

registered unemployed (p. 40). In rural China, older persons comprise the second largest group among *dibao* beneficiaries after working age adults (p. 40). Here it is also important to note that *dibao* is the main source of income for most recipient families both in urban and rural China (p. 62). It is mostly because of the limited employability of *dibao* recipients due to “chronic illness, low education, lack of skills, middle age, long history of unemployment, and lack of financial and social capital” (p. 82).

As for answering the second and third questions, Gao suggests, “[s]ocial assistance has functioned not only to support livelihood for the poor but as a means for political and social control. Both the ruling elite and the public share the view that social stability is essential for continued growth and prosperity of the country, and social assistance helps serve this larger purpose” (p. 8). Having said that, what is perhaps missing from *Welfare, Work and Poverty* is a theoretical discussion of the relationship between social and political stability and social assistance provision. Rather, this lack of theoretical discussion leads to the perception that the relationship between social and political stability and social assistance provision is taken for granted; which in turn leaves the reader questioning the ways in which *dibao* works as a social and political stability tool in China.

As the rich reference list provided by Gao in *Welfare, Work and Poverty* proves, poverty, social assistance and welfare have been and will continue to be very important components of research on contemporary China. For this reason, overall, *Welfare, Work and Poverty* presents a very timely contribution to English literature on *dibao*. The book accomplishes its promise to provide a systematic and comprehensive evaluation of *dibao* by focusing on various aspects of the programme including the less studied ones such as the subjective well-being of its beneficiaries. Therefore, the book deserves to be widely read not only by scholars and students of China but also by international poverty alleviation experts, and it should be added to the compulsory reading lists of social policy circles.

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State of Exchange: Migrant NGOs and the Chinese Government

JENNIFER Y. J. HSU

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In *State of Exchange: Migrant NGOs and the Chinese Government*, Jennifer Hsu examines how state and society have transformed each other in China through the NGO sector, and more specifically through migrant NGOs. Hsu argues that the policies and regulations governing NGOs in most cases tend to reinforce the dominant role of the state. In many ways, the NGOs are more of a service sector of the state, which means they function as an extension of the state into the community. State and society, according to Hsu, should not be treated as a dichotomy; rather, the concept of the “state” should be understood as comprising different layers and spaces, especially as local Chinese governments gain importance in both economic development and, as Hsu indicates, in work with NGOs.

Hsu starts to “unpack the state” by offering a spatial framework in chapter one. She thoroughly discusses both corporatism and the developmental state; however,

she argues that those theoretical lenses only serve to explain the relationship of state and society in China partially. Hsu offers a unique understanding of the Chinese state, which accounts for its growing internal diversity by identifying different layers and spaces of the state (p. 33). In order to capture the diverse interactions between state and society, Hsu provides a typology which includes three models of interaction: symbolic, asymmetrical and strategic. These three models are not mutually exclusive; in fact, in many of the cases indicated in the book these three models overlap and are bound to different layers of the state. It is also important to note that these models are not static: interaction between the state and society is dynamic, so these models are organic and constantly evolving into different combinations. From chapter three to chapter five, Hsu applies these models to analyse migrant NGOs' interaction with local and central governments in Beijing and Shanghai. Hsu concludes that the Chinese states and NGOs are mutually constitutive; the many layers of the state in China have greatly impacted on migrant NGOs, while the NGOs have become new sites for the state to engage with society (p. 160).

In many ways, Hsu's work enlightens our understanding in sociology and political science by using the Chinese state and migrant NGOs as a case study. More specifically, there are a couple of distinctive merits to her work. First, to conduct fieldwork on migrant NGOs in China is not an easy task. The Chinese government has a deep suspicion of NGOs as a whole, on the grounds that NGOs could be used by foreign anti-governmental agents to undermine domestic stability. The government's long-held suspicion resulted in the passing of the "Management of Foreign NGOs Law" in 2016 (p. 159). Some NGOs which work closely with migrant workers in particular are attracting more attention from local and central governments. Since the promulgation of the labour contracts law in 2008, strikes and labour disputes have increased dramatically. Those migrant NGOs therefore became the main target on the government's list of potential "trouble makers." The combination of these two reasons increased the difficulty of the fieldwork involved in this research, but also increased its value. Two significant periods of fieldwork (2006–07 and 2011–12) were conducted under these difficult conditions to provide the empirical data in the book.

The second salient merit of Hsu's work lies in its interdisciplinary approach. Throughout the book, Hsu offers a consistent analysis which combines developmental studies, sociology, political geography and political science, rightly reflecting the fact that the analysis of the relationship between state and society in China (or in any country for that matter) cannot be accomplished by applying only one or two theoretical lenses.

This book also inspired me to think further about the complexity of the state–society relationship in China, on which a couple of points are worth noting. The first is about the definition of civil society in China. Hsu's in-depth discussion in chapter two regarding civil society in China covers all the possible debates. Civil society in China is under rather hegemonic control by the state; indeed, it doesn't have much scope to develop its independence. However, this condition should not limit the role of NGOs to just delivering public services due to the limits or failures of the state. The main argument addressed by Hsu that "spaces of NGOs can become spaces of the state" (p. 35) comes from the assumption that the goals and interests of NGOs are concomitant with the state's. Nevertheless, as Hsu points out, although society, like the state, has different layers, the goals of migrant NGOs cannot fully coincide with the state's because the state also needs to respond to pressures from another layer of society, the capitalists (be it domestic investors or international investors). While the constant struggle between waged classes and capitalists exists universally, it is more obvious in China due to the country's rapid economic development. It is for this reason

that I do not see the state and migrant NGOs developing completely complementary roles in China, or again, in any country.

The second point is about the comparative cases of Shanghai and Beijing. Admittedly both Shanghai and Beijing are metropolitan cities, with the greatest concentration of migrant workers; nevertheless, the most volatile labour strikes have occurred in the south of China in manufacturing centres like Guangzhou and Shenzhen, where there are more militant labour organizations. The mode of production is crucial to deciding the social relationship of migrant NGOs and the state, or even the migrant workers' interaction with NGOs. It would perhaps be more interesting if Hsu could consider extending this fieldwork to the Pearl River Delta. The scenario of state and migrant NGOs' interaction there might offer this book a fourth model of exchange between state and society.

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Rural Origins, City Lives: Class and Place in Contemporary China

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In *Rural Origins, City Lives* Roberta Zavoretti shares stories of the migrants she came to know whilst living in Nanjing for one year in 2007. Her principal interlocutors include a family of self-employed fruit-sellers, bakers in a factory and two young female employees in a tailors' shop, all of whom have a rural household registration status (*hukou*) and a long-standing presence in the city. Through careful attention to their appearance, biographies, daily practices, interactions, social relations and use of space, Zavoretti paints a compelling, sensitive and nuanced picture of who China's migrant workers are. In the process, she contests many of the assumptions about migrant workers that prevail in Chinese official and media discourses and in the international academic literature on the topic.

Zavoretti's intellectual premises, explained in the Introduction, are at least two-fold. Firstly, while mainstream accounts of China's migrants implicitly accept that the state-endorsed free market drives much human behaviour, ethnography highlights the contradictory moralities, logics and aspirations inculcated in individuals across time and space which inform their everyday practices. Secondly, the category of "migrant" requires disaggregation because the labour migration paradigm typically frames inequality in terms of rurality, residency and geographic mobility, thereby eliding questions of class, the privatization of public welfare and obstacles to social mobility. When individual migrants' different social positions are recognized, one necessarily looks beyond state categories to see their different visions of and possibilities for social mobility. In this respect, individuals' ideological articulations of their own mobility strategies provide a basis for elucidating the complexity and diversity in migrants' visions of success, their social relations and their everyday practices.

Chapter one rehearses a now well-charted terrain in the Chinese studies anthropological literature about peasant worker bodies of no value versus urban middle-class bodies of value (*suzhi*). Zavoretti discusses how in Nanjing, middle-class bodies were the standard against which peasant workers were measured, and how different migrant individuals dealt differently with this representation of human worth.