Society Building

Society Building:
A China Model of Social Development

Edited by

Xiangqun Chang

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

In memory of Professor Lu Xueyi

and

To everyone who wants to understand
China and the Chinese people

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

LIST OF TABLES

FOREWORD ONE

MARTIN ALBROW

This book is not just about building society or society building, it is a contribution to it. Indeed the main contribution social sciences make to society is to bring to it the consciousness of self that enables self-direction. But which self, which society, do we, social scientists, help to build? If it is China we observe are there not many societies, many selves? – ethnicities, provinces, cities, churches, families, businesses, the Party and parties, inside the territory of the Peoples' Republic and outside, Hong Kong and Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore, London and New York.

It was ever so, not a matter of the territorial boundaries, or even of what a nation state government controls. Wise public policy finds what is creative and productive in society and registers and secures the aspirations of the people while ensuring collective security in the international arena. A society that governments serve builds itself in its own way and there is no universal model. Shigeto Sonoda in this volume illustrates effectively the diversity of attachment populations have towards the regimes of so-called Confucian societies of the Far East.

States supply the frame for very different kinds of society. The constitutional differences between states are minor compared with the profound differences that underpin daily life in say the United States, India, China, Brazil and Iran. These are differences within differences, where the country/city divide takes on a quite different value in each country, where class and ethnic affiliation cross cut occupation and religion differently in each, and all have their characteristic way of handling established and outsiders.

The reader will find in these pages ample recognition of the diversity and complexity of Chinese society in central/local relations, country and city, market and *guanxi*, characteristic diversity, different from diversities elsewhere in the world, as for instance in the *hukou* registration system, and now overlaid by forces of globalization with differential impacts arising precisely out of these differences.

The same production technology will destroy a traditional household structure in one part of the world and create a new one elsewhere. The new

communications technology can lay waste the shopping streets of Western countries and create businesses in Indian villages. Xiangqun Chang's study of a Chinese migrant community in London shows how it can change from being marginal or central to its own self and to the outside under constantly changing social and environmental conditions.[1] In theoretical terms, this is what Laurence Roulleau-Berger calls here the "recodification of grammars of recognition".

The many different kinds of globalization, economic, scientific, technological, informational and recreational have challenged national governments to rethink what is inside and outside their own societies and to redefine the points at which intervention can be effective. In the 1990s when globalization was equated by both Wall Street and its opponents with neo-liberal economic policies, it was fashionable to foresee the end of the nation-state. But it has since become clear, and in this respect China has led the way, that an openness to new products and ideas means national states must become more responsive to changing needs and outlooks in society even as they register and react to the way the wider world is changing. They have to be clearer about their own role. They have to become smarter and more strategic, to match the increasing empowerment of their own people. They will digest outside opinion but this may mean precisely not accepting some universal prescription from outside experts, be it IMF or any others.

The strategic state as the description implies is engaged in finding guiding ideas and, in reflecting on globalization, is bound to examine its own identity in a global society. The very openness of national societies and the interrelations of their own people with others worldwide compel the recognition of a transnational reality to society which goes far beyond old modern conceptions of international relations. I think this is what Flemming Christiansen expresses when he examines how "China is equipped to create growth within a non-imperialist and ecologically cost-neutral scenario".

National governments are local in a global society, but with an autonomous capacity beyond what they allow their own local governments. Globalization may force changes in that respect too but more importantly at the level of global society the imperative for a government is to express a collective identity in a meaningful way that can persuade its own people

---

[1] Editor's note: the contributor withdrew her paper in order to keep Lu Xueyi's advice that this volume be "non-Chinese's work studying Chinese and non-Chinese societies with society building". This paper will be published in a forthcoming volume entitled *How the BRICS' migrants are shaping global society?*

that it has a contribution to make, and in turn they have one too, to the global community of which they are all a part. Were it not for past history of the term we might call this national ideology, which is neither the expression of a class interest, nor an imperialist nationalism.

I think this is implicit in much of what the Chinese government has been seeking to do over recent years and which the scholarly analyses in this book reflect. Parama Sinha Palit's account of the concerted effort to make China both a global education hub and to provide opportunities for education abroad is consistent with ideas of "soft power" but also meets the aspirations of its own families that look beyond national borders. Bettina Gransow proposes that China's infrastructure projects at home and abroad have to meet not just development goals but also need to validate normative ideas of good governance and a harmonious world.

This book then is a snapshot of Chinese steps along a way that national societies everywhere have to tread and which has no inherent endpoint. The society building which is happening is the establishment of China in a developing global society which has already moved beyond old questions of who rules the world or which is the best economic system to ones of how national societies can address global issues that transcend boundaries and on which it is in their common interest to co-operate. If states can find their own way of contributing to these ends, if their peoples are persuaded that there is a commitment by their states to the future welfare of humankind, we may soon recognise building global society as the next stage in China's development.

FOREWORD TWO

LU XUEYI[1]

The Practice of China's Society Building
(*shehui jianshe* 社会建设)

Many countries have undergone a process of modernization. Those that have successfully solved the social problems of the critical transition period have, without exception, carried out social reforms and strengthened society building.

Looking back over the last century, the development of Chinese society experienced four stages. Modern China's democratic revolutionary pioneer Sun Yat-Sen made the initial effort. He coined the conception "society building" (Sun 2011[1917])[2]. Sun regarded society building as a fundamental part of his overall political design. Nearly half a century later, China's Prime Minister Zhou Enlai interpreted "society building" as "four modernizations" (modern agriculture, modern industry, modern defence and modern science and technology) at the third session of the National People's Congress Government Work Report (December 1964). It was anticipated, by the end of the 20th Century, to build China as a powerful socialist country by realizing the four modernizations. After the reform and opening up in 1978 under Deng Xiaoping's regime, China's modernization has been realized along with its remarkable economic achievements. Chinese society has transformed from an agricultural society to an industrial society, from a rural society to an urban society, from a traditional society to a modern society. From the 21st century, China entered an era of globalization. In the 16th and 17th Plenary

---

[1] This Preface was written in Chinese and translated by Feilian Cao in February 2013.

[2] 孙中山：《建国方略》，之三《民权初步 社会建设 》序言，上海：中华书局。2011[1917]年版 (Sun, Yat-sen. 2011[1917], "*Jianguo Fanglue*", *Minquan Chubu Shehui Jianshe*, Shanghai: Zhonghua Shuju) [Sun, Yet-sen. 2011[1917], Preface: the Initial Civil Rights and Society Building, of the Strategy III, *Nation-Building*, Zhonghua Book Company]

Sessions of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2004 and 2007, two major theoretical contributions were made to the party and state's strategic thoughts respectively. These are constructing a socialist harmonious society and "society building" with economic, political, cultural and societal elements.

Nowadays, the process of "society building" spreads widely throughout the nation in order to realize the modernization of society. This is particularly important. In 2010, China became the world's second-largest economy. Its economy has developed, but there is a consequent endless stream of social problems. The imbalance of development between urban and rural regions intensifies, and pressures of population, resources and environment increase. The problems of the close relationship between vital interests, like employment, social security, income distribution, education, health care, housing, production safety, public security, and so on become the more prominent issues. Institutional mechanisms of democracy and the rule of law are not perfect; members of society lack credibility and moral guidance; various social contradictions and conflicts are more prominent. In a few minority areas, where social contradictions have been handled improperly, confrontational conflicts and even mass incidents have evolved. Uncoordinated development of economic and social development has become China's most important contradiction. Delays in social development have become the bottleneck for economic development. In this sense, China has entered a new historical turning point. Society building and achieving society modernization is the strategic focus of this period. Meeting this urgent and arduous task will be China's contribution to global society.

Research into China's Society Building

Sociological studies on society building can be traced back to the 1930s when it was used as a title for a sociological journal *Society Building* in 1933, by Chinese sociologist Sun Benwen. Sun explained that

> "The conception of society building is of various constructions according to the requirement of social environment, and the aspirations of the people. Society building encompasses a wide range, including the cause of common life and quiet happiness of mankind, all of which are the pursuit of society building" (Sun 1935:244)[3].

---

[3] 孙本文:《社会学原理》，北京：商务印书馆。1935年（Sun, Benwen. 1935, *Shehuixue Yuanli*, Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan）[Sun, Benwen. 1935, *The Principle of Sociology*, Beijing: The Commercial Press]

After the founding of the PRC, the people of China engaged in large-scale economic construction, meanwhile launching massive society building embedded in economic, political, and cultural constructions. After the reform and opening up, we identified each such construction in the social area as social development. In recent years, we developed the theories of constructing a socialist harmonious society and society building. This sociological new theoretical achievement is becoming an important component in social science theories with Chinese characteristics.

To me, the connotation of society building is as follows: starting from the reality of the development stage of the society, conforming to the trend of social development, following the law of social development, organized, purposeful and systematic social action, building a fair and reasonable social interest relationship, promoting common well-being among community members, optimizing the structure of society, promoting social harmony and implementing social modernization. In this process, the main drivers of the society building are government, social organizations and civilians. The principle of the society building is fair and just; the goal of the society building is to bring about social harmony and social progress. The requirement for successful society building is the operation of a society safely including social valve construction. The mobilisation system of the society building is to establish a coordination mechanism for various social stratum interests, and to mobilise the people to participate in the society building. The most important method of society building is social management, which is mainly scientific management of aspects of social operations, and which guarantees the operation of social benignity. Therefore, society building is a huge engineering system[4].

Chinese scholars have done massive researches on this aspect in the past years including summaries of experiences, empirical studies, and fundamental theoretical research (see Appendix A). I hope that these achievements will assist the Chinese and foreign scholars who are interested in carrying on more thorough research in this field and applying it outside China.

---

[4] 陆学艺：《关于社会建设的理论和实践》,《国家行政学院学报》, 2008年第11期（Lu, Xueyi. 2008, "*Guanyu Shehui Jianshe de Lilun he Shijian*", *Guojia Xingzheng Xueyuan Xuebao*. No.11) [Lu, Xueyi. 2008, "On Theoretical Studies and Practice of Society Building", *Journal of China National School of Administration* 2]

The globalization of Society Building with Theoretical Studies and Practice

In order to promote the sociology of China and engage sociologists and social scientists globally to apply the concept of society building in studying Chinese and non-Chinese society, I have given worldwide seminars and speeches. For example, at the closing remarks of the Fourth International Forum for Contemporary Chinese Studies (IFCCS4) in the University of Nottingham, I proposed to use society building as the theme of the IFCCS5 and to hold the event at Beijing, which obtained the appreciation of the conference.

On the 7 – 10th Aug 2012, the IFCCS5 entitled "Contending Models for China's Future Development: Society Building and Governance" was held successfully at the Beijing University of Technology, China. More than 200 scholars and PhD students came from the UK, Germany, France, the USA, Australia, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and mainland China. They expounded a fierce discussion around the theme "why should we process society building", "how to make society building work", and "China's future development mode".

The conference analysed the nature of Chinese society from multiple angles with general theories and methods. It gave Chinese domestic scholars an international perspective on work related to social development and society building. It also provided valuable international experience for the future development of China. This book includes the invited and selected papers from the IFCCS5. They are: Professor Thomas Gold's opening speeches entitled "uncertain world mode"; Professor Bettina Gransow's work on the social meaning of the construction of infrastructure in China's society building and management; Professor Flemming Christiansen's in-depth analysis on China's reform; Professor Shigeto Sonoda's analysis on China's future development learnt from the Singapore model; Dr Parama Sinha Palit's comparative study on the significance of the development of education in China and India for their emerging soft power; Professor Laurence Roulleau-Berger's comparative study on the spatial development of Chinese and international cities.

Before ending the Foreword I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr Xiangqun Chang, for her invitation to many foreign scholars to participate in the IFCCS5, her help with the conference and its programme, her presentation of a high quality paper on "How an alternative 'China model' (*Lishang-wanglai* 礼尚往来) can help in understanding the uncertain world", and, in particular, her editing of this unique volume in English.

The IFCCS5 has the extremely important task of raising global awareness of the social problems that China is facing and focusing on China's next stage of development; exploring how the sociological work of "society building" can help to build a balanced and harmonious society in China and elsewhere, and engaging scholars broadly on sociological work with Chinese characteristics to build a global society together. I hope this book on "society building" will be a valued attempt to introduce it to the world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am extremely grateful to all the contributors for their stimulating speeches and talks at the IFCCS5 and insightful papers, which are the inspiration for this volume, and especially for their patience with the delayed publication of their work due to the transition, during the period of editing this volume, from CCPN at LSE to CCPN Global[1]. My personal involvement with this high profile conference and editing this exciting volume has provided me with better understanding of the work produced by the international renowned China experts and scholars.

I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to Professor Martin Albrow and Professor Lu Xueyi for their kind support by writing Forewords for this volume. Sadly, Professor Lu, who initiated the theme of IFSSC5, passed away suddenly on the 13th May 2013. All the contributors of this volume expressed their sincere condolences and respects to him (see Appendix C).

No words could express my gratefulness to some international renowned social scientists and China experts, who wrote endorsements to this book at the extremely short notice requested by the publisher. They are Professors Kerry Brown (University of Sydney), Robin Cohen (University of Oxford), Gary Hamilton (University of Washington), Horst J. Helle (University of Munich), Christopher Howe (University of London), Jonathan Unger (Australian National University), and Zheng Hangsheng (Renmin University of China).

I am in particular grateful to Dr Ellie Mayger who proofread the whole manuscript, Dr Guo Aimin and his students who tidied up the references for each article and all the bibliographies (Appendix A) in accordance with the publisher's House style, Ms Cao Feilian and Associate Professor Xu Haiyan who translated Lu Xueyi's Preface, Appendix A and part III of Appendix C respectively from Chinese to English.

I am in debt to Carol Koulikourdi, Amanda Millar and their colleagues at Cambridge Scholars Publishing, for their encouragement, professional guidance, and in particular for producing this book in time to make it available for the British Sociological Association (BSA) Annual Conference on Changing Society (23-25 April) and the anniversary of the death Professor Lu Xueyi in May 2014.

Last, but not least, I must express my greatest thanks to my beloved husband Thomas and my lovely son Neil. Work-life balance has never been an easy matter for every married person, especially for a woman who wants to continue her social sciences career in a foreign country with a

---

[1] CCPN Global is a UK-based interdisciplinary academic society for studying China and the Chinese from a comparative perspective. Registered Charity No.: 1154640).

non-native language. Without their understanding and support in every possible way, neither my career nor this book would have been possible.

—Xiangqun Chang
CCPN Global, UK
20th December 2013

ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
BFSU	Beijing Foreign Studies University
BSA	British Sociological Association
BJUT	Beijing University of Technology
CARs	Central Asian Republics
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
CCPN	China in Comparative Perspective Network, LSE
CEAIE	China Education Association for International Exchange
CIIDS	China Institute for Innovation & Development Strategy
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conferences
CSA	Chinese Sociological Association
CSC	The China Scholarship Council
EAI	The East Asia Institute
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ELT	English Language Teaching
FLT	Foreign Language Teaching
FOCAC	The Forum on the China-Africa Cooperation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEP	The Leverhulme Centre for Research on Globalization & Economic Policy
HANBAN	The Office of the Chinese Language Council International
HEC	Higher Education Commission of Pakistan.
HRD	Human Resource Development, India
IAIA	International Association of Impact Assessment
ICCR	The Indian Council for Cultural Relations
IGNOU	Indira Gandhi National Open University
IFCCS5	5th International Forum for Contemporary Chinese Studies
IIMs	The Indian Institutes of Managements
IITs	Indian Institutes of Technology
IRRM	Impoverishment Risk and Reconstruction Model
JCSS	Japan-China Sociological Society
LSE	The London School of Economics and Political Science

MARA	Majlis Amanah Rakyat
MIT	The Massachusetts Institute of Technology
MOE	Ministry of Education, China
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCP	National People's Congress
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NKC	The National Knowledge Commission
NYU	New York University
SCO	The Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SCCS	China Policy Institute and Nottingham Confucius Institute
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
SSAP	Social Sciences Academic Press, China
SSM	Social Stratification and Social Mobility
TVEs	Township and Village Enterprises
UoN	The University of Nottingham

INTRODUCTION ONE:
MODELS IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD[1]

THOMAS B. GOLD

Global society continues to change at a furious rate. The year 2012 brought leadership transitions in many parts of the world, through both peaceful and violent means, and many of these continued into 2013. Countries that overthrew their leaders in the 2011 "Arab Spring," such as Egypt and Libya, found it terribly difficult to stabilise their societies and build effective new political and social institutions. The on-going violence in Libya and Syria has repercussions well beyond their own borders, and risks drawing countries geographically quite distant into these bloody and complex struggles with no clear sense of how to extricate themselves. Uncertainty at home and abroad is the rule; the only thing that is certain is uncertainty, which makes it extremely difficult for leaders anywhere to plan ahead.

Different combinations of world leaders meet regularly to try to make sense of these changes at the global and regional levels, as well as within their own borders. They study what they judge to be the relevant experiences of other societies to discern policies that they might try to implement or to avoid at home. The cultures and historical experiences of societies vary so greatly that direct copying or introducing of foreign "models" is fraught with problems. For many reasons, the leaders who participate in these meetings also change, as do the parties and interests they represent as well as the "face" that they present to the rest of the world. This includes their presentations of their guiding principles and goals, both domestic and international. This makes continuity of policy formulation and implementation quite vexatious; again, uncertainty is the norm.

---

[1] Editor's note: This is an opening speech at the 5th International Forum for Contemporary China Studies (IFCCS5), entitled "Contending Models for China's Future Development: Society Building and Governance" in 2012. It has been slightly modified as an introduction to this volume.

China's rapid economic development, sustained almost continuously over more than 30 years, naturally offers a very attractive experience for others to study and learn from. Is this "experience" a "model"? The Chinese leadership itself claims that there is no "model" per se. Rather, the Chinese have "crossed the river by feeling for the stones" (摸着石头过河), periodically summing up their experience, evaluating its achievements and negative consequences, and formulating new policies to move forward. This is not a blueprint that others can follow, other than the idea of providing an environment conducive to experimentation and improvisation, tolerating missteps, and addressing negative consequences, such as income inequality, environmental degradation and corruption, in a forthright and honest way. The Chinese leadership came to the conclusion that there are no real "models" which can be blindly applied across cultures after a long and tortuous path of trying to implement models, such as the Soviet Union's, or to rigidly apply policies without adapting them to local conditions, such as happened in the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution.

I was a student at Fudan University in Shanghai from February 1979 through February 1980, during the very earliest days of the reforms. I was a personal witness to the evolution of this "model that is not a model." It was clear to me then that the leadership at that desperate time had no specific model in mind of what they should do or what a "socialist" China should look like. They knew that the Soviet and Yanan models did not work. They began to study the experiences of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore for ideas, but the main conclusion, as I see it, was that the Party should stop trying to lead absolutely everything and should retrench and let the people at the grassroots have more autonomy to manage their own lives: to choose where they wanted to live, their careers, their beliefs, their taste, who they married, and so on. This opened the door to the flow of people, talent, capital and information across China and from the outside world into China and, more recently, from China to the outside world. China has cast its fate with the developments of global society and this has brought about astounding achievements that everyone can see.

The Party collects data on what has happened, evaluates it in a practical and non-ideologically rigid manner, coming to conclusions about what is permissible and what is not. The definition of what is "permissible" has also continued to change, in oft-unexpected ways. My own research on the rise of private business, starting from the tentative appearance of micro-entrepreneurs (*getihu* 个体户）and the open door to direct foreign investment in the 1980s demonstrates quite clearly how policies changed after careful evaluation, which involved consulting experts at home and