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Making a Difference? Social Assessment Policy and Praxis and Its Emergence in China Edited by Susanna Price and Kathryn Robinson

MAKING A DIFFERENCE?

Social Assessment Policy and Praxis and Its Emergence in China



Edited by

Susanna Price and Kathryn Robinson



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PREFACE



Within influential development institutions such as international financial institutions (IFIs), knowledge-generating 'text' evolves and, via their investments, impacts on the local level through complex social and political processes that are increasingly attracting attention. People question the right of the dominant institutions, elites and experts to define development – and the epistemological basis on which their definitions are based (Oliver-Smith 2010). Even as the emerging concept of 'aidnography' explores the representations through which practitioners, especially social researchers, understand and order their world and their work (Mosse 2011), that world is changing. In turn, a rapidly moving global landscape and aid architecture challenges the way development is conceptualized, processed and realized. Cognizant of such changes, this volume focuses on Asia and particularly China, casting a wide net to encompass the private sector operations that increasingly dominate the development landscape.

As a group, international development institutions are perceived as powerful global actors, whether by virtue of their role as global policy and norm-setting bodies, their financial resources, or their hegemonic knowledge about poverty (McNeil and St. Clair 2011). Legal specialists consider IFIs' environmental and social policy standards – designed to address civil society's critiques of development processes – an integral part of international administrative law¹ (Hunter 2010). Whilst they apply internally, such policy standards reverberate outside the organizations for which they were originally designed, moving between and beyond institutions to shape and influence demands for transparency, accountability and participation in managing social risk and reducing poverty in global governance.²

Since the 1970s, some social researchers have worked to create disciplinary space for the application of sociological knowledge within IFIs. Located within development agencies dominated by a paradigm of economic growth, they realized that success or failure often depends upon non-economic, unquantifiable factors. They sought to understand the dynamics of social impacts through detailed case study social research and, based on this knowledge, to formulate

methods and tools for using sociological knowledge at key entry points, initially for project investments. Moving beyond critique to action, they developed institution-wide social policies that have spread far beyond the institutions themselves (Cernea 2005; Davis 2004; Bebbington 2006). In this volume, to take a leading example, Michael Cernea reflects on the little-known story of the formative, pioneering efforts in the World Bank to introduce an institution-wide standard for social analysis at the critical point of project appraisal. Whilst the themes converge, the institutional dynamics are very different in the next chapter, where Deanna Kemp and John Owen contemplate social science's growing role and influence in large-scale private sector resource development in the Asia Pacific region.

The policies, methods and tools for social assessment deserve scrutiny. They form the framework in which many social researchers interact with development discourses and institutions, and engage with people at the micro-level. These frameworks, as practised in IFIs, share approaches with social impact assessment (SIA). Located at the intersection of sociological knowledge and development practice, the frameworks have achieved international recognition. The frameworks reflect social science theory and practice in an effort to positively inform development planning and implementation, to understand the perspectives and conditions of people affected, to develop strategies that will engage them, to screen out risks and maximize benefits – and to open up opportunities for local stakeholders to shape and influence developments. This unfolding narrative elucidates practitioners' hard-won experience in formulating and applying methods for social assessment that aim to make social actors central to development investments.

Yet these methods may have different meaning to different actors. Should such methods be viewed as ad hoc, once-off research techniques? Used more systematically, are they intended primarily to serve and support economic growth objectives? Are they most useful as a means to avoid social instability? Are they a means of demonstrating international citizenship credentials? Do they represent an attempt to render sociological knowledge technical, making it a 'scientific' management tool? Are they productive only in the context of an SIA regulatory framework that requires prediction of social externalities for predetermined investments – thus identifying the winners and losers? Are they intended to support social development objectives, however defined? And, in the transposition from research to praxis, do they permit the logic of social research to survive the logic of development?

Social researchers venturing into this terrain find themselves at awkward intersections between competing paradigms, barely recognized political processes, institutional demands and disjunctures between the global and the local. How do they navigate such complex terrain? How does their 'expert knowledge' compare with the often messy realities, and what happens in encounters in transposition of expert knowledge to specific situations? These questions open up a new,

needed space for reflexivity amongst practitioners. Without an understanding of the context in which such methods are applied, their potential and pitfalls cannot be understood.

This volume as a whole encapsulates the experience of social researchers engaged in addressing such questions. Drawing together a group of leading practitioners of methods for social assessment and SIA in development discourse in the Asia region, particularly China, this volume allows them to reflect upon the context of their encounters. The authors elucidate their perceptions of the state of social assessment and the gaps between policy objectives and on-the-ground experience. They elucidate how they have explored the possibilities of applying sociological knowledge, navigated the often competing expectations and aspirations attached to project investments and drawn upon their experience to imagine possibilities for future directions.

This volume is not a social assessment manual or handbook – many are already available.³ Nor does it intend to detail the chronological history of SIA as practised globally; nor social assessment as conducted by borrower corporations, agencies and states; nor social analysis as practised in specific development organizations – these histories have been at least partially documented.⁴ Instead, this volume selects some key points in the trajectory of sociological endeavour within the developmentalist configuration that has both set the context in which social analysts work in international development organizations, and mediated their interactions with people and communities.

This volume has three parts. The introduction, by Susanna Price, reviews some key milestones in the application of sociological knowledge in development policy and practice, both globally and in relation to emerging practice in China specifically. It explores synergies between civil society, development practitioners and scholar-advocates in expanding the normative terrain in which development unfolds. It anticipates the critical question addressed in the conclusion: Do socially informed approaches lead to better outcomes for people?

Part 1 of this volume then addresses the genesis of social assessment as the conscious application of sociological methods, tools and approaches to maximize benefits for social actors through participative social strategies. Focusing on application in development contexts, against a background of shifting narratives of development discourse, the authors explore how such forms have resonated in the public (Cernea) and, increasingly, private (Kemp and Owen) spheres. Aaron Dennis and Gregory Guldin then address some political realities in practice, recognizing the possibility of creating potential benefits and liabilities for different groups of stakeholders through social assessment. The next two chapters focus on the application of social assessments in community-based projects in Asia generally (Kathryn Robinson and Andrew McWilliam) and in East Timor specifically for agricultural planning purposes (Andrew McWilliam et al.).

Part 2 of this volume focuses on China as a significant target of attention. China's government and private investment fuel extraordinary growth, both in

China and, increasingly, abroad, with rapidly expanding Chinese investment and a flourishing Chinese aid profile that uses projects as the primary modality of delivery. Chinese leaders express intentions to achieve 'balanced' growth and a 'harmonious society'. What might this mean for project investment planning and management? In this volume Western and Chinese scholars and practitioners illuminate emerging practices in social assessment in China, highlighting the potentials and the risks of engaged social research. Li Kaimeng identifies some of the challenges from the state's perspective, elucidating recent initiatives to require forms of social assessment for feasibility studies and social risk assessment. Bettina Gransow analyses the conceptualization of social risks in development investments in terms of future-oriented sustainability strategies. Xiao Jianliang and David Arthur present a fascinating case of community monitoring of infrastructure investments, whilst Wang Xiaoyi reflects on social issues in pastoral management.

Development-forced displacement and resettlement feature in the remaining two chapters. Scott Ferguson and Wenlong Zhu suggest strategies for strengthened social impact assessment in resettlement planning, taking account of recent government-initiated efforts at standard setting. Yu Qingnian and Shi Guoqing explore the unfolding of different negotiating perspectives in resettlement planning.

The conclusion of this volume constitutes a postscript linking the conceptual Part 1 with the China cases in Part 2. It scrutinizes the record of social assessment in achieving better outcomes for people and explores some interactions between China's growing international portfolio of project investments and developments in China, underlining some challenges for social analysts in the context of changing global architecture. Two recent events, both with significant global implications, highlight the new challenges: the establishment, firstly, of China's first IFI, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (October 2014); and, secondly, a civil society outcry that the World Bank's safeguard review and update will progressively weaken IFI standards, especially in terms of momentum towards a shared human rights agenda. Both events, which are still unfolding, sharpen the contextual framework for this volume.

We are grateful for comments received on one of the draft chapters from Irene Bain in Beijing and Bettina Gransow in Berlin, and for editing support from Geoffrey Swete Kelly, Zazie Bowen, Helen Parsons and the College of Asia and the Pacific at the Australian National University. We emphasize, however, that all contributing authors take responsibility for views expressed in their respective chapters.

The English titles of Chinese publications follow the official Chinese translations.

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Notes

- The IFIs considered here include the World Bank Group and regional multilateral development banks, including the Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and Inter-American Development Bank, amongst others.
- 2. Because the legal personality of IFIs entails a responsibility for their conduct, IFIs have sharpened their focus on relationships with their member states, other international organizations and third parties by clarifying accountability (Suzuki and Nanwani 2006). Once third parties like civil society organizations were allowed to participate in the decision-making process of international institutions, accountability mechanisms 'fundamentally altered the relationship between international organizations on the one hand and private individuals and groups on the other' (ibid.: 188). Whilst IFI inspection panels and other accountability functions work to check internal compliance rather than the compliance of borrowers, applying them in borrower countries serves to emphasize the original policy standards to which they refer.
- 3. Some examples of manuals, handbooks and guidelines for SIA as practised globally are Momtaz and Kabir 2013; Mikkelsen 2005; Becker and Vanclay 2003; Burdge et al. 2004; Taylor, Goodrich and Bryan 2004: Interorganizational Committee on Principles and Guidelines for Social Impact Assessment 2003;. For development organizations specifically see Reitbergen-McCracken and Narayan 1998; World Bank 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005; ADB 1994; 2007, 2009; 2010, 2012; IFC 2003, 2007, 2011. For China-specific manuals see CIECC 2002, 2004; Gransow and Price 2007.
- 4. The development of SIA internationally is reviewed, e.g., by Finsterbusch et al (eds.) 1990; Becker 1997; Barrow 2000; Burdge 2002, 2003a, 2003b; Esteves et al. 2012; Vanclay 2003. The history of social analysis and related policies at the World Bank is documented, e.g., by Brown 1997; Cernea 1995, 1996, 1997, 2005; Cernea and Kudat 1997; Francis and Jacobs 1999; Davis 2004; Kagia 2005; Coudouel, Dani and Paternostro 2006; Dani and de Haan 2008; Rich, 2013. For review of social analysis in regional multilateral development banks, see Harrison and Thomas 2003 (Caribbean Regional Development Bank).

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ABBREVIATIONS



ACCESS The Australian Community Development and Civil Society

Strengthening Scheme

ADB Asian Development Bank

AGR Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

ANU Australian National University

AusAID (Former) Australian Agency for International Development

CD Community Development

CDD Community Driven Development
CDS Community Development Scheme

CIECC China International Engineering Consulting Corporation

CPRF The Community Peace and Restoration Fund

CSCIIP Chongqing Small Cities Infrastructure Improvement Project

CSO Civil Society Organization

CSP Community Support Programme
CSR Corporate Social Responsibility

CWSSP Community Water Supply and Sanitation Project
EBRD European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

EIA Environmental Impact Assessment FPIC Free, Prior, Informed Consent

HRW Human Rights Watch

IAIA International Association for Impact Assessment

IDB Inter-American Development BankIFC International Finance CorporationIFI International Financial Institution

M&E Monitoring and Evaluation

MAFF Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

MDB Multilateral Development Bank MDG Millennium Development Goals

MEP Ministry of Environmental Protection

NDRC National Development Reform Commission

NGO Nongovernment Organization

OECD Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

OMS Operational Manual Statement
OPM Operational Policy Memorandum

PACAP Philippines-Australia Community Assistance Program
PALS Philippines-Australia Local Sustainability Program

PM&E Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

PNG Papua New Guinea

PRC People's Republic of China

PSIA Poverty and Social Impact Analysis

RISN Research Institute for Standards and Norms

RMB Renminbi, the People's Currency, (China) the primary unit is the

yuan

SAR Staff Appraisal Report
SD Sustainable Development

SDPC State Development Planning Commission (Now NDRC)

SEPA State Environmental Protection Agency

SIA Social Impact Assessment

SLA Sustainable Livelihoods Approach

SOE State-owned enterprise

SOL Seeds of Life

TA Technical Assistance

UN United Nations

USAID United States Agency for International Development

¥ Chinese yuan (currency unit)

INTRODUCTION

MAKING ECONOMIC GROWTH SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE?

Susanna Price



'Growth first' approaches to development theory and practice have social consequences. These consequences may emerge in focal sites for project interventions that generate specific social costs that markets cannot necessarily resolve. Social practitioners in the development domain invoked sociological knowledge and approaches to show how project success often depends upon factors that are initially invisible, overlooked, unquantifiable. Despite contested terms of engagement in development discourse, social practitioners find growing convergence among flourishing ideas for poverty reduction, gender equity, rights, participation and empowerment. This introduction sets out some milestones in this trajectory as a basis for the following chapters.

China's development path since 1978 exemplifies the theme of 'growth first', with subsequent reengagement with sociological knowledge when the social effects of that growth presented a challenge to cohesion and future growth. Some unique characteristics of the terms of Chinese reengagement with sociological knowledge have emerged, even as governance and planning modes evolve with China's massive post-1978 transformation. This introduction explores this reengagement within China, while China's global sociological practice features in the conclusion.

Sociological Knowledge in the Development Domain

What Is Social Assessment?

Forms of participative social assessment, social analysis and social risk management, as 'texts' representing policies, procedures and guidelines, comprise an inte-

gral element of the business practices of international financial institutions (IFIs) and, increasingly, private sector operations. This introduction explains how these forms developed and intersect with globally practised forms of social impact assessment (SIA), which increasingly feature in countries' regulatory practice. The formal articulation and importance of the 'texts' reflect varying institutional configurations, mandates, cultures and histories – and the dynamic interplay between institutional policy objectives and operational pressures to lend.

The World Bank, for example, defines social analysis as a method for assessing whether country programmes and lending proposals – including projects – will contribute to equitable social and economic development through measures 'to sustain the gains of economic development' by strengthening inclusion, empowerment and security (2003b: vii–ix). Five entry points are social diversity and gender; institutions, rules and behaviour; stakeholder engagement; participation; and social risk mitigation. 'Social assessment', meanwhile, is the term used to describe the borrower's similar examination of the project's likely social sustainability and actions taken to enhance it (ibid.).

The Asian Development Bank (ADB), in support of its poverty reduction and social development objectives, conceptualizes social analysis as a means to prepare country partnership and regional strategies, scope all projects, flag social issues and ensure that each project design 'maximizes social benefits and avoids or minimizes social risks, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized groups' (ADB 2010). This analysis applies to ADB operations in both the public and, increasingly, private sectors. Regarding issues of gender, stakeholder engagement, resettlement, indigenous peoples or labour, participative social analysis may result in time-bound, costed and monitorable measures or plans to be carried forward into project implementation and beyond.

Reflecting a policy framework of sustainable risk management, the World Bank Group's private sector arm, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), uses the term 'social due diligence' to describe the actions its client private sector companies take to identify risks and impacts, based on recent social baseline data in the project zone of impact. Using 'social assessment', clients then establish and maintain an Environmental and Social Management System that includes policy, identification of risks and impacts, design and management of time-bound and budgeted measures, organizational capacity, emergency preparedness, stakeholder engagement and monitoring and review for the life of the project, in accordance with the IFC's Performance Standards (IFC 2011).

Forms of social analysis and social assessment support the application of social safeguard policies. The ADB and several other regional multilateral development banks (MDBs) use the term 'social impact assessment' for this specific purpose (ADB 2009). Social safeguards include variations on the World Bank's long-standing policy on involuntary resettlement (World Bank 2002), originally approved in 1980, which seeks to reorder outcomes for people displaced by de-

velopment projects – who thus risk impoverishment – by providing for their fair compensation and rehabilitation through resettlement plans. This policy and the World Bank's 1982 policy on indigenous peoples comprise part of 'social safeguards' that have circulated to other multilateral development institutions and to bilateral donors. This includes certain IFIs that provide private sector financing,² as well as private sector self-regulatory voluntary codes such as the Equator Principles for financial institutions. Equator signatories adopting this credit risk management framework for determining, assessing and managing environmental and social risk in project finance transactions³ undertake to meet the IFC's social and environmental performance standards, including standards on involuntary resettlement and indigenous peoples (IFC 2007, 2011).4 This now includes ensuring the free, prior, informed consent (FPIC) of indigenous peoples to projects that will impact on traditional lands or cultural heritage, or cause displacement (IFC 2011).

For private companies operating in emerging markets, the IFC conceptualizes social assessment in terms of identifying risks early and managing them actively throughout the life of a project. This continuous management approach 'creates broader social support for the investment, reduces risks and uncertainties, helps maintain a "local license to operate," and enhances the reputation of a company' (IFC 2003). The rationale is that ultimately, 'economic development cannot be successful if it is not sustainable, and sustainability cannot be achieved without taking into account the social aspects of an investment. Therefore, promoting the social wellbeing of local communities is an explicit objective of development' (ibid.).

How and why did such standards evolve for these forms of analysis, broadly termed 'social assessment' or 'participative social assessment'? How are they perceived, both within and outside their institutions? How effectively do they support the poverty reduction, social risk management and social development objectives often held by the institutions that promote them? In their transposition through development processes in development institutions, do they still embody recognizable sociological knowledge? And how do practitioners work with them on the ground? In search of answers, this part of this introduction explores some of the origins, drivers and dynamics of social assessment and their future prospects. A second part then explores the emergence of forms of social assessment in China. The conclusion to this volume examines the record in social assessment, reviews recent developments in China and globally and highlights certain challenges ahead.

Contested Terrain

Development has long been contested terrain. An economic growth paradigm, in various shades, has dominated development planning for decades, challenged by alternative perspectives. Voices of people adversely affected by development investments are increasingly magnified through hyper-connected global movements. The relationship between the social science disciplines and development work has been hotly debated: should anthropologists, for example, critique, reluctantly participate in development activities, or advocate for the poor (Lewis 2005)? This question's focus on agents in turn raises issues of the parameters in which they make their choices and their position regarding social research in the context of the prevailing paradigms of development. Social researchers can take – and may seek to reconcile – all three of Lewis's seemingly opposing positions.

As observers, social researchers have long critiqued mechanistic views of development as a series of modernization sequences moving towards Western standards and institutions (Gardner and Lewis 1996; Arce and Long 2000). They have questioned whether development, as currently constructed, can address the dynamics of poverty and inequality – despite, or indeed because of, long-standing avowed intentions to help the poor. Depicted as a parallel universe, Apthorpe's allegorical Aidland is a site where 'expert knowledges' about aid delivery emerge through refracted processes, and where the right questions are seldom posed to address the social parameters of poverty and inequality (Apthorpe 2011: 214–16).

Following Foucault, social scientists have analysed development in terms of the relationship between 'discourse' – defined as fields of knowledge, statements and development practice – and the wider power relations that serve to maintain existing power structures. Since the 1980s, deconstructing these relations has characterized debates around post-modernism and development (e.g., Ferguson 1990; Gardner and Lewis 1996; Escobar 1997).

Social researchers, through their close encounters with communities impacted by policies and projects, are well placed to observe the disjunctures between development objectives and their outcomes. Ferguson famously charted the differences between development planners' intentions and their effects in Lesotho, showing that the effects were barely recognizable from the original intentions because the planned interventions operated through complex but unacknowledged social and cultural structures. The unintended consequences of repeated project failures extended state and agency power in social fields, depoliticizing development whilst transforming social and economic relations into technical problems amenable to managerial practice (Ferguson 1990: 20).

De Sardan rejected overgeneralizations that would 'tend to produce a caricature or *reductio ad absurdum* of the "developmentalist configuration" ... a "narrative" of Western hegemony bent on denying or destroying popular practices and knowledge', calling for 'empirical enquiry into the real processes of the various types of development action' that would illuminate the 'incoherencies, uncertainties and contradictions which are nonetheless inscribed in development institutions' and their continuously shifting policy and strategy (de Sardan 2005: 5). His 'developmentalist configuration' comprises a 'complex set of institutions,

flows and actors for whom development constitutes a resource, a profession, a market, a stake or a strategy', dominated by 'deciders, politicians, technicians, idealists, managers, militants and prophets' (ibid.: 2-3). In this configuration, the logic of development expertise may overwhelm the logic of social research - yet the configuration is not monolithic. Gaps between objectives and results arise as developmental policies and projects roll out, oversimplifications characterize objective-setting and clichés abound as agencies seek to reassure their programmes' resource providers. The developmentalist configuration harbours unfolding ambiguities.

Globally Connected Synergies

On this contested terrain, internationally recognized social assessment standards have emerged through unexpected synergies, fuelled by scholarly critiques based on ethnographic research, grass-roots protests triggered by people suffering development's costs, and the work of internal advocates. The impetus to disseminate social safeguard policies came largely from transformative grass-roots protest movements increasingly linked to global agendas, drawing upon cases of displacement and impoverishment in contentious circumstances, such as the landmark Narmada Dam case in India (Oliver-Smith 2010; Rich 2013).

Uncovering repeated case studies of failed projects during the 1960s, social researchers sought explanations. Why were social processes, social risks and social relations being ignored, when they were so obviously critical to project failure or success? Development institutions packaged investment projects as a key form of intervention, but many projects lacked any strategies to address their own significant social opportunities and costs. Insofar as planners, ruled by a paradigm of economic determinism, considered 'social factors' at all, they viewed them as messy elements, illogical tradition or constraints on progress that did not fit neatly elsewhere - 'merely the residual, inexplicable, or problematic aspects of development' (Francis and Jacobs 1999: 1 fn. 2). In 1970 Apthorpe asked whether this category entitled 'social' was simply the 'troublesome knob on the development machine marked "the human factor" which was twiddled wrongly, inadequately, or not at all, and therefore the "non-economic variables" were left out of the account' (1970: 7). Social researchers began mapping the social terrain to make it visible and comprehensible in planning terms. The concept of social organization in local spaces provided the framework for this mapping (ibid.).

Development discourse, as expressed by the influential World Bank Group, was converging with these efforts. Narratives positing a linear process of developing countries 'catching up' with the developed world were abandoned in the 1970s in favour of a focus on redistribution with growth and, later, basic human needs programmes. This shift called for greater understanding of local communities and their responses to development interventions. But although this new orientation invited a more sympathetic view of social spaces, 'culture' still signified a potential constraint to progress. In 1975 the bilateral aid agency USAID issued guidelines for social soundness and institutional analysis in project appraisal in developing countries, 6 recognizing cultural and institutional factors affecting adoption rates and distribution of benefits.

The World Bank social specialists went beyond recording project failures to issue a challenge: 'putting people first' should be the starting point, the centre and the end goal of each development intervention (Cernea 1985, 1991: xiv). 'Putting people first' focused attention on social actors, conceptualized as clients, users, intended beneficiaries or target groups - or, alternatively, people in the way of projects who would bear the losses. It implied taking several steps beyond critique and analysis of the social costs of development; collating practices good and bad alike – gleaned from ethnographic investigation; and consciously constructing methods for applying sociological knowledge to project preparation in an institutional context. These became detailed methodologies for analysing project-specific social dynamics, risks and opportunities involving social actors. 'Putting people first' meant scaling up those methods to formulate policies. In chapter 1 in this volume, Cernea reflects upon efforts to explain and activate often unquantifiable variables – namely, sociological perspectives, approaches and knowledge - in an institutional environment that favoured the quantifiable and measurable being dominated by 'technocratic and econocratic biases'.

In a move later described as 'conceptually pathbreaking' although not systematically implemented (Dani 2003: 8), the World Bank listed social analysis, along with economic, financial, technical, institutional and environmental analysis, as an integral element of project appraisal in its Operational Manual Statement (OMS) 2.20 (World Bank 1984). Whilst acknowledging (Cernea and Kudat 1997: 6) that full compliance with the new guidelines would require 'profound changes in staff work patterns', Cernea recalled (personal communication, July 2011) that OMS 2.20 was a

paradigmatic change in conceiving and designing projects; it aimed at actually tailoring the design and content of projects to the kind of populations those projects were intended to serve. We didn't use big words at that time, but in essence, it was a radical change from the way projects were 'manufactured' before, in a cookie-cutter manner, toward designing projects (and project content) meant to match and 'fit' the local social structure, and the 'structure of needs' of the given project population.

The World Bank's involuntary resettlement policy guideline of 1980 used sociological knowledge to identify, mitigate and manage displacement risks in an attempt to keep displaced people from becoming casualties. Sociological knowledge subsequently contributed to a rich literature on resettlement model building (Price 2009). By contrast, its 1984 project appraisal statement utilized sociological knowledge to elicit and sustain support from people singled out as the intended beneficiaries of a project, especially where their support was necessary for project success. In any case, regional MDBs and international and bilateral donors began adopting guidelines on social analysis as an integral part of project planning and appraisal (e.g., ADB 1993; AusAID 1989).

Social Analysis and Poverty Reduction

Social analysis found multiple new shades of meaning in the context of fastevolving policy agendas. By the 1980s, development discourse had shifted to fiscal austerity under structural adjustment, and in the late 1980s the neoliberal preference for market rule began to prevail over formal development planning.⁷ Programmes for structural adjustment and market rule proved uneven in their outcomes.8 The Washington Consensus had waned by the mid-1990s. Intense public protest campaigns confronted the World Bank Group about the social costs arising from development interventions (Oliver-Smith 2010), whilst private capital flows, exceeding aid flows to developing countries for the first time, challenged the pre-eminence of developmental institutions.

Social analysis achieved prominence in the resultant shift to a 'post-Washington Consensus'9 of inclusive poverty reduction and good governance in the 1990s. This broadened vision of development objectives employed new terms - 'sustainable, egalitarian, and democratic' - and encompassed improved living standards and social protection (Stiglitz 1998). Influential global events had amplified conceptualizations of the ultimate purpose of development. The United Nations (1987) Brundtland Report, Our Common Future, had linked population pressure with environmental issues and human rights. In the early 1990s, the UN Development Programme's Human Development Index expanded the focus on gross national product to include social welfare and equity by measuring gross domestic product per capita, life expectancy and educational attainment. At the Copenhagen UN World Summit for Social Development in 1995, governments reached 'a new consensus on the need to put people at the centre of development, pledging to make the conquest of poverty, the goal of full employment and the fostering of social integration overriding objectives of development' (UN 1995). The 2000 UN Summit on World Development foreshadowed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (UN 2001), which dropped full employment and social integration from the 1995 formulation but nonetheless focused on people as the ultimate beneficiaries of a social development agenda. Ratified by governments and agencies around the globe, the MDGs set out certain universal rights and entitlements. 10 Amongst certain IFIs, these changes sparked a widening of the terrain of development objectives.

ADB, for example, significantly broadened its policy 'text' in the years 1995– 2000, updating early policies on women to refer instead to gender and development, and NGOs (ADB 1998b) and elaborating new policies on involuntary resettlement (ADB 1995a); the inspection function (ADB 1995b) and indigenous peoples (ADB 1998a). These efforts culminated in ADB's 1999 declaration of an overarching policy on poverty reduction, comprising three complementary 'pillars': pro-poor, inclusive economic growth; social development; and good governance. Conceptually, social development achieved a status on a par with economic growth, encompassing human capital development, social capital development, gender and social protection (ADB 1999).

By 2004, the World Bank had, in its official view, reinvented itself through a new business model encompassing a comprehensive development framework designed to make people and poverty reduction central, prioritize partnerships and promote knowledge (Kagia 2005). This broadened social development agenda drew upon the work of internal practitioners. The bank's World Development Report of 2000/2001 (World Bank 2001), contested within the organization (Mosse 2011), nonetheless set an agenda of poverty reduction through opportunity, empowerment and security.

Moving from the project level to macro-level engagement, the World Bank developed analytical tools to inform pre-project analytical work to deepen understanding of potential opportunities and constraints to civic engagement. These required analysis of poverty and social dimensions in advance as a basis for modifying policy and institutional reforms to be more pro-poor (Johnson 2005). The agenda also moved from preoccupation with risk mitigation, through establishment of safety nets for policy-based loans, to proactively community-driven developments by 2000. Maturing partnerships with representatives of civil society, such as nongovernment organizations (NGOs), were to be reflected in a strengthened enabling framework with civic engagement and social accountability. This was to form a basis for multi-stakeholder participation in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, which also depended upon government partnerships for their realisation (ibid.).

The new business model subsumed the social development agenda of poverty reduction and social justice under the process of economic growth (St. Clair 2006; Mosse 2011). As a tangible commitment to poverty reduction, the World Bank, along with numerous other agencies including the ADB¹¹ and governments, adopted the MDGs in 2001 and engaged in a regional MDG partnership with UN agencies. The World Bank and ADB, amongst others, had both already adopted explicit poverty reduction objectives (World Bank 2004; ADB 1999; OECD 2006). The new model envisaged the World Bank as harmonizing, or aligning, aid processes between development institutions, partly to simplify procedures.¹²

Meanwhile, the IFC's standards for its private sector activities were critiqued as lower than the World Bank's. After several painful project cases (Oliver-Smith 2010), such criticism led the IFC to adopt the Policy and Performance Standards on Social and Environmental Sustainability and Disclosure Policy ('Sustainability Framework') in 2006. This signalled the IFC's intent to shift from satisfying

a set of prescriptive requirements to taking an 'outcomes-based' approach by requiring client companies to engage with host communities early on, to build constructive relationships and to maintain them over time through environmental and social management systems.

Beyond Environmental Impact Assessment

These new 'texts' were intersecting, meanwhile, with developments in environmental impact assessment (EIA) and its associated process of SIA. From 1970 on, and again spurred by scholars' and activists' efforts to predict project impacts on people, EIA and later SIA, formally linked the prediction of social impacts to the process of investment planning in the U.S. regulatory framework.¹³ SIA required prediction, before a project's approval, of its likely impacts on human, cultural and physical environments, together with description of mitigative actions to address social risks, in an environmental impact statement. 14 By the late 1980s, many governments were establishing EIA frameworks. This legislation usually formed a starting point for SIA, and some developed countries have enacted the necessary SIA agency regulations and procedures (Burdge 2003).¹⁵

The 1989 'Pelosi Amendment'16 in legislation passed by the U.S. Congress required U.S. Executive Directors at the World Bank and all the regional MDBs to abstain or vote against any proposed action with significant environmental effects if it had not received an appropriate environmental assessment, or if the assessment had not been available to the executive directors and the public for 120 days before a vote. This amendment was credited with helping to establish environmental policies and procedures in these organizations. The '120 day rule', which extended to social safeguard plans, gave stakeholders an opportunity to read and comment on the documents before their approval.

Wider application into new global spaces later took SIA beyond its early focus on predicting impacts and protecting personal and property rights in advance (Vanclay 2003), to propose a range of applications – within international, bilateral or national organizations and corporations – or to apply them outside any regulatory framework (Esteves, Franks and Vanclay 2012). SIA is still only starting to realize its potential for determining which interventions should proceed and how they should do so (Esteves et al. 2012). 17 Next to biophysical assessment, SIA may appear less developed, with it's less certain scope, definitions, legal status and requirements and regulatory underpinnings; and it's shifting administrative responsibilities. The lack of expertise among regulators also constrains development. This uncertainty, in turn, limits SIA practitioner's scope to venture beyond secondary data to explore a wide range of methodological approaches that address social complexities directly. 18 Uncertainty undermines the basis for community engagement, limiting participatory strategies to incremental project improvement or, at worst, to project legitimization (ibid.). Uncertainty may leave analysts with insufficient time and resources to address complex social data 'subsets' – socio-political, socio-conomic, cultural, socio-environmental, health, and demographic variables, for example. Although the number of practitioners is increasing globally, uncertainty undermines their capacity to influence policy and programming levels of decision making. Special interest groups may capture the process (Barrow 2000); whilst nontransparent decision making may undermine the intent of public participation (Burdge et al. 2004; Tang, Wong and Lau 2008: 59).

In response, practitioners have sought to widen the scope of SIA. To this end, the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) launched international principles for SIA (IAIA 2003; Vanclay 2003), which still supported regulation, but also advocated efforts by communities, governments or corporations to undertake their own SIAs outside a regulatory framework as a participative planning exercise to shape and address their own development objectives (Becker and Vanclay 2003: 2–3). The principles encompass processes of analysing, monitoring and managing intended and unintended social consequences, both positive and negative, as well as any social change processes triggered by planned interventions, going beyond projects to policies and programmes. The ambition was to bring about a more sustainable and equitable biophysical and human environment through local knowledge, empowerment, poverty reduction, human rights and transparent process (ibid.).

Social specialists at the World Bank explored the possibility of taking social analysis 'beyond the environmental paradigm' to 'realize its full potential' in designing pro-poor and socially strategic development interventions (Dani 2003: 2). This meant centralizing social analysis as an integral part of development decision making, looking beyond project impacts to a field of policy reform that operates at the macro- and sectoral levels (ibid.: 11). Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA) links social and economic analysis to form a basis for proactively selecting projects and programmes (ibid.: 2).²⁰

Participation has moved from consultation and individual involvement in project implementation, to a broader empowerment agenda involving community-driven development, civic engagement and social accountability. Concern with separate 'marginal and disadvantaged' groups (displaced people, indigenous people and women) has shifted to a broader concern of vulnerability and social inclusion, aimed at establishing supportive policies and institutions. An initial focus on farmer production systems has shifted to studies of local-level institutions and social capital, issues of state and society, and problems of failed states and conflict. This shift paved the way for massive new loans targeting local levels of government and civil society under innovative new governance arrangements (Davis 2004).

Subsequent exploration of social policy approaches to overcoming structural inequalities through greater focus on citizens' rights and obligations to promote

equitable access to opportunities, raised parallels with human rights frameworks of the United Nations (e.g., Dani and de Haan 2008: 128–29). These studies explored how the effects of power relations and political economy at different levels result in poor targeting of benefits and elite capture (ibid.: xxiv), examining the way such power relations, inherent in social structures, affect governance as well as economic and social outcomes.

Summing Up

The social assessment 'texts' and processes of different institutions share common themes that arise from the synergistic endeavours of researchers and scholars, engaged activists and affected people, and are mediated through internal staff reformers. However, each institution shapes the specific scope, content and weight of these texts and processes according to unique institutional values, 'visions', cultures, practices, and procedures – and its experience with contentious cases.

The convergence of SIA with forms of social assessment may be viewed – and used - in different ways. Some practitioners perceive these approaches as a means to render likely social effects and impacts visible by mapping people, processes, relations, impacts and risks in social terms. This perspective is valuable, for example, in conducting project ex-post evaluation of impacts, but the results might then be overlooked in planning the next project. More instrumentally, these approaches can match projects to social contexts – intended user groups, for example – so as to extend and sustain economic growth. In support of social safeguards, its detailed socioeconomic survey work and participative strategies can help determine the best livelihood and living options for those displaced by development projects, for instance. Forms of social assessment and SIA may be deployed through the life of a project, as part of a social risk management system that encompasses mitigation planning. Backed by strong social development goals, social assessment may be used to identify broad strategies, for example, to select and to design dynamic lending activities that tackle the social dynamics of poverty and drivers of social exclusion. The conclusion to this volume will examine the extent to which such assessments generate successful outcomes.

Does any of this experience resonate in China? We now explore different perceptions as forms of social assessment emerge incrementally, building on longer traditions of Chinese social science research.

China: Addressing the Social Costs of Transformation

This volume focuses in particular on China, a key Asian country with a rapidly expanding presence in international project investment. China's growing overseas foreign direct investment has reached commercially and geo-econom-

ically significant levels. Its expanding foreign aid programme concentrates on grants, interest-free loans and concessional loans, primarily in project form. Its approaches to project investment planning, therefore, resonate both in China and beyond its borders. As a key investment modality both at home and abroad, projects are potential flashpoints for heightened contestation on environmental and social impacts and sustainability.

Having consciously set aside social equity objectives since 1978 to first pursue economic growth, China is now confronting the social consequences of that decision by exploring new strategies, including forms of social assessment and SIA, both nationally and internationally. Nationally, this means use of governance and planning strategies that take account of the social transformation arising from market-led strategies, and the opening of new social spaces.

This section begins with some key 'social contradictions' arising from China's growth. It then explores new directions in national governance and planning that will help to determine the processes and outcomes of recent initiatives in social assessment. These recent initiatives, encompassing trials in social assessment and SIA for selected projects, as well as new forms of social stability risk assessment, are examined below.

The 'Social Contradictions' of Economic Growth

China has, since 1978, selectively transformed the state and its processes to support market-led growth, industrialization and urbanization, and to align more closely with a range of international standards. This entailed selectively applying elements of the Washington Consensus (Stiglitz 1998) whilst extensively reorganizing state government. Ren (2010) characterized this process in China as a 'neoliberalizing synchronization' whereby a socialist government directs the economic system to be more compatible with global capitalist practices.

The government-initiated, single-minded quest for growth, which was designed to secure better living standards for the Chinese people, focused until recently on economic dimensions (Ren 2010) and significantly reduced poverty. Under President Jiang Zemin (1993–2003), GDP growth became the single most important performance indicator for local government officials (Zheng and Fewsmith 2008). Investment in project infrastructure as a basis for economic development led to certain high-profile, large-scale projects embodying national prestige – the Three Gorges project, for example (Gransow and Price 2007). Intensive spatial transformation, based on massive conversion of rural to urban land and driven by local governments' revenue needs, has increased the urban population from less than one-quarter to over half of the total population (Lin et al. 2014).

However, this state (re)building to support, selectively, the capitalist economic transformation has had its own distinct social effects – most notably re-

sulting from growing social mobility and inequality,²¹ rising unemployment and underemployment, rapid urbanization,²² loss of farmland and fears of food insecurity,²³ and environmental degradation and related health issues.²⁴ These profound changes are accompanied by social disorientation (Chen 2012), alienation and anomie emerging from a perceived sharpening of differentiation in social status, organization, roles and power structures, as well as in income and educational levels (Li et al. 2010).

Observers have viewed such social consequences through the lens of social stability, implying state action is necessary to resolve the resultant social contradictions. For example, Hu contends that the trend in which 'the rich get richer and the poor get poorer ... will bear not only on social justice but also on social stability' (Hu 2011: 160). In this view the main risk to China's growth lies in 'disharmony between economic and social development. Economic development has resulted in many social problems and social contradictions that have yet to be solved' (ibid.: 20). Similarly, Arrighi observed that China's economic expansion, accompanied by rapid growth in income inequality within China, was both restraining the growth of the domestic market and causing social and political tensions that might jeopardize further growth. Recognizing government efforts to achieve a balance development between rural and urban areas, between regions, and between economy and society, he asked: 'What would this new emphasis amount to in terms of actual social reforms, and ... will [it] succeed in making continuing economic growth socially sustainable?' (Arrighi 2005: 34).

Leung and Xu predicted that China's experience of 'one of the most rapid increases in income disparities in the world since 1978' (2010: 60) would lead to social destabilization through 'widening income and regional inequalities, rising unemployment and the emergence of urban poverty ... higher risks of income loss due to social dislocations, insecure employment' (ibid.: 48). This would test the capacity of existing government-initiated social protection measures whose limitations, exacerbated by corruption, have caused pension benefits to decline while the costs of medical care, housing and education rise. The next section explores some popular responses to these changes.

Responses: Social Protest and Complaints

Escalating protests and complaints from affected people have fanned perceptions of instability and become 'normalized' (Chen 2012). Protests officially escalated tenfold in the 1993–2005 period, after which statistics ceased; the actual figures are probably much higher (Perry 2010; Horsley 2010). Reasons for protests include, in order of descending importance, land disputes, environmental degradation, labour disputes, fiscal recentralization (i.e., forcing local governments to generate revenue), the cadre evaluation system and institutional failure to address grievances (ibid.).

In the emerging discourse of legal rights, however, protestors go to great lengths to demonstrate their loyalty. For example, in the bourgeoning use of *xinfang* – a system of complaints based on letters and visits – complainers present their case in terms authorized, if not always enacted upon, by the state (Perry 2010: 23). In addition, traditions of protest that use folk stories, operas and lawsuits, amongst other vehicles, signal an interest in 'negotiating with an authoritarian state that takes such deferential expressions of popular discontent extremely seriously' (ibid.: 24–26). Thus challenged, the leadership has responded, for example by abolishing the agricultural tax in 2006 and, as explained in chapter 10 of this volume, introducing new directives in 2004 and 2010 designed to safeguard farmers in rural-to-urban land transfers.

Protesters recognize new opportunities arising from competition between departments exercising state power. This ambiguity in responsibilities gives the voices of the powerless entrée but does not seriously challenge the power asymmetries between the powerless and the elites (Chen 2012). The state's dominance and its power to intervene in the market and society are now filtered through multi-agent interactions, due not only to such competition but also to fragmentation, the rising power of local government and the growing demand for legal services from the market and from society (Li and Cheng 2013). In addition, an expanded organizational sphere and social space encompass new civil society voices and groupings. Rarely, however, do such groupings become 'professionalized' – most social protestors have consciously avoided sophisticated organization, preferring to remain in loose associations (Chen 2012).

Civil society actors therefore occupy a tenuous space. Tilt (2010: 156) defined civil society as an 'intermediate realm between family and the state characterized by collective action around shared values, interests and goals'. Dealing with 'public participation, trust, and regulatory transparency presents a problem in China where government respect for individual rights, and views is poor and citizens have little legal recourse to voice concerns about environmental problems' (ibid.). Yet despite the minimal formalized environmental movement, 'subtle, spontaneous ad hoc collectivities ... cohere around shared interests regarding environmental problems' (ibid.) every day and undoubtedly exert pressure on regulators, suggesting that opportunities for creative strategies to effect outcomes exist at the margin. The next section explores new modes of governance that permit, and yet contain, these voices.

New Modes of Governance

Governmental technologies have been used to frame analysis of the relationship between the government of the state, the government of others and the government of people. In these terms, the 'conduct of conduct' rejects the top-down image of an elite that governs the masses (Kipnis 2011: 5). More important is

the relationship between government and subjects, and the 'manifold technologies through which we have been historically constituted, and, in turn come to constitute ourselves' (Jeffreys and Sigley 2009: 4). In this sense, neoliberal technologies of governing and self-governing may be analysed as a set of calculative practices that can be adopted without necessarily changing the entire state apparatus. China's governing strategy precluded dismantling the socialist apparatus; instead, it created space for people to exercise a multitude of private choices within political limits set by the socialist state (Ong and Zhang 2008: 2). Socialist rule appears reanimated by the infusion of neoliberal reasoning in what Ong and Zhang (2008: 4) have called a 'strategy of ruling from afar'. The mix of self-governing and socialist governing at a distance configures a space designated 'the new social' (ibid.: 4) and produced by the interplay of state interests with multiple self-interested actions. Here, in a break with the socialist ethics of the past, communities and individuals are urged to be 'self-responsible' (ibid.: 14). This approach focuses on the 'multiple connections between everyday practices and state policies' so that the social milieu is not conceived as independent of the state, but as constituted through interrelationships with it (ibid.: 13). In such interrelationships, place and context assume new importance for understanding the articulation between socialist rule, neoliberal principles and self-governing practices. This process has created new political and social formations, new sets of values and beliefs, new social identities and new subjectivities, highlighting the importance of culture (Liu 2004). Modes of production and consumption based on flourishing patterns of globalization and China's integration into the world market interact with novel cultural forms based on novel technologies, rapid mobility of information, images and sounds, in a milieu of transnational structures of communication and exchange (Damm and Steen 2008). Government has itself deployed culture – history, aesthetics and everyday life – for example, during the countdown to Hong Kong's return to the mainland, 'aimed at shaping Chinese citizens to develop and improve their capacities of right choices, becoming neoliberal, sovereign individuals' (Ren 2010: xv).

Highly influential but relatively narrow economic policies, such as fiscal discipline, tax reform, trade liberalization, privatization of state enterprises, deregulation, legal security for property rights and the financialization of capital, initially resonated in China (ibid.). Yet the broader post-Washington consensus has also been influential. For example, a World Bank Report (1992) on governance and development led one Chinese writer to distinguish between 'power of government operating from top down ... primarily through orders, statutes, bureaucracy and coercion' and 'power of governance', which operates 'mutually ... primarily through collaboration, coordination, negotiation, social networking, identity and consensus' (Yu 2002 in Jeffreys and Sigley 2009: 12). Hoffman (2009: 113) described the key role that international organizations, including the United Nations and World Bank, played in 'cataloguing, naming, and monitoring' en-

vironmental issues in China and in 'integrating market rationalities' into environmental governance with a 1979 act requiring environmental assessment for all construction projects. A 1993 notice additionally required all international projects in China to meet the requirements of international agencies, including, where relevant, for participatory social analysis (Tang, Wong and Lau 2008). Analysing moves away from command and control by government towards more neoliberal ways of governing migrant workers, Xu (2009: 38) found that 'Chinese integration into wider institutional arrangements has required adherence to numerous international standards, including business and labour regulations', producing 'a network of actors, both state and non-state and domestic and international, concerned with the governance of peasant migrants' (ibid.: 40). Xu credits the World Bank and United Nations with a recent shift from 'letting the market decide' to correcting 'market imperfections' by 'paying more attention to social aspects of the market economy, especially through governance', with social policy as an element of neoliberal practices in international governance (ibid.). The next section identifies concomitant shifts in the planning mode and the possibilities for social planning in this context.

Beyond Command Planning

From 1993 on, development planning, deprived of its pre-reform central role in target setting and resource allocation, was 'fundamentally transformed in terms of function, content, process, and methods' to master entirely new tasks in new ways (Heilmann and Melton 2013: 581). The five-year economic plan was transformed, reinvigorated, and in 1986 renamed the 'economic and social development plan', remaining central to public policy directions, coordination and oversight, including in sensitive spheres such as environment, social policy and land management.²⁵

Initially set aside in pursuit of growth, social issues re-emerged in official discourse, assuming a more significant profile during and after the Sixteenth Party National Congress in 2002. President Jiang Zemin recognized income inequality in China in 2002 and disparities in access to social services, as did President Hu Jintao in 2007. Social problems could now be named and examined, whilst phrases such as 'putting people at the centre' reflected the conceptual reintegration of social issues into the development trajectory (Gransow and Price 2007: 4). The concept of 'ecological civilization', introduced in 2007 and incorporated into the Communist Party's constitution in 2012, offers a vision of a harmonious society sharing the fruits of development and safeguarding social justice and equity (CCICED 2013: 3). Starting with the Tenth Plan (2001–2005), Premier Wen Jiabao's government incorporated long-term social and environmental development programmes and programmes to mitigate urban-rural, interregional, socioeconomic, human-environmental, and domestic-international issues, that

is, 'imbalances and contradictions that the party is unwilling to leave to a free-wheeling evolutionary process' (Heilmann and Melton 2013: 585).

In a new initiative, the 12th Five-year Plan for National Economic and Social Development (2011–2015) was formulated through a lengthy but selective consultation process involving key think tanks. This 12th plan built upon the 11th five-year plan (2006–2010), which had expressed a shift from maximizing growth to promoting greater sustainability in a 'harmonious society' through balanced, sustainable economic and social development, including the goal of reducing regional and sectoral income inequality and increasing demand. These aims proved difficult to achieve, although most of the other technical targets were met. Though it retained ambitious economic growth targets, the 11th plan was the first to recognize certain limits to economic growth, promulgating instead the building of a 'harmonious society' prioritizing employment, social security, poverty reduction, education, medical care, environmental protection and safety. This included efforts to readjust the income distribution to narrow the income gap among different regions and social groups in order to achieve social equality (Xinhuanet 2005).

The 12th Five-year Plan addressed local government's critical role in implementing the Plan. Premier Wen Jiabao pointed to the 'outdated mindset and the GDP-oriented criteria for evaluating the performance of government officials as obstacles that might keep the five-year plan from being fully carried out. The central government would adopt new performance evaluation criteria for local governments and give more weight to the efficiency of economic growth, environment protection and living standards' (quoted in Zhang 2011).²⁶

As Heilmann and Merton (2013) explained, the five-year plans are executed via thousands of sub-plans at the province, city or county level, and through special plans and macro-regional plans designed to reduce regional inequality through contracts between central and regional governments. Following a long-standing Chinese tradition, decentralized experimentation and discovery of new policy instruments are allowed. Ministries and local governments oversee their own programmes and experiment with policy ideas, within certain limits set at higher levels. Coordination, bargaining and negotiation over individual responsibilities and targets are generally extensive. Higher levels of government, which often engage outside experts to advise on progress, may choose to reassert their policy authority directly through policy revisions, or indirectly via influential performance evaluations.

Yet attempts to lessen inequality in Chinese society and address the social costs of development may conflict with the need to derive maximum economic and strategic advantage from the global economy (Knight 2008: 202). The dynamic planning system has scope for local initiatives, but efforts to achieve a more 'balanced' society are 'swamped by a cyclical intensity of the old pattern' of large-scale resource allocation favouring growth (Naught on 2010: 84). De-

spite top-down public policy reforms, systemic and structural features appear unchanged, notably at the critical level of local government spending, whereby the incentives of fiscal power and prospects for bureaucratic promotion still drive local government behaviour to expand local revenue by means of rapid growth (Li, this volume; Riskin 2010: 101). Because of increasing competing pressures on local government cadres, 'China's efforts at development planning have so far displayed a pronounced weakness in pursuing redistributive goals and improving the development potential of disadvantaged population groups' (Heilmann and Melton 2013: 615). The next section explores what this might mean for sociological knowledge application.

Sociological Knowledge in Planning in China

China's long-standing tradition of social field research offers a basis for shaping social action to promote modernization with Chinese characteristics (Gransow 2003; Guldin 1994). Zheng described a 'tortuous path' (2006: 19) of sociology (and anthropology) characterized by activity and then forced isolation. This path is marked by a recurring theme: indigenization of foreign theories and methods in light of 'Chinese social reality' (ibid. 19–20). Since the 1990s, a small group of social specialists has explored possible ways of conducting social assessments in China (Wang and Marsden 1993; RISN 1995; Gransow and Price 2007; CIECC 2004).

Zheng ascribed the origins of the term 'harmonious social development', which articulates a vision of a more socially aware, less destructive type of growth, to the Chinese discipline of sociology (2006: 34). Central government has called on specifically social and local forces to provide social services, thereby assisting the state in building the 'harmonious society' – under the auspices of the governing Party. Thus 'Chinese sociologists, demographers and statisticians are at the forefront in providing the expert knowledge required for a discursive and epistemological shift away from GDP oriented growth' with a new focus on inequality (Xu 2009: 46). Increasingly, social analysts participate in investment planning and appraisal preceding decisions on major state investment projects (CIECC 2004).

The naming of social problems has opened the door to new approaches: incremental steps to social risk mitigation mediated by 'Chinese social reality'. Since 1995 some social researchers have called for SIA, in its more inclusive international form, to improve social equity, enhance social inclusion and mitigate social risk through systematic public involvement in project investments (Tang, Wong and Lau 2008).

The fading of the pre-reform, planning-centric mindset into 'socialism from afar' unlocks possibilities for the emergence of more participative approaches in planning, as examined by Gransow, this volume. These may focus on 'social harmony' rather than individual empowerment. One legacy of central planning

processes, in which the state determined social interests, was an expectation that individuals should sacrifice for state interests. In rural areas, collective rather than individual rights have continued, for example, in land use. In this context participatory strategies may primarily aim to support project investment decisions already made rather than to canvas serious alternatives or to deal with tensions arising (Tang, Wong and Lau 2008). Planners may still view participative social assessment as an unnecessary expense, believing that they themselves hold the requisite expertise whereas affected communities lack the knowledge and capacity for participation; or as counterproductive because opening the door to public participation threatens to dilute their own discretionary power. Case studies in this volume show that new approaches are beginning to emerge, albeit unevenly.

From the 1980s, China's project investment planners initially adopted internationally-practiced methods for economic and financial project assessment, then EIA under the environmental regulatory system (CIECC 2004), and, from 1993, participatory social assessments for internationally funded projects. The EIA Act of 2003 expanded earlier laws, requiring participation in environmental management but not specifying how participation would be arranged and legally defended, nor social issues formally addressed (Tang, Wong and Lau 2008). Rapid industrialization means more financing is available for EIA and SIA, and local governments recognize the importance of 'harmonious development' for their own spheres (ibid.). Yet local governments have been challenged by the constraints on realizing SIA systematically: absence of understanding of SIA among key decision makers; absence of clear responsibilities and local regulations for initiating, approving and enforcing SIA; lack of incentives and time for rigorous and participative SIA; intense pressures to approve investments speedily, whereby EIA may be undertaken as a formality only after high-level project approval without consideration of alternatives; and lack of authoritative SIA methods, organizations and expertise (ibid.; Ren 2013; Zhao and Yao 2011; Li, this volume). In short, local government cadres are not held responsible for the adverse social impacts of their projects.

As Xiao and Arthur explain in chapter 8, a Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) Technical Guidance for Public Consultation in EIA was created in 2011; meanwhile, this Ministry's Environmental Impact Assessment Technical Guideline of 2011 strengthens requirements for stakeholder engagement 'up front' and requires some pilot SIA for projects with construction impacts. Regulating these guidelines through the EIA framework, however, will be subject to the constraints identified earlier. Several authors in Part II of this volume express a range of views on the significance of the 2011 requirement, Wang (chapter 9) in relation to conservation projects, and Xiao and Arthur (chapter 8) in the context of traditional project decision-making processes. More generally, in chapter 7 Gransow explains how participatory approaches are enacted in varying contexts that affect the quality of outcomes for risk identification and management.

These developments follow a series of incremental steps towards social assessment in China over several decades. As Li explains in chapter 6, from 1993 various corporations and sector ministries developed methods and guidelines for social assessment in investment planning (e.g., Wang and Marsden 1993; RISN 1995; China Petroleum and Natural Gas Corporation 1993; Chinese Research Association for Water Supply 1999; Civil Aviation Administration of China 1999; Ministry of Railway 2001). In 2002 China's paramount planning agency, the then State Development Planning Commission, now the National Development Reform Commission (NDRC), endorsed a comprehensive guideline requiring participatory social assessments as an integral element of feasibility studies for certain investment projects (CIECC 2002). Li and Gransow, in chapters 6 and 7 respectively, explore this initiative, which probably constitutes the clearest, most comprehensive guideline of the purpose, methods and outcomes of social assessment in the Chinese context. Importantly, this document conceptualizes the aims of social assessment: acceptability among users, enhanced coordination between economy and society, streamlined implementation, higher returns and more generous project benefits, as well as mitigated risks, monitoring potential and dispute resolution mechanisms (CIECC 2002, 2004).

How would the investment management system, as transformed in 2004 (see chapter 6) address the 2002 guideline and its social development content? An NDRC 2007 format for Project Application Reports mandated both SIA and land use and resettlement impact assessment, undertaken at the project application stage, for key public and private sector projects. In chapter 10 Ferguson and Zhu explain these instructions' significance for both SIA and resettlement planning.

Since then, NDRC has issued Interim Measures (in 2012) and Report Requirements on Social Stability Risk Assessment for Major Capital Projects (Trial) (in 2013). In chapter 7, Li asks whether these requirements simply reflect the current overarching concern to reduce project-generated causes of social instability. Such risk assessment tools lack the wider mandate to achieve the social acceptability, benefit enhancement, streamlined implementation, comprehensive risk mitigation, dispute resolution and monitoring contained in the CIECC's 2002 formulation. As Gransow (2014) has pointed out, greater attention to socially sustainable project planning and implementation from the beginning may preclude the effort and expenses perceived as necessary 'to maintain social stability'.

Social Assessment in Land Transfers and Expropriation

Development-forced displacement carries a number of risks for the people affected through lost networks, housing, income or resources. It is not surprising that land disputes are a flashpoint for conflict in China, especially at rural-urban peripheries, where land politics increasingly dominate urban revenue generation strategies and drive the rapid conversion of rural land into urban land. Perry

(2010: 20) documented widespread, often violent land disputes arising when villagers contested 'lucrative sale of collective lands by corrupt village and township cadres who neglected to consult or adequately compensate their fellow villagers.' To ensure that authorities understand and address a sense of loss that goes beyond mere possessions to the very basis of culture, collective memory and identity, protesters use various forms of collective action: ritualized protests depicting narratives of suffering, petitions, documentation of losses (Oliver-Smith 2010). Politically skilful urban residents employ socialist slogans and demand justice and social protection from the Party (Hsing 2008: 69). Rural people, meanwhile, are less empowered legally and politically (Tang, Wong and Lau 2008).

These conflicts reflect differing rationalities and social constructions of land, which may at once represent a space of power and a revenue source for local government; a commodity for a developer; and food, livelihood, home, security in injury, sickness and retirement, and identity for a farmer (Yang 2012). An asymmetry of interest's results, as the relative bargaining power of the negotiating stakeholders is unequal. Yu and Shi (chapter 11) explore these differences in a fascinating case study. The vulnerability of land losing farmers – especially women, who marry outside their natal communities and thus generally have less secure use rights – has prompted calls for separate strategies to ensure their basic living, job training and social security, in addition to land compensation (Yang 2012).

The dynamics of land appropriation highlight the state's dual role: having formally established a leasehold land market in 1988 separating ownership from use rights, it also retains ultimate ownership of all land. Local governments, as the state's representatives, develop the land but simultaneously represent the rights of the people occupying that land. When agricultural land is converted to urban land on grounds of the 'public interest', its agricultural production value for compensation purposes is inevitably lower than its subsequent value as commercial land. Thus rural producers lose, whilst urban governments and often private developers gain (Lin 2009).

Recognizing the social risks of potentially increased rural-urban inequality, the State Council issued Urgent Notices in 2004 and 2010 to address the plight of affected persons. This has meant longer project lead times to ensure procedural compliance – although, as Ferguson and Zhu point out in chapter 10, the increased attention does not yet require full SIA or even systematic resettlement planning. The preoccupation with monetary compensation, which is determined by assets, not household vulnerability, is structurally insufficient to prevent impoverishment in all cases (ADB 2007), especially when rural householders are older, infirm, less well educated, less resourced or less well connected to alternative employment options.

To deal with the risks facing people displaced by project developments and land transfers, the central government has amassed urban, rural and sector-based

regulatory requirements for land acquisition, compensation and resettlement for displaced people. Preservation of arable land as the basis of food security as well as farmers' livelihoods has been a key concern throughout the 11th and 12th Five-year plans, with a binding target of zero cumulative change in arable land included in the 12th Five Year plan. However, a very broad definition of 'public interest' permits land acquisition for both public and private purposes. There is little requirement for resettlement planning or livelihood assistance, whilst 'people's right to know, participate, or appeal is frequently not respected' (ADB 2012: 10). Ferguson and Zhu take up these themes in chapter 10, cogently arguing a case for better and more systematic SIA as an integral part of resettlement planning and management in selected sectors.

Conclusion

Recent initiatives to integrate social dimensions into planning through social assessment and SIA in China present new opportunities for application of sociological knowledge to understand and address the social costs of development. Yet the initiatives also pose new challenges in their coordination and implementation: designation of responsibilities and formulation of local administrative regulations for initiating, approving, disclosing, involving public participation in, and effecting SIA; and coverage for non-major, non-state approved projects, especially locally initiated ones. Time, resources, understandings and permissions are needed for the participative planning mode; and sensitive management systems will allow monitoring, feedback and correction through the project life.

Part II of this volume holds chapters that explore planning changes, participatory experiences, and land acquisition and resettlement processes in China in greater detail, whilst the conclusion provides some closing remarks linking China's global practice with this introduction.

Notes

- The policy spread to bilateral donors through Guidelines of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 1992).
- The IFC and ADB both require their private sector sponsors to meet their resettlement policy standards.
- Signatory financial institutions undertake to apply the voluntarily adopted Principles where total
 project capital costs exceed US\$10 million (retrieved 1 September 2011 from http://www.equa
 tor-principles.com/).
- The IFC's updated Sustainability Framework with revised performance standards, approved by the IFC board of directors on 12 May 2011 (IFC 2011), was effective as of 1 January 2012.
- Some practitioners have used the term 'social assessment' to signify social analysis with greater emphasis on participatory approaches, for example, as a 'methodology for incorporating an anal-

- ysis of social issues and developing a framework for stakeholder participation in the design of a project' (Reitbergen-McCracken and Narayan 1999).
- The guidelines required assessment of three main components: proposals' compatibility with local sociocultural conditions; likely spillover effects; and the distribution of effects among groups, both positive and negative (Barrow 2000).
- 7. The Washington Consensus, originating among economists from the United States, International Monetary Fund and World Bank addressing problems in Latin America in the 1980s, concentrated on a neoliberal paradigm addressing market-opening economic growth. Whilst economists differ on the exact formula for growth and stability (Cao 2005), a leading practitioner described this consensus as requiring liberalized trade, macro-stability and getting the prices right, whereupon markets could allocate resources efficiently, generating robust growth (Stiglitz 1998).
- In 1997 the Asian financial crisis began to unfold in a region long considered a success story, with attendant questioning of the role of global capital flows and their social costs.
- 9. Though still basing their arguments on neoliberal economic fundamentals, some economists posited a post-Washington consensus in which working markets also required sound financial regulation, competition policy, and policies to facilitate technical transfer and encourage transparency.
- 10. The MDGs are a set of eight time-bound, measurable targets for combating problems including poverty, hunger, disease, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. The goals are to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a global partnership for development. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/poverty.shtml
- 11. ADB partnered with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP). The partnership also produces annual MDG updates and sector-specific reports for the region. Retrieved 21 May 2011 from http://www.adb.org/poverty/mdgs.asp.
- 12. Several international declarations (Rome 2003 and Paris 2005) 'committed the development community to harmonizing aid processes' (Johnson 2005: 41).
- 13. The U.S. National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) of 1969 was approved in 1970.
- 14. Recognizing that negative impacts from investments could reduce or outweigh their benefits, jeopardizing success and degrading environments on which communities depend, NEPA required the application of the social sciences, as well as the natural sciences, in advance (Burdge et al. 2004). This called for advance understanding of how people and communities would react to planned investments. Anthropological and sociological techniques would be used to collect baseline and follow-up data for population variables in the sphere of impact demographic characteristics; community and institutional structures; political, social and community resources and to predict likely changes in those variables based on comparative cases, modelling and expert testimony. Mitigative measures, such as compensation, were then designed to protect personal and property rights (ibid.).
- Burdge (2003) includes Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. This book contends that several developing countries, including China and India in Asia, have introduced forms of SIA in certain circumstances.
- The Pelosi Amendment, which owed its existence at least partly to NGO activity, became active in 1991 (Sanford and Fletcher 1998).
- Practitioners of SIA have described it as a 'poor relation' in the United Kingdom planning regime compared to EIA (Glasson and Wood 2009: 283); as 'a discipline that still grapples with

- credibility issues' (Rowan 2009: 185); and as subject to 'myths and misunderstandings' in that measuring social impacts increases the cost of projects and slows projects down (Burdge 2003).
- See, e.g., SIA handbooks: Barrow 2000, Becker and Vanclay 2003, Burdge et al. 2004; Momtaz and Kabir 2013.
- 19. This meant moving away from the 'positivist/technocratic characteristics' to the broader, 'more democratic, participatory, constructivist International Principles' (Vanclay 2006: 12). These urged SIA practitioners to adopt an ethic of openness and accountability, equity, and defence of human rights, in which processes that 'infringe the human rights of any section of society should not be accepted' (Vanclay 2003: 9).
- 20. The World Bank's User's Guide on PSIA (World Bank 2003a) includes prior analysis of specific reforms' likely impacts, analysis during reform implementation and analysis of completed reforms. Prior PSIA is intended to inform the choice, design and sequencing of alternative policy options. During implementation, the monitoring of a reform and its impacts can lead to refinement of the reform, reconsideration of the pace/sequencing or institutional arrangements of the reform, or the introduction or strengthening of mitigation measures. Finally, after a reform's completion PSIA assesses its actual distributional impacts, helping analysts understand the likely impacts of future reforms.
- Since 1978 income inequality has increased rapidly in China. In January 2014 the Gini coefficient was almost 0.5. World Bank website, retrieved 15 May 2014 from http://wdi.worldbank.org/table/2.9.
- 22. China's urban population is estimated to have expanded from 172 million in 1978 to 691 million in 2011, with massive increases in built-up areas (Lin et al. 2014: 3).
- 23. China has only 8 per cent of the globe's arable land but must feed 20 per cent of the world's population, even as its population grows and consumption patterns change.
- 24. The rapid pace of urbanization fosters environmental degradation, lowering ambient air and water quality. China has seven of the world's ten most polluted cities (Lin et al. 2014). This harms people's health, including through contamination of food and medicine. Population growth and the aging of the population exacerbate gaps in health service provision, and lower-income groups lack access to health services, education and social security.
- 25. Heilemann and Melton (2013: 583) set out the basic purpose as to achieve "strategic policy coordination (prioritizing and coordinating state policies from an anticipatory, long-term, cross-sectoral perspective); resource mobilization (mobilizing and pooling limited resources to bring about structural changes identified by policy makers as necessary to achieve sustained economic and social development); and macroeconomic control (controlling the level and growth of principal economic variables to achieve a predetermined set of development objectives, prevent severe cyclical fluctuations, and contain the effects of external shocks)."
- 26. Recognizing that income increases had lagged behind economic growth, the plan's core goal was to build a fairer society, spreading wealth more evenly among China's 1.34 billion people, through increased spending on education, health care and public housing, and initiatives intended to narrow the wealth gap between the rich and poor.

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