

In Search of Civil Society: Market Reform and Social Change in Contemporary China

[Author & abstract](#)[Download](#)[8 Citations](#)[Related works & more](#)

Author

Listed:

- White, Gordon
(University of Sussex)
- Howell, Jude A.
(University of East Anglia)
- Shang Xiaoyuan,
(University of Sussex)

[Registered:](#)

Abstract

Since 1978, China has pursued sweeping economic changes in an officially sponsored transition from a Stalinist centrally planned economy to a socialist market economy. China's reformers have highlighted the need to curb the awesome power of the Leninist state and change the balance of power between state and economy, state and society. In practice, the economic reforms have set in train a process of potentially fundamental social and institutional change in China which is creating new socio-economic forces, shifting power in their direction, and raising the

possibility of political transformation. This book explores the extent to which this experience can be described and understood in terms of the idea of 'civil society', defined in sociological terms as the emergence of an autonomous sphere of voluntary associations capable of organizing the interests of emergent socio-economic groups and counterbalancing the hitherto unchallenged dominance of the Marxist-Leninist state. The authors lay out a clear operational definition of the concept of civil society to make it useful as a tool for empirical inquiry and avoid the cultural relativism of its origins in Western historical experience. Guided by this theoretical framework, the book brings together a vast amount of empirical data on emergent social organization and institutions in contemporary China, drawing on the authors' extensive fieldwork experience in East Asia. It is based on interviews, survey questionnaires, and copious documentary sources, buttressed by in-depth case studies of specific localities over a two-year period from 1991 to 1993. The research focused on the changes in the socio-economic realities of three major social groups - urban manual workers, women, and managers/entrepreneurs. The primary emphasis is on transformations in urban China, though detailed rural case studies of Xiaoshan and Nanhai are included to provide comparative context. The authors describe the new forms of state-society relations, as reflected in the complex links between the state and new associations. They show how the expansion of these associations is jeopardized by the lack of general democratization of China's political institutions.

Suggested Citation

White, Gordon & Howell, Jude A. & Shang Xiaoyuan., 1996. "[In Search of Civil Society: Market Reform and Social Change in Contemporary China](#)," [OUP Catalogue](#), Oxford University Press, number 9780198289562.

Handle: *RePEc:oxp:obooks:9780198289562*

Download reference

as



More services and features

[MyIDEAS](#)

[MPRA](#)

Follow serials, authors,
keywords & more

New papers by email

Subscribe to new additions to
RePEc

Author registration

Public profiles for Economics
researchers

Rankings

Various rankings of research in
Economics & related fields

RePEc Genealogy

Who was a student of whom,
using RePEc

RePEc Biblio

Curated articles & papers on
various economics topics

Upload your paper to be listed
on RePEc and IDEAS

EconAcademics

Blog aggregator for economics
research

Plagiarism

Cases of plagiarism in
Economics

Job market papers

RePEc working paper series
dedicated to the job market

Fantasy league

Pretend you are at the helm of
an economics department

Services from the StL Fed

Data, research, apps & more
from the St. Louis Fed

IDEAS is a RePEc service hosted by the [Research Division](#) of the [Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis](#). RePEc uses bibliographic data supplied by the respective publishers.