

Building an Indigenous Civil Society: With the ICS as a Case

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The 21st century sees a rapidly transforming and ascending China. On the one hand, the market economy, growing rapidly in China, has raised the level of material life for its citizens; on the other hand, while China has successfully realized its economic reforms, it remains comparatively fossilized in its political transformation, leading to a tendency of “transformational fixation”.¹ Thus, for a long time in the past, interest claims of various social strata and groups and proposals for social development find it difficult to get onto the government political agenda, and society and environment have paid a heavy price as a result of this phenomenon. At the same time, the Chinese people have been experiencing a painful feeling in that they are spiritually rather empty and feeble. The loss of core values that could be universally accepted makes it difficult for China to become a real big power in the world. In order to solve this dilemma in social development, social transformation has accelerated unexpectedly since the end of the last century, not only the national government has put forward a strategy to build up a society of harmony, but at the non-governmental level, a variety of volunteer organizations and public welfare actions has appeared from bottom up. And around these volunteer organizations and public welfare actions, corresponding growths have been registered in the circulation of resources, institutional reforms and public spheres. The space of discourse formed by these public welfare actions and social organizations is what we call a civil society. The reason for the idea of civil society to be recognized in this fast changing society is that it is hoped that, on the one hand, it may mobilize the non-governmental forces to take part in the social reconstruction and resolve social problems, on the other hand, it is realized that a sound civil society will not necessarily result in destructive confrontations, but rather will transform into a constructive force that is able to function well interactively with the government, and in the end renew and reshape the human-based Chinese culture. In this sense, it can be seen that the notion of civil society in China is not totally equivalent to its connotations in the Western context. It has been domesticated as an approach or value for the settlement of Chinese problems. In 2008, especially during the relief work after the earthquake struck Sichuan on May 12th and the subsequent reconstruction, the scale effect of the civic actions embodied by the non-governmental public welfare organizations and the vast masses of volunteers was declared by some as the first year of the civil society in China.² Furthermore, the *Blue Book on Civil Society Development in China* published by the Center for Civil Society Studies, Peking University at the end of that year declared that China has already entered the rank of civil societies.³ The development of civil society in China has not only become a focal point in the Chinese social transformation, but is also expected to serve as an important driving force for social transformation.

However, both researchers and practitioners generally recognize that compared to the growth of the state and market, the development of civil society in China is still rather weak. Taking the situation as a whole, the insufficiency of civic social organizations is embodied in the following three aspects: first, insufficiency of resources, second, insufficiency of legal basis, and third, insufficiency of capacity. Faced with these problems, many organizers and actors of civil society operating in the front communities call earnestly for support. And it is due to this fact that supporting agencies for civil society have come into being. Since the end of the last century, these supporting agencies have tried to help civic organizations, especially the grass-root NGOs to build their capacities, which include many forms such as training, consultancy, small-amount loans and aids, symposiums, visits, incubators, creation of and investments in non-profit organizations. Although the corpus of knowledge and sense of values for capacity building in various organizations differ, they exert a significant influence on the civic organizations in different places.⁴

Meanwhile, in the 21st century, with the popularization of the concept of corporate social responsibilities and as more and more businesses and entrepreneurs begin to get themselves

involved in the philanthropic work, they have become interested in cooperating with the civic organizations. Since the May 12th earthquake in Sichuan, an increasing number of businesses and wealthy people have started to set up private funds or foundations, which have resources, but are plagued with the problems of capacity insufficiency. Under this situation, it is not easy for these private foundations to get reliable cooperation partners, and even though such partnerships are forged, their cooperative and supervisory mechanisms are far from being mature. For this reason, the supporting agencies for civic organizations begin to assume the role of intermediaries, linking the party with resources and the party of actors, promoting mutual understanding, exchange and cooperation. Although their strategies and orientations are not necessarily the same, these intermediary agencies have become important catalytic agents that bring the parties together.

In the development of civil society in China, the government has played an important role. It has assumed a paternalistic role towards the civic organizations, offering different administration to different civic organizations. However, this kind of classified administrative pattern, for now, still lacks a clear legal basis, and the processes of policy-making concerning NGOs are not transparent, leaving the civic organizations in a very uncertain political environment. It can be said that on the whole, the government is still at the stage of carefully observing the civic organizations. However, the recently initiated proposals on the construction of civic organizations have given the civic organizations that fall into the service sector more definite support. More and more service oriented NGOs are permitted to register. The industrialization and professionalization of the NGOs are mostly concentrated in this sector. Comparatively speaking, civic organizations that are devoted to safeguarding the rights for people or promoting certain types of ideas are subject to more rigorous government surveillance and control. Thus, many of the supporting agencies, in line with the government attitude, are often aimed at becoming the spokespersons for the civic organizations, attempting to provide consultancy to explain relative government policies, express and report the opinions, views and voices of the civic organizations.

The Institute for Civil Society (ICS) attached to the School of Sociology and Anthropology, Sun Yat-sen University is typically such a kind of supporting agency for civic organizations. Founded in August, 2003, it is a non-profit civil society supporting agency that combines research, experiments and teaching. The focus of its work, firstly on South China, has now gradually expanded to cover North China and Northwest China.

Concretely speaking, in the past six years, the supporting work provided by the ICS falls into the following three categories.

The first category is the study of the promotional work, which aims at producing for the civic organizations tactical knowledge that is conducive to the growth of civil society in China. The ICS stresses action study, aims to promote actions by research findings, and keeps reflecting in actions. The ICS has not only undertaken research projects on non-profit organizations commissioned by the state government ("Project 98.5"), the Ministry of Education and the National Social Sciences Foundation, but also conducted appraisals and studies entrusted by the NGOs and other foundations. On the basis of five years of relevant research, the ICS has gradually developed a set of citizen-based and community-oriented strategies for the civil society to take roots in China. The ICS realizes that the generation of a civil society takes efforts from many sides, and under the guidance of the state human-based strategies, the qualities of citizens not only determine the level of development of the civil society per se, but also decide the extent to which a statesperson can enhance his/her political qualities. Therefore, the ICS comes to see that one of the key issues of the civil society lies in the cultivation of citizen qualities and in the capacity building of civic actors. This is why the ICS has taken the cultivation of citizen qualities as its strategic goal. As the formation of citizen qualities depends on the citizen's face-to-face encounter with other citizens, that is, the community, every day, the ICS regards the building of a sustainable community capable of cultivating the citizens' initiative as the core strategy in constructing the civil society. The ICS believes that such a community construction relies on the fact that actors with citizen qualities could be produced within the community. The ICS also believes that through capacity building, civic actors capable of getting into the community and potential civic actors within the community per se, by offering community services, organizing the community to take part or

cooperate in the building of a sustainable livelihood, ecological environment and cultural life within the community, and formulating a cooperative community governance model, can gradually create a community conducive to the shaping of the citizen initiative, thereby influencing the common folks in the community into generating citizen qualities. This change of community per se can both serve as the root of an indigenous civil society and by expansion and creative duplication, form a healthy social cell that is capable of promoting the socio-political transformation.

Based on this strategy, the ICS regards itself as the supporter for the community actors. This support includes three aspects. Based on this strategic orientation, the ICS has conducted relevant community case studies and NGO case studies. The ICS has selected three communities with typical significances, one in the earthquake disaster area in Sichuan Province, one in Zhabei District in Shanghai, and the other in the Three-River Valley in Yunnan Province, each with the participation of the NGOs and civic actors, for long-term ethnographic-like case studies. The above three communities are either a township or a street neighborhood, and in the communities, there are NGO participation and change of community policies. A comprehensive study, based on the previous research work, was launched at the end of 2008. In 2009, focusing on the theme of post-disaster community reconstruction, the ICS has successively studied 60 individual organizations, completed the research reports on more than 20 relevant organizations, and published a monograph entitled *Responsibilities, Actions and Cooperation* and relevant papers.

The whole research of the ICS is based on the theories of action study, expansion of case studies, and long-term field work. Its research achievements include a monograph of case studies, macro-vision teaching materials and academic papers published in prestigious journals. The ICS also plans to launch an academic journal entitled *Review of Public Life* to examine the actions of civil society.

On this basis, the ICS emphasizes the promotional work based on research findings. This work is divided into two parts. The first part, aimed at the civil society itself, uses appraisals, supportive training and media reviews as its main working approaches. The ICS has opened special civil society columns in such important media as the *Nanfang Metropolis News*, and supports @minjian, an on-line journal. The second part of the work, targeting the government, includes mainly the writing of policy study reports, provision of proposals for government reference and holding or participating in the meetings and conferences that involve government agencies.

The promotional research attempts to influence in general the public discourse and policy-making process. Another important part of the ICS's work is the establishment of a network of actors through civic education. Its core includes the trainings at four different levels: the first is the training of leadership capacity at Huangpu, Guangzhou, and the preliminary training of professional NGO staff in Guangxi, Yunnan, Hunan and other places. The direct result of this kind of training is the establishment of an NGO network in South China. Another level of training is aimed at volunteers and interns. The third is a course called "Citizens, Society and Development" offered at the university, which provides developmental education towards the mainstream of future society. The above three levels of training constitute the main direction of civic education provided by the ICS, with the training of community actors and forming of connections between actors as its core.

Apart from the online activities, in order to further understand the strategy and demonstrate its effect, the ICS has also dedicated itself to community experiments. At present, the ICS, in cooperation with three different NGO organizations, is trying to rebuild the community at the Whitewater River in Dragon Gate Mountain, Sichuan Province. Our idea is mainly to push for the establishment of community public sphere and look for, seek and train relevant actors by building public facilities, constructing public space, and organizing community activities together with the villagers. In May, 2009, the Whitewater River Community Center was set up. Sanheping community, a once nobody-cared community plagued with complaints and sense of abandonment, has turned into a community with great cohesive force and great sense of participation. At present,

the ICS is building another community center and a youth hostel with the protection of ecological system as its theme in a nearby rural community. And it's the plan of the ICS to set up a community college upon that basis. By now, the ICS has completed its stage of service and participation. The next step of its mission is to promote a sustainable livelihood and a three-party cooperative community governance model. This experiment is an explorative process, in which the ICS mainly acts as a planner and researcher. Under the support of the International Association for Sustainable Communities, the ICS has held an International Cooperative Forum on Post-disaster Sustainable Community Reconstruction and run a workshop to train backbone community members, as a kind of support for the eight communities involved in the post-disaster reconstruction experiment. With this as a starting point, the ICS has conducted relevant researches and appraisals.

The ICS tries to take its roots in the communities through its work on the site, on-line and on the surface. For the above three parts of work, the ICS has set up special teams and groups. Their operations prove that the ICS has already become one of the most influential institutes of civil society in South China, and promoted the growth of the NGOs in the whole South China at the same time.

To ensure the above operations, the ICS has tried to incubate a small indigenous non-publicly raised foundation to support the development of sustainable communities, especially the above three tasks. As far as the community experiments are concerned, the foundation will learn the growth pattern of community funds to support the development of the communities involved in the experiments. Regarding the civic education, the foundation will set up corresponding project funds to provide operational expenditures to social innovators and organizations that are potential future leaders. For promotional studies, the foundation will set up a research fund to support studies on the community-driven, non-governmental public welfare organizations and community experiments. At the same time, the foundation will promote the innovation of non-publicly raised funds so as to encourage more and more non-publicly raised funds to support the civic participations in sustainable communities.

The above account of the ICS's work has revealed the mission of the ICS, that is, "through researches, experiments and promotional efforts, explore the development strategies for an indigenous civil society, support the growth of civic organizations, promote the communication and cooperation among the civil society, government and enterprises, and realize the aims of social harmony and social justice." As an active actor of the civil society, the ICS upholds "doing what seems impossible in a down-to-earth manner" as its highest principle, and attempts to construct a civil society "on the basis of citizens, voluntary participation, opening to all sides, and multiple cooperation." This is what the ICS understands as an indigenous civil society.

Notes:

1. Shen Yuan, "Strong Intervention" vs "Weak Intervention: Two Ways of Sociological Intervention", in *Sociology Research*, Vol. 125, 2006.
2. Xu Yongguang, "The First Year of the Civil Society", in *NPO Journal*, Vol. 4, 2008.
3. Gao Bingzhong, Yuan Ruijun, *Blue Book on Civil Society Development in China*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2008.
4. Zhu Jiangang, "Capacity Building of the Civil Society on Mainland China: Theory and Practice", in *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies*, Vol. 47, 2009.
5. Zhu Jiangang, "A Study on the Relations between NGOs and Government in the Process of Social Transitions", in Min-Hsiu Chiang, et al., ed. *The Third Sector and Government: Cross-Sector Governance*, Taiwan: BestWise Co., Ltd., 2008.

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建设本土公民社会：以 ICS 为个案

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二十一世纪面对着一个迅速变革和崛起的中国，一方面市场经济迅速发展，人们物质生活水平普遍提高；另一方面在相对成功地实现经济转型的同时，中国的政治转型却相对固化，出现“转型的定型化”倾向ⁱ。因此，在很长一段时间，很多阶层和群体的权益诉求以及社会发展的议题都难以进入政治议程，社会和环境为此付出沉重的代价。同时，人们也疼感自己精神上的空虚和无力，能够被广泛接受的核心价值观的缺失使得中国还难以成为真正世界性的大国。为了解决这一发展的困境，自上个世纪末以来，社会转型取得出人意外的加速，不但国家提出了和谐社会的建设战略，而且在民间也自下而上涌现了众多的志愿组织以及公益行动，围绕这些志愿组织和公益行动，产生着相应的资源循环、制度变革以及公共领域的扩展。这些公益行动、社会组织以及所形成的话语空间形成了我们所说的公民社会。公民社会的理念在这个急剧变动的社会中之所以得到认可，一方面是因为人们希望它能团结民间的力量参与社会的重建，解决社会问题；另一方面也在于人们认识到健康的公民社会力量并不会形成破坏性对抗，而是有可能转化成为一种与国家良性互动的建设性力量，最终能够更新和重塑中国的民本文化。从这个意义上看，公民社会这一理念已经不完全等同于它在西方情境下的意涵，它开始被本土化为用于解决中国问题的方法乃至价值观。尤其是 2008 年，在 512 地震救灾及灾后重建过程中，民间公益组织及其广大的志愿者所体现的公益行动的规模效应更被人称为是公民社会元年ⁱⁱ，进而北京大学公民社会研究中心在年底发布《中国公民社会蓝皮书》，宣布中国已经进入了公民社会ⁱⁱⁱ。公民社会的发育成为中国社会转型中引入瞩目的焦点，也被期待成为社会转型的重要动力。

不过，无论是研究者还是实务者都普遍承认，相对于国家和市场，中国公民社会的发育还普遍较弱。就整体而言，公民社会组织的不足主要体现在三个方面，一是资源缺乏，二是合法性不足，三是能力不足。面对这些问题，许多在社区一线行动的公民社会组织和行动者亟需得到支持，正因为此，公民社会的支持性机构应运而生，自上个世纪末以来，这些支持性机构针对公民社会组织，尤其是草根 NGO 开展了广泛的能力建设，能力建设涉及到培训、咨询、小额资助、研讨会议、参观、孵化器、公益创投等多种形式。虽然各个机构的能力建

设的知识体系及价值观并不相同，但是却对各地的公民社会组织产生重要影响^{iv}。

与此同时，进入二十一世纪，随着企业社会责任的推广，越来越多的企业以及企业家开始参与到慈善公益事业中来，他们对与公民社会组织的合作产生了兴趣。尤其是 512 地震之后，很多企业以及财富人士开始成立私立的基金会，这些基金会拥有资源，但是也同样面临能力不足的困境，使得它们不容易找到可以支持的合作伙伴，其合作和监督制度也很不成熟。正因为此，公民社会支持机构也开始承担这样的中介，链接资源方和行动方，促进双方的相互了解、交流和合作。虽然各机构作为中介的策略和方向都并不一致，但是它们成为重要的催化剂，促进了双方的接触。

在中国公民社会的发展中，政府扮演着非常重要的作用，它面对社会组织采取的是父权主义模式^v，对于不同的公民社会组织进行不同的管理。但是，这一分类管理模式目前还缺乏明确的法律依据，针对 NGO 的政策过程还不能透明，这就使得公民社会组织处于很不确定的政治环境之中。可以说，政府对于公民社会组织整体上还处于小心翼翼的观察阶段。不过最近提出的社会组织的建设，给服务类的公民社会组织宏观上给予了更明确的支持，许多服务类的 NGO 被允许更多的注册，整个 NGO 的行业化和专业化大部分都集中在这一领域之中，相对而言，维权类型和倡导类型的公民社会组织则受到严密的监管。因此，面对政府，很多公民社会支持机构往往力图成为公民社会的代言机构，为政府相关的政策提供咨询意见，反映公民社会的意见和看法，表达公民社会组织的呼声。

附属于中山大学社会学与人类学学院的公民与社会发展研究中心（简称 ICS）正是这样一种公民社会支持机构，它成立于 2003 年 8 月，是集研究、实验、教学于一体的非营利性公民社会支持机构。其工作地点集中在南中国地区，也逐步扩展到北方和西北地区。

具体来说，在这六年来，ICS 的支持工作集中在三个方面。

首先是研究倡导工作。这一块工作集中在为公民社会组织生产中国本土公民社会发展的策略性知识。ICS 强调行动研究，希望以研究促进行动，又在行动中保持反思。ICS 既承担了国家非营利组织方向的相关 985、教育部和国家社科基金课题，又接受 NGO 与基金会的相关委托开展评估和研究。经过五年的相关研究，ICS 逐步发展出一套以公民为主体的社区导向的公民社会扎根战略。ICS 认识到公民社会的生成需要多方力量共同努力，在国家的民本战略下，公民的素质不但决定公民社会本身的发展水平，而且也决定了政治家的政治素养提升的程度。因此 ICS 认识到公民社会的关键问题之一是公民习性的养成以及公民行动者的能力建设。因此 ICS 将公民素质的培养作为战略目标。而公民习性的形成又依赖于他所朝夕相处的面对面接触的人群生活，这就是社区，因此 ICS 把建立这样的能够培养公民主体性的可

持续社区建设看作是公民社会建设的核心策略。ICS 认为这样的社区建设依赖于社区内部能产生具有公民品格的行动者，ICS 主张通过能力建设使得进入社区的公民行动者和社区自身潜在的公民行动者可以在提供社区服务，组织社区参与，共建社区的可持续生计、生态与文化生活以及形成社区合作治理的路径中，逐步创造有助于公民主体性形成的社区，从而影响和带动社区的普通人生成公民习性。这种社区的改变本身既是本土公民社会的根基，同时又能够通过扩展和创造性复制，形成社会一个个健康的细胞，从而推动社会-政治的转变。

围绕这一策略，ICS 将自己看作社区行动者的支持者，这种支持包括三个方面，正是基于这一战略方向，ICS 开展了相关的社区个案研究和 NGO 个案研究。ICS 选择了三个具有典型意义的有 NGO 和公民行动者参与的社区进行长期的民族志似的个案研究，一个在四川灾区，一个在上海闸北区，另一个在云南三江流域地区，这三个社区以乡镇或街道为单位，社区中都有 NGO 的参与和社区政策的变革，综合研究基于先前的研究基础上于 2008 年底启动。在 2009 年，ICS 集中在灾后社区重建这一主题上，相继调查了 60 个个案组织，完成了对 20 多个组织的相关研究报告，出版了《责任·行动·合作》一书以及相关论文。

ICS 的整个研究基于行动研究的理论，扩展个案研究的方法以及强调长期的田野工作，其研究成果包括个案研究的专著、宏观视野的教材以及在核心期刊上发表的学术论文。中心还将出版《公共生活评论》这一集中讨论公民社会行动的学术期刊。

在此基础上，ICS 侧重在面上开展以研究为基础的倡导工作，其倡导分为两个方面，一个方面是针对公民社会内部，其主要方式是进行评估、支持培训以及媒体评论。ICS 在《南方都市报》等重要媒体上有公民社会专栏，并支持《@民间》这一电子杂志。第二个方面是针对政府，其主要方式是参与写作政策调研报告、提供内参以及举办和参与有政府部门参与的会议。

研究倡导力图在面上影响公共话语以及政策过程。而 ICS 第二块重要的工作是通过公民教育建立相关的行动者网络。其核心是四个层面的培训，一是黄埔公益领导力培训以及支持广西、云南、湖南等地的 NGO 职业人士的初级培训。这个培训的直接影响就是形成了南中国地区的 NGO 网络。二是志愿者和实习生培训。三是大学的《公民、社会与发展》课程，面向未来的社会主流开展相关的发展教育。这三个方面构成 ICS 公民教育的主要方向，核心就是培育社区行动的人才，并形成人才之间的联系。

在网络背后，为了更深入地理解策略和形成示范效果，ICS 还致力于开展社区实验工作，目前着重在四川龙门山白水河社区，和其他三家 NGO 机构一起合作开展社区重建工作，核心概念是和当地村民通过一起修建公共设施，搭建公共空间，组织社区公共活动来推动社区公

共领域的建立以及寻找、发掘和培育相关行动者。2009 年 5 月白水河社区活动中心建成，三合坪社区从一个三不管的充满抱怨和遗弃感的社区成为一个凝聚力强、参与感强的社区。目前 ICS 正在附近的乡村社区建立另一个社区中心及生态主题的青年旅舍。并计划在这个基础上建立社区学院。ICS 已经完成了服务和参与阶段，下一步是推动可持续生计和推动三方共管的合作式社区治理。这个实验是一个边干边学的过程，ICS 在整个实验中承担策划和研究的工作，为此 ICS 在国际可持续社区协会的支持下，举办了灾后可持续社区重建国际合作论坛和社区骨干的工作坊。支持在灾后社区八个社区的重建实验。ICS 以此作为一个渠道，进行相关的研究和评估工作。

通过在点、网和面上的工作，ICS 力图多层次推动自身的社区扎根战略。围绕这三个部分的工作，ICS 建立起完整的团队。经过运作，ICS 目前已经成为南中国地区最有影响的公民社会机构之一，同时 ICS 也推动了整个南中国 NGO 的发展。

ICS 为完成上述行动，力图孵化出一个支持可持续社区发展的本土非公募小型基金会来专门支持上述三方面的工作。在社区实验方面，基金会将学习社区基金的发展模式，力图支持实验社区的社区发展，在公民教育方面，基金会将组建配套项目基金，为具有未来领导者潜质的社会创新家及其组织提供运营经费；在倡导研究方面，基金会建立研究基金，支持有关社区驱动的民间公益组织以及社区实验的研究。同时基金会将倡导非公募基金的创新，使得更多非公募基金能够支持可持续社区方面的民间参与。

以上所叙述的 ICS 的工作，彰显出 ICS 的使命，“通过研究、实验与倡导，探索本土公民社会的发展战略，支持民间组织发展，推动公民社会与政府和企业的沟通与合作，实现社会的和谐公正”。作为公民社会的积极行动者，ICS 奉“脚踏实地，做不可能之事”为主旨，力图建设一个“以民为本、志愿参与、多元开放、多方合作的公民社会”。这正是 ICS 对于本土公民社会的理解。

注释

ⁱ 沈原 2006 “强干预”与“弱干预”，社会学干预的两条途径。《社会学研究》总 125 期。

ⁱⁱ 徐永光 2008 2008，公民社会元年。《NPO 纵横》，4，2008。

ⁱⁱⁱ 高丙中 袁瑞军 2008 《中国公民社会发展蓝皮书》。北京：北京大学出版社。

^{iv} 朱健刚 2009 “大陆公民社会的能力建设：理论与实践”。《台湾社会研究季刊》总 47 期。

^v 朱健刚 2008 “社会转型过程中的 NGO 与政府关系研究”。江明修等主编《第三部门与政府跨部门治理》。台湾：智胜出版社。