

The Community Foundation: A Model for Sustaining the Nonprofit Sector in China

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Abstract

Suzy Li addresses the question of how to make the Chinese nonprofit sector more strategic and sustainable in the face of high levels of governmental control and cultural and legal definitions that constrain nonprofit organizations and foundations. Ms. Li contends that within China's legal environment the most attractive attributes of community foundations are their potential for developing social capital and their ability to help professionalize existing forms of local philanthropy and promote long-term solutions. Ms. Li suggests that a starting strategy for the Chinese nonprofit sector is to develop existing community-based organizations and/or to increase their effectiveness and independence. She also recommends working with China's existing intermediate organizations (e.g. China Development Brief and China NPO Network) to lay the groundwork for the creation of community foundations. Local government support for a pilot project on community foundations is also plausible in light of recent efforts by the Ministry of Civil Affairs to encourage community participation in social welfare provision.

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