

*Creative Commons for the Socially Marginalized? Model Building for a
Developing Country*

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To begin, I'd like to say that my involvement with CCChina Mainland (CCCM) has allowed me to practice what I preached. I knew very little about intellectual property laws until I got involved in CCCM to help Professor Wang Chunyan develop a blueprint for promoting CC in China. My paper, which is quite a departure from my previous writings, is a status report on two specific projects in which I am directly involved in **building a rural connection for CC China Mainland**. Of course, the word "rural" should not be treated as a signifier of "place" alone (i.e., rural China) because it points more precisely toward the notion of "class." By "rural," I refer not only to the less developed places/regions in China but also to the socially marginalized groups in urban China. The two projects I will talk about are the Migrant Youth Art and Performance Troupe based in Pi Village (in the suburb of Beijing) and the West China ICT project.

As you know, my field – Cultural Studies – is heavy on meta theories and obsessive about deconstruction, but shy in designing hands-on projects and slow in participating in social practice. CC opened up several windows for me. Above all, it allowed me to ask: how relevant is my academic training as a cultural critic to the implementation of a social cause I believe in? How relevant is knowledge to action, and theory to practice?

I raised those questions because there is a conceptual underpinning behind the vision of CC China Mainland [that goes beyond simple instrumentalism (such as how we as advocates teach people how to use the licenses)]. The vision behind CC China is a

humanist vision that contains a social critique. It's a vision made for developing countries with a large population of the socially underprivileged. From the very beginning, Prof. Wang Chunyan and I were keen on developing both the rural and urban infrastructure for CC simultaneously. And that vision is best captured in the Chinese term we picked for CC – 知识共享. We want to face creators/users in both rural and urban China. The act of naming cc as such reflects our double pronged approach of promoting CC in an unevenly developed country.

In a nutshell, we want CC to reach out to four different target segments at the same time: (1) the Chinese middle class; (2) the vast Chinese “relatively well-to-do” households 小康—a cut below the middle class; (3) rural communities and migrant workers in urban China. (4) the digital elites. I am mentioning the translation issue because that decision is no trivial pursuit. Embedded in the four words 知识共享 is a utopian vision of egalitarianism of the commons. **We are most interested in designing a cc model that may be replicable and scalable** not only in the less developed regions in China and but also in other developing countries.

The first collaborative project: Migrant Youth Art and Performance Troupe. The troupe is an NPO made up of migrant workers (about 25 of them) who travel to county towns in Hebei and neighboring cities like Beijing and Tianjin to perform skits and other pop cultural shows. They want to teach their fellow migrant workers how to enrich their cultural lives, learn about their rights, develop self-governing consciousness, spot and train artistic/musical/literary migrant talents from among the migrant workers themselves. CCChina Mainland has made a long-term collaborative arrangement with the Troupe. It

is a 360 degree cooperation – which means they will adopt CC licenses to publish all their cultural products. Take a look at their music website大声唱 (SLIDE). In addition, we are exploring the possibilities of helping them set up a digital museum.

Backpedal a bit to this past summer. We were shown a physical museum in Pi Village (SLIDE) they built to exhibit migrant workers’ material and artistic cultures (music, literature, photography). Through the physical museum, they want to display contemporary and historical materials that document migrant workers’ lives in the cities. They built that museum brick by brick with their own hands. When we were brought to the construction site of the museum, an idea suddenly flashed through my mind – why can’t they build a digital museum to better preserve and archive those precious materials. Right now, we are pursuing this plan by helping them write up a proposal and seek funding for the digital museum project.

In the longer term, CC China Mainland would like to identify other socially marginalized groups living in big cities and find ways of working with them to promote their artistic endeavors through Creative Commons.

The West China Project

The opportunity of developing CC infrastructure in rural China requires a specific entry point because the hinterland is so big and we have so few resources. We found such an entry point, one that is scalable, which will allow us to replicate a model elsewhere, NGO. This is a perfect entry point to build CC presence & infrastructure in China because NGOs and CC share a lot in common. We are both non-profits and change organizations dependent on volunteers. We are thus socially inclusive and we promote the same thing:

open access of information/knowledge/creativity. Talking to the NGOs about CC is like speaking to the converted. I should note that I am not talking about big gongos or well-funded NGOs. We want to target small, homegrown, emerging NGOs in West China.

What will we do?

A member on our team, Shi Song (SLIDE), is a devoted volunteer at GreenWeb 绿网. Through his introduction, we will be collaborate with GreenWeb to conduct ICT training in West China. Specifically, we will help those emerging, small NGOS get a handle on Web 2.0 culture and P2P software tools. We believe that social media and social network technology can help those NGOs to (1) access and interact with information on a scale larger than before, (2) build constituents and volunteer base swiftly (3) facilitate network communications with the outside world efficiently (4) contribute local knowledge to the global cause of non-profits (5) identify and connect with potential younger donors (6) participate in peer-to-peer fundraising schemes like the Pledge Bank, and (7) brand themselves.

What's the relevance of Web 2.0 to NGOs? Even in Western developed countries, most NGOs are still firmly entrenched in the Web 1.0 world, meaning that they use the web largely as a web publishing tool rather than utilize it a tool for interactivity. Those non profits are still at the very early stage of exploring Web 2.0. The shift of mindset from 1.0 to 2.0 for Western NGOs is slowing coming. But to quote an NGO activist working in Cambodia, "It took years and small steps for many in the nonprofit sector to make the leap from fax machines to email – and it'll be the same when taking the leap from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0."

When we come to the ngos in West China, the possibilities of leadfrogging are better because most of our targeted NGOs don't even have a traditional website to begin with. The shift of mindset wouldn't be an issue. Given that Web 1.0 is built on a proprietary structure, those small ngos lack financial resources to hire professional ICT personnel to set up and maintain such a website. Our plan is to send in a small team of experts with whom we are co-developing a set of cc-licensed training materials focused on Web 2.0 culture and technology. Web 2.0 requires little technical knowledge of the user. Easy to implement and easy to use, free 2.0 software tools can lower the technological; threshold and pare down the cost of information distribution of an ngo to a bare minimum.

The ICT training will help *grassroots ngos build their capacity and grow technological autonomy*. *The Web 2.0 tools* we will introduce to the ngos will include video sharing, photo sharing, blogging, wiki, legal file sharing, etc. We will **teach them how to set up a social website, and demonstrate to them how to do four basic tasks: (1) how to use social media to support their organizational work; (2) how to use social media to raise funds (Pledge Bank) (3) how to acquire and disseminate ideas through blogging; (4) how to generate ideas through 2.0 task platforms like Witkey 威客**。 In short, Web 2.0 and social media tools offer many possibilities for NGOs-- to raise the public awareness of their work, turn their constituents into the disseminators of ngo messages, identify and connect with potential younger donors, raise money, find volunteers, and search for ideas on p2p platforms.

[Corresponding Action Items](#)

1. Use Ning to build social websites (“peace”), launched in October 2005, is a free online service for creating and customizing social websites. It appeals especially to users who want to create networks around specific interests and who have limited technical skills. This is also the only free social media platform that supports the Chinese language. We are going to promote Ning to Chinese NGOs. These websites are also programmable. There is a "View Source" tool on each website, allowing users to look at the source code behind any running site.

2. Fundraising 2.0 (PledgeBank). One of the biggest role for Web 2.0 involved raising money. Most of us would like to do something to help others but don't always know how to go about it. PledgeBank is a popular solution. At this site, you can create your own pledge and ask for "X" amount of people to join in. The other option is to join a pledge that already exists. How to start a pledge? (SLIDE)

(1) get a unique page for your pledge

(2) find tools to help promote your pledge (a picture is worth a thousand words, upload a picture or video)

(3) use positive peer pressure to change your community

Pledge Bank creates a community of people who make promises to their peers so that they can support each other.

Case Study #1 Qienkuen, an undergraduate, an e-learning and wiki enthusiast. He made a pledge to continue to contribute to build interactive knowledge communities in China and to start a 2.0 French learning community. His old computer was damaged if he could find 8 people to donate 500 yuan each to buy him a computer. If the pledge is successful, he

promised to write blogs daily to report on the good things that his computer has done in the next 18 months.

Case Study #2 a Hong Kong example “Trailwalker.” The pledge is: “I will complete a 100Km sponsored mountain climb within 48 hours only if twenty people donate 100 yuan per person to Hong Kong Oxfam. 23 people signed up exceeding the goal by three. 2,300 yuan was raised.”

Back to the West China project: We will integrate the introduction of CC culture and CC licenses into those Web 2.0 training courses. In addition, the training material itself will bear By-NC licenses. We are seeking funding to support this project.

By developing a model of ICT training for NGOs that is scalable and replicable in other developing countries, we will be taking a small step toward enhancing information sharing and information equity between rural China and urban China.