For instance, the early Chinese ENGOs' particular goals of rebuilding civic life after the 1989 events have been weakened, when more local ENGOs embrace the global environmental frames and focus on solving concrete environmental issues. This discussion appears to be urgent especially now, as the Chinese government is actively responding to the new UN global biodiversity framework plan (2020) by drafting new laws on the conservation of lands. From a local perspective, various justice issues emerged, such as the privatisation of land, forced migration and minority rights. How to identify and analyse these intersectional issues in relation to an environmental protection framing is particularly timely and necessary.

4. New Dynamics: Chinese ENGOs' Social Fates

As presented in Chapters 3 and 4, Chinese ENGOs' features are rooted in a specific historical context. Currently, the field is also witnessing dynamics shaping the directions of different actors. One recent example is the 'MeToo' movement in China's NGO sector in August 2018. Some ENGOs' leaders were involved in sexual harassment scandals, and some foundations were pressured to end the funding contracts with these ENGOs and some of their ENGO allies. This further pushed these ENGOs to explore new funding and change their strategies. Looking forward, the future of Chinese ENGOs is an open book, which will be shaped by various forces at different levels.

Regarding the future developments of this field, there are several trends worth paying attention to. For one thing, obviously, Xi's leadership, with features strongman politics, has largely changed China's political and social landscape. With the national development goal of 'ecological civilisation', the government has attached unprecedented weight to environmental protection, which has been framed as green authoritarianism (e.g. see Zinda, Li, and Liu, 2018). For another, in terms of the legal institutions, China is currently drafting new laws on soil protection, conservation lands and biodiversity, and initiating national campaigns on waste management and water pollution governance. Regarding financial structure, several big players, such as the Ali Foundation and the Paradise Foundation, recently joined the field and they advocate the application of commercial logic in ENGOs. Internationally, the central topics and debates are also flowing. All these social and political

dynamics could have profound implications on ENGOs' institutional space, resources and strategies. Chinese ENGOs' future is mixed with exciting opportunities and serious challenges.

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Chapter 1

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Chapter 2

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