

# Preface

This is a symposium reflecting the current views of the author, which has included papers, commentaries, and policy recommendations I have written during the past year regarding the development and reform of NGOs in China. I really hope that through this symposium, readers in the English-speaking world can not only understand the status quo and the latest development in the research into NGOs in China, but also gain an insight into the NGO-centered social reform in China.

In the current China, NGO has become the bellwether in the drive of comprehensively deepening social structural reform. In China's discourse system, NGO has now been translated as "social organization," a term considered to be better catering to the needs of reform in China. In fact, it has no major difference with NGO in terms of either connotations or extensions. Therefore, the term NGO will be uniformly used in this book. When it comes to this term, I am obliged to mention with pride the NGO Research Center of Tsinghua University (NGORC) I set up 16 years ago, which, perhaps the first of its kind in China, has now become an important think tank in promoting social structural reform centered on NGO. The center has not only been deeply involved in the innovation of relevant policies, systems, and legislation of governments from the central to the local level. It also has students all over the country, with batches of young scholars who remain active in the forefronts for research and practice in relation to NGO. Someone has jokingly called them "disciples of an eminent academy," which I would readily accept as well, taking it as an encouragement for me to continue to guide more newcomers to engage in the research into NGOs in China.

During the two years ever since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), "earthshaking" would be a word well-sufficient to describe the variety of historic opportunities for NGO development in China. Last year, when I expressed my feelings with "spring has come!" at a Harvard Forum during my summer vacation tour to the USA, someone had challenged "couldn't it be an early spring?" At this moment, I want to say that this spring has taken roots and spread out luxuriant branches, so to speak, China has opened a new historical chapter in social structural reform.

When writing this foreword, I have just returned from a biweekly consultative seminar presided over by Yu Zhengsheng, Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), which is themed "Let NGOs play a better role in social governance." At the seminar, fifteen members of the CPPCC and three experts delivered a speech and many leaders of ministries and commissions of the central government including Minister of the Ministry of Civil Affairs attended the seminar. I have appealed to the seminar to make legislation for NGO, which was met with active response. After the seminar, when forwarding a news flash, the Ministry of Civil Affairs had used the wording of "glad tidings," predicting that legislation for NGO would be launched in the near future since appeals on this regard were supported by the policy-makers.

The views in this book merely represent reflections and suggestions by a scholar in this era of reform, though not mature enough, nor far from academically profound, and in some cases still open to changes. I believe that, born into this age, we are bound to be shouldered with our mission, and to some extent, this book is an embodiment of such mission of the age as I have understood. China is undergoing changes, and we are witnessing and advancing such long-awaited changes.

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Ming Wang  
On a flight of Air China from Beijing to Chengdu



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