

## CROSS-SECTOR SOCIAL INNOVATIONS

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*A crisis creates malleability, a moment of opportunity to introduce new ideas and to bring changes to the global system, a more propitious set of circumstances for beginning to advance or at least formulate some genuinely interesting proposals, which will have a much more positive reception among global leaders and others than would be the case in more normal times.*

(Malloch-Brown 2009)

**B**oth the emergency rescue effort that saved lives in the aftermath of the Wenchuan earthquake and the reconstruction campaign that took place afterward on the ruins were systematic and highly complex projects that were swiftly implemented. They required close and well-coordinated attention to myriad issues, including agenda setting, capacity building, resource mobilization, and policy implementation. Further, the examples of past responses to such large-scale disasters have taught us that such projects cannot rely merely on the capacity and wisdom of the government; the private sector, volunteers, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) also have an important role to play.<sup>1</sup>

As discussed in the introduction, China's emergency management system, like most public policy systems, is dominated by a top-down scheme. The government plays a central part in the process, whereas regular citizens and NGOs are rarely involved. However, following the devastation of the Wenchuan earthquake, a large number of volunteers, NGOs, corporations, and media organizations eagerly offered an outpouring of help in the form of their time, money, and material supplies, and they were all willing to do their part in helping to relieve the pain experienced in the aftermath of the disaster and in contributing to the reconstruction campaign. In fact, 2008 became

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<sup>1</sup> *Third sector, nonprofit organizations, public welfare organizations, and social organizations essentially mean the same thing as NGOs. In order to highlight the interaction patterns between these organizations and the government, they are uniformly referred to in this chapter as NGOs.*

known as the beginning of China's era of "civil society" and "civilian volunteer activities" (Xu 2008). Amid the tragedy and chaos of the huge earthquake, a modern civil society was born in chronically disaster-afflicted China (He 2009).

The growing role of NGOs in disaster management was promoted by the government in the official Wenchuan recovery and reconstruction plan, in which the principle of *Chuàngxīn jīzhì xiézuò gòngjiàn*—which roughly translates to "establishing a mechanism to integrate government, the private sector, NGOs and the public to cooperate in the recovery"—is central. The plan formally identified NGOs as key partners in the response and reconstruction efforts. Although NGOs supported nearly every area of disaster relief and recovery, including medical aid, finance management, technical expertise, and knowledge provision (Guo 2012), their primary role was to supplement the public service delivery system, so the growth in the operational space and role of NGOs following the Wenchuan earthquake was mainly within this domain.

Unfortunately, the participation of NGOs in disaster management following the Wenchuan earthquake also resulted in some unintended negative consequences. For example, a lack of professional capacity and poor communication with the local people and local governments, as well as an absence of an effective platform for information sharing and collaboration between NGOs and local stakeholders, discouraged local populations from participating with NGOs in the future (Zhang and Yu 2009). A major question related to this issue is how the outsider status of these NGOs complicated their efforts and whether more emphasis should be put on improving the local grassroots capacity within Sichuan.

International disaster management experience has shown that disasters tend to trigger three major changes related to the role of NGOs in society, including increasing their capacity and level of participation, improving public attitudes toward NGOs, and enhancing policies related to NGOs. A typical case is the Hyogoken-Nanbu earthquake that hit the city of Kobe, Japan, in 1995. After the earthquake struck, more than 1.35 million volunteers swarmed into the affected zone to offer assistance. More significantly, a large number of new NGOs blossomed following the disaster, with an efficient collaborative relationship also forming among relevant organizations. In general, most NGOs established in the aftermath of past disasters help to pave the way for a broader role for NGOs in general (Li 2009). For example, because of the impressive performance of Japanese NGOs during the earthquake rescue and relief efforts, the public started to show great appreciation for NGOs as a

whole. Riding on this momentum, in 1998 Japan passed the Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities, which rendered the relevant institutional environment more conducive to the development of the Japanese civil society (Zhang and Yu 2009).

However, the development of proposals into actual institutional reform is a complex, long-term, and dynamic process. Which factors actually give rise to opportunities for NGO participation? Can sustainable institutional changes be effected? To answer these questions, we used a multiple streams framework to conduct in-depth research on and analysis of the central government, local governments, and NGOs based on collaborative surveys. The aim is to explore the drivers of social innovation and also to probe the long-term impact associated with these changes.

## **Literature Overview: Responses to Huge Disasters and Cross-Sector Collaboration**

In analyzing the impact of natural disasters on society, we have found the “crisis approach” identified by Boin and ‘t Hart (2007), which emphasizes the perception of an urgent threat to a way of life or set of values, helpful. This approach is useful because even when responses to natural disasters or major force events are consensus based and emphasize cooperation, conflicts may emerge because of differences in the relevant state or social institutions involved and how they respond to disasters. It’s not hard to perceive the aforementioned situation as an opportunity for structural change (Cuny 1983). The case of Hurricane Katrina vividly demonstrates how, aggravated by low government efficiency and severe social inequality, a somewhat ordinary natural disaster can turn into an appalling social catastrophe (Hartman and Squires 2006).

The inherent characteristics of the disasters themselves usually determine the scope and complexity of the response. W. L. Waugh (1994) points out that the first-response efforts would determine the success or failure of the whole response operation and also enable the prediction of the entire cost incurred during the recovery.

The appropriate party to lead the rescue or relief efforts has been a topic for heated debate in both academic circles and in actual practice. Academic research tends to focus on the coordination measures and interactions employed by government systems. Clary (1985) points out that emergency management in the United States attaches special importance to the functions of localities and their role as first responders during disaster. However,

government bodies at the county and city level are expected to shoulder the direct responsibility of emergency management, while government bodies at the state and federal level come into the picture only in the event of extenuating circumstances that exceed local disaster management capacity and which are predetermined by existing disaster management policy.

Japan has a well-developed and meticulously designed coordination mechanism for emergency response, the most defining feature of which is a tailor-made emergency management approach; that is, different emergency response agencies and operational mechanisms have been established to address different types of disasters (Wu 2005). Russia, by contrast, relies more on the power of the president and the Security Council of the Russian Federation to conduct its emergency management procedures.

Hurricane Katrina, which hit the United States in 2005, has caused people to question the prevailing model of emergency management. The federal government proved excruciatingly slow in its response to the hurricane, with its government-centered crisis management system nearly paralyzed by the disaster. This has prompted people to shift the focus of research to multiparty collaboration. As an important disaster response actor in the event of market failures and government failures, NGOs' participation in emergency response efforts has been attracting more and more attention.

Kapucu (2005) proposes the concept of "interorganizational networks," using the Dynamic Network Theory and the Complex Adaptive Systems Theory to shed light on the importance of an interorganizational network among government, private sector, and NGO actors. This type of network serves to maximize emergency management's efficiency. In responding to complicated social problems such as those caused by major natural disasters, we are always beset with a series of difficult situations ranging from government failure to market failure to a lack of volunteers. It is at moments like these that cross-sector collaborations—that is, collaborations that involve some combination of public, private, or civil-society actors—are expected to break down the ever-eroding borders between different types of organizations to arrive at optimal solutions.

This kind of interorganizational collaboration implies the formation of a networked and dynamic public management framework involving multiple parties such as government agencies, the private sector, and NGOs, as well as communities (Bryson, Crosby, and Stone 2006). Simo and Bies (2007) apply the cross-sector collaborative framework proposed by Crosby to the field of disaster response. They use empirical research related to Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita to assert that the establishment of a cross-sector

collaborative framework—comprising NGOs and other parties involved in disaster response—can help realize public values and prevent failures to which agencies working alone are typically prone. In fact, this measure has also proved exceptionally effective in addressing the severe lack of public services typical in the post-disaster phase.

China is a disaster-prone country, with more than 70 percent of its cities and more than 50 percent of its population distributed in areas vulnerable to meteorological, seismic, geological, or oceanographic disasters (China, Ministry of Civil Affairs, Department of Disaster Relief 2008). Disaster response has always been an important part of the country's national public governance system. However, because China's bureaucratic assessment system has traditionally measured performance according to short-term goals, its disaster management posture has been fairly shortsighted, and policymakers tended to place more emphasis on rescue and relief efforts. Especially during China's recent rapid economic growth, the losses caused by disasters typically have not seriously compromised its fast-growing economy.

In the past, top-down political mobilization and post-disaster centralized command served as the nation's main coping mechanism. In the meantime, bottom-up social organizational capability failed to materialize in China. As a result, the local governments lacked initiative, and civil society was virtually nonexistent, leading to a paradigm in which the central government served as the main actor in emergency response.

China's response to SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) in 2003 marked an important turning point in China's disaster management history as the whole of Chinese society began to realize the government's limited ability to manage public crises. As an overall planner and allocator of public resources, the government is not omnipotent; it needs to establish new governing structures in consideration of the definition, characteristics, phases, motivating factors and status of modern crisis management (Xue and Zhang 2003). Effective crisis management requires the government to consolidate its forces at all levels, including those of social organizations, and also to mobilize all kinds of social resources (Zhang 2003).

NGOs can play an important role in mobilizing and allocating social resources during the response to a crisis. However, the underdeveloped nature of China's NGOs and low level of participation in them seriously undermine their functionality (Deng 2003). China should pay more attention to cultivating and developing social forces during crisis responses (Mao 2003).

To this end, the country unveiled in recent years a series of laws and regulations containing stipulations that explicitly encourage the participation

of NGOs or volunteers. For instance, the Emergency Response Law of the People's Republic of China stipulates that "citizens, legal persons and other organizations shall be obligated to participate in responding to emergencies"; and "the State encourages citizens, legal persons and other organizations to provide materials, funds and technical support and make donations to the people's governments for the work needed in responding to emergencies" (China, Standing Committee of the 10th National People's Congress 2007).

The National Emergency Relief Plan on Natural Disaster also explicitly points out that "in terms of working principles, such diverse parties as citizens, grassroots self-governing organizations and social welfare groups shall be allowed to play their respective roles"; "due efforts shall be made to cultivate and develop NGOs and volunteer teams, whose roles shall also be brought into full play"; "the civil affairs departments at the provincial, prefecture and city levels shall organize professional training sessions at least once annually for county-level and township-level civil affair assistants; and shall also organize training programs on an irregular basis for responsible officials of relevant government agencies, all kinds of professional emergency rescue teams, NGOs and volunteers" (NCDR 2006).

The Overall National Public Emergency Contingency Plan also explicitly proposes that "all kinds of social forces including social groups, business enterprises, public service institutions and volunteers shall be encouraged to participate in emergency rescue work" (China, State Council 2005). However, previous social participation has unfortunately been heavily dictated by governmental connections, resulting in not just limited participation but also an inordinate representation of NGOs possessing ties to the government.

The development of NGOs in China before the Wenchuan earthquake struck can be measured by their effectiveness in public service provision and their social autonomy. Regarding service provision, the government remained the main provider of public products, while NGOs gradually wedged their way onto the scene and started to demonstrate their strengths, which included growing professionalism, specialization, and agility. Nevertheless, NGOs cannot compare to the government in terms of both power and scale. As independent entities committed to social autonomy, NGOs are also found to be ineffective in public policy advocacy. In this respect, their true potential to catch up with the government in their capacity as independent entities remains to be fully tapped (Zhang and Yu 2009).

Table 4.1 lists NGOs' roles in massive disasters in China prior to the Wenchuan earthquake.

**TABLE 4.1** NGOs' disaster response prior to the Wenchuan earthquake

Event	Level of NGO Participation	Characteristics
1976 Tangshan earthquake	NGOs did not participate, and international aid was also rejected.	A government-led, civil-mobilization-based response
1998 Yangtze River floods	The Red Cross Society of China participated fully in the rescue and relief work and accepted RMB 323.27 million's worth of international aid and RMB 670 million's worth of domestic donations of funds and goods. More than 9,000 medical volunteer teams were sent to the affected areas, in collaboration with public health authorities at all levels, to carry out quarantine measures and disease prevention.	A disaster response in which only a small number of NGOs, predominantly GONGOs, participated
2003 SARS outbreak	The China Charity Federation, the China Association of Social Workers, the Red Cross Society of China, and the China Women's Development Foundation jointly advocated that aid be given to frontline medical workers and impoverished relatives of patients. What is noteworthy is that some grassroots organizations such as centers of social work facilitators also spearheaded initiatives aimed at helping vagrant children and migrant construction workers fend off SARS. Some volunteers also participated on their own initiative.	NGOs, though still predominantly GONGOs, started to get involved in a limited manner, with grassroots NGOs also participating to some extent. However, because of a lack of organizational methods beyond government sponsorship, the scale and level of donations by corporations and individuals and the participation of volunteers were far from ideal. (The government designated the Red Cross Society of China and the China Charity Federation as the main channels for receiving donations.)
2008 Chinese winter storms	In addition to some traditional GONGOs such as the Red Cross Society of China, the China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation, and the China Charity Federation, some grassroots NGOs also started to play an active role in disaster response processes. For instance, eight Guizhou-based NGOs, including the Guizhou Institute of Highland Development, formed the Guizhou Volunteer Rescue Team, in which the Jet Li One Foundation Project swiftly invested RMB 950,000, and certain international NGOs, including World Vision, also carried out relief work in Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County.	NGOs started to play a significant role in disaster response, with a multiparty response model also developing. However, the scale and effect of participation remained limited.

**Source:** Zhang (2015).

**Note:** GONGO = government-organized nongovernmental organization.



What factors are likely to provide opportunities for NGO participation and thereby facilitate cross-sector collaborations in responding to disasters? The cross-sector collaboration framework for post-disaster response was significantly improved by Gloria Simo and Angela L. Bies (2007). Simo and Bies identify how cross-sector collaboration during extreme events contributes crucial elements to a successful response process. These crucial elements include organizational capacity and individual and prosocial behaviors. However, the Simo and Bies conceptualization fails to delineate the dynamic aspects of the process, including the extent to which institutional actors are shaped by their experience with the collaboration mechanism. This mechanism represents an important factor in determining whether or not relevant disaster response mechanisms can be sustained and institutionalized.

In exploring this issue, an evaluation of the disaster response work following the Wenchuan earthquake might be instructive. The Wenchuan crisis is significant not only because it influenced changes in strategies for coping with disaster but also because it serves as a reminder of the important role played by NGOs and the new paradigm for collaboration between the government and NGOs. Effective crisis management requires collaborative partnerships to be formed among the government, civil society, corporations, the international community, and international organizations (Zhang 2003).

This chapter presents a panoramic review of the heightened participation by volunteers, NGOs, and other civil society members during the Wenchuan earthquake response. It also seeks to outline how the model for post-disaster collaboration between NGOs and local governments—a model based on the changing state-society dynamic—has evolved (Teets 2009). Examining this model illuminates how an opening has emerged for collaborations among the public, private, and civil society sectors in the post-disaster phase. In addition, the chapter sets out to identify and discuss those influences that led to the cross-sector collaboration mechanism being institutionalized.

## **Research Methods and Data Sources**

Thrust into a leadership role, or voluntarily playing such a role, to fill in the gaps in available services caused by local, state, and federal administrative failures, nonprofit organizations frequently respond to crises by forming or engaging in collaborative activities. This approach is by no means new (Agranoff and Pattakos 1979), but it is groundbreaking and of great significance as far as China's institutional environment is concerned.



This chapter reviews the cross-sector collaboration paradigm formed in the aftermath of the Wenchuan earthquake and analyzes the trajectory of changes in the behaviors of major actors such as the central government, local governments, and NGOs. A multiple-streams framework of public policy processes is employed to explore the institutional causes of such a window of opportunity's emergence. This approach will help shed light on the factors that influence the changes in cross-sector collaboration mechanisms.

The data come primarily from on-site observations, analysis of available literature and research, structured interviews, and large-sample questionnaire surveys the author and his research team have conducted in areas affected by the Sichuan earthquake since 2008. In 2012 we conducted two tracking surveys on NGO participation. The first one was conducted on 263 NGOs that participated in the earthquake rescue and relief work in 2008: the service entry information for 129 were studied, and 74 of these NGOs were selected for organized structured interviews.

The second survey was conducted in 2009 and focused on the participation of NGOs in reconstruction campaigns in affected areas. This survey included 28 NGOs (20 Chinese-mainland-based NGOs; 4 Hong Kong/Macao/Taiwan-based NGOs; 3 international NGOs; and 1 collaboratively established organization) and involved interviews with the heads of these organizations. Given the informal and poorly monitored nature of NGO participation, the first stage of participant selection was simply based on involving as many NGOs as possible. In the meantime, we also consulted with or conducted interviews with relevant policymakers in the central government and the leading cadres within relevant local governments.

This chapter also uses the data of the "Survey on the Needs of Residents during the Reconstruction Campaign Following the Sichuan Wenchuan Earthquake" (2010) conducted by the School of Social Development and Public Policy of Beijing Normal University. The survey adopted a stratified sampling method, with sampling conducted on earthquake-affected residents in the Mianyang area at four levels: the county/city level, township level, village level, and household level. The subjects sampled at each level were first ranked based on economic status, and then an equal number of samples were selected among subjects of high economic standing, subjects of medium economic standing, and subjects of low economic standing. Finally, a total of 733 affected residents were surveyed, yielding 730 effective subjects, 68.4 percent of whom were male and 31.6 percent of whom were female.

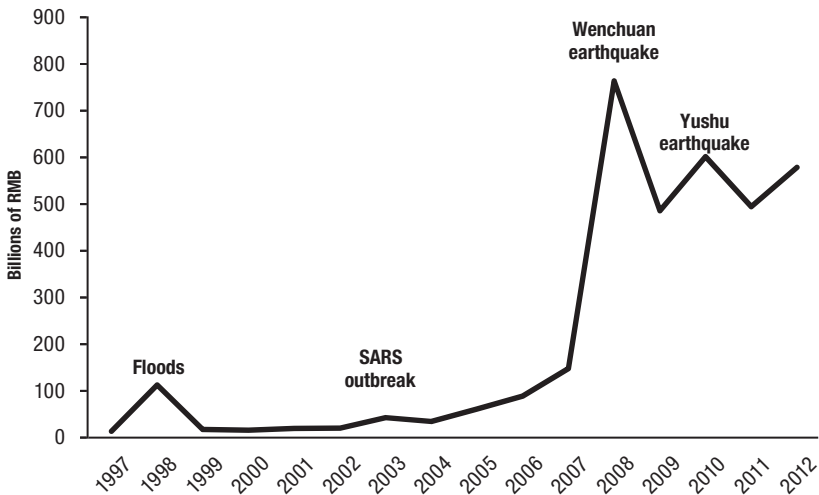
## **Panoramic Review: Cross-Sector Collaborations in Response to the Wenchuan Earthquake**

Autonomous social participation reached its peak following the Wenchuan earthquake. Take donations for instance: survey results indicate that a total of RMB 107.05 billion was received (including monetary and in-kind donations) in 2008, registering an annual growth rate of 515 percent over 2007 (for a different assessment of donation amounts that uses government statistics, see Figure 4.1). The first volunteers who entered the earthquake-affected zone to offer help (on May 13 and 14, 2008) were mainly self-initiated/self-organized volunteers (Tan 2008). (Note that the “volunteers” mentioned herein are both registered members of all types of NGOs/volunteer groups and self-organized/self-initiated volunteers.) According to the Sichuan Provincial Civil Affairs Department, more than 150,000 volunteers from within the province either directly participated in rescue and relief work or provided services to armed forces engaged in disaster relief as well as to earthquake victims (Bian, Wang, and Wang 2011).

The number of volunteers who set out to help with rescue and relief work in the zone affected by the Sichuan earthquake totaled 1.3 million (Deng 2009). The Working Committee of Volunteers of the China Association of Social Workers estimate that, in areas outside of the earthquake-affected zone, the number of volunteers participating in boosting Wenchuan earthquake awareness, raising donations, and moving earthquake relief materials exceeded 10 million. The value of the services provided by all volunteers is estimated to have reached a whopping RMB 16.5 billion (China Charity and Donation Information Center 2008).

In responding to one of the most destructive natural disasters in China and one of the world’s most devastating disasters in recent years, volunteers and local quake victims played a significant role. More than 87,000 people were rescued from the earthquake, some 70,000 of whom were self-rescued or mutually rescued (Qu 2007).

During the period of heightened social participation following the Sichuan earthquake, NGOs became an important resource facilitator binding together all relevant parties, and they also directly promoted the formation of a post-disaster cross-sector collaborative paradigm between the government and society as a whole. The sections that follow describe the work conducted by NGOs and the roles they played during the Wenchuan earthquake’s emergency rescue phase, as well as during the post-earthquake reconstruction phase.

**FIGURE 4.1** Social donations in China, 1997–2012

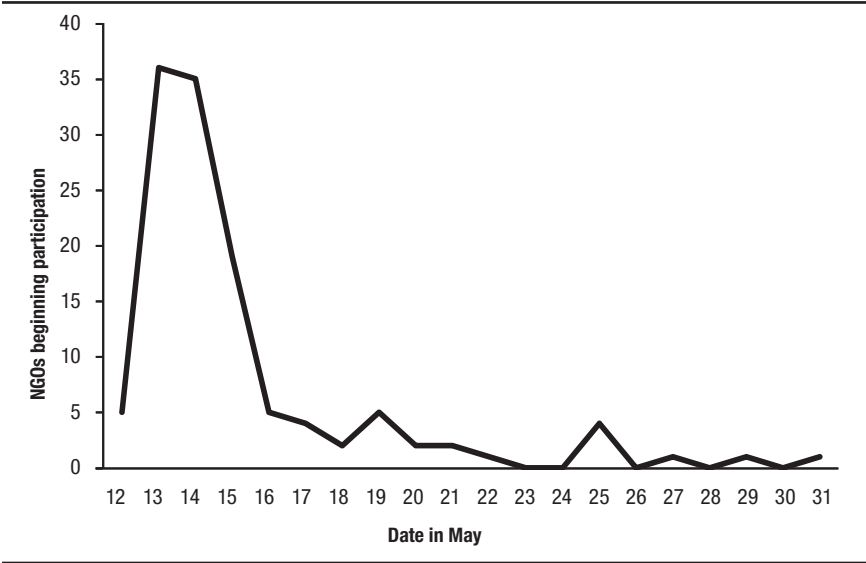
Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (2013).

### Emergency Rescue Phase

According to the Sichuan Provincial Civil Affairs Department, after the May 12 Wenchuan earthquake occurred, more than 6,000 nonprofit organizations from within the province participated directly or indirectly in the rescue and relief work. Of these, 2,456 nonprofit organizations directly participated in rescue and relief work, providing services to armed forces personnel engaged in disaster relief as well as aid to earthquake victims. More than 5,600 nonprofit organizations issued calls for disaster relief donations and raised a total of RMB 2.62 billion in cash and RMB 1.66 billion in supplies. More than 300 nonprofit organizations also participated in the first-responder relief task forces that went to the affected areas to save lives, treat the injured, evacuate victims, and transport aid supplies. They helped rescue or treat more than 170,000 injured victims, aided more than 300,000 quake victims, established 32 settlements for victims, and evacuated more than 120,000 victims (Bian, Wang, and Wang 2011).

We tracked 263 NGOs that participated in rescue and relief work, and we researched the service entry information of 137 organizations. Figure 4.2 shows the results for 129 of those organizations (8 organizations are not covered in Figure 4.2 because they entered affected areas after the month of May). The

**FIGURE 4.2** NGOs beginning participation in earthquake relief operations, May 12 to May 31, 2008



**Source:** Zhang et al. (2008)

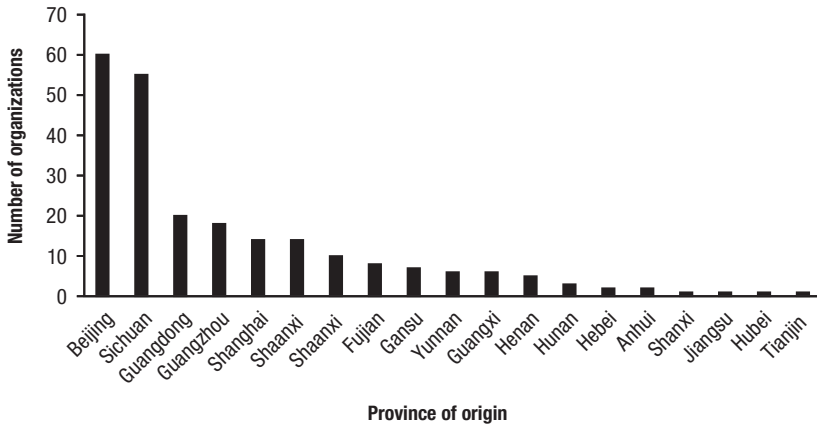
**Note:** NGOs = nongovernmental organizations.

horizontal axis denotes pertinent dates in May, while the vertical axis signifies the number of NGOs starting work in the quake-affected zone on each of those days.

Figure 4.2 shows that NGOs were extraordinarily quick in responding to the earthquake. Their swift reaction is also reflected in the prompt establishment of a collaborative operational network for NGOs. As one news report described it, “Almost immediately after the earthquake struck, NGOs throughout the country promptly rallied their forces and initiated mutual collaborations in offering aid and help to the earthquake zone.” (Figure 4.3 shows their geographic origins.) On the second day after the earthquake, Chengdu Urban Rivers Association initiated prompt negotiations with NGOs and volunteer groups in such diverse places as Chengdu, Beijing, Guizhou, Shanghai, and Yunnan and established the 5/12 Nongovernmental Aid Service Center. Its purpose was to offer aid information to interested NGOs and volunteers to ensure a smooth rescue operation and effective relief work.

On the same day, more than 40 informal NGOs from within Sichuan Province and other places such as Yunnan and Guizhou jointly issued calls for nongovernmental aid, attracting more than 100 NGOs to participate in the cause. On May 14, the NGO Collaborative Office for Sichuan Earthquake

**FIGURE 4.3** Geographic origins of organizations conducting rescue and relief work in Sichuan



**Source:** Chen et al. (2008).

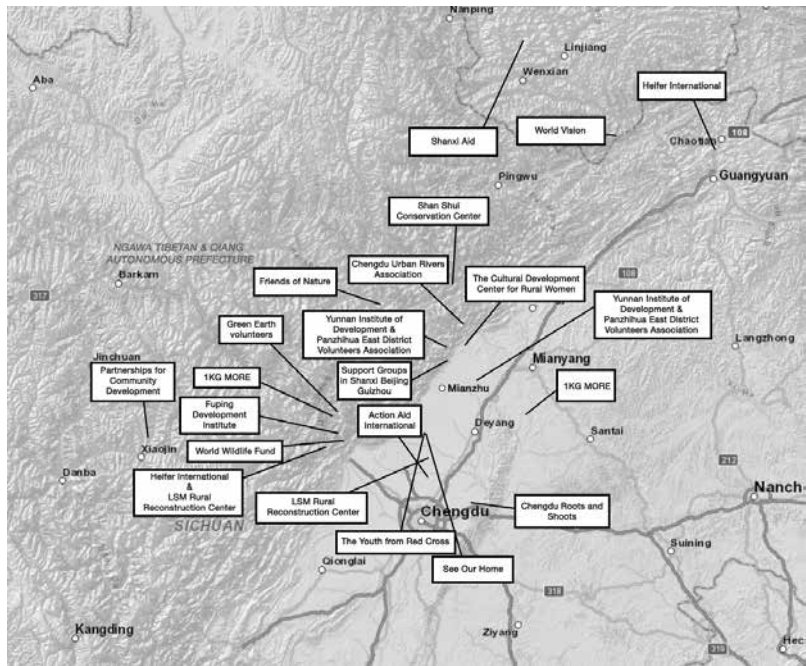
**Notes:** The data are based on a study of 234 responses out of 263 surveyed NGOs that were conducting rescue and relief work locally; some NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) offered their services in two or more places.

Rescue and Relief was set up in Chengdu; it subsequently went into operation at the office of the Roots and Shoots Environmental Culture Exchange Center. Figure 4.4 shows that in the earthquake-affected zone, volunteers and nongovernmental welfare organizations were active throughout the most heavily affected areas in Sichuan, including Chengdu, Ngawa Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Deyang, Mianyang, and Guangyuan. Outside of the affected areas, nongovernmental welfare organizations in more than 10 provinces and municipalities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Guizhou, Guangdong, and Xiamen, launched active aid campaigns that offered supplies and monetary donations to the affected areas and provided information and technical support as well as volunteers.

Figure 4.5 breaks down NGOs by type and shows that grassroots organizations constitute a significant share. Among the types of NGOs shown, the “duly-registered enterprises,” “pre-existing unregistered NGOs,” and “individual-driven organizations” (organizations that are run by a limited number of people and lack a clear governance structure), are actually rather typical grassroots NGOs.

During the emergency response phase, NGOs provided services mainly in four ways. The first way is to provide monetary aid and supplies; Figure 4.6

**FIGURE 4.4** Geographic distribution of some NGOs providing services to areas heavily affected by the Sichuan earthquake



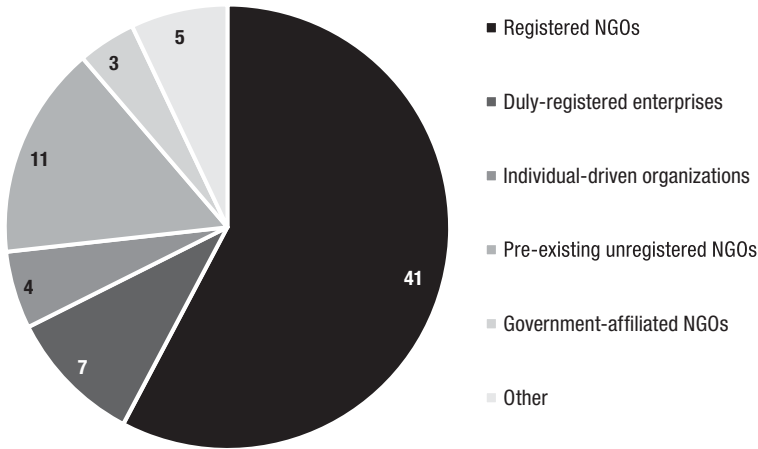
**Sources:** Map from National Geographic's MapMaker Interactive; data from the Centre for Civil Society Studies, the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and the Institute for Civil Society (ICS) of Sun Yatsen University (n.d.).

**Note:** NGOs = nongovernmental organizations

shows that more than two-thirds of the participating organizations donated money and supplies. The second way is to provide specialized services and aid on the spot and to collaborate with the government in enhancing awareness and issuing calls for action. The third way is to provide technical support and information. The fourth way is to coordinate and manage the work of volunteers and provide them with specialized training (Zhang et al. 2008, “Research on the Mechanism of NGO Participation in Rescue and Relief Work”).

During the earthquake rescue and relief process, some organizations temporarily shifted their services from those they specialize in to those the earthquake-affected areas needed most urgently. Surveys and investigations also discovered that though many NGOs specialize in fields other than disaster rescue and relief, they nonetheless actively participated in rescue and relief work, a tendency most obvious among several local NGOs (Han and Ji 2008).

**FIGURE 4.5** NGOs participating in rescue and relief work during the emergency response phase after the Sichuan earthquake, by type



**Source:** Zhang et al. (2008).

**Note:** NGOs = nongovernmental organizations. Data shown here cover 71 organizations that provided relevant information. Individual-driven "organizations" are organizations that are run by a very limited number of people and a lack of clear governance structure.

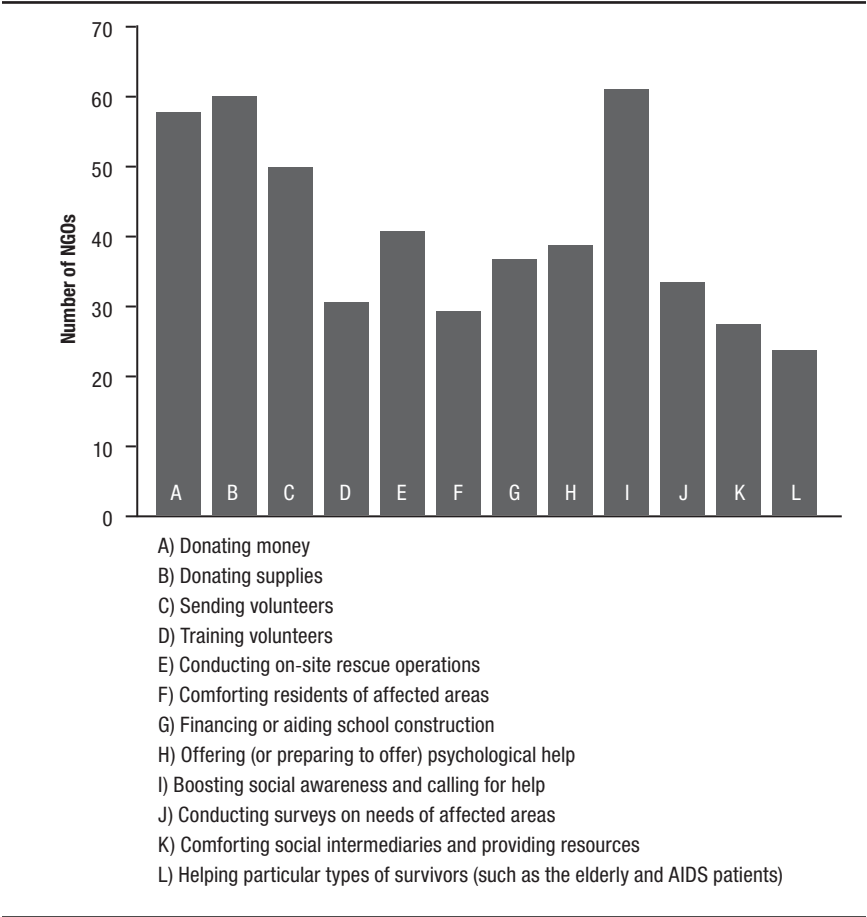
A 2008 survey conducted by the Chinese Academy of Science and Technology for Development on social capital in Sichuan earthquake-affected areas shows that among the local participants in public welfare activities, the highest proportion, 67.9 percent, consisted of civilian voluntary organizations. Researchers on social capital also stress that the active participation of local civilian voluntary organizations and social forces (including NGOs) had become a highlight of the local public welfare cause. This demonstrates and reaffirms a basic feature of civil society, that is, voluntary social participation (Zhao, Deng, and Li 2010).

### Post-Earthquake Reconstruction Phase

On June 8, 2008, the State Council promulgated the Regulations on Post-Wenchuan Earthquake Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, which stipulates six principles that were to be followed in earthquake zone rehabilitation and reconstruction. The second principle was that "the strategy of combining a government-led approach and social participation shall be adopted." Thus, NGOs were acknowledged as an important social participation force and became legally permitted to participate in the reconstruction of earthquake-affected areas.



**FIGURE 4.6** NGOs by type of work conducted during the emergency response phase after the Sichuan earthquake



**Source:** Zhang et al. (2008).

**Note:** NGOs = nongovernmental organizations. The data shown here cover 74 NGOs that provided relevant information.

Evidence shows that in addition to sending rescue and relief forces to the quake-affected zone at the earliest possible time after the earthquake hit, NGOs also became highly active in all aspects of the government-led post-earthquake reconstruction campaign, playing a critical role in rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. Additionally, relevant foreign experiences demonstrate that highly specialized NGOs not only can play a significant role in rescue and relief efforts by taking advantage of their specialized knowledge

**FIGURE 4.7** NGOs operating during the post-earthquake reconstruction phase, by type

**Source:** Zhang and Yu (2009).

**Notes:** NGO = nongovernmental organization; data shown here cover 28 representative NGOs.

and expertise, but they can also be vitally helpful in terms of post-disaster reconstruction.

With services spanning numerous areas in post-earthquake reconstruction, NGOs mainly provided assistance in the following fields: housing reconstruction, medical care and health, livelihood development, environmental protection, psychological reconstruction, education development, cultural preservation, and resources support (Zhang and Yu 2009). The present author conducted both in-depth, on-site surveys and structured interviews with 28 selected organizations that are representative of NGOs that carried out the above-mentioned functions. Twenty of them were established before the May 12 earthquake, five of them were established during the emergency response phase (May 12 to June 8), and three of them were established during the post-earthquake reconstruction phase (June 9 and after). Figure 4.7 shows the organizations by type.

NGOs also played a crucial role during the post-earthquake reconstruction phase by providing an array of public services to meet medical, psychological, cultural, educational, and reconstruction needs (See Table 4.2). In government-led infrastructure reconstruction projects, such as housing reconstruction and school campus reconstruction, NGOs were well positioned to exploit their advantages in offering personalized services. They were capable of identifying and incorporating local cultural characteristics and better meeting the needs of local residents.

In terms of the provision of intangible public services such as psychological and physical rehabilitation, NGOs also played a significant role, because the

**TABLE 4.2** Main functions of NGOs in post–Wenchuan earthquake reconstruction

Field	Function	Representative Organization	Problems and Challenges
Housing reconstruction	Financial support	The Caring for Children Foundation	Earthquake victims have credit problems Difficulties in coordinating interests Difficulties in working with the government
	Technical guidance	Mianzhu Livelihood Cooperative	
	Direct participation in rebuilding activities	Habitat for Humanity China	
Medical care and health	Services for the disabled	Eden Social Welfare Foundation	Earthquake victims being too conservative High costs Difficulties in integrating local resources
	AIDS prevention and treatment	Chengdu Tongle Health Counseling Service Center	
		Aibai Chengdu LGBT Youth Center	
Livelihood development	Full services for projects	Liangshan Yi Empowerment Center	Shortages of funds and techniques Earthquake victims being uncooperative
		Wild Grass Cultural Communication Center	
		China Social Entrepreneur Foundation	
		NGO Disaster Preparedness Center	
Environmental protection	Combination of environmental protection and livelihood development	Shanshui Conservation Center	Earthquake victims being too conservative Insufficient resources
		Wild Grass Cultural Communication Center	
Psychological reconstruction	Professional psychological perspective	Mianyang Project, Jiangsu Volunteer Service Psychological Aid Team Aibai Chengdu LGBT Youth Center	Insufficient professional techniques Earthquake victims being too conservative
	Perspective of professional social workers	NGO Disaster Preparedness Center Aide et Action (AEA)	
		Horizon Education Center of China China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation Liangshan Yi Empowerment Center	

(continued)

government had long been unable to meet the needs of these areas even before the earthquake hit. NGOs boast professional advantages over the government in those fields. More importantly, the bottom-up participation model embodied by NGOs also motivated the voluntary participation of earthquake victims.

NGOs are well positioned to establish platforms for coordinating resources, set up community service centers, and provide personalized care for the disabled, the widowed, and the elderly within communities and help them rebuild their lives. They can further consolidate community resources and

Field	Function	Representative Organization	Problems and Challenges
Education development	Financing for school construction	China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation The Caring for Children Foundation China Social Entrepreneur Foundation Aide et Action (AEA)	No prominent problems
	Financial assistance and other aid for children	NGO Disaster Preparedness Center Aide et Action (AEA)	
Cultural preservation	Assistance in developing ethnic-style products for the improvement of livelihood	Liangshan Yi Empowerment Center  Tibetan-Qiang Association of Technology-Driven Poverty Alleviation & Development	Resource deficiency
	Financial support	China Social Entrepreneur Foundation NGO Disaster Preparedness Center	
Resources support	Information platform	Zundao Township Social Resources Coordination Office 5/12 Nongovernmental Assistance Center www.51gongyi.org	Deficient NGO capability Insufficient collaboration among NGOs
	Consultancy service	Chengdu Tongle Health Counseling Service Center	

**Source:** Zhang and Yu (2009).

combine livelihood development with social reconstruction by offering community services, and they can tap the full potential of community residents, and growing grassroots democracy, through the organization of participatory activities of all kinds.

The collaboration between such NGOs as the China Social Entrepreneur Foundation and the Mianzhu government is representative in that tangible operating bodies have been established. The adopted collaborative mechanism also consistently showed signs of improvement and expanded in the ensuing three years. From organizations such as Zundao Township Volunteers Coordination Office to Zundao Township Social Resources Coordination Office to Mianzhu Social Resources Coordination Office to Mianzhu Public Welfare Joint Conference, a new, trailblazing model for government–NGO collaboration, known as the Mianzhu model, has been aggressively explored.

This exploration of collaboration models has contributed enormously to the post-earthquake reconstruction campaign of Mianzhu city (Bian, Wang, and Wang 2011). The formation of the Mianzhu model has demonstrated

that in response to the Wenchuan earthquake, the degree of NGO participation has reached such a point that the relationship between the government and NGOs evolved from a supplementary and complementary relationship to an adversarial relationship at the social self-governance level. In other words, NGOs prod the government into formulating and adjusting public policies so as to ensure that it must itself be held accountable to the public. On the other hand, the government can influence the behavior of NGOs by regulating their services and by being more or less responsive to their requests (Young 1990).

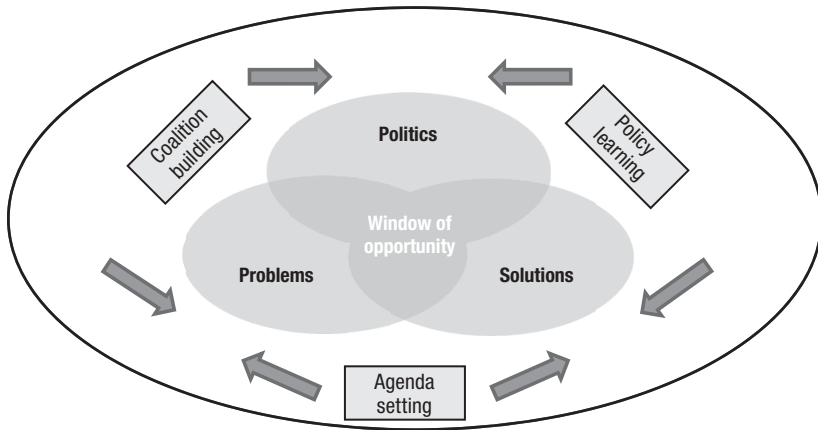
### **Opening of a Window of Opportunity: A Multiple-Streams Analytical Framework**

The panoramic review presented above makes it clear that a collaborative governance model between the government and social organizations has emerged in response to the Wenchuan earthquake, resulting in policy changes at some levels (relevant documents issued by the central government prescribe the strategy of combining a government-led approach with social participation, with local governments also piloting self-dependent policy innovations such as the Mianzhu model).

What gives rise to such a variety of cross-sector collaborations that involve NGO participation on a large scale and draw attention to social needs at the grassroots level? How can we begin to comprehend the driving force behind such a policy change phenomenon? Currently, in analyzing and rationalizing policy change, some classic policy change theories have already formed in academic circles. These theories include the multiple-streams framework, the punctuated equilibrium theory, and the advocacy coalition framework. In order to delineate the dynamic complexity of the policy change process, the evolutionary theory has also been adopted as a basic theoretical framework (John 2003).

To better illuminate policy changes that take place in huge disaster scenarios, the present research adopts the multiple-streams framework with a view to understanding the driving mechanism behind the changes. This policy process model was first proposed by American public policy expert Kingdon, who believed that “if an item is put on an agenda, it is the result of the confluence of multiple factors interacting at a particular moment, not of any individual factor acting alone” (Kingdon 1995). This kind of interaction represents the confluence of the “problem stream,” the “policy stream,” and the “political stream.”

The problem stream contains all kinds of information the government must pay attention to and address; the policy stream contains various types of

**FIGURE 4.8** Theoretical framework for the transformation of knowledge into policy actions

Source: Adapted from Ashford et al. (2006).

policy suggestions, propositions, and plans; and the political stream contains such factors as public mood, public opinion, power redistribution, and shifts in interest group configurations, which reflect political situations, trends, and backgrounds. Therefore, the confluence of the three streams implies an organic integration of particular issues, policy plans, and political situations. In order for the three streams to achieve confluence, policy entrepreneurs (that is, stakeholders who are able to inspire others to prioritize particular issues and to use specific solutions to address them) will also have an important role to play (in greatly promoting the said confluence or by taking optimal advantage of the opening of a policy window). Kingdon argues that when, at a particular moment, the three streams meet, the “window of opportunity” would open, putting relevant problems on the policy agenda and allowing policy plans to get finalized (Birkland 2011).

Some researchers rationalized policy change in the following way using the multiple sources framework: changes in problem stream or political stream → opening of policy window → policy entrepreneurs effectively utilize the opportunity → confluence of three streams → policy change (Bai 2010). However, in concrete situations, the confluence of the three streams is usually not linear, which is why the present research tends toward a more dynamic interaction framework, as shown in Figure 4.8, known as the Theoretical Framework for the Transformation of Knowledge into Policy Actions. This framework

postulates that when an organic confluence among the three streams is achieved, the window of opportunity for policy change will arise. Three actions will be helpful in promoting the opening of a window of opportunity: agenda-setting, coalition building, and policy learning (or enhanced policy-maker knowledge about specific issues) (Ashford et al. 2006).

This section analyzes the characteristics of the post-earthquake actions of a series of institutional actors that include the central government, local governments, and NGOs. It aims to identify the institutional cause of the opening of a window of opportunity for social innovations using the multiple-sources framework. Of course, all of these analytical attempts are based on a premise outlined by the Public Choice School concerning government action, that is, as “rational economic men,” governments at all levels all pursue self-interest maximization.

### **Problem Stream: Government Failure in Huge Disasters**

Under the multiple-sources framework, what causes policymakers to pay attention to the problem stream is not political pressure but quasi-systemic influences. These influences might be (1) positive or negative changes to indicators that have received widespread attention; (2) increased public attention to one or more high-profile events—either because the events have just occurred or because the events have generated a significant formal or informal response; (3) the presence of some alternative solutions (Kingdon 1995). From the perspective of the multiple-sources framework, a major natural disaster is a typical high-profile event that causes profound changes in the basic social indicators pertaining to the residents of affected areas and also receives global attention.

The Wenchuan earthquake destroyed a huge number of houses and large swaths of infrastructure, caused massive losses to the local industrial and agricultural sectors, and greatly disrupted the local natural environment. It has not only had a direct impact on the daily lives of the local residents but has also made a serious dent in the government’s public governance ability. In responding to huge disasters, a traditional top-down government structure such as China’s risks a huge public policy debacle, resulting in situations of “government failure” (Le Grand 1991) or a “weak state.” In the case of the Sichuan earthquake, policymakers faced three major challenges to mounting an effective response.

**First, there were large differences in the demands being made for policy change.** The areas affected by the earthquake were huge, covering



417 counties in four provinces, with an affected population of a whopping 46.24 million. There were big differences among those areas. The earthquake-affected areas span a variety of terrain, including mountainous regions, hilly regions, and plains. They include economically strong counties such as Shifang and Mianzhu (both are among Sichuan's top ten economically strong counties), but also some poor counties that receive aid from national- or provincial-level offices. Some of the affected counties and cities boast strong industrial foundations, whereas others rely heavily on agriculture and labor export.

Such disparities in the economies of the affected areas were bound to result in demands for different policies, which created challenges in designing reconstruction policies and in maintaining fairness. Because the affected areas and populations were vast, a great deal of effort was made to ensure that principles of fairness shaped the process of designing and formulating recovery policies. The principle of equitable recovery policies doesn't necessarily imply simple and absolute equality, nor does it suggest that affected areas should be ranked on the basis of damages suffered in being on the receiving end of recovery policies; instead it is more determined by how the affected residents psychologically respond to the policies. Therefore, the sense of fairness in recovery policies cannot be reflected in the results of the implemented policies but rather in the formulation process itself.

**Second, the social impact of disasters poses challenges for traditional response mechanisms.** Not only will an earthquake have a devastating effect on the local economy and cause large numbers of deaths and casualties, it will also have an impact on the local social fabric (Zhang, Zhang, and Zhang 2008): some family networks, neighborhood networks, and co-workers' networks got seriously disrupted in an instant; some people had to relocate numerous times, leaving their familiar communities behind; village autonomous organizations and functions of communities underwent great changes; middle-aged earthquake survivors, local rescue workers who had relatives killed in the earthquake, and even some volunteers working in the affected areas have all, to varying degrees, suffered emotional trauma or social difficulties.<sup>2</sup> Such problems as the rehabilitation of the disabled, the restoration

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2 The collapse of a large number of school buildings had caused a great many deaths among students. By May 8, 2009, there had been a total of 5,335 students who were pronounced dead or designated unaccounted for by the Sichuan provincial government. Under the one-child policy that had been implemented for decades in China, the loss of a young child usually means dashed hopes for many middle-aged parents.

of community functions, and psychological reconstruction could persist for years and continue to compromise the local reconstruction campaign.<sup>3</sup> China's crisis management system and past experiences in crisis management merely focus on the offering of aid and assistance to restore livelihoods and productive capacities; the top-down administrative mobilization mechanism is inadequate and has repeatedly failed to address problems relating to reconstruction of the social fabric.

**Third, policymakers face implementation challenges.** When designing and formulating policies, we tend to take it for granted that all policies will be properly implemented, and if the local governments fail to do so, all we need to do is introduce some supervision and oversight measures. However, in the Sichuan earthquake, the local governments and administrative bodies were greatly damaged, with buildings destroyed and lives lost. Therefore, in designing and formulating policies, we should keep in mind that the local governments had been greatly compromised in their ability to function properly; hence, we should not expect too much of them.

During the emergency response phase, because a large number of government officials had been killed in the disaster, all affected areas suffered administrative command system failures. Take one county, Beichuan, for instance. Four hundred sixty-six local officials were killed in the quake, accounting for 23 percent of the county's total number of officials before the earthquake. Another 200 or so local officials were injured in the quake (Deng 2009).

In addition, the earthquake significantly damaged the communications infrastructure. According to an estimation by the Sichuan Communications Administration, the quake cut off communications with 109 townships under the jurisdiction of eight counties in the most heavily affected areas. At the early stage of rescue operations, because of communications failure and widespread road closures, information on quake damages couldn't be gathered and

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3 Based on past experiences, some professionals estimate that the Sichuan earthquake caused 145,000 people to suffer mild disabilities, 83,000 people to suffer moderate disabilities, and 31,000 people to be severely disabled (Zhao 2008). People who survived the Tangshan earthquake (which struck on July 28, 1976) tended to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which plagued their mental health for a long time afterward. These people are three to five times more likely to suffer from psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, and phobias. Findings of the "Monitoring the Lives of Residents of 5/12 Earthquake-Stricken Areas" survey, jointly conducted by the Horizon Research Consultancy Group, the China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation, and the Social Entrepreneur Foundation, showed that up to 66.7 percent of adults in the affected areas felt a strong sense of pressure and 33.1 percent suffered from severe melancholy and sadness. Sixty-six percent of adult residents of the affected areas who were themselves injured or had injured relatives, as well as 58 percent of adult residents who lost some relatives in the disaster, suffered from severe PTSD.

conveyed to the operations and command center, leading to the latter's lack of awareness of the distribution and extent of damages in the affected areas. On May 14 and 15, maritime satellite phones became jammed and were consequently unable to convey commands swiftly; as a result, the rescue teams could not get accurate information and were unable to go to the places where they were most urgently needed.

In a sense, this meant they missed out on the best window of time to conduct rescue operations. For example, the county seat of Beichuan was literally wiped out in the quake, but the county government couldn't get the information out. All they managed to do was to send three separate teams of people, walking on foot, to report on their situations to the Mianyang city government. When the State Council and the Sichuan Earthquake Relief Operations and Command Center realized that Beichuan was actually among the most devastated areas in the quake, one vital day had already passed, which disrupted the overall rescue and relief operations.

In fact, Beichuan wasn't alone in adopting this foot messenger method to get the information out. Most of the other heavily affected townships did practically the same thing. Among the 238 townships surveyed by the author, each and every one of them was faced with communications failures immediately following the earthquake, with some severely affected areas not having their communications capability restored until two weeks later.

In such serious disasters, because of a high level of uncertainty regarding the extent of damage and the affected parties, adopting an adaptive, flexible leadership framework becomes vitally important. Such a system helps inspire innovative strategies, encourages collaboration awareness among working teams, and establishes a fault-tolerant incentive mechanism (Howitt and Leonard 2009).

In comparison, the traditional top-down policymaking process is less effective and cohesive, which is likely to create more problems. On the one hand, as earthquakes are usually highly destructive, they tend to affect a broad expanse of land as well as a huge number of people. Serious information asymmetry exacerbates the challenges posed by policy- and decisionmaking, which requires decisionmakers to formulate and unveil each policy with great care. On the other hand, the dreadful living conditions faced by a large number of affected local residents following the earthquake also requires decisionmakers to respond swiftly to the need for new policies and reform. In this policy-making dilemma, the need to strike a balance between conflicting demands has become a major challenge for policy- and decisionmakers, especially in the event of catastrophes (Zhang and Zhang 2008).

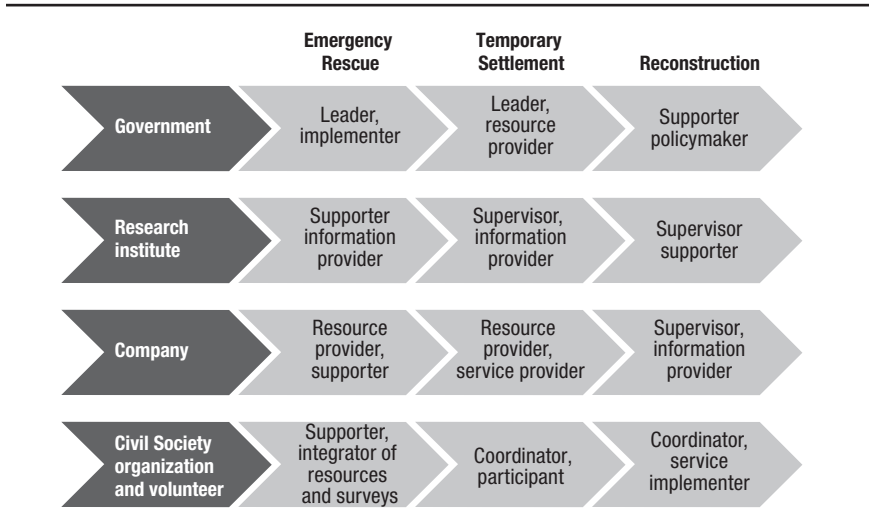
### Policy Stream: Innovative Solutions

Under the multiple-streams framework, the “policy stream” refers to viable solutions. The selection process that ensues is not unlike the natural selection process we observe in the biological world. Among all the ideas proposed, only those that meet the following two criteria can be recognized as viable solutions: the first criterion is technical feasibility, which concerns not just budget analysis but also whether the execution path and the envisaged result meet the public’s expectations; the second criterion is value acceptability, which refers to the political or ideological feasibility of the solution. Over the course of such a process, policy entrepreneurs will have an important role to play (Kingdon 1995).

International experiences with disaster response indicate that because of the erratic and unpredictable way in which major disasters tend to strike, the successful formation of a policy stream in response to such events depends on two conditions. The first condition is cooperation among government, academia, civil society, and business circles. Different sectors have different needs and roles to play at different stages. Figure 4.9 lists the roles of different sectors in three stages—emergency rescue, temporary settlement, and reconstruction—following the Taiwan 921 earthquake.

The second condition is that actors boldly conduct innovative experimentation and dynamic policy adjustments. Therefore, in response to the Wenchuan earthquake, even if the disaster disrupted government activities to such an extent that it was unable to provide sufficient public services, solutions would not have been found were it not for the fact that the central government, the local governments, and NGOs conducted viable innovative experimentation and shared relevant international experience. This was crucial to facilitating the emergence of a window of opportunity for cross-sector collaboration.

After spending years building up its emergency management system, the central government put in place a well-developed contingency plan for crisis response and aid systems; on the other hand, and more importantly, relevant decisionmaking power has also been shifted downstream, and a government-to-government partner assistance model established. On May 19, 2008, in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, the Sichuan earthquake relief command center wisely established a model that provided for collaboration between six provinces—Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Shandong, Guangdong, Hubei, and Henan—and five affected cities in Sichuan. The latter received relief supplies from the newly instituted partnership, which laid the foundation for subsequent policy changes.

**FIGURE 4.9** Roles of sectors of society in the three stages of disaster response

Source: Zhang and Yu (2009).

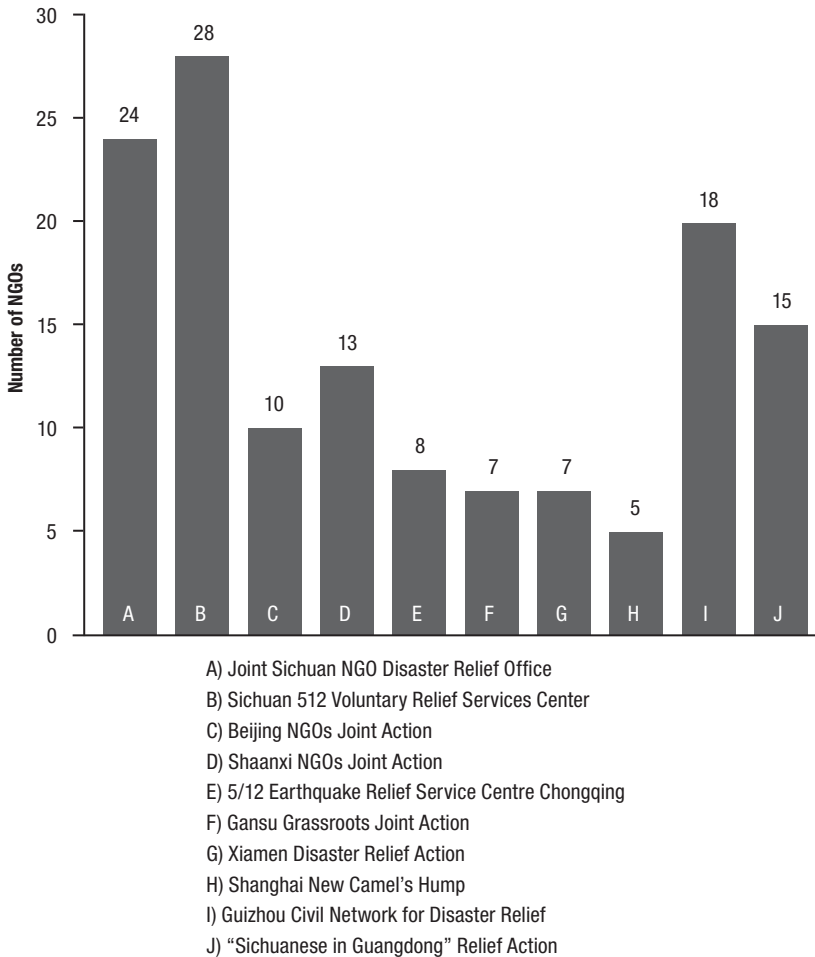
For local governments, the emergence of a number of innovative pilot programs has also produced viable options for subsequent policy changes. A typical example is the formation of the Mianzhu model. During the very first stage following the earthquake, on May 15, 2008, under the coordination of the China Social Entrepreneur Foundation and the Communist Youth League Committee of Mianzhu city, such organizations as Vanke and the Shenzhen Mountaineering Association collaborated in establishing the Zundao Township Volunteers Coordination Office. For the first time, the government and private companies joined hands to create an open platform for disaster relief. After the establishment of the office, thanks to the joint efforts of all parties concerned, a coordination mechanism involving four parties—government, businesses, NGOs, and individual volunteers as well as external resources—was successfully established, with the office serving as its operations center. A total of 40 NGOs (28 of which were registered and 12 unregistered) and more than 470 registered volunteers participated in the mechanism, which has since been widely hailed as the “Zundao model.” The local government communicated related experiences and lessons in a timely manner and took further steps to institutionalize the mechanism.

The Social Resources (Aid) Coordination Platform Project in Mianzhu was established in Mianzhu city, Sichuan Province, on July 17, 2008, with

the aim of “Receiving Aid, Demonstrating Love.” On September 26, 2008, the government of Zundao township issued formal documents in establishing the Zundao Township Social Resources Coordination Team, with the CPC secretary of the township serving as its head. A CPC deputy secretary of the township and a representative from the Vanke volunteer group were jointly appointed as deputy heads. A Zundao Township Social Resources Coordination Office was also set up under the program. In 2009, the Social Entrepreneur Foundation, the Mianzhu City People’s Government, the Mianzhu City Administrative Service Center, the Mianzhu City Committee of the Communist Youth League, and the Mianzhu City Bureau of Civil Affairs, collaborated with 30 NGOs working in Mianyang and jointly established the Joint Conference Mechanism for Public Welfare Organizations in Mianyang (Ran 2011).

On the NGO front, the networked linkages among the various organizations represent a viable opportunity for China’s underdeveloped NGOs to fill the response gaps left by government efforts and to establish a proactive collaboration directly with government officials (the pairing system did not designate the partner provincial governments as liaisons for their own local NGOs). A foremost example is the rapid formation of an extensive inter-organizational network alliance (Figure 4.10) among NGOs, government-organized nongovernmental organizations (GONGOs), informal volunteer groups, and businesses. Of the 70 NGOs surveyed, 58.6 percent collaborated on an ad hoc basis with at least three other organizations in conducting operations in Sichuan. Only 29 percent of the surveyed NGOs operated independently there.

Figure 4.10 also shows that the networks have provided organizations and volunteer groups interested in earthquake relief work with an important platform. In helping introduce NGOs into the affected areas, these networks have played a role as significant as that of the government. Of the surveyed organizations, 48 percent relied on these networks, a proportion close to that of the organizations that relied on the government in entering the affected areas (50 percent). Not surprisingly, surveys also show that compared with duly-registered organizations (both official and unofficial), organizations registered with the industry and commerce authority, as well as unregistered ones, were more likely to rely on NGO networks in entering the affected areas (Shieh and Deng 2011). The most prominent networks include the 5/12 Nongovernmental Aid Service Center (Zhao 2009) and the NGO Joint Relief Office (Lei 2012).

**FIGURE 4.10** Networks of NGOs engaging in civil collaboration in Sichuan earthquake relief

**Source:** Zhang et al. (2008).

**Note:** Some organizations operate within two collaborative networks simultaneously.

In addition, the Internet has played an important role in the exchange of relevant information. A variety of nongovernmental forces built up platforms for information exchange on the Internet and provided information and technical support in connection with front relief efforts. The platforms also acted



as a medium for promptly forwarding authoritative information released by the government in disaster relief procedures; for providing relief-related research information as well as data relating to relief demand, relief supplies, and volunteers; and for undertaking a variety of other initiatives.

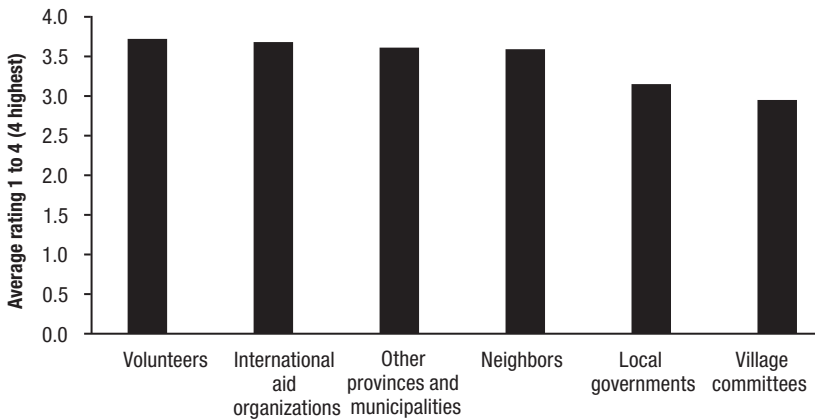
One typical platform is NGO CN ([www.ngocn.net](http://www.ngocn.net)), which is dedicated to exchanging information on public welfare undertakings and was first set up in 2005. After the Wenchuan earthquake, NGO CN launched a dedicated page, “512 Earthquake Disaster Relief Operations,” aimed at providing organizations interested in participating in the earthquake relief effort with information exchange services—an initiative intended for the public interest. During the emergency rescue phase, the monthly data traffic generated by the web page reached 770,000 hits, with its highest number of individual thread views hitting a whopping 7 million, providing more than 1,100 items of information on earthquake relief. In addition, the Sichuan 512 Voluntary Relief Services Center opened up its own dedicated website, which included sections on topics such as service information, supplies distribution, a disaster relief organizations directory, and relief fund-raising. The Joint Sichuan NGO Disaster Relief Office also regularly released information on supplies and volunteers on the [www.ngocn.net](http://www.ngocn.net) website. The joint office also directly accepted supplies and volunteer resources via the NGO CN site, and after processing the information it collected in affected areas, it allocated resources efficiently to those affected areas that had received less attention than others. Thus, it was able to make up for the deficiencies of the government’s relief efforts (Zhang et al. 2008).

### **The Political Stream: The Relationship between the Central Government and Local Governments**

Under the multiple-streams framework, the political stream is independent of both the problem stream and the policy stream and has its own dynamics and rules. Its most important variables include changes in public mood, election results, regime changes, ideology, party politics, and changes in government officials, as well as campaign strategies of interest groups and their consequences (Kingdon 1995).

The relationship between the central government and local governments has always been an important factor in China’s political reform and economic development. On the one hand, as the implementers and enforcers of the policies issued by the central government, local governments undertake the function of running the country in every practical sense; they also wield considerable autonomous power within their own jurisdictions. There are great

**FIGURE 4.11** Local residents' satisfaction with assisting agencies and organizations in Sichuan earthquake relief



**Source:** Horizon Research Consultancy Group and the Foundation for Poverty Alleviation and Social Entrepreneur Foundation (2008).

**Notes:** Ratings by survey respondents where 1 = "Not at all satisfied" and 4 = "Very satisfied"; Volunteers = NGOs because local respondents were not familiar with the concept of NGOs.

differences among local governments, as well as a certain level of competition (Saich 2011), given China's promotion of a tournament-style local government structure, in which promotion depends on excelling in meeting goals (Li and Zhou 2005; Zhong 2007; Xu et al. 2014). In responding to huge disasters, this kind of political pattern also lays the foundation for the emergence of windows of opportunity, making it possible for local governments to initiate collaborations with external NGOs.

In responding to earthquakes, local governments come under pressure on multiple fronts. They must undertake the pressing task of performing emergency rescue operations and conducting post-earthquake reconstruction. At the same time, they must deal with complex problems relating to affected areas and local residents. In addition, they are forced to compete with other local governments for resources from the central government, with a view to fulfilling their respective political goals. Under the tough post-earthquake circumstances when resources tend to be in short supply, they find it difficult to accomplish any of these tasks.

Figure 4.11 shows the results of surveys of local residents conducted in 2008, addressing their degree of satisfaction with the local government and other assisting groups. It makes clear that most residents of the affected areas thought local governments performed poorly.

**TABLE 4.3** Channels used by NGOs to enter the area of the Wenchuan earthquake

Type of Organization	Personal Relationships	Home District Local Governments	Quake Area Local Governments	NGO Networks	Other
All organizations	23.8%	14.1%	50.0%	48.4%	12.5%
Registered NGOs	20.0%	20.0%	62.9%	48.6%	5.7%
NGOs registered as businesses	33.3%	16.7%	66.7%	66.7%	33.3%
Unregistered NGOs	9.1%	0.0%	27.3%	45.5%	18.2%
Individual-driven organizations	50.0%	0.0%	25.0%	25.0%	0.0%

**Source:** Survey on 64 participating NGOs, conducted by Professor Tao Chuanjin (2008).

**Notes:** Based on a survey of 64 NGOs; because some NGOs use multiple channels, percentages may add up to more than 100; “individual-driven organizations” refers to organizations that are run by a very limited number of people and lack a clear governance structure.

Though the pressures of fulfilling tasks assigned by the central government, addressing public concerns in the affected areas, and winning the competition with other local governments were high, local governments succeeded in starting to make rational, practical choices. They began to show willingness to work with NGOs to solve the social service problems relating to emergency rescue and reconstruction. Many local governments not only welcomed volunteers and NGOs to come aboard but even took the initiative by leveraging the institutional setup of the local Red Cross to help with the fundraising.

As mentioned earlier, a truly innovative model in this regard is the Mianzhu model, which set up a coordination office to promote NGO participation in local relief work. As shown in Table 4.3, among the 64 NGOs surveyed, 41 were introduced into the affected areas under the auspices of the governments of the affected areas or the governments where they are headquartered. The governments of the affected areas realized that NGOs can constitute an important force in disaster management measures.

According to the results of questionnaire surveys and interviews conducted by the Southwest University of Finance and Economics, government officials were generally satisfied with the services provided by the participating nonprofit organizations; they expressed their belief that nonprofit organizations are capable of actively contributing to the work of the government in effectively meeting the needs of the masses. Having played an important role in earthquake relief and post-disaster reconstruction, nonprofit organizations have made commendable contributions to maintaining social stability and advancing the development of a harmonious society. They are poised to become an important partner of the government in addressing social

problems and conflicts, promoting solidarity, and safeguarding social stability (Bian, Wang, and Wang 2011).

For these reasons, despite severe shortages of resources, local governments have spared no effort to help the participating nonprofit organizations to carry out their services. The survey shows that among the local governments that offered assistance, 67.7 percent provided venues for activities; 63.5 percent communicated or coordinated with their superiors to facilitate the operations of NGOs; 49.5 percent provided office space; 41.7 percent provided NGO personnel with accommodations and meals; 44.3 percent provided policy consulting services; 19.8 percent provided transportation; 45.3 percent addressed people's concerns raised by relevant NGOs; 10.4 percent provided financial support; and 1.6 percent provided other forms of assistance, such as briefing NGOs on local conditions, and notifying or organizing the target audience of each participating NGO. Of course, of the forms of assistance provided by local governments, such as offering office space and venues for activities as well as communicating or coordinating with superiors in facilitating NGO operations, make up the largest proportion of the service provided, whereas extending financial support remains a rarity (Bian, Wei, and Deng 2009).

## Conclusion

Based on the findings outlined in the previous sections, we can pinpoint the factors driving the emergence of the window of opportunity for cross-sector collaborations in the aftermath of the Wenchuan earthquake. According to the empirical analysis using the multiple-streams framework, the Wenchuan earthquake, being unforeseen and devastating, resulted in government failure. Specifically, the government failed to respond completely to such a large-scale emergency in a timely manner, which in turn engendered the problem stream.

In the meantime, dynamic innovations performed by all participating actors generated feasible and win-win solutions to the problem: the central government adopted the partner assistance model to move decision-making downstream and encourage social participation; local governments started to work with NGOs and explored new working mechanisms such as the Mianzhu model; and NGOs made themselves more networked so as to strengthen their service delivery capability. All of these dynamic innovations formed the policy stream that was indispensable to the opening of a window of opportunity.

What's more, given the current pattern of relationships between the central government and local governments, the latter are motivated to collaborate

with NGOs, thus forming the political stream. As described in detail in the previous sections, the confluence of the three streams triggers the opening of a window of opportunity for new policies, ushering in the possibility of burgeoning collaborations between the government and civil society in responding to huge disasters.

## Further Discussion

As a result, most of the collaborations formed between NGOs and local governments did not extend beyond calculus-based trust and relationship-based trust. The Mianzhu model, which was believed to have made certain breakthroughs as a coordinating mechanism, seems to focus more on resource channeling and hence hasn't reached the level of institution-based trust either (Xu 2008). Granted, the emergence of a window of opportunity gives rise to some social innovations conducive to a kind of "organic synergy" between the government and civil society. However, whether a fundamental change in social institutions can be achieved remains to be seen.

That said, one thing is certain: China's civil society is still growing rapidly. At the end of 2010, there were 439,000 registered social organizations in China, including 243,000 social groups (an increase of 3.4 percent over the previous year); 195,000 nonbusiness civil institutions (up 3.7 percent over the previous year); and 2,168 foundations (an increase of 17.9 percent over the previous year) (China, Ministry of Civil Affairs 2011). Following the Wenchuan earthquake, people gradually realized that powerful social groups can coexist with a powerful yet flexible state, which implies that a strong society does not necessarily mean a weak state; the two can achieve mutual empowerment. However, a strong state without active social participation is actually weak and unable to withstand the test of social changes. As Joseph S. Nye (2004) suggests, "soft power"—the ability to make others want what you want—of Western developed countries stems from the robust growth of civil societies there, rather than stimulative government policies. In the years to come, China will have to learn some important lessons and mobilize the forces of the whole of society in developing soft power and reconcile it with forms of more coercive "hard power," so as to nurture the proper combination of both known as "smart power" (Nye 2012). In this way, China will finally be able to achieve a win-win combination of a smart state and a strong society, instead of a problematic combination of a strong state and a weak society.