China's Provinces in Reform, 2nd Workshop (Institute for International Studies)
Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, VR China, 20. - 24. Oktober 1996

The 2nd Workshop of the project to examine *China's provinces in reform* was held at Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, from 20 to 24 October 1996. The workshop was attended by 31 participants invited by the Institute for International Studies at UTS (University of Technology Sidney), and another ten staff from Hangzhou and Zhejiang Universities.

The workshop discussed ten paper in English and three in Chinese on the social, economic and political development of different provinces. In the process it further developed the research agenda on provincial change in China which has emerged as a continuing focus of the project.

Intellectually the 2nd Workshop clearly built on discussions held in 1995. In particular the papers presented to the workshop focussed for the most part on the interactions within a province between the provincial and sub-provincial levels. In addition, two major themes that emerged from the 2nd Workshop were concerns about the role of local culture in shaping provincial development; and the form, function and consequences of the emphasis in a number of provinces (if not all) on provincial identity. The following questions and comments were raised at the workshop:

Explaining economic change

• The difficulties of explaining (as opposed to describing) economic change - is factor endowment, comparative advantage, and foreign investment really enough?

• There was some reaction against the view that all that is needed to ensure rapid economic growth is factor endowment plus foreign investment.

• The objections were a combination of arguments - not all provinces have grown through foreign investment.

• Elsewhere in the world, rapid economic growth has not always depended on factor endowment.

• That kind of argument ignores the role of action and activists.

• Foreign investment alone is unlikely to prove successful.

• The lack of infrastructure is not in any case an independent variable.

Definition of a province

• What is a province and why is it important? In which sense is it the prime unit of analysis?

• Accepting that there may be both higher and lower (in the administrative hierarchy) more abstract or more important forms of political community, nonetheless the provincial level is important because of its role in the PRC.

• One key concern for research must be examining the current role of the province in relation to the centre and sub-provincial regions.

• Is a province a planning unit, the provincial leadership, the people in the provincial party-state, the people in a province, the land of the province, a combination or aggregation of local (sub)provincial cultures ?

State structures

- The relations between the province and the counties.
- The strength, of the provincial party-state is as important as the size. How many counties can be governed, how, in what contexts and with what results ?
- The relations amongst provinces.
- Are the structures of the state more important than the role of market interactions?
- Provinces may be examined as though they existed on their own, but they don't. What is the role of central government in mediating provincial interactions and self-rule?
- The relations between provinces and their (sub)provincial regions.
- Can we identify strong and weak provincial states?

Comparative perspectives

- There was considerable discussion of the ways in which the three directly-subordinated municipalities - Shanghai, Tianjin, Beijing - can be considered alongside the provinces and autonomous regions. Whilst they have a relatively distinct and different economic and social geography, it is also clear that direct subordination to Beijing is a specific political relationship.
- How does social change occur?
- There was some feeling that though individual chapters might address topics on economic, social and political change they sometimes fall down in explaining the relationships.
- Does social change occur through intervention, imitation, endogenously or a mixture ?
- Do inland provinces have radically different economic development legacies?
- How does the emergence of new social forces effect state capacity at provincial level?

Political relationships

- The career incentives for leaders to lead are far from clear. Provincial leaders are likely to be risk adverse. Because the punishments for failure in a risky strategy are disproportionally great they are unlikely to be prepared to stick their necks out, whereas the rewards for following the more comfortable status quo reinforcing path are guaranteed. How then do we explain the occasions when provincial leaders have stuck their necks out?
- Do provinces combine to lobby the centre? when and how?
- How do provinces manage emergent and political interest groups?

Culture and identity

- There was much discussion in the papers and at the workshop on the potential role of local culture in economic, social and political change. This discussion was often complicated because of imprecision about the meaning of 'culture'.
- The management of culture as a political and economic strategy might be a more useful focus.
- But still it remains necessary and difficult to disaggregate the manipulators and audiences.

- There has, for example, been a considerable emphasis on provincial identity in the reform era.
- The why and how of this construction of cultural capital is complex.
- For a start it is far from clear that provincial-level cultures are more salient than (sub)provincial regional cultures.
- The emphasis on provincial identity may be intended to both encourage and mobilise provincial population, and locate the province in China as a whole.
- At the same time it can show the provincial population that the provincial leaders are working on their behalf, and can allow the provincial leaders some leverage on behalf of province in their discussions with the Centre.

Papers

Feng Chongyi, & Hans Hendrischke: *The provinces of continental China*
Dali Yang: *Coping with the Northeast Phenomenon: Heilongjiang and the pains of adjustment*
Andrew Watson: *Shaanxi: The search for comparative advantage*
Jiao Xingguo: *Dongxibu chaju - neilushengde jingji gaige yu fazhan zhanlüe*
David S G Goodman: *King Coal and Secretary Hu: Shanxi's Third Modernisation*
Hans Hendrischke: *Tianjin City - quiet achiever?*
Thomas Heberer: *Hebei in reform: social change from below*
Zhao Lingyun: *Hubei: The strategy of rising abruptly over Central China and its social and political consequences*
Yao Xianguo: *Cong beidong shiying dao zijue chuangxin - difang zhengfu zai Zhejiang jingji gaigezhongde zuoyong*
Yan Chunyou: *Gaige kaifang buduan tuijin Zhejiang jingji shang xintaijie*
Bruce Jacobs: *Uneven Development: Prosperity and Poverty in Jiangsu*
Feng Chongyi: *Jiangxi in Reform: The fear of exclusion and the search for a new identity*
Linda Chelan Li: *Guangdong: From "Machievellian" flexibility towards the rule of law*
Tim Oakes: *Selling Guizhou: the concequenes of 'market socialism' for an interior province*

David S G Goodman

Soziale Bewegungen in Japan
Bonn, 1. - 3. November 1996

Zum ersten Mal lag eine Jahrestagung der 1988 gegründeten Vereinigung für sozialwissenschaftliche Japanforschung e.V. (VSJF) ganz in den Händen von sog. NachwuchswissenschaftlerInnen. Entstanden war die Idee innerhalb des vor allem aus jungen JapanforscherInnen bestehenden Arbeitskreises "Alternative Politikformen in Japan", der aus der Fachgruppe "Politik", einer Sektion innerhalb der VSJF, hervorgegangen war.

Die Entscheidung für das Tagungsthema "Soziale Bewegungen" fiel insbesondere aufgrund der bisherigen relativen Vernachlässigung dieses Bereiches innerhalb der sozialwissenschaftlichen Japanforschung, die vor allem auf zwei Ebenen auffällt: auf der Ebene des inhaltlichen wie auch des theoretisch-methodologischen Diskurses. Hatten sich bisher unterschiedliche Disziplinen in erster Linie einzelnen Bewegungen wie z.B. der Arbeiterbewegung oder der Frauenbewegung zugewandt, so zielten die InitiatorInnen gerade auf eine sowohl themen- als auch fächerübergreifende Auseinandersetzung mit dem Thema. Diese interdisziplinäre Ausrichtung entspricht auch der Zusammensetzung des Arbeitskreises "Alternative Politikformen"