FROM NAMELESS MARXIST TO PUBLIC SOCIOLOGIST:
THE INTELLECTUAL TRAJECTORY OF
SHEN YUAN IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA

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Abstract

The study of intellectuals constitutes a vibrant intersection of political sociology, sociology of knowledge, sociology of intellectual life, and sociological theory. Influential scholars such as Karl Mannheim, Zygmunt Bauman, Pierre Bourdieu, and Michel Foucault have enriched the social-historical understanding of intellectuals in modern societies; and more recently, the New Sociology of Ideas (NSI) has extended this endeavour with studies of social scientists and humanities scholars in Western countries. This thesis, however, documenting the intellectual trajectory of Shen Yuan (沈原, b. 1954) since the 1960s, is the first empirical study of a Chinese social scientist as a public intellectual produce within the sub-field of the NSI. It explains how Shen negotiated an authoritarian regime to become a public intellectual. In order to explore such a process, this study demonstrates the importance of attending to the way Shen sees and defines himself as an intellectual. Following Gross’s theory of Intellectual Self-Concept, the research shows that the key to understanding the making of Shen as a public intellectual is to study the Chinese sociologist’s changing intellectual identity, from problematic Marxist during the 1980s and 1990s to public sociology after 2000. To trace Shen’s intellectual trajectory, this research utilized original interviews with Shen Yuan and several of his students in Beijing, and primary sources including Shen’s publications. While employing various interpretative tools, including Gross’s intellectual self-concept, Bourdieu’s field and habitus, and Watson’s dual concepts of orthopraxy and orthodoxy, the research makes two conceptual contributions to the sociology of intellectual life: both archived identity and conceptual literacy hone an analytical understanding of the development and work of public intellectuals.
Preface

Part of the data used in this thesis was collected in 2012 by François Lachapelle in Beijing, China. This research project was approved by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board at the University of British Columbia (BREB Number: H12-00263). Data about Shen’s editorship at the journal *Sociological Research* in Chapter 5 was collected by Xiaoran Zhang, but I remain the sole author of that chapter. Laura Bain did the copy-editing for the totality of the thesis, but again I remain the sole author of the document.
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<td>CASS</td>
<td>Chinese Academy of Social Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Central Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCP</td>
<td>Chinese Communist Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>CH</td>
<td>Conceptual History</td>
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<tr>
<td>CISM</td>
<td>China Institute of Strategy and Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>CME</td>
<td>Chinese Ministry of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>CV</td>
<td>Curriculum Vitae</td>
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<td>CYF</td>
<td>Chinese Youth Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCC</td>
<td>Dictionary of Chinese Communism</td>
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<tr>
<td>DXP</td>
<td>Deng Xiaoping</td>
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<tr>
<td>GYH</td>
<td>Guo Yuhua</td>
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<td>IS</td>
<td>Institute of Sociology (Beijing)</td>
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<td>ISC</td>
<td>Intellectual Self-Concept</td>
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<tr>
<td>LQ</td>
<td>Li Qiang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MZD</td>
<td>Mao Zedong</td>
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<td>NES</td>
<td>New Economic Sociology</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Government Organization</td>
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<td>NL</td>
<td>New Left</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSI</td>
<td>New Sociology of Ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPT</td>
<td>PowerPoinT</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
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<tr>
<td>PS</td>
<td>Public Sociology</td>
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<tr>
<td>QSS</td>
<td>Qinghua School of Sociology</td>
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<tr>
<td>RMB</td>
<td>Renminbi (Chinese currency, also denominated as yuan)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SLP</td>
<td>Sun Liping</td>
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<tr>
<td>SM</td>
<td>Strategy and Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>Sociological Intervention</td>
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<td>SOEs</td>
<td>State Owned Enterprises</td>
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<tr>
<td>SY</td>
<td>Shen Yuan</td>
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<tr>
<td>TASK</td>
<td>Traditional Approaches in the Sociology of Knowledge</td>
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<td>TW</td>
<td>Tsinghua Website</td>
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</table>
Notes on the Spelling

Chinese terms and names are written in Hanyu pinyin, with the exception of a few names that are better known in the Wade-Giles transcription, such as Tsinghua [Qinghua]. In regard to Chinese names, except for the main protagonists in this thesis—Shen Yuan, Sun Liping, Guo Yuhua, and Li Qiang—I also abide by the Chinese convention of putting the family name before the surname.
Acknowledgements

“It’s just an MA—gett’er done,” the commonplace saying euphemistically goes. While this work might indeed be “just” an MA, it is also the most absorbing and most daunting task I have undertaken so far in my academic life, far more difficult than learning the language of Confucius. Working within the tradition of the sociology of knowledge established by Karl Mannheim in the 1930s, a tradition striving to document the social determination of knowledge, this acknowledgements section acts as a reflexive gesture allowing me to recognize the human and non-human assistance (mostly human, though!) that contributed to the form and content of this little MA monster while also helping me power through the previous challenging 16 months. Amongst my fellow aspiring sociologists at the University of British Columbia, a special “many thanks” goes to Patrick Burnett and Caitlin Forsey. The time we spent in Cork and Dublin, Ireland—especially at the pub next to the castle, eating chicken curry and drinking pints of Murphy—will forever remain in my memory as the exemplar of intellectual camaraderie. While my knowledge of relational sociology remains rudimentary, I feel it is an ideal epistemic tool to blend historical and sociological imagination, so thank you, Pat, for relentlessly bringing it up in our discussions. Caitlin, you once told me while driving to UBC, “at the end of the day, sociology is a process-oriented discipline.” While I might have only a rough grasp on what exactly that means, your perspective did provide me with a clue for distinguishing historical from sociological research. Your encouragement, your advice, and even your occasional “just get it done!” have meant a lot over the past few years. Xie xie, dear Comrades. Jean-Philippe Ménard also deserves mention: thank you for Bourdieu’s book, Langage et Pouvoir Symbolique.

I owe a special thanks to my committee members. Dr. Timothy Cheek, Dr. Amy Hanser, and Dr. Neil Gross have being extremely understanding and flexible with the quasi-mouton noir of the sociology department. Over the past four years, they all have enriched my socio-historical way of looking at knowledge production and intellectuals. Koselleck, Callon, the New Sociology of Ideas: all figure prominently in my repertoire now. I also want to acknowledge the support of my long-time mentor at the University of Montreal, Dr. David Ownby, as well as the encouragement of Dr. Thomas Kemple, Dr. Dawn Currie, and Dr. Julian Dierkes.

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Finally, a special thanks to what Schutz called the world of my predecessors, men and women of ideas of the past those ideation powerfully inhabited the world of my contemporaries.
Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the memory of my loving Godmother, Suzanne Melançon Dufresne who passed away as I was about to start writing my thesis.
Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 - Shen Yuan and the Tsinghua School of Sociology

This research is about Chinese intellectuals, the discipline of sociology, and politics in post-Mao China. It offers a sociologically-inclined narrative of Shen Yuan [沈原], a prominent social scientist in China's academia. Shen is professor of sociology, as well as the director and a co-founder in 2000 of the Department of Sociology at Beijing's Tsinghua University. The Beijing intellectual is part of a generation known in China as zhiqing (or “educated youth”). During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), Mao Zedong sent nearly 17 million Chinese youth to the countryside for “re-education”; by learning from the peasants and workers there, they were to become the next generation of Chinese revolutionaries. After completing his M.A. degree in Marxist philosophy at People’s University (Renmin daxue, or Renda) in the mid-1980s, he served as a policy-oriented researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in Beijing from 1986 to 1998, where sociological knowledge and tools were mainly mobilized to cope with urgent social problems.

In 1998, Shen co-published an extremely influential article criticizing the hold of a limited number of elites on the country’s institutions of power, a situation which he argued was hampering the national construction of a balanced society. Following Alain Touraine (1973), Shen called this process “the production of society.” “A society where everybody can express and defend their interests is a healthy society,” the Chinese intellectual asserted during our first interview session.1 Then, at the turn of the millennium, along with half a dozen other noted Chinese scholars, Shen developed a new sociological paradigm, Communist Civilization, with which to study China’s contemporary structural and socio-political transformation. At Tsinghua University, however, along with his colleagues Guo Yuhua and Sun Liping, he strived to liberate sociology from its utilitarian relationship with the state. Since 2005, he has been creating his own public sociology of labour, an undertaking influenced by Buroway’s Marxist sociology and Touraine’s views on sociological intervention. In 2010, in order to address pressing contemporary social issues, Shen and other prominent scholars from Beijing founded the Social

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1 Note on convention. Throughout this thesis, I have used "we" and other plural pronouns (us, our) as a convention to refer to myself; I myself conducted the interviews cited in his paper, in 2012 in Beijing; and I alone am responsible for the arguments and positions proposed in this paper.
Development Research Group, hosted at Tsinghua. Since then, Shen has been increasingly active in the intellectual public sphere, publishing articles in influential Chinese magazines such as *Strategy and Management* (*Zhanglüe yu guanli*) and *Southern Weekend* (*Nanfang zhoumou*).

That being said, when we shared our research interests—Chinese intellectuals and the sociology of knowledge—with the Chinese sociologist, the first thing Shen Yuan said was, “you should not study me. If you want to study only one amongst us you should study Sun Liping,” pointing to the right, towards his well-known colleague’s office; “he is the most thoughtful of all of us.”

Shen added, “Or you could study us as a group working together for over a decade.” Later in the interview, he named the others in this group: Sun Liping, Li Qiang [李强] and Guo Yuhua, all founding members of the Tsinghua Department of Sociology in 2000. As Shen Yuan recalls, at that time

we wanted to create an academic environment that was alive, an academic environment capable of facing up to the complexity and the richness of social life. ... We were hoping to (1) have the capacity to tackle the real problems of Chinese society, but at the same time we wanted to be able to (2) establish a constructive dialogue with contemporary social theory. At the time, we had the impression that this ideal could not be realized in the other departments; and that we would be obliged to found a new department . . . in which we could pursue research projects in common, in which we could debate and exchange our ideas. (Aurore Merle 2007b: 23).

Although this research is not a history of sociology in post-Mao China *per se*, it should nevertheless prove useful to succinctly describe the current position of Shen’s department of sociology vis-à-vis both Chinese sociological and intellectual fields in contemporary China.

Nearly 14 years after the establishment of that sociology department, the enterprise can be considered a success in terms of (1) the resources and accumulated symbolic capital it has made available for both studying and influencing ‘real social problems,’ and (2) the dialogue it has facilitated with contemporary sociological theory. The department’s academic works are widely discussed within and outside of China (see Merle 2004, 2007a; Burawoy 2008; Roulleau-Berger and Li 2008, Roulleau-Berger 2012; Rocca 2008). In the last 10 years virtually all Western projects concerning Chinese sociology have invited members of the Shen’s department to sit on their editorial boards as did Roulleau-Berger et al. 2008) or have showcased their work in other ways including by translating some of their articles for publication (Shen

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2 I reproduce key phrases from my interview for the interest of sinologists [最有思想的就是他.]
2001, 2002a, 2008a, 2008b; Sun 2008; Sun and Guo 2012) and by requesting original research papers from them (e.g., Guo 2012, Dirlik, Li and Yen 2012). Furthermore, Shen and his colleagues have established scholarly relationships and dialogue with sociologists such as Alain Touraine, Ivan Seleny, and Michael Burawoy, as well as institutional partnerships in the U.S., the U.K., Germany, France, and Canada, in order to send their undergraduate and graduate students abroad for training and doctoral studies.\footnote{Of the three students we interviewed, one was about to leave for a year at the University of Chicago for a doctoral exchange while the second was applying to two top U.K. sociology departments for graduate school. Also, since 2012, two undergraduate students from Tsinghua have spent scholarly time at the department of sociology, University of British Columbia, Canada.} Since 2007, Li Qiang, widely considered the author of Chinese studies of the middle class (Rocca 2008: 35), has been acting as the Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Tsinghua University while also holding numerous positions such as the Vice-Presidency of the Chinese Sociological Association and Advisor to the Committee on Social Sciences for the Ministry of Education, the National Committee on Information, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Ministry of Health, and the Beijing Municipal Government.

Sun Liping, already revered in academia and beyond as the most influential sociologist of his generation, is the former PhD advisor of Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Communist Party of China and the President of the People’s Republic of China. Xi Jinping recently earned a doctoral degree in sociology at Tsinghua (Keck 2013). That being said, Sun and his colleagues have been increasingly vocal in the intellectual field since the 2008 Olympics. For example, last year Sun compared the former administration (Hu Jintao’s administration) to North Korea’s (Keck ibid), while his latest blogs (which quickly attained widespread attention both in mainland China and abroad) have been cautiously voicing his concerns about what he sees as the Chinese authority’s return to totalitarian ways of dealing with the increasing complexities of the nation’s socio-economic life (Sun 2013; see also Shen et al. (2010) on the ‘re-totalitarisation’ of Chinese Power).

1.2 - Research Questions: Intellectuals, Ideas, and Identity

This research investigates Chinese intellectuals, sociology, and politics by studying one Chinese intellectual creatively navigating the changing boundaries set by the powerful Chinese Communist Party in post-Mao China so that he can promote and enact social change. Shen’s
intellectual trajectory over the last four decades points to a sociological question: how was it possible that by the mid-2000s a social scientist had become a public intellectual/public sociologist involved in risky socio-political activities and working toward what he calls the “production of society” (Shen 2006a, 2006b, 2007a, 2008b, 2008d)? In other words, how can one make sense of Shen’s intellectual path, beginning as it does with his early work for the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences think-tank in the 1980s, where the goal was to advance the CCP’s vision for China’s economic modernization, and leading to the founding a department of sociology dedicated to constructing an active and civil Chinese society able to defend itself against the power of both the state and the market after the year 2000? This study is a response to David Swartz’s (2003) call for research on the conditions facilitating the transformation of scholar into public intellectual; in Bourdieusian terms, it asks what are the conditions of possibility for political action and public intellectuality in contemporary China? (Bourdieu 1981).

Therefore, in the tradition of the sociology of knowledge, the initial part of this thesis aims to identify the experiences, friendships, institutions, trainings, readings, and events that facilitated Shen’s trajectory towards public intellectuality. In this way, these first four chapters document the making of Shen as a “public intellectual” leading to 1998 and his subsequent move to Tsinghua, when he decided to address a public beyond the circle of his fellow-sociologists by publishing with Sun Liping and Li Qiang an influential article in the magazine *Strategy and Management*.

The three following chapters (5 to 7) of this thesis attempt to understand Shen’s change from a public intellectual according to our own definition of his action following the publication of the paper in 1998 to a public sociologist as he will come to defined himself in the middle of the first decade of the twentieth first century. This second section thus considers the relationship between an intellectual’s ideas about the world and his ideas about himself, his identity.

It begins by showing what, as a public intellectual, Shen was doing that moved him beyond uncritical and commonplace ideas: that a public intellectual is “a critical commentator addressing a nonspecialist audience on matters of broad public concern” (Posner 2001: 5); or more generally, that a public intellectual is one who uses “what they [see] as their authority or standing within society to take a firm stance, to mobilize the wider public and bring about socio-
political change” (Baert 2011a: 410). The argument then points out that social scientists’ and other intellectuals’ ideation may consist of more that just truth-claims about the social world, and that it is more analytically sound to see Shen’s participation in public debate as actually bringing him into a symbolic struggle with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and educated elites over the redefinition of sacred concepts such as state, people, and society. Thus, Shen and his colleagues launched a symbolic attack on the conceptual resources of the CCP. As Kauppi (2010: 3) rightly pointed out, “concepts are . . . Shibboleths: only certain individuals know how to use them correctly.” It would indeed be misleading to argue that all Chinese intellectuals were or are equally concerned with “the task of making conscious and visible the fundamental [concepts] of a society” (Eyerman 1994: 6), let alone with the risky symbolic task of re-articulating the meaning of such concepts. In regard to Shen, however, this first section of the paper argues that his trajectory leading to 1998—which includes his zhiqing experience as well as his philosophical and sociological skills—shaped his political know-how as well as facilitated the shaping of what may be called his conceptual literacy. This paper’s interest in symbolic struggles and the centrality of concepts reveals one way in which public intellectuals such as Shen attempt to bring about change: by striving to redefine the powerful concepts by which social actors apprehend and construct their social worlds. For instance, by coining and putting forward the concept of social group in an attempt to move away from the Party’s concept of the people, Shen was making an effort to liberate dominated fractions of Chinese society from representation by the CCP, a move toward the moment when, with minimal state interference, the people would be able to speak for themselves by organizing, representing, and defending their own interests.

However, taking this position towards the end of the 1990s would, paradoxically, put the Beijing-born intellectual in the uncomfortable seat of spokesperson for such dominated groups. The problem for Shen was how to promote agency and representational power for dominated Chinese groups without acting like the CCP by speaking on their behalf: how could an intellectual be only a temporarily audible voice for the voiceless, who name the nameless?

The second main thesis of this research is that, because it marked his break with state research and facilitated his participation in founding the sociology department at Tsinghua, Shen’s ideational position-taking in 1998 was a liminal moment in his intellectual life. That event facilitated the increased necessity for Shen to find his own intellectual self-concept both as
a way to deal with the problem of speaking for others and as a means of facilitating his participation in the production of the social in contemporary China. Thus the second argument proposed in this thesis is that Shen’s articulation of Alain Touraine’s idea of sociological intervention and Burawoy’s concept of public sociology after 2000 provided the Chinese intellectual with what he needed to fulfil his quest for his own intellectual self-concept, his identity as a Chinese intellectual eager to interact with society and to act towards the construction of it.

1.3 - Literature Review

1.3.1 - The New Sociology of Ideas

The term the New Sociology of Ideas (NSI) was coined by Camic and Gross (2001) to propose a more programmatic investigation of social scientists’ and humanists' ideational production, a process that presents substantial differences from the classical sociology of knowledge and its development in the United States between the 1950s and 1970s. Camic and Gross identify four loose meta-theoretical assumptions that structure most scholars’ investigation of social knowledge institutions and makers: (1) the importance as an intellectual enterprise of the study of ideas, (2) the rejection of the internal/external approach (see Bourdieu 1994: 61-97 for a critic of these approaches to the study of cultural production), (3) the importance of both contextualist and localist approaches to ideational study, and (4) the centrality of intellectual position struggles in the knowledge field. The main interest of scholarship subsumed under the NSI revolves around a set of sociological questions and puzzles: (1) How do humanists and social scientists select projects on which to work? And what factors help to explain which theories, approaches, and methods they end up using? (2) What social processes can account for the ways in which ideas and professional institutions of ideas grow, emerge, and change?

1.3.1.1 - Academia

This historical-sociological scholarly pursuit varies from monographic accounts about prominent and influential Western thinkers—Robert Bellah (Bortolini 2011, 2012), Jacques Derrida (Lamont 1987), Martin Heidegger (Bourdieu 1988), Talcott Parsons (Camic 1987, Bortolini 2005) and Robert Rorty (Gross 2008), to empirical studies of departmental unity—for instance, Bryson's analysis of USA’s English Department (2005) to research on academic disciplines—criminology (Savelsberg, Cleveland and King 2004) and economics (Fourcade
2006) and French academic field (Bourdieu 1964, 1984), and to broader intellectual movements—the Scottish Enlightenment (Camic 1983) and a general theory of scientific movement (Frickett and Gross 2005).

These studies have tended to investigate a variety of historical times and cultural spaces while maintaining a general focus on Western academia and members in both social sciences and the humanities. By providing an impressive body of scholarly work on “how intellectuals/nascent schools of thought operate and strategize within their respective institutional contexts” (Baert 2011b: 416), these researchers have successfully begun to explore social knowledge-making. The main contribution from NSI is to have overcome the enduring myth of intellectuals as exceptional and isolated in the ivory tower of academia. Such simplistic view has begun to be replaced by a ‘realist’ and relational construction that explains social actors as being embedded in complex, unique webs of social, cultural, historical and institutional contexts.

Finally, it is worth noting that lately the NSI substantially revised its own foundation (1) by expanding its focus from the study of ideas to the study of social knowledge, (2) by operating a “practical/practice turn,” and (3) by transcending the doors of academia by presenting twelve challenging and in some cases ground-breaking empirical studies covering topics/examples such as the development of library research in 20th century USA and the transformation in the use of archives for historical research in post-World War two America (Camic et al. 2011).

Outside the NSI one can find other contemporary sociological research as well as approaches in the subfield of the sociology of intellectual life—also influenced by Bourdieu and Collins—that could form the basis for compelling analyses of social ideational making.

1.3.2 - European Sociology of Intellectual Life

In recent years, Patrick Baert has tried to “[move] in a different direction from the NSI, and [aim] to analyze the involvement of intellectuals in the political arena – that is, outside and beyond the academy” (2011b: 411) with the publication of several studies on the intellectual realm in France since World War II (2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d). In this sense, one could argue that the Cambridge sociology of ideas, or Baert’s scholarship is striving to maintain the
traditional interest of the sociology of knowledge\textsuperscript{4} for the intelligentsia—direct political involvement of intellectuals or the political component of their work—whilst he acknowledge some important theoretical points and the orientation of the NSI. By studying influential intellectuals’ responses/understandings/accounts of political issues, Baert has indicated his fundamental interest in understanding “under which conditions ideas are likely to spread from the intra- to the public intellectual arena” (Baert 2011a: 262).

\textbf{A Relational Approach to Ideation: Temporality and Reception}

Broadly speaking, one can see a resolutely more relational approach to intellectual life amongst European scholars than amongst their American counterparts. These academics generally take more convincingly into account what we called ideational duality in next chapter. In her study of French intellectual radicalism (2010), Kauppi takes a relational stance that stresses the importance not only of how social processes shape ideational production but also of post-production temporality, the notion that an idea can retroactively act on its creator’s subsequent production, self-image, etc (4).

The sociology of ideational reception—the ‘post’ realm from a temporal standpoint—is the focus of Italian sociologist Matteo Bortolini. In an article on Robert Bellah (2012), Bortolini re-visits Merton’s Matthew effect. The paper explains the potential unintended consequences of going public, that is when one earlier work enjoyed large-scale reception. The danger is what Bortolini called the trap of intellectual success whereby subsequent work (even if radically new) might only be interpreted and understood in relation to previous work. Bortolini's point is that for an intellectual to gain the public's attention (or his own community of culture) and a substantial amount of symbolic capital does not always ensure easier diffusion and success (of communication) of future work. He argues that Bellah’s decision to withdraw as a prominent participant from the American Secular Debate (ASD) and his subsequent engagement in quite different scholarly work can be explained by Bellah’s awareness of his seeming incapacity to make his new ideas on the ASD heard outside of the context of his previous symbolic production.

Another important scholar in the study of intellectual life is French philosopher and sociologist Edgar Morin. His seminal work, *Method*—translated into 27 languages and published in 42 countries in six volumes that appeared between 1977 and 2004—is hard to classify. In volume 4, *Ideas* (1991), Morin develops a “complex sociology of knowledge” which proposes compelling ways of studying ideation from social and cultural perspectives (that is, from an ecological point of view), from the autonomy/dependence duality of the ideational realm (noosphere), and finally from an organizational standpoint (noologie). Morin, like Bortolini (2012: 202-203) and like the sociology of reception in general, grants ideas an ontological status in the post-making temporality. This idea is important because it goes beyond Bourdieusian’s notion of the relative autonomy of the intellectual realm to propose the relative autonomy of ideational products themselves, once their creators have released those products into the noosphere.

1.3.3 - Research on Contemporary Intellectuals: Toward a Plurality of Intellectual Activities in Post-Mao China

In his survey of more than five decades of Anglo-Saxon scholarship on Chinese intellectual life Timothy Cheek (2004a, 2006), identifies four main analytical categories used by scholars in their studies of China: “[i]nstitutions, discourse (conceptual tools), social organization and status, [and] lived experiences” (2004a: 30). Furthermore, Cheek enumerates a set of issues that dominates intellectual interest in the field: “professionalization, commercialization and globalization, nationalism and issues of identity, state organization and reform and the rule of law, civil society[,] and [the] public sphere” (30). The NSI and intellectual history of China are both interested in the institution, the lived experience, and the professionalization of intellectual workers.

More closely related to our research topic, social knowledge-making and intellectual work in contemporary China, Cheek explains that “one of the most interesting recent developments in . . . the study of Chinese intellectuals is the turn to detailed studies of the institutions that shape intellectual work, particularly universities” (28). In this regard, Yeh Wen-hsins’s *The Alienated Academy* (1990) proposes a ground-breaking analytical description of the shifting nature of Chinese intellectual life in the 1920s and 1930s by surveying the culture and politics of three main centers of intellectual life at that time, colleges and universities in


**1.3.3.1 - Chinese Think-Tank**

Cheng (2011) investigated Chinese think-tanks, a relatively recent institutional phenomenon in China. Cheng explains that “an increasing number of foreign-educated 'returnees' (like that in the text) find think-tanks to be ideal institutional springboards from which to reintegrate into the Chinese political establishment and play a role in shaping the public discourse” (1). Powerful Chinese think-tanks such as the China Center for International Economic Exchanges and the Chinese Economists 50 Forum illustrate how professional intellectuals (members of academia) become public intellectuals (members of the elite involved in policy-making processes). More recently, Zhu (2009) wrote a book on the development of think-tanks in post-Mao China.

**1.3.3.2 - Professionalization**

The professionalization of Chinese academics has been an important recent phenomenon, especially since the early 1990s. The matter has been explored by many scholars, such as Hao in *Intellectuals at a crossroads: The changing politics of China's knowledge workers* (2003) and He in *Chinese intellectuals facing the challenges of the new century* (2004). This influence of cultural marketization and professionalization is also analyzed by Joseph Fewsmiths in *China since Tiananmen: The politics of transition* (2001), in which the author presents two new intellectual figures: the political advisor and the public commentator. Similarly, Cheek (2004b) suggests a typology of the public intellectual in the context of professionalization by identifying the generalist type and the disciplinary-based expert-type.
1.3.4 - Scholarship on Chinese Sociology

In recent years three French sociologists have shown an interest in the history and development of Chinese sociology. Aurore Merle, who wrote her PhD dissertation on the history of Chinese sociology, has published by far the best accounts of the challenges for and the transformation of the discipline in Mainland China since its rehabilitation in 1978 (2004, 2007a). This French scholar, currently a faculty member in the Department of Sociology at Tsinghua, also wrote a piece analyzing the relationship between sociological knowledge and politics in Mainland China at the end of the twentieth century (Merle 2013). Another French sociologist, Laurence Roulleau-Berger, co-edited in 2008 La Nouvelle Sociologie Chinoise, the result of collaboration between a group of French and Chinese sociologists. The 500-page volume is a survey of sociology practices in Mainland China since 1978. Roulleau-Berger and Peilin Li (2012) edited a collaborative volume called European and Chinese Sociologies: A New Dialogue in which sociological work by both European and Chinese scholars addressed global issues and phenomena affecting both continents, including class, citizenship, and social inequalities. In 2011, Roulleau-Berger authored a critical and reflexive work called The Dewesternization of Sociology: Europe in the Mirror of China. Jean-Louis Rocca, a third French sociologist interested in Chinese sociology, edited a collaborative volume, La société chinoise vues par ses sociologies, which comprises a dozen French translations of Chinese sociological research articles on topics such as migration, city, the middle class, and HIV.

More recently, Anglo-Saxon scholars have also shown renewed interest in the history of academic disciplines in 20th-century China. Arif Dirlik (2012), an important China historian, recently co-edited a volume on the history of two disciplines, anthropology and sociology, in twentieth-century China. Although the quality of the 13 articles contained in the book is uneven—e.g., Dirlik’s introduction on the history of the two disciplines is based exclusively on secondary materials, and some historical narratives of important Chinese sociologists are cast in rather simplistic terms—this is nonetheless a welcome contribution to the field, since the French literature described below mostly fails to give a sense of the intellectual, political, and social conditions of scholarly life in twentieth century Mainland China. Dirlik’s volume is evidence of a growing scholarly interest in the history of social scientific knowledge in China. For instance, Culp, U, and Yeh recently co-edited a volume entitled Knowledge Systems, Knowledge Producers, and China’s Distinctive Modernity (forthcoming), while Qi Zhao (2013) presented a historical account of the Department of Sociology at Yenching University.
Meanwhile, beginning soon after the rehabilitation of the discipline in 1979, a certain number of noteworthy works were produced on Chinese sociology. Based on primary and secondary sources, Wong’s *Sociology and Socialism in Contemporary China* (1979) surveyed the history of the discipline of sociology in twentieth century China. His account of sociological research done under Mao’s reign remains the single best account published in either English or French of the political and intellectual conditions for the practitioners of social research during that period. Also in 1979, James McGough published *The Dilemma of a Chinese Intellectual: Fei Hsiao-t’ung*, an English translation of Fei’s writing about sociology, politics, and research in China. In 1984, David Chu translated into English for the journal *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology* 18 original pieces of research done by Chinese sociologists in the early days of the discipline’s rehabilitation. A year later, Schmutz (1985) offered an account of Chinese sociology before 1949, based mostly on secondary sources. Finally, Gransow (1993) published a post-colonialist thesis on the nature of Chinese appropriation of Western sociology and Le Tian (2008) investigated the consequences of state-funding agencies and marketization in creating both a practical orientation amongst scholars and poor-quality academic research.

1.3.4.1 - Western Scholarship on the Tsinghua School of Sociology and Shen Yuan

In 2004 Aurore Merle published a paper called “Towards a Chinese Sociology for Communist Civilization.” Her objectives were to contextualize the founding of the new Department of Sociology at Tsinghua University and to discuss the new sociological paradigm of Communist Civilization coined by Shen Yuan and his fellow colleagues. Filled with rich interviews with Shen Yuan, Guo Yuhua, and Sun Liping, Merle’s research is an extremely valuable source of information on the scientific and socio-political intentions behind the establishment of a strong sociological pillar at Tsinghua.

Four years later, Michael Buroway (2008), an influential American Marxist sociologist and former president of the American Association of Sociology, published a small-scale critical literature review of the development of public sociology in the southern hemisphere. Buroway explains how Brazilian, Russian, and Chinese sociologists, including Shen Yuan, all skeptical of Western science's universalistic sociological claims, developed different approaches adapted to their social milieu and context.
Finally, as mentioned in the introduction of the thesis, in the last 10 years virtually all Western projects concerning Chinese sociology have invited members of the QSS to sit on their editorial boards (Roulleau-Berger et al. 2008) or have showcased their work in other ways.

1.4 - Scientific Contribution

A review of the literature in these three areas—the sociology of intellectual life, China-studies on Chinese intellectuals, and the history of sociology in mainland China—indicates that this thesis may make contributions in all three fields. Furthermore, by reconstructing the making of Shen as a public sociologist by documenting the twists and turns of his intellectual trajectory over the last 40 years, this thesis offers both empirical and theoretical contributions.

1.4.1 - Empirical Contribution I – NSI

Although the New Sociology of Ideas has produced several studies investigating not only social scientists and humanities scholars but also knowledge production and institutions of knowledge in a variety of historical times and cultural spaces, the general focus has almost exclusively been on Western Countries (Medina 2014: 4). This research on Shen Yuan proposes to address this gap in the literature by providing new and original empirical research focusing on knowledge production and social scientists in post-Mao China. In this sense, our scholarly undertaking will be the first work in the sociology of ideas to study China’s contemporary intellectuals. This study is also the first to systematically assess Gross’s theory of intellectual self-concept in a context other than its original American context of production. Third, this research investigates a set of concerns that the NSI has so far failed to address: concerns related to the social processes and mechanisms involved in the social emergence of public intellectuals.

1.4.2 - Empirical Contribution II - China-Study

With the exception of a handful of works mentioned in this section [Chiang (2001); Cheek (2004b, 2006); Evasdottir (2004), Merle (2004); Ownby (2008); Weston (2004), and Yeh (1990)] no Western research has looked specifically at the institutional and ideational levels of contemporary Chinese social sciences from a sociological perspective. As Timothy Cheek (2004:

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5 It is also worth noting here that despite the rich and voluminous body of research that together compose the Science and Technology Study and NSI, only Collins’s sociology of philosophers (1998) attempted to venture beyond the boundaries of Western/European-centrist stance to include Chinese thinkers in his sociological study of great philosophers.
28) argues “one of the most interesting developments in the historical China-centered approach to the study of Chinese intellectuals … the turn to detailed studies of the institutions that shape intellectual work, particularly universities.” In short, while extending the NSI’s horizons beyond the traditional boundaries of Western sciences and social knowledge, this study wish to contribute to the sociological turn of historical scholarship in regard to Chinese intellectuals and knowledge production.

1.4.3 - Empirical Contribution III – Chinese Sociology

While an increasing amount of scholarship on Chinese sociology has been published recently, these works normally fall into one of the following categories: (1) English or French translations of post-Mao Chinese sociological work; (2) surveys and general descriptions of disciplinary development; or (3) historical work on important sociologists, schools of thought, institutions, or departments. While this study does partly fit in the third category, it also brings something new, in its sociological account of the intellectual trajectory of a sociologist as well as the making of a department and a school of thought. At the same time, this research is not merely a sociology of sociology, since it aims for sociological understanding of the relationship between power and knowledge in a radically different civilizational context.

1.4.4 - Theoretical Contribution – Archived Identity

After narrating Shen’s switch from philosophy to sociology, Chapter 2 proposes the concept of *archived identity* as a way to enable the researcher to follow Shen’s intellectual self-concept in an authoritarian society during the last two decades of the twentieth century. While Shen considered himself to be a Marxist in the mid-1980s, he nevertheless acknowledged the risk—and practical impossibility—of embracing that identity as a social scientist and orienting that ideational choice with Marxism. The concept of *archived* tries to capture the fact that for a period, Shen accepted putting aside his identity and playing by the CCP’s rules.
Chapter 2 - Theory

2.1 - Meta-Theoretical Considerations

Generally speaking, this research is informed by Aronian’s understanding of the relationship between history and sociology. The epistemological position of Raymond Aron suggests that history aims at the understanding of singularity (accidents, contexts, events, ideas), whereas sociology seeks to explain regularity (contextualized and fragile “law” within history) (Aron 1938, 1964, 1989, 1992; also see Baert 1992: 137-145).6

That being said, this research, rather than relying solely on one theoretical framework or tradition—say, Bourdieu’s sociology—to make sense of Shen’s decisions and symbolic production on his road toward public intellectuality, follows Gross’s model of drawing on a variety of interpretative tools as necessary (2008: 26). There are two good reasons to do so. First, although the primary level of analysis of this research is an individual—his intellectual trajectory, his intellectual self-concept, his formative experience and the shaping of his habitus—the embeddedness of social actors in larger organized contexts must be acknowledged as a second-layer interpretative focus that must be analyzed to account for events and field dynamics. Second, because of the kind of research questions asked in this thesis and our primary sources, our analysis (Chaps. 4 through 10) is broken into two blocks, each requiring the mobilization of a different theoretical approaches.

The first four chapters document the making of Shen as a ‘public intellectual’ in 1998, when he decided to address an audience beyond his fellow-sociologists by publishing an influential article in the magazine Strategy and Management. This section of the thesis highlights the experiences and events, friendships, institutional logic, and intellectual training that contributed to how Shen’s specific habitus, skills, and capital enabled his engagement in public debate.

The remaining three chapters underscore two related things: first, that Shen’s work as a ‘public intellectual’ has extended beyond the uncritical and commonplace idea that a public

6 “The authentic history preserves simultaneously the two terms, regularities and accidents, of which it does not seek a synthesis, but of which it follows both the interlacing of the emerging determinism and history as it veritably happens” (Aron 1989: 433).
intellectual is “a critical commentator addressing a nonspecialist audience on matters of broad public concern” (Posner 2001: 5), or a person “who use[s] what they [see] as their authority or standing within society to take a firm stance, to mobilize the wider public and bring about socio-political change” (Baert 2011a: 410). Rather, Shen’s entrance into public debate was his entrance into a symbolic struggle with the CCP and educated elites over the definition of such sacred concepts as state, people, and society. This argument relies on three sets of ideas: (1) Bourdieu’s political sociology of language and symbolic power, (2) Reinhart Koselleck’s conceptual history, and (3) realist discussion around the concept of spokespersonship. To limit this theory section and facilitate the reader’s understanding of the overall argument, Bourdieu’s and Koselleck’s ideas will be introduced in Chapter 8 rather than in this chapter.

Finally, the last chapter, From Nameless Sociologist to Public Sociologist applies the interpretative tools used in the first four chapters to follow Shen’s repositioning at the newly founded Department of Sociology at Tsinghua and the shaping of his powerful self-concept.

### 2.2 - TASK and the Realist Sociology of Intellectuals

Generally speaking, the research at hand falls under the umbrella of what Camic et al. (2011: 6) have called TASK, Traditional Approach in the Sociology of Knowledge. TASK is a genre of interpretative sociology that typically involved the following modus operandi: (1) “Focusing on a particular intellectual, the researcher begins post festum, with the thinker’s ideas already known,” and then, (2) “[w]orking backward, the researcher “[l]ink[s] to the material and cultural circumstances of the societies in which they live, while also identifying the connections between the social positions occupied by producers of social knowledge and the shape and content of their intellectual productions” (Camic et al. 6-7).

Although in general terms TASK summarizes the approach taken here, some clarifications are necessary to explain how exactly this research has aimed to explain Shen’s intellectual trajectory and production. Unlike TASK work, this research is not solely interested in Shen Yuan’s ideational production in an effort to understand his development as a public intellectual/public sociologist. Instead, my interpretative framework tends to follow the New Sociology of Ideas in its focus on “the social mechanisms and processes that thinkers encounter as they go about formulating their ideas and staging their careers” (Gross 2008: 350). Yet, given the scientific field’s relative autonomy from other fields (e.g., political or economic) in the U.S.,
tracking the career of prominent scholars by the NSI has so far tended to focus primarily on politics within academia (Baert 2011a: 411) rather than studying context displaying a relative dependency between the fields of politics and academia. In Shen’s case, the political context of an authoritarian regime and the historical context of a massive, fast-paced social transformation require consideration of the interconnection between knowledge and power.

In that sense, the realist sociology of intellectuals (see Aron 1949, 1955, 1960, 1965; Brym 1981; Bourdieu 1984, 1988; Karabel 1996), a trend of interpretative sociology less interested in studying social knowledge producers or thinkers “who wrote or taught” (Baert 2011a: 410) confine in their professional milieux than in studying intellectuals and politics outside of academia is extremely useful in following Shen’s intellectual journey.

Finally, the NSI, like much of the realist sociology of intellectuals sees women and men of ideas (Bender 1997: 3) not merely as loosely related to society and social structures, but as belonging to cultural elites firmly embedded in social materiality and “engaged in historically specific struggles with one another, and with various audiences, to establish their legitimacy and respectability” (Camic et al. 248). That being said, in general terms this research mobilizes three theoretical bases: (1) Bourdieu’s concepts of field, habitus, and capital; (2) post-Bourdiesian efforts to conceptualize intellectuals’ experiences, choices, ideation, and existence beyond their academic fields, habitus, and capital (in other words, theory such as Gross’s idea of intellectual self-concept and Szakolczai’s of liminality); and finally (3) Watson’s concepts of orthopraxy and orthodoxy as used by his student Erika Evasdottir.

2.2.1 - Bourdieu’s Sociology: Field and Capital

The concept of field is a central one to the relational sociology of Pierre Bourdieu. For the French thinker, social life is divided into fields, each of which is has its own internal logic and regulatory principles, the rules of the game that curtail social actors competing for recognition and the accumulation of capital in their social fields. Overall, Bourdieu recognized four “species of capital, [four] different types of material and symbolic goods that are valued by society and confer power on their holders[: . . . ] economic capital, control over material resources; cultural capital, the possession of valued forms of knowledge and taste; social capital,  

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7 For an in-between perspective, see Gross’s *Why Are Professors Liberal and Why Do Conservatives Care* (2013).
who one knows; and finally, symbolic capital, the means by which holders of other forms of capital legitimate their possession of them” (Gross 2008: 239). The last form of capital and the power it bestows on its holders—symbolic power—is further discussed in Chapter 8.

The concept of field is an important contribution to the study of intellectuals and knowledge production for two main reasons. First, as Bourdieu (1994: 61-97, 1997: 13-14) argued, both close textual analysis (internalist reading) and the attempt to link knowledge-content and macro-social context (externalist reading) short-circuit the crucial realm of forces shaping both the content and the form of cultural production of fields. Thus, the concept of field is a third possible reading of cultural production accounting for dynamics within a field as well as the position of the producer vis-à-vis other social actors in that field according to their capital.

Second, Bourdieu argued that determining the influence of extra-field forces on a given field and its actors required consideration of the autonomy of the given field: that is, of its position in the larger social space. If the rules of the game structuring a given field are drawn from another field (e.g., if the field of higher education is structured by economic logic and rationale), the field is said to have weak relational autonomy. In contrast, if the actors occupying a dominant position in a given field originate from or are located in other fields (research institute headed by a party-cadre), the field is said to have weak positional autonomy (Maton 2005). In the case of Chinese sociology, the discipline and the field of social sciences in general since its rehabilitation of 1979 have had only limited autonomy. Both its research agenda (relational autonomy) and its head of research (positional autonomy) have been under the control of the CCP. Bourdieu’s insight that autonomy or “[f]ields of specialized activity arise . . . not out of historical necessity, but out of struggle: out of the efforts of individuals and groups to secure for themselves . . . power or jurisdiction over some arena of social life” (Gross 2008: 241; also see Bourdieu 1984) is central to my effort to explain Shen’s position-taking in the late 1990s; thus, Chapters 8 and 6 show how the question of sociology’s autonomy affected Shen’s position-taking as editor-in-chief of Sociological Research. The establishment of a department of sociology at Tsinghua in 2000 similarly and definitively marked the struggle of a group of intellectuals to gain autonomy for their discipline.
2.2.2 - Habitus and Intellectual Self-Concept

*Habitus* is another foundational concept in the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu. It represents a system of enduring dispositions, of the vision and di-vision of the social world that govern social actors’ conduct and representations and that orient their strategies. Essentially, it encapsulates a set of socially learned habits or dispositions (Bourdieu 1984). For the French thinker, two institutions (or socializations) tend to play an important role in the shaping of *habitus*: family and school. Chapter 4 shows how Shen’s experience as an educated teenager sent down to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution shaped his *habitus* in ways that still resonated later in his life as a form of ongoing, productive common sense pointing to the tense traces of anti-elitism, anti-conformism/independence, sentiment for the people, etc.

Although Bourdieu’s relational deployment of habitus is keen on transcending the trap of essentialism—he always either historicizes or understands habitus in relation to a particular field—the concept is not without shortcomings. First, it remains at a preconscious level of analysis (Throop and Murphy 2002); second, in shaping the practice and strategy of social actors, it tends to overemphasize field-dynamics and positions in the field. The dual concepts of *field* and *habitus* under-estimate social actors’ lives, experience, and existence outside the power-grid of their fields, capital and positions. As Gross (2008: 261-62) put it,

“there is little sense in [Bourdieu’s] theory of action as being shaped by actors’ understandings of themselves as beings with unique histories and identities. . . . Bourdieu . . . hypothesized not only that actors’ pasts shape their present and future primarily through preconscious means . . . but also that variation in this shaping corresponds with the structure of positions in a given social field.”

As Neil Gross (2008) argued, a type of individual regularity other than *habitus* can convincingly highlight the twists and turns of intellectual trajectory. His theory of *intellectual self-concept* (ISC)

holds that intellectuals tell themselves and others stories about who they are qua intellectuals: about their distinctive interests, dispositions, values, capacities, and tastes. These stories are typological—they involve a thinker describing herself or himself as an intellectual or a particular type—and once they become established they may exert a powerful effect on her or his future thought, inclining the thinker to embrace certain ideas over against others. (263-264)

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8 Throop et al. (2002) develops an insightful critique of Bourdieu’s emphasis on the non-conscious grounding of social action based on the French sociology’ ‘shaky’ interpretation of the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schutz.
Gross’s ISC is an important contribution to the sub-field of the sociology of intellectual life: this theory of identity strives to capture a glimpse of existential reality, the complex layering of durable experiences and thought making individual *qua* intellectual navigating social fields. Therefore, Gross’s theory moves beyond a crudely realistic apprehension of intellectual life in which field-position and strategy of capital accumulation are the only forces that set the tone to what Tristan Riley (2010: 24) describes as a world where the “goal of all actors and all actions is everywhere and always to destroy opponents and to become the dominant force within the field, from which position one can then set the definitions as to what is and is not worthy of attention within the field.”

Taking intellectual identity seriously also facilitates the shift from an experience-distant to an experience-near concept (Geertz 1974). Instead of always imposing a heuristic construct on a given social actor (experience-distant concept)—e.g. *critical intellectual, establishment intellectual, organic intellectual*, etc—for interpretative reason, ISC suggests that we be attentive to how social actors talk or define themselves (experience-near concept). Timothy Cheek (forthcoming) exemplified the tension between the ideal-type and ISC when he explained the meeting in the early 1980s between the sinologist Guy Alitto and Liang Shu-ming, a famous Chinese intellectual: “Dr. Alitto gave Liang his recently completed biography, *The Last Confucian: Liang Shuming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity* (1979). Liang replied, ‘But I am not a Confucian!’” In our own research, the ideal-type of public intellectual exhibits such tension as Shen likewise told us he doesn’t consider himself as such. Therefore, this thesis, while using ideal-types pertaining to intellectuals—*spokesperson* and *tertius gaudens*—generally attempts to use these terms in ways that guide the reader to consider the subjective life of Shen Yuan. We also found it useful to rely on the concept of public intellectuality as it focus on characterizing Shen’s thought or say ideational production.

2.3 - Orthopraxy and Orthodoxy

Gross indicates an important point in regard to the formation of ISC: “as thinkers move across their life-courses and are affiliated with different institutions, they may pick up from some of them identity elements that they integrate into their self-concept narrative” (279). In Shen’s case, as Chapters 4 and 5 detail, his experience in the Maoist countryside and his scholarly training in Marxist philosophy later facilitated his formation of his Marxist self-concept.
However, until the early 2000s the post-Mao ideological context in China did not allow Shen’s ISC to play an important role in the sociologist’s trajectory and career choices. Thus, following Shen’s relationship with his own problematic Marxist identity—that is, his trajectory from establishment sociologist to public sociologist—involves the dual concepts of orthopraxy and orthodoxy as used by Evasdottir (2004) in her book on Chinese archeologists. Orthopraxy is the express formulation of action to conform to commonly held standards. In such a system, belief and intent may be important to a person’s sense of character and self-esteem, but they cannot be the final arbiters of moral character, success, or satisfaction. For those, we must look to the audience who is witness to any action, for it is the audience who provides judgment. A person polices his actions, not his thoughts, in response to the presence of an audience (2004: 14).

Orthodoxy, in contrast, is the effort to align internal beliefs with external practices. Several generations of sinologists have pointed to the fact that historically, “the importance of correct belief, of adherence to orthodoxy, of departure from orthodoxy, and of the formation of orthodoxy . . . in the course of European [intellectual and religious] history . . . are relatively meaningless in the case of China” (Qi 2014: 117). One reason is that polytheism—Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism—rather than monotheism has characterized China’s political and intellectual history. A second is that although China developed and maintained a large unified empire for two thousand years, doctrinal symbolic coherence and orthodoxy was less important than “conformity to practices established by and necessary for imperial rule” (Qi ibid). Therefore, throughout this period the state emphasized standardization of structures, not content; orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy. Evasdottir’s ethnographic research on late-socialist Chinese archeologists successfully demonstrates the relevance of these two concepts to an understanding of the many challenges facing Chinese intellectuals attempting to navigate the troubled waters of an authoritarian state embedded in a rich civilizational net of long-lasting practices.

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9 In his major work on post-Mao Chinese intellectuals, Zhidong Hao (2003) relied on the tension between the ethic of responsibility and the ethic of ultimate ends to explain the shift of mental workers from organic to critical intellectual. As he put it, “all of these dilemmas between the ethic of responsibility and the ethic of ultimate ends, between Dao and Shi, and vocation and profession, lead to intellectuals’ dual and sometimes split personalities. That is the perennial lot of intellectuals. To be an intellectual is to be afflicted with this lot, but to understand it may help intellectuals cope with the ache and find what they believe to be the best they can do at the time to effect social change” (348-349). While one can certainly appreciate the family resemblance between orthopraxy and orthodoxy on the one side and ethic-responsibility/ultimate ends on the other, I argue that for two reasons, the former is a better analytical or relational tool. First, it supplies us with supporting concepts such as the audience-that-matters; and second, these concepts were coined especially to articulate the patterns of Chinese social life.
2.4 - Liminality

An understanding of Shen’s intellectual trajectory and the formative moments of ISC should involve the concept of liminality, as articulated by Arpad Szakolczai. According to Szakolczai, Van Gennep’s ([1909] 1960) original concept could be transformed from “its narrow meaning as the middle phase in rites of passage into a general [sociological] concept” (2000: 210). As Szakolczai (2009:146) pointed out, Bourdieu’s sociology “followed the Kantian attention to “limit,” the boundary “ignoring what happens when somebody is actually “on the limit.” As a consequence, the productive, formative aspects of experience have been underplayed.” As Chapter 4 explains, Shen’s successful entrance to university in the late 1970s does much more than what Bourdieu would simply call the social magic of elite reproduction. Before exploring this last point in more detail, the reader should consider Szakolczai’s methodological insight (2000: 5-6) to identify liminal moments in intellectual life:

most breakpoints of an individual life are not that difficult to identify. In most cases they correspond to the major “rites of passage” in one’s life and are available in any reasonably accurate and detailed curriculum vitae.\(^{10}\) In our contemporary world, due to the excessive formalization and emptying of all rites of passage, it is forgotten that such rituals do not simply perform a formal-legalistic function but are emotional and experiential breakpoints, liminal experiences. Dates of initiation, maturation, appointment, promotion and publication are not just trophies to be collected in a curriculum vitae but provide the emotional and existential context of the work. paper”

The first five chapters of this study, as mentioned above, are a narrative understanding of Shen’s emergence with the first publication listed in his vita, “Short-Term Trends and the Potential Crisis of the Transformations of Chinese Social Structure” (later referred to as either “the 1998 paper” or “the trends and crisis paper”), as a public intellectual. It is extremely telling—of his habitus and self-identity—that his first publication was a semi-academic one, geared not only towards his fellow sociologists but also policy makers China’s educated elites in general. Shen’s textual commitment of 1998 epitomized Shen’s decision to no longer play the

\(^{10}\)Gross (2008) and Tristan Riley (2010) have also recognized the richness of preface, introduction, correspondence, and other written yet sometime unpublished sources in investigations into the existence and thought of intellectuals:

they are powerful contribution to a sociological theory of intellectual production insofar as they can bridge the gap between the intimacies of the thought process itself, which, absent documentation and empirical verification, is too easily relegated to internal and individualist processes, and the primordial sociality and dialogical quality of intellectual production. (Tristan Riley 2010: 29)

That being said, this claim of a methodological discovery of empirical sources for sociologists of ideas by Tristan Riley is nothing new for a number of important French historical schools of thought during the twentieth century, including the history of mentalities/cultural history, and the Annales School.
game of orthopraxy.

2.5 - Master of Ceremonies

Szakolczai defined experience as “trial, proof, experiment, peril, danger, and testing” (in Tristan Riley 2010: 35). Different types of experience—e.g., childhood experiences and reading experiences—all share the fundamental status of rites of passage, “moments of lived reality in which an individual moves through a liminal phase of transformation with the aid of a social network of masters of ceremonies that entails at its conclusion a change in the individual’s mode of being” (Szakolczai 1998: 23-33). Masters of ceremonies are met during liminal periods of intellectuals’ trajectories and tend to “play key parts in those academics’ negotiations of specific scholarly initiations, such as their entrance into particular institutional positions” (Tristan Riley ibid).

The concept Master of ceremonies explains the role Chairman Mao played during the latter part of the Cultural Revolution, in the early political and existential training of nearly 17 million Chinese youth sent down to the countryside, including Shen Yuan (Bonnin 2004). As Szakolcza (2009: 159) put it, “if an individual goes through a significant personal experience, or a “rite of passage,” during major socio-political events or a “social drama,” then one might expect particularly significant lasting effects.”

2.6 - Rites of Experience

One major anthropological insight coming from the concept of liminality is that “the sequential order of a rite of passage is the structure of lived experience” (Szakolczai 2009: 147). Van Gennep (1960) explains that a rite of passage consist of three distinct phases: rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation. During rites of separation, the social actor is deprived of his current status as he is prepared to accept a new identity. As anthropologist Victor Turner (1969: 80) explained, “the first phase (of separation) comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group . . . from an earlier fixed point in the social structure.” The second phase, liminal rites, is a moment between the rites of separation and the rites of reincorporation. Lastly, “[w]ithin the context of ritual passages, a key feature of

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11 While the term mentor has recently been used in sociological literature (Forsey 2013) to explain practices of knowledge transmission, the concept of Master of Ceremonies has the advantage of pointing to the all-important structure of experience that is recognized as a rite of passage.
liminality is the final stage of reintegration, in which the initiand is recognized as a part of the social order and is welcomed into that order with a new role, “stamped by the formative experience”” (Thomassen 2009: 22). Following this insight, this research uses the same three phases beyond their original anthropological use to describe some important moments in Shen’s life. For instance, while anthropologists would consider Shen’s experience in the countryside and his university entrance to be two distinct rites of passage, we consider them as two different phases of a single rite of passage, the making of Shen as intellectual. Thus, Shen’s removal by Mao to the countryside acted as both a rite of separation and a rite of liminality, whereas his entrance to university was a rite of reincorporation.
Chapter 3 - Methods

3.1 - Introduction

This research was organized as a case study as it was centered on one intellectual. Its first goal was to sociologically reconstruct the intellectual trajectory of Shen Yuan since the mid-1960s, paying particular attention to the major shifts, position-takings, and knowledge production that punctuated his career. We strived to shed light on the complex story that led Shen in 1998 to stage his ideational production beyond the walls of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the directed or dominated sociological field. The second goal was to look at how such orthodoxic move in 1998 launches Shen into a quest for an intellectual self-concept able to articulate his new way of playing the game where knowledge and politics are intimately intertwined. Naturally, for such interpretative research, Shen’s ideational production constitutes the most reliable source to with which to start addressing our intellectual puzzle.

3.2 - Contextualism and Localism: Two Methodological Principles

While the last section introduced the interpretative framework and the main theoretical apparatus informing the research, two general methodological principles have structured the reading of primary and secondary sources: contextualism and localism. Contextualism is the idea “that meanings are always embedded in socio-intellectual contexts which must be opened up to in-depth investigation before the ideas themselves can be understood” (Camic and Gross 2001: 245). Very much as Koselleck (1989) does, “contextualists argue . . . that texts must be situated in the immediate socio-linguistic contexts where they were produced” (Camic et al. 246). Localism, on the other hand, is the important sociological insight that the contextual reconstruction of an idea cannot remain at a macro-historical level if the aim is to clarify the social emergence of that idea. Instead, as the NSI proposes (along bourdieusian lines: see Bourdieu 1994:68), we should shift our sociological regard to “the particular local institutional settings in which intellectuals find themselves when formulating their ideas” (Camic and Gross 247; see also Cheek 2004: 28).

3.3 - Ideas Matter

The third important interpretative principle guiding this research is that ideas matter, as the American sociologist Clem Brooks wrote recently (2012). For Camic et al. (2001), the NSI is an end in itself as the question of “how do intellectuals come to hold the ideas they do?” is an
important one (243). Ideas also matter for Max Weber. He thought that ideation was an independent cultural force that could be used to facilitate meaningful lines of action (Giddens 1971: 147-150). As the German sociologist famously suggested, “worldviews that have been created out of ideas have very often, like switchmen, decided the tracks on which the dynamic of interest propelled action” (Weber 2004: 69). Edgar Morin (1991) argued that with his theory of ruling ideas, thinkers such as Marx have instrumentalized ideas and ideology to a point where the recognition of their structuring power has often been lost in sociological work, a problem that led to the now classic insight that the duality of structure needs to be reiterating for the idea itself. In other words, ideational duality is the proposition that ideas and knowledge-claims are not only structured or socially shaped themselves, but can also structure and shape actors, institutions, and the social.

That being said this research, while documenting Shen’s intellectual journey toward public intellectuality, focuses on two particular topics. First, it attempts to document the creation of Shen’s knowledge production, especially his ideas and position-takings in the late 1990s in regard to the concepts of state, people, and society. The second topic examined concerns intellectual identity. Following Gross (2008), this paper subscribes to the view that intellectuals’ self-concepts—that is, intellectuals’ own ideas about themselves—are central to any work attempting to interpret thinkers’ knowledge production or intellectual paths. In short, this research is interested in the making of ideation and self-concept, the effects of these matters on intellectual trajectories and cultural fields-dynamic, and the relationship between these two subjects.

3.4 - Primary Sources

Shen’s intellectual production, of course, constitutes the most significant primary sources in answering the research questions. However, unlike most of his fellow sociologists at Tsinghua, Shen cannot be considered a prolific scholar, a fact which might seems surprising considering Shen’s relative importance in Chinese sociology. However, Shen spent the first decade of his career (1988-1998) at the Institute of Sociology (CASS) where his main tasks as a state researcher involved survey design and policy-report writing, not academic publishing per se. Although he did publish more than half a dozen Chinese translations of Western sociological work during that time, Shen published his first research paper only in 2002, at the age of 48 years.
Since receiving his Ph.D in 1998, Shen has produced 16 scientific articles, all published in peer-reviewed academic journals, as well as two monographs. Also since 1998, Shen published seven other articles in different magazines, newspapers, and other media. Three of these articles appeared in two different magazines, *Fazhan Luntan* [Development Forum] and *Qiantuo Guandian* [Frontier Perspective], both of which are publications of the Chinese government. The four remaining pieces enjoy a widespread internet presence. Three of these four originally appeared in the magazine *Strategy and Management* (*Zhanlue yu Guanli*) and the other in *Southern Weekend* (*Nanfang Zhoumo*). Both of these publications are important, critical, and independent voices in the Chinese directed-intellectual public sphere (Zhao 2004: 62-63). In 2012 Shen Yuan and two colleagues also wrote a lengthy obituary dedicated to the famous Chinese sociologist Lu Xueyi. Also as editor of the journal *Sociological Research* from 1997 to 1999, Shen published two editorial addresses. Together with a few hundred PowerPoint pages from a course he taught in late 2012 that we managed to collect, we have 30 documents authored/co-authored by Shen. Finally, during his three-year editorship, 247 articles were published in the pages of the journal. These articles as well as the change in the format of the journal when compared to the previous editorship constitute an excellent source to access Shen’s vision for the discipline of sociology.

3.5 - Secondary Sources

Secondary sources helped to limit the collection and analysis of primary sources. This secondary literature falls into two categories: French and Anglo-Saxon historical works on the history of Chinese sociology, and French, Anglo-Saxon, and Chinese historical and sociological work on twentieth century Chinese intellectuals.

3.6 - Interview Data and Fieldwork in Beijing

A series of semi-structured interviews with Shen, six of his students, and one other key informant based in Beijing, China, supplemented the shortage of primary sources documenting the first 20 years of Shen's career. This fieldwork was conducted in Beijing between May and August in 2012. For reasons beyond the control of the researcher, planned interviews with Sun Liping, and Guo Yuhua, and Li Qiang, three of Shen’s colleagues in the Department of Sociology at Tsinghua, were not able to take place.
3.7 - Sampling Strategy

Contact with Shen Yuan was initialized in mid-2012 through a mutual acquaintance, Dr. Thomas Gold, Professor of Sociology at Berkeley, who is a good friend of Shen Yuan and the former PhD advisor of Dr. Amy Hanser, the acting director of the Inter-University Language program at Tsinghua University, Beijing. Dr. Gold agreed to contact Dr. Shen to assist this research project and also facilitated contact with an undergraduate sociology student at Tsinghua.

Interviews with Dr. Hanser and that Tsinghua sociology student led to a snowball recruitment method yielding additional potential interview subjects. Both of the initial interviewees were asked to forward our interview request in the form of a Letter of Initial Contact (see Appendix A) to potential interview subjects. This Letter of Initial Contact requested that potential interview subjects convey to the acquaintance who had forwarded that request their willingness (or unwillingness) to be interviewed; the acquaintance would then convey each of these responses to us. If a potential interviewee communicated in this way his or her agreement to be interviewed, the researcher then contacted that interview subject directly by email in order to schedule a time and place convenient for the subject for conducting the interview. In all cases, the researcher transmitted a letter of self-introduction (see Appendix B) in order to familiarize the potential interview subject with the research and the researcher. Before the formal beginning of each interview session, the subject was asked to read the Consent Form (see Appendix C) and to give oral consent to proceed with the interview and be recorded.
Chapter 4 - The Zhiqing Generation and Chairman Mao

4.1 - Introduction

This chapter considers the historical and generational context of Shen’s upbringing during the last 10 years of Mao Zedong’s reign. A generational perspective will help to explain both Shen’s life-trajectory prior to his entering People’s University in 1979 and the significance of such rites of passage on his making as a Chinese intellectual.

Born in 1954 in China’s capital of Beijing, Shen Yuan graduated in 1983 from the city’s People’s University [人民大学] with a bachelor’s degree in philosophy and in 1986 with a master’s degree in the same subject. 12 The People’s University of China was officially established in 1950 as the first national university in the People’s Republic of China (PRC). When the 25 year-old Shen entered his undergraduate program at Renda’s second branch campus in 1979, he was part of the second cohort of university students to do so since the reestablishment of the university system in 1977.

It has been widely acknowledged that the extreme competition for admission to the university during the first few years after its reestablishment effectively selected the la crème de la crème of Chinese candidates. In 1977, “only 400,000 out of the 11 million who participated in the first college entrance exam after the Cultural Revolution . . . were admitted to college, with an admission ratio of 29 to 1” (Chinese Ministry of Education 2007; also see Taylor 1981: 179). The number epitomize the competition amongst literally millions of zhiqing anxious to resume their intellectual training after years in the countryside or factory. University’s admission rates are much lower now. For instance, in 2007, around 9.5 million students took the college entrance exam, and close to 6 million were admitted to university, for an admission rate of 1.9 to 1 (CME Ibid).

But between 1977 and 1979, only a small fraction of Shen’s generation successfully navigated the highly political and selective process of resuming their educational trajectories, stopped by “Mao’s zhiqing policy.” To re-establish his dominant position within the State apparatus, Mao Zedong had already transformed the urban youth, one of the last elements of

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12 Shen’s CV on the website of Tsinghua’s Department of Sociology. Later reference in the text as (SY-TH 2011).
Chinese society to be alienated from his vision, into the Red Guards so that they could help him foment an anti-bureaucratic revolution and disable the CCP from within. He then decided to preemptively neutralize China youth in a grandiose manner: he would re-educate these young intellectuals by sending them to the countryside to learn and be transformed by the revolutionary wisdom of the rural masses. Shen Yuan is part of this generation of displaced youth, famously known in China as zhishi nianqing [知识年青] or simply zhiqing [知情], “educated youth” or “knowledge youth.” These were the close to 17 million city-dwelling Chinese youth who, between 1968 and 1980, were uprooted and relocated to the countryside, a process that interrupted their secondary or sometimes even their elementary schooling (Bonnin 2004). Of these millions of young people sent out to the countryside after 1968, only 2.3% (439 000) eventually had the privilege of entering university to resume their education. These few are, in Michel Bonnin’s words, “to some extent the survivors of the intellectual shipwreck of the Cultural Revolution” (2004: 199).

4.2 - Master of Ceremonies I: Chairman Mao

As Cheek (2008:14) explained in the article ‘The Multiple Maos of Contemporary China’, “Among the contemporary mythologies of founding political leaders in Asia today, the role of Mao Zedong in China is one of the most contradictory and portentous.” A plethora of terms have been used to describe China’s most fascinating twentieth century political figure: genius strategist, mad man, charismatic leader, founding father. For former zhiqings as well as scholars of modern China, Mao’s mass relocation of educated youth to the countryside was an inspired and self-serving political move. In the 1960s, Chinese youth from urban areas had been caught in the political struggle between the CCP’s radical and more pragmatic factions, which

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13 The resume of Li Qiang (LQ-TH 2011), one of China’s most influential contemporary sociologists and also one of founding members of the department of sociology at Tsinghua in 2000, epitomized the zhiqing’s lost years in the countryside during Mao’s Cultural Revolution. In his case—see below—Li spent 10 years away from books and knowledge.

[ 教育经历 ]
Education Experience
[1968年， 毕业于北京四中]
1968, Graduated from Beijing 4th Middle School
[1978年9月 — 1982年7月， 中国人民大学国际政治系学习，获法学学士学位]
1978, September-1982 July, Renmin University, Department of International Politics, Law Bachelor’s degree

14 The author’s own translation from French.

Note: The English translation of Michel Bonnin’s book was published by The Chinese University Press in October, 2013, as The Lost Generation: The Rustification of Chinese Youth (1968-1980).
all claimed to adhere to Mao’s goals. But in 1968, exactly when China’s social order was completely disrupted by Mao’s skillful manipulation of the Red Guards and his return to preeminent power within the CCP, Mao decided to transform the Red Guards into zhiqings and send them to the countryside in an attempt to transform them into a new type of peasant. This massive human movement to rurality was another of Mao’s attempts to reorder society, placing peasants and workers at the top of the social hierarchy while reforming the future intellectual class of China by sending the zhiqings to learn from peasants and workers. After the death of Mao, most zhiqings managed to return to their native urban areas, and Mao’s vision of their transformation into a new type of peasant never materialized. However, as Bonnin notes (2004: 424), “[If] zhiqings [were in any way] transformed by their experience . . . [t]he question remains as to how exactly.”

Nevertheless, for these millions of young minds in the mid-1960s, Mao Zedong literally was a Master of ceremonies, causing them early in their lives to become active members of society as the new revolutionary element of the PRC. In the mid-1960s, Chairman Mao himself gave China’s youth the sacred mission of saving China from its revisionist, bureaucratic, and bourgeois trajectory. This generation’s accelerated passage into adulthood during such a disturbing time was a massive liminal experience. Szakolczai (2009: 159; see also 2000: 35) states that “[i]f an individual goes through a significant personal experience or a “rite of passage” during major socio-political events or a “social drama,” then one might expect particularly significant lasting effects.” And as Karl Mannheim (1952: 322) puts it, “[t]he social phenomenon of generations represents nothing more than a particular kind of identity of location, embracing related age-groups embedded in a historical-social process.”

A sign of his zhiqing awareness of how the unsettled (political) times were affecting his generation’s intellectual development appears in Shen’s first known publication.16 At the beginning of 1998, while acting as editor-in-chief of Sociological Research [社会学研究], Shen published an essay reviewing the state of affairs in sociology during the previous year (1997); it examined and commented on trends and important topics, criticism, methodology, and theory. Toward the end of the 14-page analysis, in a section entitled “Possible Directions for Sociology

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15 The author’s own translation from French.
16 Excluding Shen’s published translations of Western sociological work, as documented in his vita.
in 1998,17 the sociologist identified three research areas that deserved attention (98: 123). Of these, Shen emphasized the importance of undertaking “research on [Chinese] generations of children growing up during major historical events in order to explore later characteristics displayed such as ways of acting, thinking, and psychology, as well as other aspects” 18 (Shen 1998: 123). Such a textual trace suggests the impact of Shen’s sense of belonging to a generation affected by the political concept of *zhiqing*.

The characteristics of the *zhiqing* experience shared many of the elements of a Goffmanian total institution: for Shen’s generation, the countryside was indeed “a place of work and residence where a great number of similar people, cut off from the wider community for a considerable time, together [led] an enclosed, formally administered round of life” (Goffman 1961: xiii). Organizational sociology also indicates that ideological cohesive-ness and youth are two factors that predict the high likelihood for “identity elements coded as sacred within an institutional setting [that] will come to be integrated into an intellectual self-concept (Gross 281)” or habitus. During our first interview19 with Shen, which focused on his trajectory after the events of Tiananmen, the subject of *zhiqing* was raised only once. However, Shen’s response, “I am one of those sent to live and work in the countryside” [我是个插队到农村的], was extremely emotionally charged and quite revealing. Shen’s use of the present tense, “I am,” suggests that he still identifies himself as a *zhiqing* despite returning from the countryside many years earlier.

Although the theory of intellectual self-concept will be discussed in more detail later, Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*, understood as embodied sets of vision and di-vision of the social world, is at this point an extremely useful interpretative lens with which to consider Shen’s *zhiqing*/Maoist habitus. As the slogan in the propaganda mural below (Figure 1) states: “Chairman Mao will always be with us [youth, *zhiqing*, red guard].” In that sense, *zhiqings’* embodied experience of the Maoist countryside epitomized what Cheek (2006b: 3, 9, 33) calls “living Maoism” in contemporary China. As the exploration in the next chapters of the twists and turns of Shen’s trajectory show in greater detail, Shen continues to display a Maoist habitus

17 [1998 年社会学可能的走势]
18 [另一个方面是对于在某个重大历史事件中成长起来的一代儿童的研究, 探讨这些当年的儿童现在的行为方式、思维方式和心理结构等方面的特征。这两项研究对于将生活周期研究引入国内学界都具有重要的意义。]
19 When citing from our interview data, we adopt the following reference system: first letter of the last name, first letter of the first name, ID for Interview Data and year—e.g., (SY-ID 2012).
where knowledge need to be align with praxis and intellectuals need to be useful to society. Shen’s rural time seems to have shaped two additional principles that have guided his thinking: a form of anti-elitism according to which intellectuals must interact with society; and a strong affection for the countryside and dominated social groups.

Illustration 1: Chairman Mao will always be with us. Propaganda fresco of Chairman Mao surrounded by China Youth fervently holding the charismatic leader’s little red book, Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung (1967) (Takungpao 2013).

4.3 - The Zhiqing Generation, University Entrance, and Rites of Reincorporation

If you go to university, you will wear leather shoes, if you do not, you will wear grass shoes (du daxue, chuan pixie; budu, chuan caoxie). In Evasdottir (2004:32)

In Socialist China, because of the extraordinary “rustication” experience which caused them to spend an average of six years in the countryside (Zhou and Hou 1999: 16) in the countryside, the zhiqing generation is often described as a special breed, the elected or chosen generation. For historians of zhiqings and the Maoist Period, as for a good many of the zhiqings who became important intellectuals and thinkers after the 1980s, however, the experience is mostly described in negative terms: alienated generation (miwang [迷惘] de yidai), lost generation (shiluo [失落] de yidai), wasted generation (danwule [耽误了] de yidai) (Bonnin 428-29). One possible sociological explanation for such negative generational descriptions would point not solely to zhiqing experience itself but also to the bitterness felt about the termination of schooling after 1977. Indeed, as the concept of permanent liminality explains, such negative phrases are best understood in the context of more positive descriptors, such as reflexive generation (sikao de yidai [思考] de yidai).
The concept of permanent liminality is a powerful interpretative tool in reconsidering zhiqings’ return to urban life in the late 1970s, when only a small minority successfully resumed their schooling after a decade of forced intellectual stasis: “liminality becomes a permanent condition when any of the phases [that is, rites of separation (see Van Gennep 1960: 105-06), of transition (185-85), or of incorporation (20-24)] in this sequence becomes frozen, as if a film stopped at a particular frame” (Szakolczai 2000: 212). As explained in the theory section, in any given ritual, the last stage of reintegration, in which the social actor is recognized as a part of society, or say accepted back with his new identity, is a crucial one. Szakolczai (2009: 147) pointed out that “the sequential order of a rite of passage is the structure of lived experience.” And as Chinese archeologists told Evasdottir (2004: 32), “studying to pass the [college entrance exam in the late 1970s] as akin to eating after a long fast. Other [former zhiqings] became inarticulate in their rush to explain that it was simply the most important event that had happened to them since 1966,” the year of the Cultural Revolution, when rites of separation were imposed on millions of youth. The zhiqings’ long years in the countryside acted as liminal rites, while the gaokao (National Higher Education Entrance Examination) served as rites of reincorporation.

Thus, the gaokao represented the chance for a generation to resume their educational training and fulfill their potential as young intellectuals, a generation for whom the right to knowledge had been replaced by a dual moral duty: to take charge of Chinese revolutionary task and to learn from the peasant or proletarian class. However, as explained below, it has been widely acknowledged that the extreme competition during the first years after the re-establishment of the gaokao acted as a mechanism to select only a handful of zhiqing (2.3%) to continue their education and successfully complete the rites of reincorporation.

As a famous Chinese writer bitterly wrote in the late 1980s, “with an elementary school diploma I was deemed a young intellectual. . . I left the city as a young intellectual. But when I came back after 10 years I was a young dolt!” (in Bonnin 2004: 198). University experience represented, without a doubt, an ideal way to heal the intellectual wounds inflicted by zhiqings’ “enforced rustication” (Doar 2011: 12), to resume the academic trajectories brutally arrested by Mao’s last mad move, and to reintegrate zhiqings into society. In early post-Mao China, Deng Xiaoping’s Four Modernisations doctrine recognized this fact by revalorizing higher education,

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scientific pursuit, and socialism-building as well as by rehabilitating the role of Chinese intellectuals within the Party apparatus after three decades of their absence. In combination with that enormous competition for university admission, however, this doctrine meant that the vast majority of those who had been *zhiquings* a decade earlier now felt *déclassé*, denied the possibility of fulfilling their potential, and denied the rites of reincorporation. Thus, the notion of permanent liminality can help to contextualize terms such as *alienated, lost* or *wasted* generation.

On the other hand, for *zhiquings* like Shen who completed the rite of passage, university entrance clearly transformed their lives at the same time as it separated them from the rest of their generation. Chosen first by Chairman Mao to keep the revolutionary flame alive and then again by their university entrance exam success by the newly established reformist faction led by Deng Xiaoping, this group within the *zhiquing* generation—Shen’s cohort—felt a strong moral obligation to contribute to China’s future. As the next chapter develops, during the early period of the economic reforms the habitus of these *zhiquings* was in harmony with Deng Xiaoping’s modernization national plan.

Unlike the negative adjectives discussed above, the terms *reflexive* or *deliberative* generation could be said to refer to the main traits associated with *zhiquing*, since their prolonged rural sojourn gave them unique and acute insights that post-1978 generations would lack into China’s political, economic, and social realities (Bonnin 234). But it is primarily those who successfully graduated from university—*those who made it*—who had the most legitimate chance to effectively utilize their habitus in dominant social fields. In Shen’s case, admission to Renda in 1979 played a vital role in his becoming a public intellectual.
Chapter 5 - Liminal Shift: From Marxist Philosophy to the Risky Endeavor of Sociology

People make their own histories, but not in circumstances of their own choosing.
Karl Marx

5.1 - A Young Philosopher at Renda

In 1986, Shen Yuan completed his MA in the department of philosophy at Renmin University (Renda)\(^{21}\) in Beijing. He defended a thesis on the Father of the 1917 Soviet Revolution, entitled The Exploration and Contribution of Lenin to Dialectical Epistemology.\(^{22}\) Shen’s thesis retraces the making of Lenin’s dialectical methodology as an epistemological tool. His “historical and theoretical investigation of Lenin’s thought” (Shen 1986: 1) engaged him in textual analysis of Lenin’s Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, Marx’s Philosophical Manuscript and Das Kapital, and Engels’s Logic (Shen 13). Given Shen’s background as a zhiqing [知情]—a ‘chosen’ young Maoist revolutionary during the 1970s—and then seven years embedded in Marxist-Soviet philosophy at one of Beijing’s top universities, the prospect of taking a position such as Party-ideologist could have seemed to him to be the right thing to do, ziran 自然\(^{23}\) [the natural flow of things] for him. Such position was in high demand especially during the first decade after Mao’s death while CCP factions were all trying to re-establish their legitimacy by reconciling official doctrines and ideational imperatives to the quickly changing national environment (Chen 1995). As Shen Yuan and his American colleague Ching Kwan Lee wrote, “[the] official Marxists at the Institute of Marxism and Leninism at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences were all preoccupied with formalizing the ideas of [Party leaders] into the canon of Chinese socialist thought” (2009: 116).

As the American sociologist Jerome Karabel (1996: 210) points out, following a realist tradition: “From the perspective of those who wield political and economic power, intellectuals possess crucial specialized knowledge as well as the important ideological capacity to legitimate

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\(^{21}\) In Chinese, a standard way to abbreviate a university’s name is to combine the first character of the institution with ‘da,’ which means ‘higher’—‘da’ being the short for ‘daxue’, university or litt. higher learning or study. Therefore, Renmin University is referred to as 人大 (Renda), Beijing University as 人大 (Beida), and Tsinghua University as Tsinghua. ‘Tsingda’ however, refers to the National Tsinghua University in Taiwan.

\(^{22}\) [列宁对作为认识论的辩证法的探讨与贡献] Otherwise specified, author’s own translation from Modern Chinese.

\(^{23}\) Recently, Xiaoying Qi (2014 : 228) convincingly argues that Chinese concepts such as 人大 can cover more analytical ground than just that restricted to its local context.
(or, in some cases, delegitimate) the prevailing order.” Indeed, in Chinese modern history ideological service has play a crucial role “because China’s governments have been fully ideological regimes that have needed the services of an intellectual elite to devise, elaborate, implement, and police the ideological “software” of the regime” (Cheek forthcoming: 4). But the ideologist route didn’t seem like the right fit for the young intellectual. As Shen told us in an interview: “I’m just not a traditional Chinese Marxist.” In a sense Shen’s Marxism differs from what he called “traditional Chinese Marxist” as he look beyond Marx as a political ideology for statesmanship and see a rich conceptual repertoire for sociological research and social action. As this chapter will go on to discuss, having to navigate post-Mao’s intellectual spaces with such an problematic intellectual self-concept had consequences.

5.2 - The Two Names of the Game: Orthopraxy and Orthodoxy

As Chapter 4 explains, when Shen entered college in 1979 (SY-TH 2011), “[t]raditional old sciences like philosophy [and] literature . . . they were the best, the most prestigious. At that time, we were all crazy about philosophy” (SY-ID 2012). However, seven years then passed before Shen completed his master’s degree in Marxist/Soviet philosophy. His enthusiasm for that most vaunted of disciplines was not the same, to say the least. As he explained: “At this point [1986], I felt philosophy was very abstract. The philosophy from that time was not able to solve [concrete/social] problems” (SY-ID 2012). It is interesting to note that Shen’s recollection pointing at philosophical uselessness contrasted sharply with the very last lines of his MA thesis—and the overall tone of the paper—where he wrote the following:

To understand the reform of the economic system and well as other systems, one needs to study dialectics as Lenin did. To be good at applying this epistemological tool to analyze the objective practical situation [facilitated] grasping firmly the societal development laws of our current national stage and [thus] pushing forward various undertakings in the development of socialism. (P. 49)

The disparity between the oral recollection during the interview and the textual trace can be explained with the dialectical terms, orthopraxy and orthodoxy, as used by Evasdottir (2004) in her book on Chinese archeaologists. Again, Orthopraxy is “the express formulation of action to conform to commonly held standards. In such a system, belief and intent may be important to

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25 [传统的老的学科：哲学，文学，。。。最厉害的，我们当时都对哲学疯狂.]  
26 [当时觉得呢哲学如何不和一个具体的东西。。。很抽象，那个时候的哲学不是解决问.]  
27 [从享经济体制和各项体制的改革，就必须象列宁那样研究辨证法。善于运用这个认识工具分析客观实际情况，从而把握我国现阶段的社会发展规律，推动社会主义的各项事业的发展.]
a person’s sense of character and self-esteem, but they cannot be the final arbiters of moral character, success, or satisfaction. For those, we must look to the audience who is witness to any action, for it is the audience who provides judgment. A person polices his actions, not his thoughts, in response to the presence of an audience” (14). Orthodoxy, in contrast, is the effort to align internal beliefs with external practices.

One can see the importance of the maintenance of orthopraxy or correct behaviour in Shen’s Master thesis. Indeed, Shen’s concluding remarks in his thesis about the importance of Lenin’s theoretical apparatus should be seen as the textual gesture of an intellectual willing to play the game of orthopraxy, not as a complete representation of Shen’s thinking, beliefs, or values. Since the field of philosophy was still heavily shaped by the holy trinity of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism for most of the 1980s, for Shen the right thing to do was to produce textual knowledge typical [地道] of a Marxist, according to the expectations of the audience-that-matters: the Renmin University Party Secretaries, ideologists, and Chinese Marxist philosophers. That being said, however, a closer look at the passage may also reveal what seems to be an intellectual’s orthodoxic game, what Shen really wanted to do as an intellectual. Indeed, phrases in the same passage above—e.g. understanding the current national situation, analysing practical problems, helping the country’s modernization—all suggest Shen’s motivation and rationale for his switch to sociology, a discipline that in his mind was better able to get things done.

This interpretation is supported by Shen’s comment that in 1986, “amongst those who graduated in philosophy [from Renda], I [alone] chose sociology, chose to understand the world sociologically.”28 As he recalled, “at that time, the job market for graduate student[s] was nothing like today, it was excellent, everybody wanted to hire us” (SY-ID 2012). Yet the 32 year-old Beijing intellectual chose the still relatively sensitive discipline of sociology, rehabilitated just 8 years before, in 1979.29

However, as the two next sections will discuss in detail, Shen’s switch to sociology was not merely mediated by his orthodoxic game. The rehabilitation of both the discipline and the

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28 [我们哲学毕业的人呢，我是选择和社会学结合起来] Loose or Liberal translation.
29 From its status for more than 30 years as a “Bourgeois Science”; first during the reform of the university system of 1952 following the Soviet model (Zhuang 2012: 32-39) and again in 1957 during the Anti-Rightist campaign after a short revival orchestrated by Fei Xiaotong (we shall discuss this point later in Chapter 5).
public role of intellectuals necessitated the sponsorship of the reformist wing of the Party-State, as well. Put differently, the rise of social sciences sponsored by the CCP’s reformist wing in the early 1980s was offering the possibility that the perennial role of Chinese intellectuals as State advisors could also be rehabilitated. By switching to sociology, then, Shen answered the CCP call to participate in its efforts to modernize the country (which we will describe in the next section).

In 1986, Shen joined a research team working on socio-economic problems at Tsinghua University in Beijing. “The university was talking of opening a sociology department, I stayed there half a year but the project never materialized so I left. It was too much trouble” (SY-ID 2012).\(^\text{30}\) Interestingly, amongst all the job opportunities open to him, the Renda graduate nevertheless chose Tsinghua, where, 14 years later after receiving his M.A. degree, Shen would help to found the university’s sociology department. Today Tsinghua is rivalled only by Peking University as China’s most prestigious university, and it is by far Mainland China’s best research-oriented institution for both the pure and applied sciences. The university is also known for its strong political ties to the state (Pan 2007).

A classic Bourdieusian interpretation of Shen’s move to Tsinghua in 1986 would emphasize the reproduction of the social elite, with Shen’s elitist habitus—being one of Mao’s “chosen” zhiqing, a university graduate, and a Beijinger—perfectly matching the institution (Bourdieu 1970: 175-206, 1984, 1994: 41-44). Undeniably, Shen’s liminal upbringing had molded him into an intellectual eager to work to improve his country’s future. However, his choice of Tsinghua can be understood as more than exemplifying the idea of elite reproduction or of the intellectual’s will to power. First, during the 1980s, the institutional position of sociology was still fragile. Apart from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences’ national and provincial institutes of sociology, very few schools had opened or reopened sociology departments (Lee and Shen 2009). Elite universities were amongst the few exceptions, and as one of these, Tsinghua was thus an obvious choice for an intellectual eager to commit himself to sociology. Second, Shen was part of a generation “intoxicated with politics,” as Raymond Aron (1981: 118) said of himself when returning to France in 1945 after his war-time exile in London. Ever since his switch to sociology in 1986, Shen has remained institutionally close to political

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\(^{30}\) [太麻烦了!]

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power, whether at CASS, China’s premier think-tank [1988-1998]; or at Tsinghua, a Party and Technocrat Elite School (Pan 2007) [1999-present].

In short, as not only one of “Mao’s children” but also a Renda philosophy graduate, Shen was well-trained and eager to play the game of orthopraxy, an enterprise pregnant with possibilities for changing the nation’s future while staying on the right side of political authorities and maintaining access to intellectual, professional and personal resources. In what follows, a picture of how sociology was rehabilitated in 1979 by the reforming wing of the Chinese Communist Party provides the proper context for understanding the force at play as Shen navigates elite Chinese institutions of knowledge learning the craft of sociology.

5.3 - Scientific Knowledge and Politics in Early Post-Mao Era

Like the institutional evaporation of the social sciences from China’s intellectual landscape during the early 1950s, when the CPP decided to follow the Soviet model while recasting higher education in China (Wong 1979: 42-62), the 1979 rehabilitation of sociology should also to be understood as a highly political decision, orchestrated by the central government, that is the CCP.

In fact, the entanglement between sociology and politics early in the post-Mao period brings to mind the reforming efforts of late-Qing Dynasty intellectuals such as Liang Qichao [1873-1929], Kang Youwei [1858-1927], and Yan Fu [1854-1921], all of whose translations of Western sociological and anthropological works into Chinese and their more general work on behalf of the dynastic ill-born Self-Strengthening Movement (自强运动) [1861-1895] were dedicated to institutional reform and advising the government of the day, the Qing. In the introduction to his 1904 translation of Herbert Spencer’s The Study of Sociology, Yan Fu advocated sociology as an antidote to political radicalism. “With his idea of sociology, intertwined with elitism and political gradualism, Yen Fu set the tone for later Chinese sociology, particularly of the Anglo-Saxon variety” (Wong 1979: 10). More than 75 years later, other reform-minded Party leaders such as Deng Xiaoping and Hu Yaobang mobilized sociology as an antidote against ideological radicalism, thus accelerating the rehabilitation of a discipline formerly dismissed as “bourgeois science.” Although Deng devoted more time discussing the

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In his translation of Spencer, Yan Fu uses the term *qunxu* [群学], “collectivities or masses,” to capture the word sociology in Chinese (see Wong 1979: 5, also Dirlik 2012).
natural sciences than the social sciences, he strongly thought that the latter were also essential to guide the country’s modernization (Vogel 2011: 209). In fact, as the leading proponent of the economic reforms within the Party, Deng Xiaoping in 1979 invited sociology, political sciences and law to make up for lost time after more than 30 years of institutional persona non-grata.

However, this declaration in favour of the social sciences added to the tension already present within the factioned Party-State, where reformists, conservatives, neo-Maoists and those of many other political denominations were competing for control of the state apparatus and the national fate of the Popular Republic of China. The death of Mao in 1976 and the subsequent arrest of the Gang of Four the same year had ended the hold of Radical Maoism on the country. A genuine desire for change, widespread in China, translated “into a deep base of support for pragmatic policies underlying reform and opening” (Vogel 183). Nevertheless, it took Deng Xiaoping and his allies two years of patient manouevring and planning for Deng to replace Hu Guofeng, the new neo-Maoist leader, and emerge as the new CCP spokesperson and ultimate leader (Vogel 198-200). Deng also had to articulate and promote his pragmatic program of economic modernization following the Party’s vestigial ideological lines if he wanted his project to be more than just a third period of political pragmatism in-between two-Maoist catastrophes—the liberalization period of 1956-57, and the readjustment and consolidation phase of 1960-1965 (Bergère 1987: 159-196, see also Brodsgaard 1983).

The objective in this section is not to delve head first into the complexity of CCP history and the ideological struggle that marked early post-Mao China, but simply to provide a sketch of the political scene during the economic reforms of the first post-Mao decade. Such a picture is necessary to an understanding of the relationship between power, social knowledge, and intellectuals during those years. What is particularly relevant here is how fragile the balance of power in favour of the Reformist camp was, and how correspondingly risky any intellectual endeavours associated with that camp were. Within months, intellectuals would see both the rehabilitation of humanism, and then its official condemnation and a celebration of revolutionary puritanism (Bergère 1987: 188-89). Indeed, under the sinusoidal leadership of DENG, nearly every period of liberalisation and state restructuring undertake by the reformist camp was followed or preceded by conservative campaigns of political repression. For example, in the 1980s, “conservatives led by Propaganda Chief Deng Liqun . . . were engaged in several campaigns—against spiritual pollution (1983) and against bourgeois liberalization (1987)—to slow down or even reverse the policies of reform and to open up to the outside world policies.
advocated by Premier Zhao Ziyang and Party Secretary Hu Yaobang” (Sleeboom-Faulkner 2007b: 19).

One of the toughest questions for the reformist camp was how to both accelerate economic development and restore the legitimacy of the CCP without also threatening the structure of the political system (Cabestan 1994: 165). In response to these challenges, party ideologists working for the reformist camp had to rearticulate the relationships between revolution and production, the criteria for productive forces, the definition of the preliminary stage of capitalism, and a theoretical justification for capitalist practices. For Deng, the choice of socialism over capitalism had to do with the former’s superior speed and efficiency in terms of economic development. From a conservative perspective, however, the danger of that choice was that such new thinking could lead the CCP to “legitimately implement whatever means and methods [they wanted to employ in order] to pursue economic growth and efficiency” (Chen 41).

The CCP’s 1981 Resolution on Party History typified the ideological reinterpretation of both Maoism and Marxism-Leninism produced by Deng’s camp. “It recast the thought of Mao Zedong as being about not class struggle, but seeking truth from facts [the author’s emphasis], and defined the latter as the core of Marxism” (Chen 1995: 16). This new ideological direction came to be known as scientific Marxism.

This recasting of “seeking truth from fact” as the core of Marxism also meant moving away from the holistic power of historical materialism in order to provide institutional space in which social scientific disciplines could investigate the social. This attack on the totalizing gaze of historical materialism triggered a confrontation that strongly shaped China’s political and intellectual landscape in the 1980s (Sleeboom-Faulkner 2007b: 42).

An example of this occurred, in May 1979, when an article entitled ‘Historical Materialism and Sociology’ and which many attributed to Hu Qiaomu, CASS’ first president, was published in Philosophical Research, an important journal at the time. In the paper, the author undertakes the delicate task of negotiating the shrinking relevance of Historical
Materialism for the study of all social phenomena, a movement that corresponded with the CCP’s growing demand for non-ideological social research.32

The stage for Hu’s position-taking was set two months earlier, in mid-March 1979, when the Preparatory Section of the National Philosophy-Social Science Planning Conference invited more than fifty intellectuals formally trained in sociology to deliberate on the possible undertaking of research work in sociology “under the guidance of Marxist-Leninist and Mao Zedong’s thought so as to make contributions to China’s socialist modernization” (Jihui 1983: 20).

Finally, during the same eventful month of March 1979, under the sponsorship of the newly established Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and encouraged by the favourable ideological climate, Fei Xiaotong founded the Chinese Sociological Association in Beijing (Chu 1983: 3).

What kind of work would be solicited from sociologists in this context? Essentially, after 1978 the social sciences were given an important function in the country’s reform plan: to serve the goals of the Four Modernizations—agriculture, industry, national defence, and science and technology—in the building of a strong socialist China (Sleeboom-Faulkner 2007b: 35). Raymond Aron (1960) once famously said that every society produce the sociology it needs, while his student Pierre Bourdieu (1987: 65), more critical,33 reiterated throughout his life that the political demand for sociological knowledge runs the risk of producing a “spontaneous sociology of the dominant” that gives the elite’s perspective scientific legitimacy. The explanation that social scientific disciplines emerge in response to a state’s demand for social intelligence34 is indeed familiar. Applying Bourdieu’s rendition of Clausewitz’s famous statement to the Chinese context, one might say that for Deng and his allies, social sciences was

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32 Society is an object of scientific study. Social life, various social phenomena, aspects of mutual relationships of social life, and social development are all objects of social scientific study. . . . Marxism’s research object is also society. Marxism is also a social science. Then, can it be said that since there is Marxism, it is not necessary to have other social sciences? It is possible to eliminate a discipline such as sociology? . . . To view historical materialism as a kind of all-inclusive thing, to treat it as the category of historical materialism which can be exhaust all social life . . . is not reasonable and also does not accord with reality. . . . In order to study and to know our social life concretely and in depth, we need sociology. Under the guidance of the perspective and method of scientific historical materialism, our sociology definitely will make important contributions (Hu 1979: 10, 11, 17).


in part the pursuit of political goals by other means: “As the Chinese government strove to make its policies and decisions processes more scientific the application of social science knowledge to the construction of social programs and policy formats intensified” (Zhang 207: 110).

The early political reformist demand for the social sciences was thus motivated by an intricate set of rationales: (1) a demand for the production of effective mechanisms of social control in dealing with social problems—“labour problems, problems related to population, culture, morality, folklore, nationality, women, youth, children, the aged, the city, etc” (Hu 1983: 21)—so as to ensure a smooth transition from a planned to a socialist market economy; and (2) the quest for the legitimation and ideological re-tooling of the Party-State.

5.4 - Historical Continuity I: Subordinating Dynamics Between Knowledge and Power

While a look at the early post-Mao political field reveals major changes in the ideological landscape, the last paragraph also reveals continuity with Deng’s predecessor. In fact, although the Denguist ideological framework under which Chinese social scientists were working has been more open than during the previous 30 years, both the subordination of the social sciences and knowledge production to the powerful CCP and that party’s plan for the future of China’s people remain a stable equation in Mainland China (see Sleeboom-Faulkner 2007b: 49 for a similar argument).

35 In 1983, Chinese Sociology and Anthropology, an academic journal based at the University of Berkeley, California, published a special issue: ‘Sociology and Society in Contemporary China 1979-1983.’ The guest editor, David S. K. Chu, translated 17 articles that had been published by Chinese sociologists since the revival of the discipline in 1978. The articles all deal with topics echoing the government’s concerns: family, social structure, and social change (10); attitudes and opinions (4); economic life (1); gambling (1); and superstitious activities (1).

36 The Foucauldian concept of governmentality (Foucault 1991)—the mentality of the government (Dean: 1999), as “the techniques and strategies by which a society is rendered governable”—could certainly help define another level of relationship between social sciences and Deng’s politics. While a full-fledged Foucauldian analysis of Denguist governmentality would be out of place here, it is important to go beyond a mere description of political actors’ intentions so as to direct our gaze on the performative nature of social sciences. In Chapter 6, our analysis should venture in these waters. In the Chinese context, two recent Foucauldian analyses focusing on pre-1949 China are Tom Lam’s A Passion for Facts: Social Surveys and the Construction of the Chinese Nation-State, 1900-1949 (2011) and Malcolm Thompson’s PhD dissertation The Birth of the Chinese Population: A Study in the History of Governmental Logics (unpublished). However, no historical or sociological work appears to have undertake the archeology of Mao’s and Deng’s knowledge-power dynamics.
Yang Po, a sociologist working under Mao in the 1960s, described the role of sociologists in terms that are quite similar to how Shen characterized the relationship between power and sociological knowledge at the Academy during the last two decades of the twentieth century. Yang said that “the choice of research problems does not rest with the investigators. Researchers are instructed by the leadership of the Party and the Government in regard to what is required of them, what they should tackle, and what questions needs to be answered” (Yang Po 1959: 24 in Wong 1979: 72). The recollection of Shen’s experience working at the CASS sounds rather similar:

Theoretical engagement and knowledge accumulation are considered [by the Party to be] secondary. All in all, however, policy-oriented research in this initial stage of sociology’s re-emergence legitimized the discipline’s existence, provided the necessary funding and personnel to practice and teach sociology, and focused sociologists’ attention on the burning issues of a rapidly changing society (Lee and Shen 112).

In Bourdieusian terms, the subordination of the social to temporal power highlighted the quasi non-existence of the field of sociology in China—with its autonomy, rules of the game, gatekeeping—during the first decade of its existence. Yongjin Zhang (207: 109) nicely captured the spatiality of the power dynamics involving social knowledge in 1980s China, noting that “the opening and expanding of political space for social sciences has also been promoted and facilitated by the perceived need for enlisting the service of knowledge for the state.” In that respect, the trajectory of sociology after the establishment of the PRC—1949—contrasted sharply with its first 30 years of its existence under the Republican government [1912-1949] when the discipline developed into a networked field (Medina 2014) built around a limited number of intellectual entrepreneurs and institutions located outside the patronage of the nationalist state (Chiang 2001). Maurice Freeman, an American sinologist and sociologist, went so far as to argue that “before the Second World War, outside North America and Western Europe, China was the seat of the most flourishing sociology in the world” (1962 in Wong 1979: 36). In fact between 1927 and 1935, 9,000 sociological projects are estimated to have been completed in various parts of China (Wong 17).

However, what Freeman overlooks is that most of these Republican [1911-1949] sociological endeavours were largely shaped and supported by the U.S. As Chiang (2001) shows, most or all of the key aspects of China’s influential social scientific endeavours during the Republican Era—(1) the institutional home of Chinese social scientific projects (Yanjing, Nankai), (2) the educational trajectory of its leaders continuing their studies at Chicago, Yale,
Columbia, Harvard, etc., (3) curriculum design, (4) teaching materials (American textbooks), (5) research agenda (China’s rural reconstruction was sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation), and (6) methodologies—overwhelmingly points at American philanthropic institutions and American social sciences. Chiang concludes that the powerful American/Anglo-Saxon influence on the birth of China’s social sciences is undeniable, thus supporting the argument that the history of Chinese social sciences between 1900 and 1949 can be viewed as part of the larger history of the American social sciences. Thus, we must conclude that sociology as a discipline in China and as a politically-engaged form of knowledge production has always been subject to the guiding forces and interests of dominant political actors of the day. Thus, it would not be surprising to find similar intellectual strategies among Republican-era sociologists as we find among Shen and his colleagues. Similar but not the same—the reality of political influence on sociology may have continued but the particular realities of political regimes in the 1930s, 1960s and today are meaningfully different.

5.5 - Historical Continuity II: Western Ideational Flow and American Sociology in China

Although the Chinese state and the reformist faction within the leadership were the main patrons of Chinese sociology after 1978, directing the discipline towards purely applied research (Dai 1993: 94), an second important influence on sociology in China—one which had been present throughout the twentieth century—was the sociological knowledge flowing to China from America (Li et al. 2008: 80; Li 2012: 20). For example, “[i]n 1981, C.K. Yang at the University of Pittsburgh, together with American-trained sociologists at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Peter Blau and Nan Lin at the State University of New York (SUNY) in Albany, offered what came to be known as the “Nankai class”, the first sociology training course for some forty college seniors recruited from around the country’s leading universities” (Lee and Shen 2009: 112). The sociological specializations of these American scholars, including social stratification, mobility, organization, demography, and economic sociology, became the dominant sub-fields of Chinese sociology as well. In the same way, survey research and quantitative methodology became the prevailing tools for the practitioners of sociology in China (112-13).

As two sociologists have recently reaffirmed, the globalized flow of knowledge that has characterized our late-modernity is still fundamentally asymmetrical, with ideation circulation predominantly moving from powerful Western centres of knowledge production to developing
countries (Medina 2013; Qi 2014). Unsurprisingly, scholars have identified such an ideational flow during the first decade of the economic reforms in Mainland China: Xu Julin (2000), an influential Chinese intellectual historian, identified such a situation during the first decade of the economic reforms in Mainland China, emphasizing not only the large amount of Western knowledge flowing in the coastal cities before 1989 but also the intellectual field’s frenetic and uncritical reception of such foreign ideation.

However, as Chapter 6 details, the Tiananmen events of 1989 acted as a powerful experience in reflexivity that impelled some Chinese intellectuals to practice the crucial cognitive habit of contextualizing the incoming flow of Western knowledge. “Contextualizing” here doesn’t mean creatively applying metropolitan ideation to the Chinese context, a process that Ulf Hannerz (1990: 246) called the second step of recontextualizing. Rather, this primary contextualizing process involves two steps not unfamiliar to what is called social epistemology in social sciences: (1) dissociating Western knowledge from its envelop of universal theory so as to ground Western knowledge in its own civilizational development, thus (2) opening the door to the valorization, production, and circulation of ‘local’ knowledge in the Chinese social scientific and intellectual fields and beyond. As Chapter 9 investigates in more detail, during the early 2000s Shen and his colleagues became the leading Chinese advocates for a balanced epistemological approach striving (1) to articulate new sociological theories able both to understand the Chinese context and to enrich Western knowledge—e.g. Sun Liping’s theory of transition versus theory of modernization and development (Sun 2008), and (2) to reconfigure metropolitan ideation for their new contexts—e.g. Burawoy, Touraine, Szelenyi—(Burawoy 2008; Merle 2007a; Shen 2006a, 2006b).

Unsurprisingly, after the 1990s the Chinese ideational importation of American sociologies played an important part in Shen’s intellectual trajectory. In 1994, he decided to undertake his PhD dissertation on the New Economic Sociology; allowing him to engaged in a period of reading experiences that strengthened his position against neo-liberalism and state capitalism in China. Then, in the early 2000s, Michael Burawoy’s coining of the concept of public sociology can be seen as a determinant event in Shen’s intellectual life; the discovery of his most prominent intellectual self-concept. Burawoy proposes a new division of sociology in which public sociologists should “engages broader publics, lay audiences […] in” a dialogical relationship in which each side is accountable to the other in which sociologists respond to the
problems and interests of publics and publics respond to sociological insights” (Pokrovsky 2011: 225). Burawoy’s concept seems to have symbolically captured what was until then for Shen only an incoherent mode of being and praxis. The term public sociology allowed him to articulate his dual desires in regard to theory and practice: scientific enquiry into the social and socio-political activism. Public sociology proved to be the perfect intellectual self-concept with which Shen could excavate his dusty Marxist identity. As Laozi (1999: 135) wrote more than two thousand years ago: “What is not name is not known and in that sense may not exist, but named things may have efficacy and be responsible for effects” (in Qi 2014: 206).

5.6 - Rose or Black?

Although Deng brought social sciences in the political realm during the 1980s, the architect of the Chinese reforms had to fight many political battles in the early post-Mao era in order to establish science as a force of production and mental labour as a form of labour. Deng thought that scientists should be able to concentrate on carrying out their professional duties without having to worry about whether or not they were wearing the Red hat (Vogel 210). Along with his valorization of higher education and affirmation of the state’s need for scientific knowledge, Deng undoubtedly facilitated the rehabilitation of “the Stinking Ninth Category” the intellectuals, a social category harshly treated during the Maoist period. “In line with a strategy of mass mobilization as opposed to technocratic management, [Mao] appeals to the creativity and initiative of the ordinary people and urges them to break away from a superstitious reliance on the experts” (Sleeboom-Faulkner 2007b: 68). In that sense, contra Mao, Deng reactivated the classical Confucian model of scholar-official as a legitimate way of praxis for Chinese intellectuals. As Rocca (2008: 27) explained, during the 1980s Chinese sociologists therefore underwent a “fulgurant social rise—from pariah to Prince’s advisor [again], from a starving wage to a respectable income.”

This section has focused on how, early on in post-Mao China, the CCP’s perspective on scientific knowledge changed. Deng Xiaoping’s rise to power and implementation of his reformist vision was a strategic political struggle that pitted his faction against neo-Maoists and conservatives within the CCP. The return of sociology and social sciences was thus not universally accepted, so during the time that Deng was striving to liberate mental labourers from the political dimension of their work the practice of sociology was a risky business embedded
within the new leader’s pragmatic politics. If Deng’s camp failed, the future of the discipline and its practitioners would be not rosy but dark.

Many academics have therefore saluted the courage of the old generation of sociologists who finally were able to gamely accept the opportunity to resume their sociological duties after having spent more than 30 years away from the discipline (Merle 2007a: 34; Rocca 2008: 26-28; Chu 1983). The term chosen by this old generation of sociologists to capture the return of the discipline in 1978 reflects the political prudence shaped by their more than 30 years under the Maoist regime: Chongjian-huifu [重建-恢复] meaning “reconstruction-restoration,” is intended to suggest that in its aim to serve the people and the CPP, the discipline is a reconstruction, not simply a restoration of the old imperialist and bourgeois discipline serving the interests of the ruling classes (Merle 2007a: 34). In the next section, we are turning our attention to Shen’s first encounter with sociology while looking at the relationship between a new generation of intellectuals and the rehabilitated discipline of sociology.

5.7 - It Was Something New: Chinese Intellectuals and the Risky Sociological Endeavor

The entanglement between the social sciences and politics within the high-sphere of Chinese power has created an unequal distribution in demands for social intelligence. At that time, not all political factions saw eye to eye on that subject, however. Indeed, at the beginning of the 1980s, despite official (that is, reformist) support for the discipline of sociology and the political rehabilitation of its practitioners, its old label, “Bourgeois Science,” continued to hamper the development of the ‘field’. It was somewhat of a risky enterprise\(^\text{37}\) to take a stance on such uncertain turf: considering the uncertain future of the new reforms and the vicissitudes of Maoist times, nobody knew exactly how long the reformist school and their agenda would hold the balance of power (Merle 2007a: 33-34).

However, if we turn our sociological gaze at the level of Chinese intellectuals, we see a somewhat different prospect. Despite the fact that sociology was, to some extent, a risky business, it was nonetheless also something new; and the intellectual appetite/demand for

\(^{37}\) In the political field, numerous factions, including the conservative and Maoist, were opposed to this drifting away from their philosophical bases (Marxism and Historical Determinism, in their cases); while in the intellectual field, many scholars and students preferred to stay away from a science with a bad reputation (Rocca 2008: 27; Merle 2007).
something new was well distributed amongst the zhiqing generation.\textsuperscript{38} Three decades of absence from the intellectual scene, or in some cases, of surreptitious relocation to neighbouring disciplines (Lee and Shen 2008; Wong 1979: 35-105),\textsuperscript{39} also meant that sociology has been relatively unaffected by the maelstrom of radical Maoism and historical materialism buffeting other academic disciplines. This helps to explain why sociology rose to a dominant intellectual position during the 1980s (Merle 37-38).

Describing what sociology represented for him and his fellow-friends in the early years of the reforms, Cai He, a zhiqing and the head of the sociology department at Zhongshan University in Guangzhou in 2007, captured this association of sociology with novelty when he said:

I think that most of us, the vast majority did not know what it [sociology] was, but before anything, it was new, it was a feeling of the search for novelty [which drove us toward that discipline]. The quest for something new clearly expressed our rejection of the political ideology which has dominated any social and intellectual activity since the foundation of the People's Republic of China and which culminated with the Cultural Revolution (Merle 2007a: 37).\textsuperscript{40}

Cai’s words make clear that this “quest for something new” was for something outside the realm of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and historical materialism. Indeed, members of the political class and intellectuals alike thought that China had to be saved from its catastrophic

\textsuperscript{38} The talk delivered by Yuan Jihui, founding chairman of the Department of Sociology at Fudan University’s Branch Campus in Shanghai, at UC Berkeley, Stanford and USC (March, 1983) embodied this demand: “Ever since May 4, 1980, when the Guangming Daily carried news of the formal reestablishment of the Sociology Department at our university, people from different parts of China [have written] letters to express their support. Some of them [also] sought materials; some asked about correspondence courses; some wanted to apply to be graduate students; still others volunteered their services, hoping to become teachers in the new department. That a 200-word piece of news aroused such great responses in Chinese society fully showed the people’s interest in and their hopes for the new sociology department” (Jihui 1984: 18).

\textsuperscript{39} Although sociological research in China essentially ceased in 1952, the discipline of anthropology thrived under Mao. In particular, ethnology and research on minority nationalities became important enterprises after 1949 (Wong 1979: 78-92). Also, social research reports that proliferated under Mao were “examples . . . affirming and illustrating current policies” (Wong 77). That been said, there was also the short-existence of mass sociology under Mao, a fascinating attempt at produced during this time, “the four histories” [四史]: a large-scale social survey of the masses by the masses. Here “four” refers to four central social institutions: the family, the village, the commune, and the factory.

\textsuperscript{40} [Je pense que la plupart d’entre nous, l’immense majorité ne savait pas ce que c’était, mais d’abord c’était nouveau, c’était un sentiment de recherche de la nouveauté. La nouveauté recherché exprime clairement le rejet de l’idéologie politique qui domine toute activité sociale et intellectuelle depuis la fondation de la République Populaire de Chine et culmine avec la Révolution Culturelle.] Own translation from French.
Maoist trajectory, that something new like sociology could effectively help modernize the country by supporting the replacement of its crumbling totalitarian ideology. As Shen told us,

At that time, [I or we] felt that China had to modernize. Sociologically speaking, modernization could not happen without sociology. We had to have sociology because at that time our government’s main concept was historical materialism. [From the state’s perspective] historical materialism could replace sociology. [However,] at that time, we thought sociology was very important.41

That sociology was something new, an uncharted knowledge realm offering the possibility of intellectual explorations beyond what otherwise were the only theoretical apparatuses available for valid social and historical thinking, Historical Materialism and Maoism (Lee and Shen 2), made it an ideal intellectual landscape for the some members of the zhiqing. For the most part, the zhiqing’s generational experience gave them a unique outlook on political, social, and economic realities, allowing them to escape their (political) ideological illusions and to think for themselves (Bonnin 2004: 430, 433). Hence, this habitus—with its principles of vision and division of the social recognizing both (1) that peasants and the countryside were central realities that needed to be consider and (2) that an all-encompassing ideology was a poor tool with which to try to understand reality—was a perfect match for sociology. As Bonnin (433) remarked, “[i]n social sciences, the researchers belonging to this generation quickly benefit from their specific sensitivity to the social problems [and so are able] to contribute greatly to this field.” Yet another clue as to why sociology became one of the leading disciplines of the Chinese intellectual field during the first decade of its rehabilitation (Merle 37-38).

During the 1990s, Shen and his close friends’ habituses retroactively shaped their sociological discipline’s main conceptual baggage. For instance, their anti-ism facilitated the emergence of concepts such as social transition, which allowed them to consider open-ended social possibilities not teleologically tied to China’s future, unlike conceptual offerings in the 1980s such as the theory of modernization, which were future-oriented, step-by-step blueprints for development based on the historical experience of Western countries (Sun 2008, 2012).

Nevertheless, although the demand for new ideation was high early on in the post-Mao era, the output of intellectuals trained in sociology in the initial years of the reforms was

41 [当时觉得中国要现代化，要现代化从社会科学上说不可能没有社会学，我们应该有社会学，因为当年的去向社会学的时候我们政府的主要的概念就是历史唯物主义，历史唯物主义是可以代提出社会学。我们当时觉得社会学很重要]
relatively low and slow. It was not until 1983 that, under the mentorship of Fei Xiaotong, the first cohort (the so-called “Nankai class” [Lee and Shen 2]) formally trained in sociology graduated from Nankai University in Tianjin. In the same year, the Department of Sociology at Fudan University’s second branch campus also graduated its first class of sociology majors\(^42\) (Jihui 19: 1984). To meet the demand, a good many of the new sociologists of the 1980s were actually ‘turncoats’\(^43\) coming for the discipline of philosophy, history and economics\(^44\). In fact, according to Shen, more than half of the new generation working in the field of sociology had no official training in the discipline (SY-ID 2012).

5.8 - Shen’s Ideational Encounter with Sociological Knowledge

In the 1980s, Shen’s first encounter with the sociological imagination came with his reading of Marx and Gramsci in graduate school, and then was extended to the work of the classical figures of Comte and positivism, Simmel, Weber, Durkheim, and Mauss (SY-ID 2012). He proudly explained that he did this reading independently of his academic training in philosophy: “I studied sociology by myself. In fact, I have not received a very strict education in sociology. Therefore (laughing), I have a messy way of thinking. If I had graduated from a sociology department, I could not have had this type of thinking. I would have been socialized by them [or the institution]” (SY-ID 2012).\(^45\)

Shen’s independent attitude toward learning can be related to his zhiqing experience in the countryside, where reading was a highly political activity. For a generation who saw their urban education abruptly cease at an early age, access to books other than the little red book *Quotations From Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (1966) was rare and dangerous. “During the Mao era, Mao’s [Little] Red Book had served to reflect the ‘truth’, and was taken as the point of departure by great numbers of people writing articles on all kinds of pseudoscientific subjects” (Sleeboom-Faulkner 2007b: 46). Learning from the people, manual and administrative work were the tasks designated to occupy and transform the young intellectual’s mind (Bonnin 2004; see Mao on Youth (Chap. 30), 1967: 288-293); “[r]eading is learning, but applying is also learning and the

\(^{42}\) Yuan Jihui (19) also claimed that his cohort were “the first sociology graduates since Liberation [1949].”

\(^{43}\) In the sense of betraying the discipline of philosophy and the ‘holy’ concept of historical materialism.

\(^{44}\) Interestingly, after the suppression of sociology in 1952, many of its practitioners relocated themselves in neighbouring disciplines like philosophy and history (Lee and Shen 2009; Wong 1979)

\(^{45}\) [自己学社会学。。。其实社会学我没受过太严格的教育，所以（嘿嘿）呢，我有乱七八糟的想法，我故地是社会学系毕业的也不会有这样的想法，都被他们socialization…]
most important kind of learning at that” (Mao 1967: 308). The Chairman was pitilessly critical of intellectuals for possessing only book knowledge. Any form of non-ideological schooling therefore had to be self-taught and organized outside the local Party structure (Rocca 2008: 27).

Interestingly enough in his dissertation-turn-book published in 2007, Shen (2007b: 17) wrote something cognizant with Mao’s position on learning: “the production of market let us occupy a particularly privilege scientific position, as we can see with our own eyes a variety of emergent processes related to market. This [situation] demands us to walk out of our study and enter the field and make on the spot and meticulous observation about the development and extension of market.”

Unsurprisingly Shen’s embodied experience more than a decade earlier of as a zhiqing craving books outside the realm of Maoism fostered academic discipline and facilitated Shen’s self-guided discovery of sociology as he strived to engage intellectually with non-ideological goods after the death of Mao. Also supporting our interpretation of his independent learning style is Shen’s schooling during his PhD program, more than a decade after his shift to sociology. When asked about his experience of deciding to pursue his doctoral studies at the CASS Graduate School in 1994, Shen pointed at his zhiqing habitus: I very much dislike attending class and listening to lessons. [But] at 40 years old, I attended the [doctoral] program part-time and did a lot of reading on my own of things related to economic sociology.

Another subtle element in the temporality of his discourse during the interview supports the presence of a connection between Shen’s zhiqing experience and his way of taming knowledge. Shen’s answer above, with its suggestion that his early encounters with sociology connected to his zhiqing experience, came just 12 seconds after his statement, “I entered college in 1979 after going to the countryside as a zhiqing.” As Chapter 4 indicates, during our first interview session with Shen, which lasted more than 90 minutes and focused on Shen’s trajectory after the events of Tiananmen, the discussion only once approached the subject of

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46[生产市场这件事，使我们占据了一个得天独厚的学术位置，可以亲眼目睹各种各样的市场的生成过程. 这就要求我们走出书斋，进入田野，对市场的延升和发育做实地的，细致的观察和了解。]
47[我非常不喜欢来课堂上听课，40 年，我上 Part-time [in English]，读了很多经济社会学的东西。]
48[79 年上学 过去插 队到农村]
zhiqing; but Shen’s response to that topic was extremely emotionally charged⁴⁹ and quite telling: “I am one of those sent to live and work in the countryside” (SY-ID 2012).⁵⁰

5.9 - Archived Identity: The Choice Between Chosen Intellectual and Marxist Maverick

In her ethnographic study of male Han archaeologists in late-socialist China,⁵¹ Evasdottir (2004) argues that within that field, “everyone knows that members of the lost generations [i.e., zhiqing] are rebels” (171). She goes on to describe how these rebels tend to play the game differently, with more freedom and evidencing less regard to orthopraxy and audiences-that-matter. As Chapter 6 explains, however, Shen’s decision to take a research position at the CASS Institute of Sociology, China’s most powerful State-run think-tank suggests that it is not possible to go along with Evasdottir and argue that the Beijing-born intellectual is a maverick playing the game of orthodoxy. Although Shen’s zhiqing experience may have contributed to the making of his habitus in infusing an element of critical intellectuality—anti-ism and independence of mind—it did not necessitate that he choose to play his own game around orthodoxy. Rather, Shen’s liminal upbringing also deepened his sense of moral obligation to his nation. What the Beijing-born intellectual told Merle (2007a: 45) summarizes Shen’s view of the moral praxis incumbent on the Chinese intellectual:

In the 1980s, we had no idea what the paradigms that were structuring the discipline of sociology, and what the state of development of the discipline was or its history in other countries. It was more the problems of Chinese society that worried us. If Chinese sociologists could not resolve them, we could not enter in the twentieth first century!⁵²

Such moral commitment mirror perfectly what Bonnin (2004: 426) describe as Mao’s mission for zhiqings, “At that time, it was to youth and to them alone that Mao entrusted the sacred mission to save China and socialism.”⁵³

⁴⁹ Again the word ‘proud’ is the best word to describe his emotional utterance.
⁵⁰ [我是个插队到农村。]
⁵¹ The Han 汉 are the majority ethnic group in Mainland China.
⁵² [La décennie 1980 est essentiellement une décennie de "l’indigénisation" (bentuhua) (...) Nous ne savions pas ce qu’était l’objet de recherche commun de cette discipline, nous n’avions aucune idée de son état de développement, c’était plutôt les problèmes de la société chinoise qui nous inquiétaient. Si les sociologues chinois ne les résolvaient pas, nous ne pourrions entrer dans le XXIe siècle!] Our own translation from French.
⁵³ [À cette époque, c’est à la jeunesse et à elle seule que Mao a confié la mission sacrée de sauver la Chine et le socialisme.] Own translation from French.
Shen therefore agreed to engage in Deng Xiaoping’s regime of orthopraxy and embrace the responsibility to help leading the country’s modernization. Zhiqing intellectuals’ habitus resonated in harmony with Deng’s plan just like fishes in water, as Bourdieu put it. This pattern also occurred at the very beginning of the twentieth century in China, when Chinese Marxists and liberal intellectuals wanting to transform Chinese society so as to save the nation armed themselves with sociological tools to save China (Merle 2007a: 32).

As last section has explained, orthopraxy is the idea that the audiences-that-matter (the powerful CCP, not one’s personal beliefs) and the available social roles/identities (husband, brother, teacher, mentor, zhiqing, intellectuals, etc.) are what ultimately shape and motivate one’s actions (Evansdottir 250). Shen accepted the public role in China of what Hamrin and Cheek (1986) have called the establishment intellectual; that is, a person “serving and operating within the governing institutions of the People’s Republic” who were at the same time “specialists with advanced training involved in the practice of the arts, economics, journalism, history, and philosophy” (Hamrin and Cheek 1986: 3). We are adding sociology to their list. However, the main point to emphasize here is not that sociology should be added to the above list, but that by taking up a research position at the CASS Institute of Sociology, Shen had to navigate his career trajectory within the walls of that powerful think-tank with what can be called an archived identity.

Indeed, as it will become clear in the next chapters, if one part of his embodied past is mobilized in his work—the product of a member of the intellectual elite whose moral responsibilities have been shaped by Mao’s and Deng’s selection of him—another part of his embodied past has been demobilized, or “archived”—his Marxist identity.

As an intellectual, one of Shen’s objectives in switching from philosophy to sociology was to use the newly available intellectual field’s conceptual space as a context in which to think about society, change, and history outside of the prevailing influence of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. However, by choosing to participate in the rise of sociology during the 1980s and 1990s, thus undermining the prestige of philosophy as the Mother of all scientific endeavours, Shen also facilitated the tangible marginalization of Marxist thought within the intellectual/ideological field. As he later quasi-reflexively noted: “[t]he recovery of Chinese sociology coincided with Marxism’s secular decline as an intellectual paradigm in China” (Lee
and Shen 2009: 3). Under the authority of the state, it became virtually impossible for Shen and other similar-minded Marxists to mobilize concepts from the Marxist repertoire to carry out their own sociological work, leave aside mobilize and transform the subjectivity—and the dominated existence—of the Chinese working class. As Shen did when he was a *zhiqing* in the countryside, longing to return to the city, he would have to wait patiently for the right time to invest himself into such ‘struggle’. It is in that sense that Shen’s Marxism differs from what he called “traditional Chinese Marxist” as he looked beyond Marx as a political ideology for statesmanship to see a rich conceptual repertoire for sociological research and social action.

In formulating the idea of archived identity, we are not simply drawing on James’ classic insight recognizing “that people have multiple selves—as many different selves as there are different others that recognize the individual” (1890: 294); or Stryker’s idea that “a person has an identity for each of the different positions or roles the person holds in society” (1980: 60). Following this well-established perspective, one could say that in any given social encounter, a specific identity is mobilized while multiple ‘irrelevant’ others are archived for future use. In the case at hand—an intellectual trajectory within the confine of an authoritarian regime—Shen confronted two possible ways of being an intellectual. In regard to Shen’s acceptance of a research position at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, it was *realpolitik* as well as cultural factors that informed his choice of orthopraxy—in the role of Chinese intellectual, as offered by his *zhiqing* embodied past—over the orthodoxy he could have tackled as a Marxist intellectual. Certainly, both the need to legitimate sociology vis-à-vis the State and the lack of political support for and interest in Marxism were two reasons that facilitated Shen’s archiving of his intellectual self-concept.

For instance, the last decade of the twentieth century in Mainland China has been described as a steady yet accelerated march toward neo-liberalism, market economy, and globalization. Numerous authors have used the term *paradox* to describe the dynamics of socio-economic development happening during the last decade. That is “at a time when China is turn[ing] itself into the world’s workshop” (Pun and Chan 2008: 76) the CCP is definitively moving away from the discourse of class and thus from the historical base its claim to have dutifully represented thoughout the second half of the twentieth century. Indeed, Not only were Chinese intellectuals moving away from the author of *Das Capital*, but in the early 1990s, the CCP would be actively working to archive/retire its central concept of *class* and replace it with
the more scientific and neutral concept of social strata (Anagnost 2008; Pun and Chan 2008; see also Chapter 9).

In 2009, Ching Kwan Lee and Shen Yuan published a paper in *Work and Occupations* entitled ‘the Paradox and Possibility of Public Labor Sociology in China’. Here is how they articulated such an idea with a focus on the relationship between social reality and its sociological representation: ‘Th[is] paradox -- of the poverty of labor studies against the backdrop of momentous working class formation, export-driven industrialization, and influx of capital -- become even more puzzling if one considers the long ideological and intellectual dominance of Marxism in Chinese official and academic discourses’ (2009: 1). As the autonomy of the field of social sciences is reduced considerably after 1989, a desertion of ‘communist ideology’ refract back to restrict considerably the scholarly usage of Marx, Lenin or Mao. Indeed, in the 1990s, after the Tiananmen massacre and in a developing country plagued by growing social inequalities, it would prove too risky for Chinese intellectuals like Shen to mobilize Marx for social criticism or sociological analysis. As Lee and Shen (2009: 3-4) explained this bluntly:

Marxism, having been monopolized as the ruling ideology of the state, and taught as part of university students’ political education, has become synonymous with coerced indoctrination rather than a critical intellectual tradition useful for analyzing China’s nascent capitalist society. Bereft of one of the most insightful and productive paradigms for the study of work and labor, Chinese sociologists look at labor issues from the perspective of the state.

And as the next four chapters explain, Shen’s intellectual life-trajectory exemplifies the slow swing of an identity pendulum moving from orthopraxy to orthodoxy, from membership in a modernizing elite during the 1980s and ‘90s to identification as a Marxist intellectual since the early 2000s—that is, from state sociologist to public sociologist.

Shen’s experience in the countryside as a zhiqing waiting for his urban return most probably shaped one trait of intellectual style or personality trait: Patience. The patience of playing the game of orthopraxy, the patience of playing the game with an archived Marxist habitus. The audience-that-matter, “the heavy hands of the Chinese state [in Shen’s own words] . . . all too visible and powerful (Lee and Shen 2009: 1)” were the ones carving the rules of the game.
6.1 - The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Before 1989

In 1988, after Tsinghua University’s failure to re-establish its department, Shen relocated to the Institute of Sociology (IS) as a full-time researcher inside the walls of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). The IS was founded in 1979 (Sleeboom-Faulkner 2007b: 306) as part the CASS’ Social, Political and Legal Studies academic division.

CASS was found in May of 1977 (Zhu 2009: 158) in a reformist attempt to separate social sciences from both natural sciences and philosophy. This partitioning of the sciences from the social sciences epitomized the importance that Deng, the emerging Chinese leader, attached to the latter as the potential think-tank behind his Four Modernizations (Sleeboom-Faulkner 2007b: 46). In Deng’s mind, the raison d’être for CASS and the social sciences—and the recently rehabilitated “stinking ninth category” (intellectuals in Cultural Revolution words)—was to “serve” the various intended reforms—e.g., “administrative reforms, economic development and legal regulations, control of population, social stability, and the containing of minority regions” (Sleeboom-Faulkner 94, 213). Indeed, CASS was organized to become the main brain trust of the Central Committee and the State Council, supplying the government’s most powerful organs with the information they needed to formulate policy and make political decisions. In 2011, the CASS was ranked as Asia’s foremost think tank and the world’s twenty-eighth (CASS). With well over 3,000 staffers, 31 research institutes, 90 research centres, 105 provincial branches and attached networks, a graduate school, three publishing houses54 and a document and information centre, the CASS is still Mainland China’s largest social-sciences research institution (Sleeboom-Faulkner, 2007b: 27, 306-07).

Unsurprisingly, early in the 1980s, when the CASS became one of China’s most prestigious institutions of research and higher learning, it also became one of the country’s most

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54 China Social Sciences Press, Chinese Social Sciences Today and, Social Sciences Academic Press. Since its establishment in June, 1978, the China Social Sciences Press has published over 8,000 books (Pan 2008).
respected institutional homes for intellectuals. After a decade of renegade status, Chinese academics were given by CASS the rehabilitated, legitimate role of state advisors (Hamrin and Cheek 1986). Overall, the CASS played a key role in positioning social sciences—especially political sciences and sociology, but also history and law—as rising intellectual fields, in the process slowly eroding philosophy’s pre-eminence (Kelly 2006; Merle 2007).

6.2 - Sociological Research at the Academy

Institutionally speaking, sociology was doing well at this point: the discipline was about to celebrate its tenth anniversary. Hu Yaobang’s approval in 1985 of Fei Xiaotong’s modernization plan for the countryside (Merle 2013: 5) was a particular high point for the discipline’s status. One of the main architects of Chinese sociology’s rehabilitation, and one of a handful of noted sociologists active before 1949, Fei was the founding director of the IS. He knew that the route towards disciplinary legitimacy and institutional stability had to be paved through all the high-official bureaus within the Party. Fei’s approved project for rural industrialization in small towns and cities was the first large-scale sociological undertaking of the 1980s (Lee and Shen 2007: 112). The research underlying this project was motivated by the CCP’s strategic needs to create channels for surplus labourers moving away from the countryside after de-collectivization. This landmark enterprise “ushered in an important tradition in Chinese sociology that persists today. It is the paramount impact of government policy interests in defining the agenda of sociological research” (Lee and Shen ibid). Therefore, when Shen secured a research position in 1988 at the IS, “[t]he government was providing massive funding for the Chinese Academic of Social Science to mobilize its national network of provincial and local academies to implement research. Shen had joined IS just at a moment of massive institutional expansion. Large scale, multi-province and expensive surveys, with samples of 10,000 or more, were conducted year after year” (Lee and Shen 114-115).

By the time Shen switched to sociology in 1988, then, ten years of massive economic transformations-decollectivisation, privatization, Special Economic Zones—had already ‘stripped’ more than 55 million workers from the public sector. Each year saw millions more peasants moving to the cities. Also in 1988, the year that a CASS sociologist coined the term peasant-worker, nongmingong [农民工] (an expression now in common use around the globe), Chinese leaders were trying to grasp, control and, respond to what would become the largest urban
migration in human history—the famous floating population of rural workers in China’s cities (Shen 2006b). In response to this challenge, the government provided the CASS with massive funding for research that could create valuable data to answer a plethora of questions:

[h]ow to manage the migrant population in the cities? How to establish official trade unions in foreign and private enterprises? How to regulate the flow of migration? How to deal with rampant unemployment in old industrial regions? (Lee and Shen 114)

These issues, which Shen investigated as an IS researcher, must obviously be seen as orthopraxic research: the government’s interests framed these sociological inquiries. However, the issue that Lee and Shen enunciate immediately following this set of questions neatly suggests Shen’s archived Marxism: what the intellectual was really eager to investigate:

Without venturing into the workplace, or exploring the life worlds or subjectivities of the workers, these accounts of Chinese labour are decidedly apolitical and uncritical. Because these studies were unable to truthfully reflect labour experiences, they also fail to help Chinese workers to be reflexive [about] their own historical conditions and potentials. (Lee and Shen 4)

Materialized on paper next to each other, both clusters of Shen’s words epitomize an embodied hierarchy in which orthopraxy dominate orthodoxy; serving the reform over serving the people. As Zhang (2007: 107) explains, “[In China, p]roblem-solving [scholarship] enjoys unchallenged domination in both academic and policy worlds. Critical scholarship in social sciences, if any, is very much in its infancy”—no surprise, given Deng’s clear statement that the role of Chinese intellectuals was to serve the reforms first and foremost. It would for instance take nearly 20 years for Shen to finally publish a sociological Marxist article about Chinese labour (Shen 2008a).


When Shen joined the Institute of Sociology workforce, Lu Xueyi had recently been appointed as its director. Lu became the Master of ceremonies for Shen at CASS. As Szakolczai (2009: 161) explains, “Masters of ceremonies . . . are normally met during the formative period of an intellectual’s career and tend to play a key part in the negotiation of specific scholarly initiations, such as the entering into a particular institutional position” (Tristan Riley 2010: 35; see also Szakolczai 2009). In the case at hand it is difficult to distinguish Lu’s direct influences on Shen from the elective affinities existing between the two. Despite this uncertainty, however,
Lu’s understanding of sociology as a commitment to society must have (1) deeply resonated with Shen’s habitus and (2) moderated the liminal state he found himself in after his disciplinary shift from philosophy to sociology.

Lu Xueyi [1933-2013] who specialized in rural sociology, graduated in 1962 from the Department of Philosophy at Beijing University. He is widely recognized as one of the most prominent thinkers on the topic of the three nong [三农]; the peasantry, agriculture and rural China. After the Cultural Revolution, he enrolled in the CASS graduate program. Lu was, as most philosophers at the time, a student of historical materialism at the Institute of Philosophy, but switched to the IS early on after its foundation where his research focused on the reforms in agricultural communities and the responsibility system (Sleeboom-Faulkner 2007b: 297). After his graduation he continued to work at the IS as a full-time researcher until being appointed Deputy Director of the Institute in 1987, and Director one year later. Lu Xueyi was senior to Shen Yuan for 21 years.

While Lu was not a zhiqing, the academic paths of the two—training in philosophy, switching to sociology, CASS graduate school—and their research interests—migrant workers and rural China—are remarkably similar. Interestingly enough, in 1982, as zhiqings were rapidly returning to urban life, Lu left Beijing to spend three years in Shandong Province as a CASS Deputy Chief. This is where Lu “gained unusual hands-on experience of how rural Chinese society operated at both grassroots and official levels” (Sleeboom-Faulkner 2007a: 98). One could also add the frankness and outspokenness that characterized both man’s personality. Furthermore, in the early 2000s both sociologists relocated outside the CASS to become advocates for Chinese workers, Lu boldly calling on the Communist Party leadership to attend to the problems of rural people, including migrant workers, while Shen developed a public labor sociology (Shen 2006a, 2008a). These parallels are not intended to suggest that Shen’s career and sociological thinking originated entirely from his proximity to Lu at the Institute, although Lu’s MC-ship probably facilitated Shen’s smooth integration into the CASS. For instances, Lu’s

55 In the CASS’s nomenclature, deputy is roughly equivalent to associate- or vice-director (Sleeboom-Faulkner 2007b: 30).
56 In their obituary piece to the memory of Lu, several passages narrated by Shen et al. (2013) highlighted the IS’s third director’ straightforward shuangkuai [爽快] personality. Similarly, in our interviews with several of Shen's students—and from our own direct observations—the 爽快-ness of the Beijing sociologist was a constant note.
sociological interest in rural China most certainly reassured Shen that he had made a good decision in moving to CASS. Shen’s intellectual production as well as the interview data we collected clarify that his zhiqing experience shaped his perception of and affection for/interest in the people and the problems of China’s rural areas. Even in our first meeting, after we told him our own research interest, Shen reiterated several times the point that:

“It’s not interesting [不玩儿] to research [Chinese] intellectuals, if you really want to understand and help China you need to live in the countryside with peasants and study fun things [好玩儿的东西], migrant workers’ problems [农民问题], countryside society, [农村社会] etc.

When Lu Xueyi passed away in May, 2013, in the blog section on China’s online Economic Observer newspaper, Shen Yuan authored an obituary piece with two of his colleagues at Tsinghua, Guo Yuhua and Sun Liping dedicated to the man whom they affectionately called ‘Old Lu’. Several passages in that text bring to mind Szalkolczai’s concept of Master of ceremonies: “Old Lu was our generation of sociologists’ spiritual guide. A spiritual guide not only in the academic sense but also in terms of his personality and character” (Shen, Guo and Sun 2013).⁵⁸ Shen found in Lu an intellectual like himself: someone who early on abandoned the revered discipline of philosophy for the possibilities of sociology, someone deeply concerned about the radical transformation China was experiencing and profoundly eager to help its people. Therefore, Lu’s intellectual style and commitment to sociology must have resonated strongly with what Shen describes as his “calling” to ‘solve concrete social problems’.

As Shen wrote in the obituary: ‘The main reason for Old Lu to do sociology was to solve the practical problems of Chinese society, for the progress of people’s livelihood and China.’⁵⁹ For the Third Director of the Institute, sociology was much more than a knowledge endeavour, it was first and foremost a type of social undertaking⁶⁰ [社会担当].

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⁵⁷ Throughout our first two interviews, Shen kept using the word [好玩儿] [amusing, fun, interesting] to describe what he considered to be [重要] [important] or [关键] [key/crucial] research topics: globalization and commodity chains, or emergent subfields such as financial sociology. 好玩儿 seems to be his casual yet engaged way of talking about important topics to research, not a euphemism.

⁵⁸[ 老陆是我们这代社会学者的精神导师。这不仅是在学术的意义上，更是在人格的意义上。]

⁵⁹[ 说到学问，老陆也算是著作等身了。但是老陆的学问绝不是书斋里的学问，不是掉书袋子式的学问。老陆做社会学主要是为了解决中国社会的实际问题，为了民生和中国的进步。]

⁶⁰ The same marriage of theory and practice, science and action are also evident in Shen’s scholarship after his transition from the CASS to Tsinghua University in the early 2000s. The abstract for the English version of Shen’s article “Strong and Weak Intervention: Two Pathways for Sociological Intervention” (2008c), for example, reveals elements that echo Lu’s political vision for sociology and intellectuals. In the opening lines of this abstract Shen writes the following:
Nevertheless, Shen and Old Lu were not in perfect agreement about the direction for the future of Chinese society. The Third Director is posthumously portrayed as a resolute optimist—society always has to progress—while Shen Yuan and his colleagues Guo Yuhua and Sun Liping described themselves as much less optimists, cautious realists (Shen et al. 2013). But all three sociologists agreed with something Old Lu repeated throughout his life, that “a good market absolutely needs to be match with a good society” (That assertion is very similar to Shen’s view about sociology’s role in the production of society (e.g., Shen 2005a, b and c)—see the first excerpt from his abstract in the last footnote). As Chapter 9 explores, the explosion of social inequalities in Mainland China during the last decade of the twentieth century certainly help shaped Lu’s leitmotif. But before, the next section explore the effects of the Tiananmen massacre of June 1989 as it will proved to be a watershed for a generation of Chinese intellectuals including, of course, Shen Yuan and his fellow academics Guo Yuhua and Sun Liping.

6.4 - The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences After 1989

During the late 1980s, if the Institute of Sociology can be seen as a relatively tight ship run by the CCP, the public intellectual sphere emerging during the same decade however resembled something of a cultural armada navigating the high seas of a quickly changing intellectual environment, where forces such as the Movement to Liberate Thinking and the New Enlightenment Movement were in evidence. The decade separating Deng Xiaoping’s socio-economic reforms from the Tiananmen massacre where hundred of Chinese pro-democracy college students and civilians were killed (Vogel 2011: 630) was marked by an intense public life and culture led by public intellectuals; “writers, scientists, philosophers, historians, men of letters and humanities and even high-rank ideologists” could come together and discuss “national political life, comparative East-West culture and scientific enlightenment, etc” (Xu 2003: 36). For the Chinese historian Xu Jilin, the communal intellectual realm in play at that time reflected important aspects of what Jurgen Habernas has termed the “public sphere”, a public realm in which matters of public interest, whether social or cultural, could be discussed either unofficially in open academic forums, or officially via the public media (203). This field was also

The most important mission of sociology is perhaps to push forward the production of society. Sociologists should not only in its theory, but also in its practice, help resist the pressure from the state and the market, on the one hand, and assist society to emerge and grow, on the other (2008c: lines 1-4).
And in the last sentence of the abstract, he proclaims that "Our most important task from now on is to combine social practice and social knowledge effectively" (2008c: lines 9-10).
characterized by the “wholesale opening up to the West, resulting in the indiscriminate acceptance of all kinds of Western ideas and the fetishization of Western institutions” (Liu 2001: 52).

One crucial consequence of this intellectual effervescence was a concerted effort to extend economic reforms into the political realm—in effect, a push toward democracy—that also influenced the CASS and the whole nation. Indeed, by the time Shen joined its Institute of Sociology in the late 1980s, the State-run think-tank had achieved considerable independence from Party groups and leadership, as exemplified by the growing number of its institutes that no longer had Party Committees (Sleeboom 2003: 215). Not surprisingly, then, the Tiananmen popular movement of 1989 and its bloody aftermath resulted in the government restructuring CASS, transforming it into a tight Red Ship anchored to the CCP.

While in the late 1970s DENG’s reformist camp had envisioned the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences it had created as its flagship en route to China’s modernisation, ten years later the country’s most prestigious social research institution had drifted towards liberal shores. CASS provided the democratic movement with some of its most charismatic leaders which fuelled the discursive space with many powerful ideations that spread throughout the capital and across the country, in the process colonizing the minds and texts of ten of thousands of college students. “[T]he CASS building, a prominent landmark on Chang’an Boulevard, was draped with some of the most effective banners calling for reform. Virtually all graduate students and the great majority of scholars took part in demonstrations prior to June 4th, [1989]” (Kelly and Reid 1990: 351).

Unlike some of the other CASS institutes, the sociological quarters where Shen Yuan had been head of the research bureau since 1988 appears not to have played a major political role in the 1989 demonstrations for the fact that the dismissal of Institute Heads in the after-math of the Tiananmen massacre tends to be a clear sign of political involvement. Lu Xueyi remained acting head of the Institute of Sociology up until 1998. Prominent people in some of CASS’s other institutes, however, fared less well. Those discharged included the History Institute’s head, Bao Zunxin, who was the principal mover of the Autonomous Association of Intellectuals, and who wrote the May 17th statement calling for the overthrow of China’s “emperor,” Comrade Deng Xiaoping; and Su Wei, in the Literature Institute. Others were retrograded (Zhang Xianyang of
the Marxism-Leninism Institute) or jailed (Bao Zunxin). Some resigned (Liu Zaifu, Director of
the Literature Institute; Yan Jiaqi, Director of the Political Science Institute) or fled the country
(Wang Zhaohua, one of China’s “21 most wanted” student leaders), while other saw the
withdrawal of such scholarly privileges as overseas travel and access to foreign publications (Li
Zehou and Wang Shuren of the Philosophy Institute). Finally, Su Shaozhi, the reformist head of
the CASS Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought Institute, ended up in exile in the USA.
Reminiscent of Maoist practices, in the after-math of the massacre the Party required each
university to submit a list of 20 guilty students, while all incoming graduate students had to work
for ten months in the countryside prior to being formally accepted into CASS programs (Kelly et
al. 1990: 349).

In a recent informal discussion, a former staffer at the CASS Library and Documentation
Institute now working at a leading North-American university told us that after the massacre,
virtually all CASS personnel had to undergo fansi [反思], sessions of self-criticism in regard to
their participation in the protests—not surprising, since “[e]verybody in important positions in
the Party or government or academia who had anything to do with the pro-democracy movement
[was] obliged to submit to the process” (Kelly et al. 349). Younger researchers, scholars, and
staffers were, in some cases, informally encouraged by seasoned personnel to leave the Academy
for the sake of their future careers (ID). 61 The prospect of staying was not bright. Some CASS
journals were banned while the Academy budget underwent substantial cuts, at least during the
early 1990s (Kelly et al. 353). Every CASS institute was now formally lead by a Party Director
who enforced strict research guidelines issued by the political side of the government, and the
CASS itself was assigned a conservative new Party Secretary, Yu Yuan. A responsibility system
was implemented whereby administrative staffers became accountable to Party Committee
secretaries. In addition to these and other measures, all of CASS’s research institutes were
directed to establish party committees, and research topics began systematically to relate to state
policies (Sleeboom 2003: 219). In short, for CASS the aftermath of the Tiananmen Massacre
meant a structural overhaul that reasserted its original role as a CCP think-tank.

Materially speaking, during the last decade of the twentieth century, the working
conditions and profession opportunities at the CASS did not improve as quickly as they did at

61 As mentioned on page 19, ID stands for Interview Data.
universities such as Beida or Tsinghua. Because of problems including housing and wages, CASS became particularly unappealing to young social scientists. As Sleeboom-Faulkner (2007a: 90, see also 88) notes, “the giant advertisement for DAEWOO on top of the main CASS building instead of the logo of the academy seemed to symbolize the lack of financial resources for China’s most prestigious social science research institute.” In the 1980s, Beida, Tsinghua, and CASS were all regarded as equally prestigious. In the 1990s, however, institutions of higher education had become progressively autonomous, in part as the government permitted higher tuition fees for Beida and Tsinghua universities (92). Furthermore, “these universities [began and continue to] use science and engineering to run profitable companies” (Sleeboom-Faulkner 2007a: 92).

Thus, in the 1990s, CASS’s ability to recruit bright candidates had dropped along with the standing of the institution. The number of CASS staff dropped by about 30 per cent. Given its relatively small campus, CASS was unable to rent space (Sleeboom-Faulkner 2007a: 90). However, another structural reason for the plethora of problems CASS and the intellectual field encountered during that decade was the increasing appeal of career alternatives. After 1992, many intellectuals decided to follow the motto of Deng Xiaoping, recently returned to power, and “get rich”; many others immured themselves in the *house of intellect*62, participating in the professionalization of Chinese academia that marked the 1990s (Hao 2003: 225-260; He 2004; Li 2012: 23-24; Zhao 2001).

### 6.5 - Intellectual Field After 1989: ‘Desertion’ and Pluralisation Amongst Chinese Mental Workers

In the 1990s, although the relative desertion of intellectual space and correlating fading prominence of the Chinese intellectual as a legitimate cultural and political figure were social phenomena with complex ramifications, scholars were quick to recognize the effects of the events of June 4, 1989, and of Deng Xiaoping’s 1992 Southern tour. The tragic and bloody events of the summer of 1989 compelled some intellectuals active before 1989 in the emerging public sphere to turn their attention to boundary work, separating politics and ideology from scholarship. The call for pure scholarship, academic conservatism, and the establishment of academic standards consequently gained strength beginning in the 1990s (Liu 2001: 59). Such a zeitgeist was also conducive to the introduction of post-modernism in China (Xu 2003: 4-5).

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The second event, the return to power of Deng and the reiteration of his economic reform agenda after three years of conservative state control (Vogel 2011: 664-690), offered intellectuals whose democratic dreams had been crushed and whose pockets were empty an avenue that perhaps would lead to material and symbolic ‘payback’. One intellectual interviewed by Hao Zhidong, a Sino-American political sociologist, suggested the significance of this shift: “We used to be slaves of politics. Now we are all influenced by the economy” (213); another remarked that in the 1990s, “among many intellectuals and young students, there indeed was a movement toward making money rather than making democracy, more oriented toward individual development than collective progress” (219).

The above tour d'horizon merely skims the complex intellectual state of affairs in China at the beginning of the 1990s, where academic conservatism, cultural anti-elitisms, post-modernism, money-seeking, cultural commercialisation, and indigenation of Western knowledge contributed to the pluralisation of intellectuality or mental work in Mainland China. Yet this overview suffices to raise an important question. In the above paragraph, “some intellectuals,” “we used to be,” and “many intellectuals and young students” are reminders that an important sociological question pertains to intellectuals’ position-taking or choices, their trajectories; so then why do some individual intellectuals or groups of intellectuals call for X-ism, while other call for Y-ism?

6.6 - Generational Dynamic: The Entrance of the First Post-Zhiqing Cohort

In respect to this particular situation, a generational perspective might help to answer the question. The early 1990s also marked the entrance onto the intellectual scene of the first post-zhiqing generation (Li 2012: 22; Merle 2007a; Rocca 2008: 27), a cohort who had experienced a much less turbulent youth than had their elders (Bonnin 2004). The training that they had received in their disciplines had also differed substantially from that of the previous generation; many scholars now were entering the academic market were armed with doctoral degrees from foreign graduate schools. For them, sociology was a discipline characterized by traditions, schools of thoughts, norms, and so on (Merle 2007). Indeed, the normalization of Chinese sociology during the 1990s reveals the strong influence of these Chinese PhDs returning from abroad—mainly from the U.S.—eager “to make sociology a normalized discipline just like economics. Instead of depending entirely on opinions, judgments and deductions, it would entail theoretical systems consisting of theorems, laws, rules and formulas” (Li 2012: 23).
If we accept that “what people are good at and what arenas they know how to navigate are important cultural determinants of their lines of action” (Vaisey 2008: 615), it make sense to see this desire as the new generation trying to transform the field of Chinese sociology so that it reflects their habitus. Although Shen’s generation of academics partly shared this position with the newcomers, since it had the potential to give sociology a margin of autonomy from the state, its emerging field-logic nevertheless encouraged a scientific and dis-interested libido (SY-ID 2012). For scholars like Shen, as we shall discussed in Chapter 7, 8 and 9, the emergence of scientific norms meant better quality research, relative independence from State intervention, more conceptualisation and critical reception and usage of Western knowledge (SY-ID 2012).

What ultimately distinguished sociologists like Sun Liping, Guo Yuhua, and Shen Yuan from other position-takings is their denunciation of a type of profesionalization which favors predominantly academic sociology and the professoriate retreat behind sociological problems where as they argue, social problems is what need to be conceptualized and solved (SY-ID 2012). For Shen, the political voice of knowledge production is marginalized in this new post-zhiqings’s di-vision.

Furthermore, this new generation’s American methodologies of choice—massive-scale questionnaire surveys, data models, and quantitative analysis (Li 2012: 23)—merely strengthened the sociological tools that the state had mobilized during the previous decade. For these reasons, normalization does not necessarily imply emergent ‘autonomy’ in a Bourdieusian sense, because the methodological homology between the post-zhiqing generation and the Party-State planning habitus positioned these newcomers as idle substitutes for the desertion of zhiqings from the field.

As the next chapter elaborates, in the mid-1990s Sun Liping, Guo Yuhua, and Shen Yuan mobilized anthropological tools such as oral history to collect first-hand popular recollections of post-Liberation political history from folks living in the countryside. This sociological endeavor thus strives to give voice to the people, and in the process showcased the three intellectuals' willingness to pit a “spontaneous sociology of the dominated” against the State’s vision and di-vision of the social build with American objective quantitative methodologies.
Despite these uncertainties about the exact generational field-whereabouts of both zhiqing and post-zhiqing sociologists, what is certain is that even if 1989 pushed radical or critical intellectuals far from the center of power where things are called and decided (Hao 2003: 119-204), Shen—as a member of what Bonnin called a “political generation” raised during the last years of Radical Maoism—was equipped to navigate such a sensitive national environment. In contrast, the new generation entering the scientific field in the 1990s was poorly equipped, both cognitively and politically, to work in an intellectual environment that had shifting and potentially dangerous political parameters.

“Clearly, if scholars want to avoid trouble, they must develop a sense of recognizing the correct-isms, and find out what formulations apply to which label (Revisionist, Bourgeois, Liberal). This required keeping up-to-date with the prevailing recommendations in official documents, and knowing what ideas are currently rejected” (Sleeboom 2003: 226). Navigating such a scientific space ‘enclosed’ in the field of power certainty required what Bourdieu called a political habitus, a practical sense of what can and cannot be done supply by a “learned corpus of knowledge specific to the field (e.g. theories, concepts, historical traditions, economic data) . . . and the mastery of a specific language and political rhetoric” (2001: 217).

For example, as Chapter 8 shows, in the late 1990s, more than 10 years after switching to sociology, Shen mobilized the philosophical/political skills he had honed at Renda—what we called conceptual literacy, the abilities to discuss and manipulate weighty ideological concepts—in order to participate ‘politically’ in the conceptual/theoretical stratum of his discipline, his goal being to help sociology gain a margin of autonomy from the Party-State.

But in the meantime, Shen stayed at his poorly paid CASS job63, spending the difficult years after the Tiananmen massacre64 reading and translating Western scholarly works, reactivating the discipline by paying frequent visits to State Council meetings (Shen et al. 2013), and attending informal sociological gatherings of the fishery meetings (see the following section). Why did Shen did not abandon his intellectual endeavours and join the many intellectuals who “jumped into the sea of business” xia hai [下海] eager to invest themselves in

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63 See Sleeboom-Faulkner (2003, 2007a, 2007b) for a discussion of the institutional and ideological history of CASS since its inception. The author also spends some time discussing the changing material conditions and social advantages of CASS workers between 1980 and 2000.
64 While in Beijing we scheduled a third round of interviews with Shen Yuan to discuss his childhood, his zhiqing experience, and the Tiananmen massacre, but these interviews unfortunately did not occur.
more lucrative enterprises? As Hao suggests (2003: 205-260), the marketing of culture in the 1990s facilitated a tool-kit convertibility for intellectuals; there was a high demand for intellectual skills outside the walls of academia, and retooling was neither risky nor costly. Why then? We argue that question of intellectual identity is an important part of the puzzle.

6.7 - Identity Shift: From Chosen Intellectual to Sociologist

Although Shen’s institutional address remained unchanged for most of the 1990s—“IS-CASS”—in China the heuristic value of the establishment intellectual as an idle-type became less and less useful. Indeed, during this decade the identity of such intellectuals was on the move. Following the Tiananmen incident and the subsequent temporary political take-over by the Conservative faction, Chinese intellectuals beat a strategic retreat from the public scene. As Hao puts it, “intellectuals from the 1990s on have experienced a number of value changes, including their views of themselves” (224). This permits us to operate a shift from an experience-distant to an experience-near concept (Geertz 1974): instead of our imposing a heuristic construct on a given reality or social actor, such as an establishment intellectual, the social actor can reveal how he defines himself—that is, what his intellectual self-concept is. In an interview with the French sociologist Aurore Merle in 2004, Guo Yuhua, Shen Yuan and Sun Liping explained that:

at first [in the 1980s], Chinese intellectuals were saying: I need to take care of this society. Well, the identity shift was that now [in the 1990s] I possessed knowledge, I recognized the existence of a knowledge community which I was part of. (24)

As this statement above reveals, although such Chinese intellectuals as Shen who were located inside the establishment during the 1980s saw themselves as working for a greater cause—China’s modernization—they later began to see themselves primarily as sociologists, not as intellectual saviour so to speak; they saw themselves as belonging to a ‘boundless’ community of ideas, rather than being limited to the “burning issues of a rapidly changing society” as defined and managed by the CCP.

As the discussion in Sun, Li and Shen’s 1998 paper clarifies (Chapter 9), the brutal and violent ending of the 1989 popular movement made obvious to many Chinese intellectuals how fiercely the Party-State was protecting its own interests. The events of 1989 thereby problematized for intellectuals like Shen the idea that serving the people [为了人民服务] via the state was a legitimate enterprise; serving the Reforms seemed no longer to be the best way “to
fulfill the . . . noble goal of” (Cheek forthcoming) serving the people. This issue certainly facilitated Shen’s adoption of a sociological identity. However, as the next chapters explain, this new disciplinary sense of belonging (performatively) presented Shen and his colleagues with the set of conflicting field-ism-s listed earlier—academic conservatism versus political activism, cultural relativism versus scientific universalism. It will be argue that the originality and power of the positions that Shen and his colleagues took during the 1990s in response to these challenges resides in their proposal of a third-way modus operandi vis-a-vis the state, their discipline, and the intellectual field.
Chapter 7 - Moving Away From the Game of Orthopraxy

In a China where social surveys rhyme with authority, how can the investigators avoid being seen as representing those in power?

Fang Huirong, Sun’s graduate student and oral history researcher

7.1 Fishing for its Existence: The Institute of Sociology and the Fishery Council

After the tragic events of June 4th, 1989, the powerful Party authorities did not question Lu’s position as director at the Institute of Sociology. The Jiangsu-born scholar retained his leading role at the Institute for another nine years, until 1998. Like many others, Shen and his colleague Guo Yuhua also managed to go through the early shock wave of political repression following 1989; like Lu, Shen stayed for nine more years in his research position at the Institute.

At the same time sociology’s new dominance was greatly jeopardized. Like Fei Xiaotong a decade earlier, Director Lu was once again at the head of a relatively fragile and risky collective endeavor. Yet China’s sociologists were looking up to the leadership of Lu Xueyi, the head of the nation’s most prestigious institute of sociology (Shen et al. 2013). In their 2013 obituary piece devoted to Old Lu, Shen and his colleagues recounted a story that speaks volumes about Lu Xueyi’s relentless (orthopraxic) commitment to sociology in those unsettling times:

In this trying time the discipline of sociology endured huge pressure. Just when the Institute of Sociology was about to celebrate its tenth anniversary, people were wondering whether sociology should even continue to exist, whether or not to organize a commemorative meeting, and if so, how to organize a conference if nobody’s heart was in it. But Old Lu firmly expressed the view that since economic development and state construction needed the discipline of sociology, the Institute’s anniversary had to be celebrated, and that celebration had to be organized in a stately and ceremonious manner. He went personally to invite high-level leaders to participate in the ceremony. He also invited Fei Xiaotong and Jieqiong Lei [see Yue 2012 for a narrative of Lei’s intellectual trajectory]. The result was that national media outlets all reported the CASS meeting for the tenth-anniversary celebration of the rehabilitation and reestablishment of sociology and the foundation of the CASS Institute of Sociology, thus broadcasting nationally the idea that the discipline of sociology would continue.

Indeed, in the early 1990s, the political atmosphere in China was tense, resources for sociological research were scarce, and the young blood of sociology was in a state of despair and in need of direction and inspiration. Again, in important ways Lu Xueyi acted as a Master of ceremonies for this younger cohort of intellectuals eager to save their discipline from liminality.
in which it had been suspended since the 1950s, and move it through the rites of reincorporation that would grant it recognition as a new and welcome part of the social order. It was in this context that Director Lu started to hold regular meetings with his young and middle-aged colleagues from Beijing at a modest hotel featuring a large fish pound on its premises, situated fairly close to Beida and Tsinghua in Beijing’s Haidian [海淀] district. This unlikely location chosen for these intellectual gatherings had the advantage of being extremely inexpensive: Shen remembers a bunk bed costing just 8 RMB.

One of the original intentions behind these intellectual get-togethers was to discuss the creation of an introductory sociology manual for Chinese officials. Consistent with Fei Xiaotong’s legacy and strategy, Old Lu knew that to push the development of the discipline out of its liminal state, he “need[ed] cadres in positions of leadership within the government to spread sociological knowledge” (Shen et al. 2013). From this collective effort would come Sociology: A reader for the Senior Cadre65, a book that would enjoy some prominence within the sociological world.

Soon, these sociological meetings became sought-after opportunities to discuss the development of the field, research projects, social problems, etc. The seeds of important future contributions to the field of sociology such as the Report on Chinese Social Development [中国社会发展报告] were planted on these occasions, which because of the fish ponds at the hotel would come to be known as “the fishery council or the fishery meetings” [渔场会议]. Many of the intellectuals who regularly attended these gatherings would go on to become well-known Beijing-based sociologists (Shen et al. 2013).66

Yet these meeting had two additional dimensions that further indicate their importance. First, contra Collins (1998), Tristan Riley (2011) argues that the American sociology of ideas tends to over-emphasize the importance of the public sites and public practices of intellectual production and exchange, including conferences and seminars. In his own work on Durkheim, the French school of sociology, and the post-structuralism movement, Tristan Riley highlights

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65 [为了推进学科发展，需要向从事领导工作的干部们推广社会学的知识。后来在社会学界小有名气的就是成型于那里。]
66 [现在北京的一些最有名的社会学者多数都曾经参加过那时的“渔场会议。”]
the place in the French context of less public and formal sites of creation, such as cafés, bookstores, and salons. In China, where intellectuals continue to operating under a fragmented authoritarian regime, informal behind-the-door intellectual practices had/have vital importance: Merle (2007a: 44) argues that “less obvious areas based on a division of spaces and circles of relations are fundamental in order to appreciate [the] practices that structures research and important debates within contemporary Chinese intellectual fields.”

Second, under the guidance of Lu Xueyi, the fishery meetings resulted in catalyzing moments when the collective effervescence of like-minded intellectuals discussing, debating, creating emotional momentum, defining and reinforcing values and beliefs, and facilitating creative ideations forged new social bonds. One such result was the friendship that two CASS colleagues, Shen Yuan and Guo Yuhua, formed with Sun Liping, a student of Fei Xiaotong who later emerged as one of the most influential sociologists and public intellectuals in contemporary China. As the next three chapters make clear, this intellectual friendship amongst Shen, Guo, and Sun is central to how Chinese sociology has developed in the last 20 years. After the Tiananmen massacre, the emotional energy (Collins 1998) generated by the fishery meetings was crucial to establishing solidarity and crystalizing identity amongst the Chinese intellectuals who remained active in the discipline despite the massive general desertion at that time of intellectual colleagues.

7.1.1 - To Exist Scientifically

A reductionist realist story-line might argue that the fact that Shen remained ‘stationed’ at the CASS displayed a cowardly disposition or a lack of skill or capital to trade in the sociology market. However, Shen can be argued to have been playing the game of orthopraxy, (re-)legitimating sociology vis-à-vis the audience-that-matters in his own words, “the heavy hands of the Chinese state . . . all too visible and powerful” (Lee and Shen 2009: 1) while simultaneously extending his own social network, building friendships and his own reputation as a committed sociologist.

Bourdieu argues “that ‘to exist scientifically’ is to have a ‘plus’ in terms of the categories of perception prevailing within the field”; that is to say, for one’s peers to appreciate that one has contributed something, “to have distinguished oneself [positively] by a distinctive contribution” (Bourdieu 2004: 55 in Medina 2014: 20). As far as Shen’s case, his participation in the fishery
council in the early 1990s as well as his active participation into the Beijing’s sociological associative life—for instance, he acted as the vice-secretary general of the Beijing Sociological Association from 1990 to 1994 (SY-TH 2011)—showcased just that, a “plus” or a contribution for the discipline. Also, during the early 1990s, Shen and Sun were not only active members of the fishery council—as was Guo—but the two friends were also frequent guests at state meetings, where they advocated for sociological research (Shen et al. 2013). However, Gross’s claim about the importance of self-concept to shedding light on a person’s intellectual trajectory add a “plus” to Bourdieu’s insight and emphasizes something central to this research: “to exist scientifically,” one must be able to rely on a strong core-self or identity. So far, this narrative has suggested that Shen’s Marxist identity was still cognitively archived and patiently waiting for him. In fact, his academic travel in the West less than three years after the Tiananamen massacre neatly suggests the existence of Shen’s dormant Marxist identity.

7.1.2 - Transaltantic and Transcontinental Voyages

Szakolczai’s methodological insight into the existential content of curricula vitae helps us to unearth traces of Shen’s archived intellectual self-concept. In 1992, the Chinese scholar made his first trip to the U.S. as a visiting scholar.\(^67\) That academic journey took him to several prestigious American universities, including Harvard, Duke, and Berkeley; then two years later, he spent some time at the Hautes Écoles en Sciences Sociales in Paris, France.\(^68\) During these sojourns, Shen made important encounters: with Micheal Burawoy at Berkeley, and with Alain Touraine in Paris (SY-TH 2012). Not surprisingly, of all the brilliant scholars he met while abroad, those two Marxist sociologists most thoroughly captured the attention of the CASS sociologist. As Chapter 10 discusses, Burawoy and Touraine have extensively shaped Shen’s sociological thinking since 2000, from his theoretical framework (Shen 2006a, b, c, and d, 2007a, 2007a, 2008a, b, and c), his theoretical contribution to Chinese sociology (Shen 2006a), and his criticism and vision of Chinese sociology (Burawoy 2008; SY-ID 2012) to his teaching materials (Shen PPTs). These intellectual encounters\(^69\) confirmed Shen’s Marxist identity, although back home his intellectual self-concept remained archived for most of the 1990s.

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\(^{67}\) Such a destination is hardly surprising, given both the dominance of U.S. sociology since the 1960s and the enduring influence of American sociology on the development of that discipline in China during the twentieth century, as explained in Chapter 5, Section 5.5.

\(^{68}\) In 1996, Shen would also spend some time in the department of sociology at Donghai University, Taiwan (SY-TH 2011).

\(^{69}\) We are not mobilizing the concept of Master of ceremonies to better understand Shen’s encounter with Burawoy and Touraine, since these encounters cannot be seen as a passage from the liminal stage to the
In regard to Shen, a span of nearly 15 years separates his encounters with Burawoy and Touraine from his opportunity to finally start mobilizing Marxism as a social analytical tool as well as providing his interpretation of the two Western sociologists (Shen 2008a; SY-ID).

7.2 - Sun Liping and the Dictionary of Chinese Communism

This second part of the chapter draws the reader’s attention to a sociological project Shen invested himself in during the last decade of the twentieth century after his befriending of Sun Liping at the Fishery Council. This intellectual endeavour, the Dictionary of Chinese Communism (DCC), was a stepping-stone towards the formation of a group of sociologists at Tsinghua University centered on Sun Liping, Guo Yuhua, and Shen Yuan.

As this section explains contra the dominant quantitative sociology mobilized by the state to solve social problems and build a strong socialist modernity, the DCC proposed a decelerated gaze that looks back at the state-society relationship since Liberation—1949. This section will thus show that the DCC as a collective enterprise in the 1990s is significant in respect to three level of analysis: (1) the general appreciation of the emergence of the relative autonomy of the sociological field (epistemic relation), and within that, both (2) the political dimension of sociological knowledge (social relation), and (3) the trajectory and intellectuality of Shen during the last decade of the twentieth century (identity relation).

In the early 1990s the intellectual mood was definitively less affirmative—“we need to modernize”—than during the previous decade as it acquired a more critical and reflexive nature—“what is modernity and what are the specificities of the Chinese historical experience?” In sociology, one of the most important attempts to answer such questions came from Shen Yuan’s friend and future colleague at Tsinghua, Sun Liping (Merle 2007a: 49). In the early 1980s, Sun was part of the famous Nankai class, the first cohort of sociologists to graduate since rites of incorporation. In a sense, it merely highlithed the liminality of Shen’s Marxist identity. Therefore, one can see how these two Western encounters contrasts with Shen’s selection by Mao in the 1960s (exemplifying rites of separation and of transition; see my Chapter 1), his college entrance (rites of incorporation—see my Chapter 2), his transition from philosophy to sociology (rites of separation—Chapter 2) and his move to the CASS and his subsequent encounter with Lu Xueyi (transition rites—Chapter 3). It is only in early 2000s that Michael Burawoy’s concept of public sociology will allow Shen to experience the rites of incorporation, his re-incorporated into society with a new identity, as a “new” being.
the discipline’s rehabilitation in 1979. This Nankai class was taught by Fei Xiaotong himself, along with a host of prominent American scholars (Lee and Shen 2009: 112). Within a year of graduating from Nankai University in 1981, Sun was teaching sociology at Peking University. Following the state’s sociological orthopraxy, most of his research in the 1980s was, unsurprisingly, related to the issues of China’s modernization and to modernization theory (SLP-TH 2012).

At the beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century, however, Sun’s sociological gaze shifted as he began to study the state-society relationship following the kick-off of the Reforms (SLP-TH 2012). Sun thus set up an ambitious and large-scale research project, the DCC from his sociological headquarters at Beida. The objective of this program, which continues to mobilize sociologists as well as graduate students, is to collect first-hand folk accounts of social change that occurred during Mao’s numerous political campaigns and mass mobilization. Sun divided the historical period in question (from 1949 to the present) into six historical periods: the Agrarian Reforms/Land Reform [全国土地改革] [1950-1953], the Cooperation Movement [农业合作化运动] [1949-1956], the People’s Commune [人民公社] [1958-1980s] and the Great Leap Forward [大跃进] [1958-1962], the Socialist Education Movement [社会主义教育运动] and the Cultural Revolution [文化大革命] [1963-1976], and the Chinese Economic Reform [改革开放] [1978-…]). Early on, Sun Liping invited two researchers from the CASS Institute of Sociology—Shen Yuan and Guo Yuhua70—to discuss and join in the project. As Aurole Merle (2007b: 5) noted, “[the DCC] project was an important step in the intellectual development of the researchers [as it also] marked . . . the start of a collective research undertaking.”

Early in the project, however, Sun and his colleagues had a liminal experience that furthered their skepticism about the relevance of modernization theory in the Chinese context. As Sun (2008: 94-95) explained, “in the West, it’s common to hear students of China say ‘the Communist regime did not radically change Chinese civilization; instead, Chinese civilization influenced it.” However, a major finding from Sun and Guo’s fieldwork in the 1990s revealed to them the contrary. For instance, while working on the Land Reforms, one of the six periods covered by the Dictionary project, the two sociologists found that the effects of 30 years of the CCP’s totalitarian domination and unremitting campaigns of mass mobilization on the social

70 After completing her doctorate on popular Chinese funeral rites at Beijing Normal University in 1990, Guo Yuhua joined the CASS-IS as an assistant-researcher (GYH-TH 2012).
tissue went well beyond “economic measures or . . . recourse to force and propaganda [as it also acted] in a more “subtle” and “secret” way through the production of a real habitus, imparting a new vision of the world and new principles of division” (Merle 2007b: 5).

These discoveries led them to redefine their object of research: “It was at this period that we were really confronted by ‘Communist Civilization’, Sun and Guo declared” (Merle 2007b: 5). More than any other experience, this research revealed to Sun and his colleagues that after the death of Mao in 1976, the “blueprint” of Chinese society was not that of a still-traditional society but of a civilization radically transformed by Maoism, a historical experience that had completely restructured the social tissue of China (Sun 2008).

It is important to remember that the intellectual burden and anxiety to modernize the country in the 1980s elevated and crystalized modernization theory as a powerful ideation structuring the vision of many Chinese intellectuals, including Sun, Guo and Shen. If 1989 did raise serious doubt about modernization theory, very few Chinese sociologists in the 1990s managed to propose a way to move forward or produced a positive sociological offering outdoing the framework of modernization theory. Sun was amongst the few to do so.

Sun’s Dictionary project succeeded where his mentor Fei Xiaotong had failed more than three decades before. In 1957, despite the 1952 disciplinary ban that expunged the institutional existence of most social science enterprises in Mainland China, Fei had undertaken a rare attempt to document the social changes following from the Communist victory of 1949. Eight years after Liberation, in an effort to resume empirical sociological research, Fei proposed to track social changes—standards of living, consumption, family relationships, time management—in the Chinese village of Kaisenkung by comparing the village’s current state of affairs with data he had gathered in 1936 in the same location for his famous *Peasant Life in China*. In 1957, Chang-han Li, another courageous sociologist, deployed the identical methodology by comparing data from his 1926 study of villages on the outskirts of Beijing with fieldwork he had undertaken during the first years of the Communist reign. However, the very year the two studies were published, Mao’s Hundred Flowers Movement and Anti-Rightists Movements annihilated the two scholars’ bids efforts to revive sociology in China (Wong 1979: 54-57). “The works of the sociologists during the Hundred Flowers as well as the pre-Liberation period came under close scrutiny. Suspicions were cast on their political motives and intellectual
integrity” (Wong 57). Fei’s and Li’s scholarship was put in the political spotlight and criticized with the characteristically long list of “errors”: (1) bearing the mark of bourgeois, capitalist, and reformist ideas, (2) neglecting class dimensions, (3) underplaying post-liberation achievements, (4) questioning the Party leadership, and (5) serving the interests of imperialist countries (Wong 57-59). Mao’s permanent revolution strategy of mass mobilization crushed the fragile rebirth of sociology and with it, the possibility of documenting the radical changes brought about by the new political order.

With a project such as the Dictionary of Chinese Communism, Shen, along with Sun and Guo, acted as Master of ceremonies for Chinese sociology. Under their MC-ship, Chinese sociology would pluralize itself, evolving beyond the monolithic statist sociology working towards socialist modernization for eventually counting the sociology of Communist Civilization in its repertoire. Indeed, in the early 2000s, under the three intellectuals the DCC would grow into one of contemporary Chinese sociology’s most systematic or programmatic formulations of a research program, the sociology of Communist Civilization. This shall be discussed in Chapter 10.

7.2.1 - Oral History I: The Social Relation, Politics and Methodology

While the aim of Sun’s Dictionary project was to liberate the research agenda of Chinese sociology from the CCP’s powerful hands, that intention did not necessarily involve erecting a thick epistemological wall between knowledge and politics. In fact, spatially speaking, as they tried to distance themselves from their sub-role of political advisors and their practise of the sociology from the political field, they moved closer to the social field of dominated social groups as the oral history project strive to understand the reality as live and apprehended by social actors, mainly those living in the countryside.

Recently, Gross (2013: 186) asked “[i]n terms of the research process, how exactly do the political commitment of academics affect the topics on which they choose to work, the theories and methods they employ and the kinds of evidence they find persuasive, and the social networks they form and the collaborations they undertake?” Shen addressed such questions about the power-knowledge dynamic in the following way: “*Vis-à-vis* the complexity of Chinese society and the extreme heterogeneity of the situations from one end of the country to the other, oral history does not aim at representativeness or exhaustiveness, but tries, in a situation of
immersion, to understand and analyze in-depth local configurations, while being attentive to the speeches and practices of the actors” (Merle 2007b: 4). This sociological approach contrasts drastically with quantitative methodologies such as the social surveys—and their homogenizing onto-epistemology—privileged by the Chinese government since the beginning of the economic reform.

Sun and his team proposed a third-way methodology to apprehend social reality, choosing to subscribe neither to a theory of state centralism nor to the study of society and popular culture. They argued that while the former favored “the analysis of the structures of domination and the apparatus of the state and the Party, and stressed total control, exerted from the top down, by the political authorities over society,” the latter, in reaction to such a totalitarian paradigm, “developed from the 1980s onwards . . . a view favoring the study of society and popular culture, and emphasizing the predominance of phenomena of social resistance [which led] in its most radical form to the image of a traditional peasant society that was scarcely touched by the central power or the state structures (Merle 2007b: 4). Oral history was an approach that strived to document the agency of social actor between these two extreme views.

Documenting the complexity and heterogeneity of Chinese society is also an attempt to counter the all-encompassing ism aggressively looming in the future. Ideology—that is, the powerful-isms (e.g., communism, socialism, Marxism, Leninism, Maoism)—understands as a “systematic interpretative system of the politico-historical world” (Aron 2006: 399) all contains an elementary philosophy of history. As Reinhart Koselleck explained (1996: 61), “[m]any . . . concepts, above all those designating movements—e.g. development, liberalism—concur in the demand that future history should differ fundamentally from the past.” Although reformist elites and intellectuals post-Mao tried to escape the totalitarian trap of Maoism, conceptual offering such as modernization and development quickly become new terms underlying the building of China’s economic future.

In the book *A Passion for Facts: Social Surveys and the Construction of the Chinese Nation-State, 1900-1949*, Tong Lam (2011) argued along Foucault’s lines that social surveys and statistics emerged in late-Qing China—as elsewhere—as privileged methods of producing

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71 [国家中心论]
empirical knowledge about what society consisted of and how it could be organized: “social surveys became a political necessity in this context not only because they produced empirical knowledge of the social world for the state, but also because they provided new specifications for how individuals and groups should relate to the state and to one another” (49). In many ways, most of social surveys conducted by intellectuals and state agents during the first half of the twentieth century can be viewed as efforts to add to the statistical picture of national communities.

In many ways, most of the social surveys conducted by intellectuals and state agents during the first half of the twentieth century can be viewed as efforts to add to the statistical picture of national communities. It is certainly not the goal here to follow Lam by offering the reader a detailed genealogy of social surveys in Post-Liberation China. Rather, the paragraph below should suffice to clarify the rupture that Sun’s oral history represents in China’s twentieth century history of social sciences. On the one hand there was the continuation of several generations of Chinese social surveyors—from Qing officials and scholars, Republican “low-ranking functionaries-census takers, police, social bureaucrats, guards, and managers” (Gulp 2013: 164) to RPC cadres and Party researchers—while on the other, there was Sun’s sociological team. The former group was invested in a century-long project of nation-state construction; the latter wanted to break away from that vision to propose its own construction of society that put the voice of the people front and center.

The fact that it did give voice to Chinese people outside the institutionalized channel controlled by the CCP, thus side-stepping the ontological translation of people's voices into numbers or homogenizing categories (see Callon 1986), is what gives the Dictionary its political dimension. In that sense, the oral history project can be seen as a modest (utopian ?) democratic attempt to shape a new kind of citizen, political actors who have learned to recognize the importance both of their social experience and of their quest for alternative means of expressing their views and interests. In highlighting the significance of such a project in contemporary China, one is tempted to go so far as to suggest that the Dictionary should be considered to be one of the rare sociological attempts in twentieth-century China to give voice to people outside

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72 For instance, documenting the three most important social scientific endeavors in Republican China, Chiang (2001) argued that all three had fundamental social-engineering missions. However, while these projects were proposing to both studied and shape the transformation of China, they certainly did not give
the strict boundaries of either a CCP nation-building project or a group of intellectual, both with
the elected mission of leading the people, poised with the will to represent\textsuperscript{73} all under heaven [天下].

\textbf{7.2.2 - Oral History II: The Identity Relation: Zhiqing Habitus and the People}

The electronic term “short-circuit” is pregnant with sociological meanings in its potential
for directing one’s attention to the concept of political representation. In the 1980s, Shen felt that
the best way to serve China and its people was to serve the state. In the 1990s, however, the
partial reversal in his position is evident in his participation in the short-circuiting strategy used
in the Dictionary project. Although Shen was still working for the state in the 1990s, Sun’s oral
history project engaged Shen in short-circuiting the notion that the state provided the only
legitimate channel by which the people’s interests could be heard. In other words, one can say
that the Beijing sociologist was simultaneously playing the games of orthopraxy and orthodoxy.
While still working at the IS as a state sociologist, his commitment to the discipline more than
anything else highlighted his determination to serve the people.

As mentioned earlier, in the 1990s, some sociologists rediscovered qualitative
methodologies, working with approaches closer to the common practices in anthropology than to
the quantitative practices prevalent in their own field (Merle 2007a: 48). One can recognize in
Shen’s zhiqing habitus the \textit{affinitées électives} of more qualitative methodologies, such as oral
history. Indeed, for our sociologist and some of his contemporaries, the DCC represented a
chance to return to the countryside in a meaningful fashion, without the encumbering statist
survey tools that would have coloured their interactions with its inhabitant. In some way, with its
researchers retrieving folk recollections of the past 40 years of social and political changes across
the country, Sun’s historical Dictionary acted as rites of reintegration for zhiqing such as Shen
Yuan; after all, one of Mao’s original intentions in sending China’s youth to the countryside was
to have these educated youth learn from the people (Bonnin 422). Such experience as Shen had
of Mao’s countryside facilitated the shaping of an anti-elitism that can be perceived in his
development of the sociological curriculum at Tsinghua. As he put it, “the attitude of Beida and

\begin{footnote}{73}{The will to represent can be seen as the third position both embodying the will to power and the will to know.}

center-stage to the people.
Tsinghua students is too elitist; this is just not right” (SY-ID 2012).\textsuperscript{74} Then while explaining the structure and the organization of undergraduate teaching in the Department of Sociology at Tsinghua and its main differences from Beijing University, Shen stressed the anti-elitist nature of the training undergraduate Tsinghua students received, with a passage obligé in the countryside during their second year during which they experienced a rites of separation. Shen told me it is important to make students aware of the living conditions in rural China, as it still accounts for over 60% of the population’s experience. Clearly, crushing any elitism developing at Beijing’s elite universities was thus a moral imperative for Shen and his colleagues.

7.2.3 - Elitism and Representation

To explain the relative “voicelessness” of Chinese people, those studying Chinese intellectuals are quick to single out paternalism as the ultimate source of the will to representation.

While an individual intellectual may choose to espouse democracy or support communism, [or to] extol the virtues of Western nations, . . . in all cases, he will subscribe to a strong form of paternalism. Intellectuals are convinced that both the ruler and the people of China need their knowledge, guidance, and aid to be raised up from the darkness of ignorance and tradition into the light of modernity. . . . [However] it is also important to realize that the vision of the intellectual as paternal guide is still foundational to the self-perception of most if not all intellectuals (Evasdottir 2005: 11).

Thus, while Shen embodies a sense of strong anti-elitism, the positions he takes in regard to the people may raise questions. If one wishes to look beyond a sympathetic reconstitution of Shen’s trajectory—the courageous mind rising above cowards and self-interested intellectuals in order to serve the people—one needs to ask a set of realist questions. As an intellectual endeavour, the DCC did not magically give voice to people as they share their experiences of Mao’s totalitarian regime and Deng’s reforms; rather, the sociologists carrying out the project still owned the textual means of production of those people’s voices. The orality of people’s life-experience needed to be captured and then translated by the literacy skills of those social scientists before it could take on a material life of its own in limited circulation amongst China’s educated elite.

The goal here is not to follow the sociology of the ‘bad guy’, a trend of accusatory realism which “describ[es] the social anchorage of intellectuals in a dispassionate way,

\textsuperscript{74} [北大清华的学生的情况你会发现太经营主义，太 Elite, 这个是不对的.]
effectively denigrates their role, brings them down to earth, discredits their self-adopted high-
mission, accuses them of muffling their mundane interests behind solemn gestures and sublime
sounds” (Pels 2001:22). But rather to present a more balanced account of the inherent tension of
speaker for others.

It is, of course, easy enough to follow vulgarized realism and show that Shen’s academic
trajectory and his decision to work for an authoritarian regime before and after the Tiananmen
massacre revealed a will to power that was nurtured by two early experiences, rites of liminality
(Mao’s xiaxiang), and rites of reintegration (university entrance), a combination of experiences
that transformed him into an elite Chinese intellectual assuming the burden of popular
enlightenment. Such a sociological narrative would portray Shen as an opportunistic, organic
intellectual willing to support any cause that would advance his own interests, ready to switch
from State researcher to people’s spokesperson in a heartbeat. The main problem with such an
account, however, is that it suggests that an intellectual’s identification (Bourdieu’s notion of the
homology of position) with the masses has everything to do with field-position and strategies of
capital accumulation, and nothing do to with subjective life, pre-field experience, and self-
identity. As Tristan Riley (2011: 24) rightly put it, for Bourdieu “the goal of all actors and all
actions is everywhere and always to destroy opponents and to become the dominant force within
the field from which position one can then set the definitions as to what is and is not worthy of
attention within the field.” But then, if it is true “that strategies for achieving personal success in
the intellectual or other worlds are frequently parts of an intellectual self-positioning […] about
the role] of ethical convictions, personal beliefs and passionate reactions on the part of
intellectuals” (Rieffel 1993:14).

Indeed, in Shen’s case, we argue for a more sophisticated realism that considers the self-
concept aspect of intellectual life, the identity level. For instance, Shen’s zhiqing experience in
Maoist countryside shaped a habitus with a social vision that recognized the importance of
rurality, rural inhabitants, and their struggles. That habitus in turn informed Shen’s actions—
namely, taking the position of the people—nearly 15 years later.

However, Shen’s trajectory brings into question the classic realist claim that
spokespersons always speak for themselves in the act of speaking for others. In his case, what
might be called the “hidden interest” of Shen and his colleagues in giving voice to people can be
understood in their goal of liberating sociology from its statist tutelage while slowly establishing the foundation for the day when the people could express themselves independently of the representational interests of the CCP and intellectual elites. Until that day arrives, Shen is willing to play the game of spokesperson.  

In fact, as the next two chapters detail, the strategy of orthopraxy that Shen followed as a CASS researcher—working toward the political legitimacy of sociology and its subsequent and methodical liberalization from its heavy CCP patronage—paralleled a much larger—and riskier—cause he has pursued since the 1990s: to represent the people’s interests at various points in time, in the hope of nurturing their powers of self-organization and self-representation.

The tension is that the ‘liberalization’ of sociology from the state’s research agenda  

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75 While I rely in the concept of spokesperson in this text, the notion of mediumship is a much better analytical tool to get at what intellectuals are really doing. “Culture is a mediated culture. Mediums, more than direct personal experience, define people’s world picture” (Van Del Weel 2011: 1). One argument in favour of mediumship is that when we say that intellectuals are speaking in the name of others, they are also, if not primarily, mobilizing literacy, their writing skills, to do so. Therefore we can see how, while the concept of spokesperson tries to render visible the intellectual medium—the agent “speaking in the name of other” and representing the interests of that other—it actually renders invisible the intellectual media mediating the act of representation. In that sense, speaking is a figure of speech indicating another modality of representation or communication, writing. Starting with images in prehistory, mediation took off in earnest with the invention of writing. “It could be said that, paradoxically, the textual mediums are so central to human existence as to be largely invisible. So pervasive is the role they play in society that the implications of their use cannot be readily assessed” (Van Del Weel 32). “Text is old [and taken for granted] in the sense that its cultural transmission started a long time ago (if 5,000-6,000 years may be called long in human history), but it is also always old in each individual lifetime. Learning to read and write tend to happen so early in formal education, if not before, that humans have little conscious experience of pre-literacy, leaving text almost invisible as a technology. As a consequence, our awareness and understanding of the formative role of text rather than the media in human culture remains surprisingly rudimentary” (3). As Walter Ong explained in his seminal work Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the World ([1982]1989): ‘Written word is not simply another modality of spoken utterances, it’s a radically transformed medium.” In Western intellectual history, from social movement studies, post-colonial critiques, feminist studies, political sociology, and standpoint theory to the sociology of knowledge and intellectuals (with the exception of Dorothy Smith, Actor-Network Theory, and the New Sociology of Ideas), the predominance of a language of orality—“the voice of the people,” “giving voice to,” “speaking truth to power,” “speaking for”—highlights perfectly a mediated culture unable to think of itself as it really is. Therefore, any concept containing residual ‘orality' metaphors—such as spokesperson—is not really getting at what and how intellectuals are doing what they are doing. This should clarify the view of oral history as the tension between Folk Voice and Academic textuality or literacy.
doesn’t free its practitioners from all orthopraxic social relationships; in fact it slowly ties these intellectuals to the people their work represents—and ultimately, represents politically—at least in its initial stages, according to Shen. It is fascinating to see re-enacted or mirrored the modus operandi of Shen’s trajectory in the late 1980s, when he made the largely orthopraxic move of working as a socialist sociologist for the CCP to support the young discipline's existence? It was the “right” thing to do at that time. It was as if Shen felt—in an attuned anticipation of the future, and with the patient sense of political timing carved by years spent in the countryside—that one day the discipline could possibly grow its own wings. In that context, the oral history project was a liminal moment when Shen finally helped shape sociology according to his own idea, that it should serve the people’s interests and the construction of society rather than carrying out the will of the CCP. Although at the same time, the Dictionary project tied him to enacting the paternalist role of Chinese intellectual (an orthopraxic moment), Shen sees this as only a temporary role—but one that he must take, exactly as he adopted the earlier role of establishment intellectual in the past as a means of ultimately achieving his sociological goal.

Taking on the paternalist role of Chinese intellectual was an orthopraxic move: Shen accepted the choice to play this role because the audience-that-matters—the people—expected him to do so. Evasdottir (12) explained this dynamic between spokesperson and its constituency perfectly:

[T]heorists have forgotten to look at the incentives that make it beneficial for peasants and bureaucrats alike to maintain intellectuals in their paternalistic social position. Those said to be responsible for the well-being of the nation make, after all, excellent scapegoats if something goes awry; moreover, someone expected to serve, and trained throughout university in the language of service, is ripe for exploitation when an official or peasant needs a favour.”

During the 1990s, however, the more Shen invested himself in such spokespersonship for the people’s interests, the more his habitus, shaped by Maoist anti-elitism, felt out of step with the reality at hand. Undeniably, such position-taking in the shoes of the paternalist intellectual creates existential as well as professional tensions for an intellectual used to and wishing to be by the side of the people, not above them. Nonetheless, oral history has allowed Shen and his colleagues to start answering the question, “how can we avoid being considered representatives of power in a context marked by growing social inequalities and exercising economic and symbolic violence towards the country’s most deprived populations?” (Merle 2007a: 51)
Chapter 8 - Doctoral Studies and Editorship as Field Spokesperson

8.1 - Introduction

This chapter follows Shen moving steadily toward the breaking point of his orthopraxis game as he completed a Doctoral program in Philosophy at CASS graduate school and secured the editorship of the most influential sociological journal in Mainland China at the very end of the twentieth century. His textual encounter with the new economic sociology during the PhD program would further sharpen his reading of the national situation in the 1990s, as social inequalities grew as well and his interest in calling for the political engagement of sociology increased. Invested with symbolic power, Shen used his editorial position in the pages of *Sociological Research* to speak on behalf of the sociological field, his school of thought as well as the social, thus blurring the lines not only between speaking for others and speaking for oneself, but also between politics and knowledge. This chapter will rely on a Bourdieuian and Koselleckian analysis to explain the working of Shen’s conceptual literacy, his abilities to manipulate political concepts enabling the shaping of China’s social world.

In 1994, at the age of 40, Shen decided to pursue a doctoral degree at the Institute of Philosophy at the CASS Graduate School in the program called theories of social development. As he worked on his doctoral program, Shen remained a full-time researcher at the Institute of Sociology (SY-ID 2012; SY-TH 2011). During the interview, when asked if his decision to enrol in a PhD program was motivated by either a desire to relocate after graduation or any prospects of promotion at CASS, Shen simply replied that when he started his PhD, he simply wanted time to study a bit [读一读] and that he had no clear plans either to leave the CASS or to transfer to a university.

8.2 - The Concept of Market in Sociology

Shen’s PhD dissertation, *The Concept of Market in Sociology* ([社会学的市场概念]) (written in 1997 [Shen 2007]) is cast as a theoretical discussion of the New Economic Sociology (NES)’s main predecessors and proponents as Shen saw them: Polanyi, Granovetter, Burt, White, Swedberg, Dobbin, Zelizer, and Fligstein. Before introducing the reader to the NES, Shen devoted a lengthy section of his dissertation to the history of Western economics, paying close attention to the nineteenth- and twentieth-century European debates opposing economics to sociology. As he explained (20-21), such a historical overview is necessary to an understanding
of the emergence of the NES in the mid-1980s, with the work of scholars including Granovettor, Swedberg, and Burt. The remainder of his thesis goes on to introduce and discuss the NES’s main theoretical approaches, important findings, and problems. For a North-American sociologist, Shen’s dissertation reads like a short yet systematic introduction with a certain historical sensibility to the sub-field of the New Economic Sociology. In all likelihood, that was most probably his intention, given that he is one of the first Chinese sociologists to specialize in the sub-field of economic sociology,\textsuperscript{76} as his Tsinghua faculty personal webpage claims.

It is quite significant to note the virtual textual absence in Shen’s PhD dissertation of any discussion of both (1) Marxist sociology (in discussing the contribution of the founding fathers of sociology on pages 43–44 he spends half a page on Marx’s conceptualisation of the market) and (2) Marx’s contributions to economic sociology. These absences help substantiate the argument that Shen has taken an orthopraxic approach to politico-sociological life and been willing to patiently archive his intellectual self-concept. As mentioned earlier, during the 1990s the political and intellectual currency of Marxism hit a historical low. It was therefore extremely dangerous for scholars to mobilize the German thinker in their social analysis even if sociologists such as Shen could clearly see the utility of Marxist thought: “Marx said a lot of fundamental things that are relevant for us now, what we are facing now is rather similar to Marx’s time.”\textsuperscript{77} The irony of that situation was reinforced by the fact that Shen’s declared major for his PhD at the Institute of Philosophy was Marxist philosophy (Mazhuxue 1998: 3).

However, even if in the mid-1990s Marx was persona non-grata at the powerful CASS think-tank, economic sociology had already become an important sub-field in Mainland China. As Shen said (see Chapter 6), economic sociology was being mobilized by the State at that time as a scientific tool that could be used to study migrant workers, market dynamics, and a host of other social problems related to economics. Shen’s decision to accept employment within the boundaries of the state certainly signalled a willingness to play the game of orthopraxy; undertaking a dissertation on market and economic sociology assured him the blessing of the audience-that-mattered—the CASS leadership. At the same time, he had some room to manoeuvre, although doing so was risky business. As Zhao (2004: 43) remarked, “[in] the 1990s,

\textsuperscript{76} For example, that same year, he was invited to teach a graduate course on New Economic Sociology at Shuren College, Hong Kong.

\textsuperscript{77}[马克思说了很多很基本的东西对我们现在有意义的，我们现在面对的是什么，跟马克思，的时代有点象。]
any critical examination of the process of marketization was almost politically impossible.” How did Shen succeed in his dual goals? First, the Beijinger carved out for himself ideal conditions for intellectual thinking: he was in a part-time program, had no classes to attend—he explained that he really didn’t like attending class—and had a flexible advisor, Wang Ruisheng (王锐生), a senior researcher from the Institute of Philosophy (Mazhuxue 1998: 3) who let him read at his own pace and taste (SY-ID 2012).

While it is also highly likely that Shen’s background in Marxist philosophy helped him to secure a doctoral position in the Institute of Philosophy graduate program in 1994, his acquired skill-set as an M.A. philosophy student—the ability to discuss and manipulate weighty ideological concepts—is the focus of most of this chapter. We argue that that set of skills allowed him to concentrate his intellectual energy on the conceptual/theoretical stratum of the sociological discipline, reading and engaging confidently with these ideas. It is fascinating to see the same intellectual who nearly 10 years earlier switched from philosophy to sociology, arguing that the former discipline was “too abstract” and “not interested in concrete things” as he now took institutional refuge in a philosophical space by mobilizing the cognitive and discursive skills he learned during his years as a philosophy major to discuss sociological theory. Indeed, if Sun’s oral history project was, amongst other things, a short-circuiting methodology, a way for Chinese sociologists to investigate the social environment outside the structures of the statist tool-kit (large-scale surveys), Shen’s PhD dissertation was a continuation of the struggle for disciplinary autonomy. Indeed, with his dissertation, Shen turned his attention to the theoretical underpinnings of the discipline, where the concept of market operated as the pièce de résistance. Following the professionalization of the sociological field during the 1990s, it became essential for the autonomy of the discipline that sociologists investigate the social armed with common concepts that did not emanate from the state apparatus. As Shen told us in regard to the evolution of the discipline in the 1990s,

[at the time we had] two contradicting attitudes: [on one side we were thinking] sociology is very important, [yet we] are still not doing sociology well enough. All the way until today [this is still true] because we don’t have a lot [of sociologists] who can do “conceptualization” [in English], [who can] conceptualize the experience of China so that later on, this concept become something that everybody in social sciences can discuss.78

78[两个矛盾的态度（50:26）社会学很重要，社会学做的还不够好！一直到现在。。。因为我们没有多少可以做conceptualization, 把中国的经验概念化以后变社会科学大家都可以讨论的概念。]
8.3 - The Rise of Economics

While the focus of the above section was primarily on the disciplinary/professional aspect of Shen’s dissertation (epistemic relation)—that is, an interpretation of what he was trying to accomplish within the emergent field of sociology—this section considers the political implications of his doctoral writing. Earlier, we explained that in order to introduce the NES, Shen proposed an overview of the history of economics and its rivalry with sociology. He explained the emergence of the NES in the context of the economic imperialism characterizing American social sciences in the 1970s and 1980s (Shen 2007b: 27-29). At the time, important American sociologists such as Etzioni, Tilly, and White mobilized the field’s attention with publications taking positions against the reductionist rational choice theory and the atomized actor perspective, arguing that both cultural and social elements had to be factored into any sociological analysis of economic phenomena. In 1985, Mark Granovetter articulated one of the most convincing sociological arguments against reductionist economic account of social life in his paper “Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness.” Granovetter argued that a neo-liberal view of economic action that separates economics from society disseminates an undersocialized account that atomizes social behavior, whereas the idea of embeddedness more correctly considers that the actions individuals choose are importantly refracted by the social relations within which they navigate.

If it is not wish to deliberate here whether Granovetter’s position-taking was an intervention confined to the field of American social sciences—that is, an act of sociological gate-keeping countering the growing imperialism of economics—and whether it is an argument against the effects of Reaganomics, the American president’s mix of conservatism and economic neoliberalism. However, the point here is that Shen must have found it relatively easy in the 1990s to import such discussions into the Chinese context. By the 1980s, many actors and observers had identified sociology as the dominant social science in Mainland China, but in the following decade—and especially after DENG’s stone-stepping southern trip (nanxun) of 1992, economics emerged as the dominant form of social knowledge: “the 1990s . . . were marked by the rise of economics. Throwing off the inhibitions imposed by Marxist political economy and assuming the role of high priests in the process of “growing out of the plan,” economists emerged as key spokespersons in public affairs. Gaining favoured access to government and international funding, setting up important think-tanks [see Li CLM 29], and exploiting
developments in the discipline (which opened new areas of public policy to economic analysis, such as institutional economics), they commanded wide prestige” (Kelly 2006: 198-99).

Indeed, if the rise of sociology in the 1980s was shaped by the political intervention of DENG, it should come to no surprise that the rise of economics in the 1990s was also affected in 1992 by Deng’s successful call for the acceleration of market reforms—price reforms, the introduction of stock market, and large-scale privatization of state-owned enterprises. Zhao (2004: 46) put it more bluntly: “If 1989 witnessed the state’s crushing of liberal and democratic voices in the media, 1992 marked the triumph of the market facilitated by the undemocratic intervention of an extra-state political power–Deng as an autocratic leader.” After 1992, the CCP began market reforms and focused mainly on the economic dimensions of national social life. The media performativity of economics was everywhere as journalists “promoted the market ideology and championed market-oriented government policies, entrepreneurial role models and successful businesses” (Zhao 47). Overall, “[w]hat the Party [could] tolerate [was narratives] that individualize[d] human behavior and [took] for granted the existing social structure” (64). The discipline of economics and its neo-liberal practitioners were thus ideal agents for the propagation and dissemination of this new di-vision of the social and this is exactly what sociologists such as Shen would try to attack as he became the editor of Sociological Research.

8.4 - Editorship and Symbolic Power
8.4.1 - Theory

Therefore, as economics and the social knowledge it generated promptly dominated China’s social sciences, Shen’s NES knowledge and highly developed political habitus skills positioned him to engage in the dominant economic discourses with a view to reintegrating the social into the equation. In 1997, the year that the CASS researcher devoted to writing his PhD dissertation, Shen also became the editor-in-chief of Sociological Research, a journal host at the CASS Beijing’s Institute of Sociology, thus providing him the means to speak with authority.

During an interview, when discussing Shen’s trajectory during the 1990s we asked about the prestige associated with this editorship position from 1997 to 1999, given that the publication was the only sociological journal in Mainland China to have an official national status (Merle 2007a: 42). Shen immediately replied that that editorial position was not very prestigious or important [地位不高]. However, in the context of how sociology had developed in China by the
late 1990s, Shen’s response is clearly a humble one [谦虚], an embodied strategy of speaking modestly about oneself that Bourdieu would call a euphemistic strategy: by that point, there were more than 100 sociology institutes and sociology departments across China offering 20 masters programs as well as 5 at the PhD and 4 at the post-doctorate level, employing some 6,000 professional sociologists, and training 3,000 undergraduates students and 400 graduate students (Lee and Shen 2009: 112; Merle 2007a: 39). Therefore, being editor of one of the most important sociological journals in Mainland China undeniably bestowed a huge amount of symbolic capital on Shen. In 1997 Shen also became the active head of the editorial department of the Institute of Sociology. “[T]he possession of symbolic capital (namely titles, positions [or membership in intellectual societies and associations (Charles 1990: 7-9)]) through participation in associational life is terribly important for Chinese intellectuals to pursue symbolic power within their own workplace units [or respective fields of action]” (Gu 2004: 29). Indeed, the foundation of symbolic power, or making and breaking things with words, is dependent on the possession of symbolic capital. The power to impose an old or new vision of the social world or of social divisions indeed depends on the social authority acquired in previous struggles (Bourdieu 1987: 163).\footnote{Comme toute forme de discours performatif, le pouvoir symbolique doit être fondé sur la possession d’un capital symbolique. Le pouvoir d’imposer aux autres esprits un vision, ancienne ou nouvelle, des divisions sociales depend de l’autorité sociale acquise dans les luttes antérieures.] Own translation from French.}

As Randall Collins (1975: 480) put it, “a realistic image of science, in fact, would be a open plain with men scattered throughout it, shouting: ‘listen to me! listen to me!’ By the end of the 1990s, then, Shen was well-positioned to grab the attention of those in the field. In fact, his editorship position beginning in 1997 at the most resourceful and prestigious social scientific publication in Mainland China was a sine-qua-non condition for his considerable influence over the sociological field.

How exactly does the symbolic power of the editor operate? Part of the answer concerns the fact that communication in scientific fields is much more than a way to publish research,
theories, or methodologies. It is also a practice by which scientists set boundaries (Medina 2014: 18). McGinty argues that “[e]ditor plays out by funnelling manuscripts in one direction or rejecting material entirely. In this way, the journal editor has an impact on the professional life of every scholar” (1999: 1) as he influences the research agenda of a discipline by setting the boundaries between what is published (and accepted as valid) and what is not. The scholarly journal plays the most important role in a discipline’s existence, direction, and shape, and “the center of this universe is occupied by the journal editor” (McGinty 1999: 8 in Medina 2014: 136-37).

Shen’s three years at the academic journal *Sociological Research* were complicated by the fact that as an emergent social scientific field, sociology was still essentially dominated and subordinated by the CCP. In that sense, his work as an editor entailed much more than just “setting boundaries between what is published and what is not”; his symbolic power allowed him to participate in the emergent autonomy of the field of sociology itself (epistemic and social relations). A general comparison of the changes that occurred under Shen’s editorship and those that took place during the previous editor’s three-year tenure is sufficient to reveal Shen’s vision for the discipline as well as his so-called “hidden interests.”

### 8.4.2 - Practice

Shen’s years as editor of *Sociological Research* gave him an important opportunity to address what he had already identified as the poor quality of Chinese sociological research. Significantly, while the previous editor had published 140, 132, and 92 articles (a total of 364) between 1994 and 1996, Shen’s team edited just 104, 77, and 66 (a total of 247) during his three-year term. Whereas the former editor tended to publish more articles that were essentially informal, undocumented essays rather than scientifically researched studies, Shen favoured formal sociological studies, although he also included informal essays on sociological topics in the back pages of each issue. For example, a short article published in 1995 reported that the level of China’s development was now putting the country in the world rank 67\[80\] while another discussed some early publications of Lu Xun, one of China’s foremost writers of the twentieth century.

Shen also restructured the journal itself, reducing it from 9 to 7 sections. This new visual configuration was a textual embodiment of Shen’s vision and di-vision of the field of sociology

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\[80\] [1995年中国社会发展水平已上升为世界67位]
itself. While in 1995 the section “Modernization and the Development in Urban and Rural China” was devoted to research topics close to the interests of policy-makers and the CCP and appeared second in the journal only to “Theory, Methods, and the History of Sociology,” in 1999 “Policy Studies” [对策研究] was the fourth section, after monographic studies [专题研究], theory, method and methodology [理论,方法,方法论], and research papers [学术论文], a reconfiguration that expressed the scientific and independent tone of the journal (social relation). Sections such as “Culture and Psychology” and “Demography and Family” (SR 1995) were eliminated under Shen. Also, in their 1998 editorial address, Shen, Zhang, Guo, Tan, Fan, Zhang, Luo and Jing. (1999: 110) forcefully asserted that “sociology is not the combination of the work of journalists, politicians and critics. Chinese sociologists must take the analysis unit and tool seriously and forward their research questions based on previous studies.” Shen’s editorial hand in the format and contents of the journal indicates the embodied symbolic power infused in textual materiality, including academic journals, to help delineate academic fields vis-à-vis both other academic fields, and the prevailing political power. In short, boundary work was a central part of Shen’s editorship.

Therefore, Shen’s editorial work at *Sociological Research* certainly encouraged the scientificity of the knowledge production circulating in the field while also reducing the porosity of the boundaries of that field in regard to political power and to other disciplines, thus bringing Chinese sociology closer to autonomy. In that sense, one might be tempted to described Shen as a dominant yet legitimate spokesperson for the interests—scientificity, professionalization, autonomy—of sociologists in Mainland China in the late 1990s. However, as the previous chapter clarifies, the act of speaking for others often obscures the fact that one is simultaneously speaking for oneself. In other words, while acting as editor-in-chief, Shen was also advancing

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81 [98 社会学:研究进展状况与热点难点问题 提到，如果认为将新闻记者和政治家、评论家的工作加在一起就等于社会学研究的话，那将是社会学这门学科的误解。社会学家需要在前人研究成果的基础之上斟酌研究命题，在方法上要讲究基本的分析单位和作为分析工具的概念体系，然后给出理论性分析。]

82 At this point in this thesis, the reader may have a better appreciation for the limitations inherent in the term *spokesperson* and in such expressions as *speaking for others*. For example, Shen’s symbolic power—that is, his power to break or make things with words, as Bourdieu (2001: 138) puts it—is not an utterance. In fact, understanding the workings of Shen’s symbolic power entails the understanding that a network of human and non-human—e.g., paper, printer, computer—actors were involved in allowing Shen to realize his vision for sociology and thereby to make new and break existing assemblages.
both his own research interests and the interests of his own developing school of sociological thought organized around Sun’s Dictionary project.

In 1999, there was a marked increase in the number of articles appearing in three fields related to Shen’s research interests, economic sociology, the sociology of labor, and studies of financial markets. During Shen’s editorial term from 1997 through 1999, he and Guo Yuhua, Li Qiang, and Sun Liping, the four founding members of Tsinghua’s Department of Sociology, published nine articles. And in 1999, nearly 50% of the papers (32 out of 66) published in Sociological Research were related to the host of sociological phenomena pertaining to China’s transformation. After the foundation in 2000 of the Department of Sociology at Tsinghua, the term transformation became associated with the phrase Communist Civilization to form a paradigm orienting the research activities of the group. For instance, Shen’s dissertation-turned-book, published in 2007, is entitled Market, Class, and Society: Critical Issues on Sociology of Transformation while in 2009 he authored a text for The ISA Handbook of Diverse Sociological Traditions called ‘A New Agenda for the Sociology of Transformation in China’. As one of Shen’s graduate students said, “up until today Shen continues to be a strong advocate of the view that any Chinese sociological study absolutely needs to be set against, or you could say contextualized against the period of radical transformation that characterizes contemporary China” (FG-ID 2014; also see Merle 2004a: 11).

Another clear sign of ‘speaking for oneself’ comes from Shen’s argument in favour of oral history. Toward the end of the 14 pages of Shen’s 1997 editorial address—his essay reviewing the state of sociological affairs in the previous year (1997)—he includes a section entitled “Possible Directions for Sociology in 1998.” Here the Beijing-born sociologist outlined his ideas for three research areas that deserved attention (98: 123). In regard to the first, research relying on oral social history [口述社会史研究], Shen explained that, in recent years in Western countries, the decline of grand narratives had given rise to personal life-history research. The result, Shen continued, was that oral social history research had already become an important sociological area, and had created connections with other disciplines such as history,

83 Although more research is needed, it is highly probable that the concept of transformation—including the sociology of transformation [转型社会学], the transformation of the Communist Civilization, and social transformation [社会转型]—actually first gained currency in the pages of the journal Sociological Research in 1999.

84 [1998 年社会学可能的走势]
political science, and economics despite being a relatively new enterprise in China. Without directly mentioning Sun’s Dictionary project, Shen also called in this essay for an extension of the current scope of research focusing on social life in the countryside to include city dwellers as well. It is evident that here, one of Shen’s objectives is to add legitimacy to Sun’s HCC and one of their privileged methodological approaches.

But apart from the epistemic relationship of oral history to the field of sociology, such a method also need to be considered for it social relation or say the social mediation it facilitate, that as an alternative political tool that can be used to help document and amplify people’s voices in dominant social fields. Indeed, the political implications of Shen’s position-taking, especially of the positions he took in his editorial addresses, must also be considered. For instance, towards the end of his 1997 editorship address he emphasized that “in important problems, the voice of sociological science needs to be heard” (Shen 1998: 124).

8.5 - The Multiple Faces of Theory: Political Concepts and Symbolic Struggle

Why should concepts not be ... open to manipulation? Why should it not be a part of their use that the ambiguity of words, the logically illicit transformation of one concept into another (like a spirit appearing in diverse forms) is exploited to the full by the users of what seems to be ‘one’ concept?

Ernest Gellner, Concepts and Society, 1962

As points out earlier in this chapter, Shen’s three-year tenure as editor of the academic journal Sociological Research was a rather complicated appointment, given the subordinate relationship of sociology to politics in late-socialist China. One consequence of sociology’s position vis-à-vis politics was that Shen’s advocacy for the autonomy of sociology cannot be seen as a strategic or heroic attempt to separate knowledge and politics. Rather, it should be understood to have been an effort to distance sociological agendas and knowledge production from State control as far as possible so as to allow Shen to reorganize the knowledge-power connection according to his own politics of sociological production. Indeed, intellectual autonomy does not mean knowledge production that is absolutely free of politics, or say disinterested scientific work. Since his participation in Sun’s Dictionary project, Shen’s game of orthopraxy was more and more informed by (his idea of ) orthodoxy. Although he published no research papers during the first two years of his mandate as editor, he did published two editorial addresses (Shen 1998; Shen et al. 1999) in the pages of Sociological Research. In the first of these texts, Shen entered a symbolic struggle over the definition of core political concepts such
as *modernization* and *development*, an attempt to envision a new knowledge-power connection that fit his ideas on sociological production. Shen’s strategy in this argument was to use his theoretical discussion of socio-political concepts as a means of defending his discipline against (1) the symbolic power of the state, and (2) the economization of sociological phenomena, what can also be described as *the undermining of the* social or society.

The first topic Shen addressed in his 1997 Editorial Address concerns modernization theory and the sociology of development (Shen 1998: 12-13). Shen argued that the concept of *modernization* lacked clarity. The array of meanings bestowed on the term—industrialization, social progress, rational expansion—made it extremely difficult for those using the word to prevent misunderstanding and confusion, thus hampering the development of a productive common theoretical background right at the start. Instead of directly proposing a programmatic definition for the concept of modernization, however, Shen preferred to keep the discussion of this issue within the boundaries of sociology. He explained that during the previous decade, modernization theory had become such an important sub-field in the sociology of development that the question “what is modernization?” had been replaced with “what is development?” Shen then explained that since research on development in China was extremely important, “how to delineate and clarify the signification of [the concept of] 'development' is an important task facing sociologists” (112). It is at this moment in the text that the editor entered a symbolic struggle over the definition of core political concepts in Mainland China. He used his preceding discussion of the concept of development—confine within the field of sociology—to give the political concept of modernization several new meaning-clusters, all of which went against the all-powerful and dominant economic overtones attached to the word *development*. His assertion was that “compared to economic development, the meaning of the concept of social development need[ed] to be more rich” (113). As Shen argued, the concept of development had to include

> the comprehensive social progress in the political, economic, and cultural spheres; [that is, it ought to comprise] not only economic growth and economic development, but also social justice and democratic participation, women’s social position, etc. [Realistically speaking,] economic growth is a necessary condition to development, but it is only when combined with social change that it can achieve at least reasonable development. (112)

Using local sociological research published during 1997, Shen went on to advocate three conceptual liminal changes to the political concept of development: (1) from economic to social development, (2) from development centered on material and quantity to development focused
also on people, and (3) sustainable and regulated rather than merely accelerated development (112-113).

In the rest of the essay, whether discussing research on social justice (115-116) or the reform of the system of social security (118), Shen continued in the same manner to emphasize that the key for the development of the discipline was theoretical development—literally, the definition and formation of concepts\(^\text{85}\): “if we want to resolve social problems, we must define and create concepts [and] carry out exploration and creation in the theoretical realm\(^\text{86}\)” (118) in order to overcome the critical limitations of the dominant economic gaze in such problems (118-119).

This interpretation of Shen’s textual intervention by no means excludes the possibility of Shen’s use of concept being interpreted according to a Mertonian perspective: that is, that without the development of scientific concepts, observations cannot be meaningfully assimilated into a point of view and therefore cannot participate in knowledge accumulation (Merton 1968: 143-45). Certainly, Shen’s discussion partly embrasse Merton’s view on scientific concepts (e.g., 对理论的要求提高 [Shen 1999a: 110]). However, because of the spatial proximity of sociological knoweldge and political power in Mainland China—and Shen’s zhiqing habitus—it would be naïve to overlook the symbolic dimension of politics infused in Shen’s use of the word concept\(^\text{87}\). “[B]asic concepts are highly complex; they are always both controversial and contested. It is this which makes them historically significant and sets them off from purely technical or professional terms” (Koselleck 1996: 64). We shall discuss Bourdieu’s and Koselleck’s theory on language shortly.

In the pages of this essay, the editor was not trying merely to address the conceptual ambiguity involving the terms development and modernization that had hampered scientific advancement and knowledge accumulation. With a potential readership of nearly 10,000 sociologist researchers and students, most at provincial or local branches of the CASS, CCP’s

\(^{85}\) 界定和形成概念

\(^{86}\) 进行理论上的探索和创新

\(^{87}\) And the sociological reaction to Shen’s text seems to have been good. Indeed, the abstract of the 1998 editorial address published exactly a year later began with the editor enthusiastically explaining that “after the publication of the 1997 essay, a lot of scholars and readers sent letters inquiring. This reception indicates how everybody is deeply concerned with the development of our discipline” (Shen et al. 110).
most ressourceful think-tank, infusing social meanings into a concept of development that had been dominated by economics meant the possibility of facilitating a new representation of China’s social tissue in sociological research. Scientific representation precisely imply political representation, “All things social—. . . tendencies, laws, patterns, causes, connections, collectivities, interests, motives—are in need of a spokesperson or an intermediary who renders them present, who lends them an existence which is made to ‘bear,’ ‘weigh,’ or act upon other entities in the world” (Pels 2001: xii).

Shen’s position-taking in that essay should therefore be understood as his “directly engag[ing] in the struggle for a monopoly on the legitimate expression of truth about the social world” (Bourdieu 1991: 317), a social world which, in 1990s China, was overwhelmingly an economic one where market, economic development, economic liberalisation, etc. prevailed. Timothy Cheek (2006a: 419) argued that, in today’s Chinese directed public sphere, just as when Shen was writing, “one major source of . . . abstract writing is political common sense.” In the emergent Chinese sociological field, however, one major source of theoretical/conceptual writing was the attempt to shape political common sense. For Shen, the social or society being crushed by market forces and the State was what ultimately needed to be researched, what needed “to be written for,” scientifically and politically. Shen’s approach embodied a keen Bourdieusian insight into the seldom recognized knowledge-power relationship⁸⁸: a recognition of the symbolic dimensions of political life. As Bourdieu explained the symbolic power of theory,

the knowledge of the social world, or more precisely, the categories allowing it production, are what is at stake in political struggle, struggle . . . for the power of maintaining or transforming the social world by the maintainance or the transformation of the categories to perceive at that world (Bourdieu 1991: 213)⁹⁹ [, that is] the transformation of the old political lexicon (1987: 160).

Consistent with Bourdieu’s political sociology of langage, Begriffsgeschichte (Conceptual History (CH)) the historical school of thought that Reinhart Koselleck⁹⁰ built

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⁸⁸ That is compared to the recognition of the political dimension of any social fields including the scientific fields. See Dick Pels (2003) Unhastening Science.

⁹⁰ Indeed, Koselleck’s understanding of the relationship between language and politics is extremely similar to Bourdieu’s. “For all concepts have two aspects. On the one hand, they point to something external to them, to the context in which they are used. On the other hand, this reality is perceived in
focuses on ideation, what he called *concepts* or *basic concepts*, very similar to Bourdieu’s *categories* in the block quotation. For the German historian, concepts are at the center of the construction and knowledge of the social world created by historical actors. For the researcher, concepts should be an important category of analysis because “social and political conflicts of the past must be interpreted and opened up via the medium of their contemporary conceptual limits and in terms of the mutually understood, past linguistic usage of participating agents” (1985:79). As Koselleck (1996: 62-63) puts it: “The record of how their [concepts] uses were subsequently maintained, altered, or transformed may properly be called the history of concepts.”

Indeed, like Bourdieu’s sociology of language, Koselleck’s *Begriffsgeschichte* both (1) refuses to see the formation of concept and language as epiphenomenal—that is, as shaped merely by the external forces of “real” history—and (2) “at the same time . . . rejects the theory that political and social languages are autonomous discourses unaffected by anything extra-linguistic” (Richter 1996:11). The core analytical category here, *the concept*, is defined by Koselleck as a word representing an idea that is both powerful enough in a certain discourse to direct thought and ambiguous enough to hold within it a range of meanings. One example Koselleck (1985: 74) offers is *democracy*, a concept that carries three political meanings, “the Greek definition of the constitution of a *polis*, the rules of eighteenth-century European states, and the expectations of industrialized society. All of these are different meanings but they are related, showing that the term democracy is able to encompass persistence, change, and novelty within its meaning” (Cheek 2014: 9). Concepts such as *progress*, *development*, *emancipation*, *liberalism*, *democratization*, and *socialism*, all “designating movements[,] concur in the demand that future history should differ fundamentally from the past” (Koselleck 1996: 61). In post-Mao China, *modernization* and *development* undeniably achieved the status of Koselleckian concepts because they had symbolic importance in the political and social vocabularies used in shaping China’s future. Considering Shen’s 1997 editorial address from Koselleck’s perspective thus suggests the importance of Shen’s thinking in this essay. Indeed, following Koselleck’s claim that “[w]ithout common concepts there is no society . . . [and] . . . above all, no political field of action” (1985: 74, 82), Shen’s re-articulation of *development* and *modernization* must be seen as
an attempt to re-shape the meaning of these powerful concepts in a way that would allow social scientists to see society beyond economic parameters. His discussion here thus constitutes a key sign of Shen’s growing eagerness to participate in the construction of his society. Before the society could speak for itself a conceptual offering allowing them to exist had to be take roots in the dominant social fields.

8.6 - The Making of Shen’s Public Intellectuality

Shils’ definition of intellectuals as “the figures in any social order most involved in the realm of the transcendent and universal manufacture and manipulation of symbols that can be identified by his engagement with the sacred” (Tristan Riley 2010: 275) provides an interesting working definition of Shen and his thought work in the late 1990s. That is, if one understands the sacred to include the fundamental social and political concepts shaping social reality. Not all intellectual work can be best understood through Shils’ ideal-type, since his definition would suggest that virtually any full-time cultural producer interacts with the sacred. While that claim might hold more ground in a democratic context, in the context of a authoritarian regime like CCP’s contemporary China, if interaction is defined as “symbolic struggle” and sacred as “the fundamental social and political concepts of reality,” we are in Bourdieu’s and Koselleck’s territories, and obviously not all intellectuals are engaged in such high-level political mêlées. Thus, it would be misleading to argue that all Chinese intellectuals were or are equally concerned with “the task of making conscious and visible the fundamental [concepts] of a society” (Eyerman 1994:6), let alone with the risky symbolic task of re-articulating the meaning of such concepts. As Kauppi (2010: 3) rightly pointed out, “concepts are . . . Shibboleths: only certain individuals know how to use them correctly.”

As the last five chapters have attempted to show, the intellectual trajectory of Shen Yuan since the mid 1960s helped the intellectual to slowly shaped a know-how-to-use-political-concepts-correctly, what we called conceptual literacy. Shen attained a dominant position in the field by developing a considerable share of scientific and social capital, experiences and skills along the way. His zhiqing experience (Chap. 4) was a liminal moment and led to the shaping of his political habitus during three decades of interaction in the peri-political field, including 10 years under Old Lu at the CASS, China’s most prestigious research institute for the social sciences. Here Shen played key roles at the Institute of Sociology in some of the major sociological research projects of the reforms (Chaps. 5, 6, 7 and 8). Shen’s friendship and
interactions with Sun Liping, regarded as the most brilliant sociologist of his generation, on both the fishery meetings and the Dictionary project contributed further to Shen’s making as a dominant intellectual. Throughout his academic training, Shen honed his abilities to manipulate ideological and philosophical ideation as a master’s student (Chap. 5), during his doctoral self-training in New Economic Sociology (Chap. 8), and throughout his symbolically powerful years as editor-in-chief at Sociological Research, with its potential readership of about 6,000 professional sociologists. All these experiences shaped Shen’s second-nature-abilities to code his writing, read political situations, and identify official boundaries not to cross. Coming together at the end of the millennium, first in his 1997 editorial address and twice the following year, all of these allowed Shen and his associates to launch a symbolic attack on the power field.

Indeed, more than 10 months later, in early 1999, Shen repeated the experience and published a 1998 editorial address, the product not of his labours alone but the concerted effort of Shen and seven other sociologists. Rather than defending sociological ground against the discipline of economics or constituting a political intervention by re-articulating core concepts such as modernization and development, the group of sociologists, led by Shen, probed what was arguably the most sensitive topic during the second half of the 1990s: the relationship between the state and society [国家-社会关系 (Shen et al. 1999: 111)].

Finally, with Shen’s next publication ‘Short-Term Trends and the Potential Crisis of the Transformations of Chinese Social Structure (later referred to as either “the 1998 paper” or “the trends and crisis paper”), as the following chapter discusses, much more was at stake. Rather than entering the symbolic struggle vis-à-vis the state via the sociological field, Shen and his two collaborators published their piece in Strategy and Management (SM) [战略与管理], one of the most influential magazines read by Chinese educated elites. What is more, not only did “the trends and crisis paper” address a much broader audience, it also addressed the interests of Chinese society at large since it attacked the very definition of the state and the people. Put differently, while Shen’s 1997 editorial address attempted to attack the conceptual resources of the CCP such as modernization and development, the 1998 paper attacked the conceptual meaning of the CCP itself. It was really with this publication, the first to appear on his CV in 1998, that Shen emerged as a public intellectual.
Chapter 9 - Public Intellectuality and the 1998 Paper

Any working solution to the problem of knowledge is a solution to the problem of order.
Shapin and Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*

9.1 - Introduction

This chapter explores the first publication to appear on Shen’s CV, the paper ‘Short-term Trends and the Potential Crisis of the Transformations of Chinese Social Structure,’ co-published with Sun Liping and Li Qiang in 1998 in the influential Chinese magazine *Strategy and Management*. This paper marked Shen’s emergence as a public intellectual. Patrick Baert (2011a: 262) have suggested that sociologist of intellectual life pay more attention to his unearthing “under which conditions ideas are likely to spread from the intra- to the public intellectual arena.” As explained in this chapter, Shen’s ideas and positions-takings developed within the pages of *Sociological Journal* will attempt to reach a broader audience with the 1998 paper. This chapter is dividing in three sections. The first section explores the social, political, and intellectual contexts that characterized the last decade of the twentieth century in Mainland China, a period marked by the explosion of social inequalities and the CCP’s firm effort to move away from the language of class in an attempt to legitimize the emergence of new social entities such as the middle class. This situation greatly facilitated Shen and his colleagues’ position-taking in 1998.

The second section deals with the 1998 paper itself, arguing that consistent with the conceptual strategy deployed in Shen’s 1997 editorial address, this paper also entered a symbolic struggle over the re-definition of the two sacred concepts, the state (CCP) and the people, thus ultimately bringing into question the legitimacy of the CCP’s political representation of its traditional constituencies. It would be misleading in teleological terms to see Shen's earlier editorial addresses as mere rehearsals for the bigger statement represented by this paper, but certainly the 1998 paper brought more risks and certainly more rewards, in terms of the third-way intellectual politics it developed. As Chapter 8 explains, Shen embraced neither academic professionalism nor policy-sociology as positions from which he wanted to articulate a new knowledge-politics connection. In the 1998 paper, the same modus operandi of position-takings vis-à-vis the intellectual and sociological fields was mobilized as the three sociologists avoided embracing whole-heartedly either the New Left or the liberal perspective of Chinese intellectuals, or the class-ist or social strata-language of social scientists and policy-makers.
In terms of Shen’s intellectual trajectory, it is significant that this first publication appeared in a journal geared toward Chinese educated elites, part of what Cheek (2010) called the “directed public sphere”—an arena of publicity that looks like the commercial and academic spheres in the West but is firmly under the management or “direction” of the Party-State in China. In fact, that article epitomized a key shift in Shen’s work: from statist sociology focused on the birth of economic market, to a more complex kind of sociology concerned with the birth of society itself. As the last section discussed, this change raised for Shen the questions of who he was and what he should do as an intellectual. Shen’s existential breakpoint facilitated his quest for an intellectual self-concept, as Chapter 10 explains. The inherent political tension between such position-taking such as the 1998 paper entailed and the role of the spokesperson is discussed below, in the last section of the chapter.

Several signs reinforce our interpretation that this first publication listed on Shen’s vita was particularly important to him. For instance, when we referred in an interview to the three “public” papers published by Shen between 1998 and 2011 as a trilogy of important public stances, Shen immediately nodded, calling them the three articles on/concerning society [关于社会的三篇文章] before briefly discussing the objective of each paper.

Whereas for Shen this paper was a first publication, for Sun it was not: his vita shows that Sun had been publishing vigorously since the mid-1980s. However, for Sun as for Shen, signs of the importance of the 1998 paper can be find. For instance, on the Tsinghua Department of Sociology’s website, the first part of Sun’s publication record [论著译著] takes a narrative form rather than the familiar list of publications. This record presents a three-fold chronicle—80s, 90s, and present⁹¹—in which Sun succinctly describes both the research orientation [研究方向] and most important publications of each period. The Chinese scholar explains that in the 1990s, his research interest switched from modernization theory to changes in China’s social structure [中国社会结构变迁]. After enumerating five papers pertaining the latter topic without mentioning publication information, Sun begins a new sentence: “Published in October 1998 in Strategy and Management, the article ‘Short-Term Trends and the Potential Crisis of the Transformations of Chinese Social Structure’ received the attention of academic circles both

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⁹¹ According to the most recent date for published articles listed in the second part of the webpage, the last update of the text-content probably occurred in 2012.
inside and outside the country (SLP-TH 2012).” Interestingly, Shen views the impact of the paper differently: in an interview, although he mentioned that “some academics came to discuss and ask questions [after the publication of the article],” Shen was visibly more excited to share with us that “the reaction of [Chinese] society was big, especially on the internet.” These two different “reception” accounts from Sun and Shen nicely illustrate their different intellectual styles/identities, Sun being more a professional scholar while Shen is more an activist scholar who is eager to interact with society.

9.2 - Explosion of the Social: Social Inequalities and the Classification Struggle

One of the most significant changes in reform China, especially in the 1990s, was the explosion of social inequality and social differentiation (Sun, Li and Shen 1998; Gipouloux 2005). In many ways the problem was relatively new to the continental giant, since the previous fifty years of Communist rule had claimed a strict egalitarianism both in ideological and material terms, though in fact serious differences between urban and rural existed under Mao. Indeed, during the last decade of that long and unsettled century in Mainland China, “the geographies of winners and losers under reforms [quickly emerged]: coastal provinces versus interior provinces; urban residents versus rural residents; men versus women; Han versus minority groups; and across all these, the elite classes versus the ordinary citizen versus the poor” (Cheek 2006: 75). DENG’s pragmatic pronouncement in 1985 that “some will get rich first [or much more quickly]” (Vogel 2011) largely legitimized and facilitated these emerging social inequalities. Before 1978, there were only two principle official classes in Mainland China—the working class and the peasant class—and one stratum, the famous “9th Stinky Category,” the intellectuals; and the meanings of “class” and “stratum” were indistinct (Ngai and Chan 2008: 80).

After the successful reformist take-over of the State apparatus in 1992 and the acceleration of the economic reforms, the Maoist discourse of class/class struggle was definitively abandoned. The historically and ideologically privileged position of the Chinese working class was dismissed as inappropriate in the new social realities of China’s late-socialism. As Koselleck perhaps rather conservatively claims, “[c]oncepts can become outdated

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92[发表在《战略与管理》1998年第五期上的《中国社会结构转型的中近期趋势和隐患》...受到海内外学术界的关注.]
93 See Brown 2012 for a balanced account of existing inequalities under Mao focusing on the divide city/countryside.
because the contexts within which they were constituted no longer exist” (1996: 62). The political context after 1992 in Mainland China was indeed changing under the state’s firm neoliberal hand, but as Shen (2006b, 2007a, 2008d; Lee and Shen 2009) pointed out, it was somewhat of a paradox in terms of China’s class history that as the concept of Marxist class virtually disappeared from the discursive realm, a new workforce formed by rural migrant workers was pouring into the recently industrialized urban coastal zones.

During most of the 1990s, the central task for the CCP was not to articulate new categories that captured the realities of this new working class—the exploitative conditions of labour, massive layoffs of SOE workers, mingong, and rising rural inequality. The focus, rather, was the textual production of the middle class, the new foundation of the CCP’s envisioned topography of social strata. This new language was (per)formative for the political project of developing the middle class “by inciting aspiring individuals to adhere to new social norms of middle-class identity often defined around consumer practices” (Anagnost 2008: 498).

The middle class was becoming what Koselleck called a “future-oriented concept,” a phrase that highlights the profoundly nonrepresentative quality of language, or what might be described as its creative or performative nature (Hacking 2004: 139). When discussing the making of the social, perhaps no other sociologist has better articulated this idea than Bourdieu. According to that French sociologist, the power of creating or obliterating groups with words epitomizes a state’s monopoly on symbolic power, “the power of making groups to manipulate the objective structure of society [or t]he performative power of designation, of nomination to create the existence of what was, until then, a collection of people, a purely additive series of simply juxtaposed individuals” (Bourdieu 1987: 164-65).

9.3 - The Chinese Sattelzeit - the Reorganization of the Socio-Political Discursive Field

The above discussion concerning the symbolic dimension of politics and the performative quality of language highlights the ordering power of concepts such as class, social strata or middle class. Indeed, these are not Mertonian concepts merely describing reality, since both class and social strata include visions of the future and of corresponding social mobilization; rather, they should be considered to be “concepts in motion” (Junker 2006: preface). For the leader of the Chinese revolution, the importance of “class analysis was to assess the attitude and potentials of various groups towards revolution” (Wong 1979: 33-34); in fact,
Mao never forgot about class struggle. One of his most systematic projects of Mass Sociology in the early 1960s, the four histories, engaged laypeople in researching and documenting class struggle within the four basic social institutions regulating Chinese life: “the family, the village, the commune, and the factory or the mine” (Wong 95). While the total number of published or produced pieces of data for that project is unknown, given the ratio of published to unpublished works of 1:230 and the fact that about 10,000 histories were written in Beijing alone in 1963, it is safe to say that because it was a systematic and national social movement, the four histories shared many characteristics with classic Maoist mass mobilization. Indeed, to recognize only the epistemic relation linking “struggling” Chinese realities with amateur authors of the four histories would be fallacious. It was the social relation that interested Mao: the revolutionary effect of the research experience on amateur historians. Indeed, “the task of instilling vicarious experience of class conflict was assigned to the four histories because direct knowledge of that historical phase of class struggle could no longer be obtained through painful personal experience” (Wong 96). The mot d’ordre was change through revolution, and Mao had little patience with gradual reforms.

In the 1990s, the emerging concepts of social strata [社会阶层] and a middle strata/class [中等收入 中间阶层 中产阶级], unlike the working of class [阶级], articulated social inequalities in a way that actually side-stepped the idea of social antagonism (Ngai et al. 2008). As Anagnost (502) put it, with the shift from a class-based discourse to the language of social strata, tackling “increasing economic disparities becomes a problem to be addressed through public policy, aided by social analysis rather than social revolution.” While mass mobilization was the dominant Maoist strategy of social development under DENG, the policy of sanctioning “a few to get rich first” embodied the problem of social inequalities “in terms of developmental time” (Anagnost 2008: 501-02). As a result of this new perspective, those who succeeded early on in the 1980s were held up not as victims of class struggle, but rather as examples for others to follow, the avant-gardes of a widespread prosperity to come. The language with which to discuss social strata accordingly shifted from terms describing a class-based conflict model to the metaphor of a ladder which aspiring subjects could clamber up (Anagnost 502, 504).

9.4 - Middle Class as a Theory of Social Harmony

Unsurprisingly, in that context, “the growth of the middle class in China increasingly became a new telos of development” (Anagnost 499). Yet even more importantly, this
conceptual shift centering on a growing middle class should be understood as a normative theory engineered by the state to help stabilize Chinese society, a society increasingly plagued by inequalities and unrest. For instance, in 1997, the World Bank (WB 1997) reported that the Gini coefficient (a measure of income disparity) had increased in China from 0.28 in the early 1980s to 0.458. This number was alarming for two main reasons. First, 0.458 was exceeding the coefficient level of 0.40 which was generally recognized as an acute sign of social inequalities. Second, such quick increase in the Gini coefficient was historically unprecedented for any society (Anagnost 497). Furthermore, between 1993 and 2010 incidents of social unrest sharply increased, especially toward the end of the 1990s (Woodman 2014). While the number of incidents remained relatively stable between 1993 and 1996 at an average of 10,000 incidents per year, that figure nearly doubled during 1997 and 1998, from 15,000 to 25,000. In that context, the expansion of a middle class was seen by a lot of social actors as a necessary counterbalance to this growing social instability in the wake of rapid economic change.

Therefore, as suggested above, in the midst of the radical transformation of the social tissue in Mainland China, the CCP faced an acute two-fold challenge: to delay the national emergence of an accurate picture of the society so that it could both minimize the need for the government to acknowledge and respond to growing social inequalities, and establish a new concept of social strata that was centered on the middle class. The stakes were high for the Chinese leadership. If the working and peasant classes were no longer the “people” represented by the CCP because of this shift, the question of who the Party was speaking for would emerge both within and outside of government. Ultimately, what was at stake in this symbolic struggle in which the CCP held a disproportionate balance of symbolic power was the re-articulation of the master concept of the ‘people’ as to fit the new political base of the Chinese power. We really assisted at that time with a Chinese Sattelzeit: a reorganization of discursive field. Under the Maoist regime, the discursive field was stable; the people were those in the countryside, and the working class. While the government’s motto serving the people had clear meaning during that period, after 20 years of economic and social change, it had lost that clarity.

A marked example of the tension between the social representation of new realities and the political representation of new social stratas came in 2002 with the publication of Lu Xueyi’s report on class and social strata. This document summarizes the results of a large social survey on stratification and mobility started in 1999, when Old Lu was still head of the CASS Institute.
of Sociology. The book proposes five groups and ten stratas to describe the new stratification of Chinese society. Shortly after its publication, Lu’s report became the subject of intense debate on the internet. What is more, the book was even found in the hands of industrial workers in the northeast who were protesting in front of their local government, arguing that the report was proof that under DENG, the working class had been side-stepped as the "master" class by emergent social groupings. The Institute of Sociology in Beijing also received numerous telephone calls from workers anxious to know to which social strata they belonged (Merle 2013). As Hobbes observed, the problem of order is a problem of knowledge.

Although consistent with the Party-line, since Lu stressed the essential role of the middle class in the social development of China, the book was banned and taken out of circulation shortly after publication (Merle 2013). If the book acknowledges new social stratas such as white-collar workers, business owners, and specialized technicians, it also officially shows that they represented only small fractions of the working population, while the peasants and the working class still accounted for nearly 67% (Merle 2013). The problem for Old Lu’s report was that in the same year, Jiang Zemin was making official his doctrine of The Three Represents, a political gesture aimed at giving the CCP a more democratic quality by proposing to represent (1) the advanced productive forces (private entrepreneurs, business owners, etc.), (2) the intellectual and cultural orientation of an advanced culture, and (3) the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people of China (Jia 2004). Therefore, the concept of the people was being given a new twist by the interests of the new social strata now acquiring political representation via Party membership. As the order in which these three interests were enumerated indicates, the least numerous group, the middle class, were preeminent in the social hierarchy while the traditional CCP base, its large majority of working people, came last.

9.5 - Intellectual Field

Within ten years of the government’s bloody 1989 crackdown on the democratic movement, the intellectual field was flourishing again as contending groups were competing for the attention of the educated elites. This was especially true after the CCP’s 1996 release of its Ninth Five-Year-Plan (1996-2000), which promised to seriously attend to the growing socioeconomic disparity by calling for systematic improvement in living standards and eradicating the problem of poverty. This official acknowledgement by the Party-State of the existence of these social problems certainly was a green light to intellectuals. Stern and O’Brien
(2012: 174) argued that “one way to understand the Chinese state is to view it from below, from the perspective of people advocating change.” Intellectuals who operate at the boundary of the acceptable are attentive to signals about what the authorities will tolerate. The Ninth Five-Year Plan was a signal indicating that public debates around the question of social inequalities would be tolerated.

Questions pertaining to the development and the role of state and market in the emergence of both the New Left (NL) and the Liberals in China’s intellectual fields have been abundantly treated in Western sinological scholarship (e.g., Gu and Goldman 2004; Hao 2003). These two loosely defined political stances are generally recognized as providing “authoritative conceptual lenses for understanding reality [at the time]” (Anagnost 501). After 1992, following the official dismissal of Maoist discourse regarding class struggle, exploitation, and mass mobilization, the NL [新左派] articulated its critique of China’s economic and social development. In the context of globalization, the NL regarded institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, and the World Bank as serving the interests of a global neoliberal free-market order in ways that were disastrous for developing countries. Beyond this critical analysis, however, these Chinese intellectuals emphasized the continued importance of the state’s political authority over domestic struggles for social justice and equality. Many members of the NL were social scientists at universities or in government think-tanks. They are credited with having contributed to the debates over social policy by addressing the contradictions inherent to economic growth, such as social inequality (Anagnost 500-01). For their part, the Liberals, acquainted with the reformist vision of the 1980s, argued in favour of furthering national economic development by following a set of neo-liberal principles: a market economy, globalization, and limited state intervention.

When asked what he thought about the debate between the New Left and the Liberal camps, Shen explained with a smile, “We make jokes with them, [we say to them: the situation] is not that easy! The problem of the NL is that they do not oppose the government, they only oppose capital. The Liberals oppose [the state’s] social intervention, [but] not capital. [Both groups fail to recognize that] Chinese capital and the Chinese government have been linked [since the early days of the reform], with important consequences for the development of the
country. Although I have friends [on both sides], I never attended these discussions.”

This third-way intellectual political stance is precisely the view that informed the position taken in the 1998 paper that we shall now turn to.

9.6 - The 1998 Paper: From Field-Spokesperson to Spokesperson for the Social

The human being who would be an original is not the one who has a great private thought within him that he then makes public. The original is the one who can change the very language what we share, in which we think, and which is our communal version of the world, both inner and outer.

Ian Hacking, *Historical Ontology*

As the previous section discussed, before the opening of the twentieth first century the question of who the CCP’s “people” were was a pressing conceptual concern with practical implications for the legitimacy of the Party-State and for the direction it was taking in constructing the country’s socialist future. Meanwhile, after virtually half a decade of relative marginalization—1989-1995—sociology had regained its front and center position. While some sociologists were active in these national endeavours on behalf of the State, social actors such as Shen Yuan, well-trained in the manipulation of sacred symbols, was participating in a crucial debate over the making of China’s social tissue. This debate was no mere exchange of ideas or communication; rather, it was a symbolic struggle over the vision and di-vision of the social world, the practices involved in knowledge-making, and the shaping of central social and political concepts.

The 1998 paper named and materialized the elite networks revolving around the CCP. In fact, that paper critically analyzed how two powerful Party mottos, *Serving the People* and *Serving the Reforms* (or as some translated these mottos, *Serving the Reforms is Serving the People*) had shifted to *The Reforms are Serving the CCP’s People*—and it pointed out that those people certainly did not include the majority of the Chinese population.

Indeed, although the objective stated in the introduction of that paper in relatively typical scientific language was to “establish a conceptual framework to analyze the development of China’s social structure” (Sun et al. 1998: 1), the paper also presents the three intellectuals’ entrance into the existing symbolic struggle to redefine two core concepts—the state itself, and people/society—while also attempting to show what both the New Left and the Liberals failed to

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94 See Sun (2002) for a virtually exact formulation of this criticism.
articulate: the connections between state and capital in post-reform China. As Shen said in interview: “We were hoping to rely on this type of article to make this problem an important topic that everybody would come to discuss.”


In October, 1998, Sun Liping, Li Qiang, and Shen Yuan published the paper ‘Short-Term Trends and the Potential Crisis of the Transformations of Chinese Society Structure’ as the leading article of the fifth bi-monthly edition of the journal Strategy and Management. This publication remains a need-to-read publication for the educated elite (high-rank officials, businessmen, scholars, intellectuals, lawyers, and policy-makers), having established itself as one of the most influential discursive forums for important debates—read symbolic struggles—about contemporary China (Li 29:2). SM is sometime refers to as “the oriental Foreign Affairs” (CISM 2014).

The China Institute of Strategy and Management (CISM) has published SM bi-monthly since 1993. The CISM, “a national first-grade academic group registered on June 17, 1989, under the ratification of the Ministry of Civil Affairs” (CISM 2014), is widely considered to be one of the most influential think-tanks in Mainland China (Li ibid).

According to Zhidong Hao (2003: 336), “[s]ince the mid-1990s, groups of policy intellectuals [国策派] have clustered around Strategy and Management. Many of them are economists, sociologists, and political scientists, who seek to provide policy suggestions for, and to cooperate with, the government toward a gradual reform. This is where many neoconservatives published their articles.” As an ideal-type, Hao’s “policy intellectual” certainly

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95[我们希望通过这样的文章能过在社会上变的议题，变重要的 topic，然后大家来讨论。]
96 Li Qiang was, at the time, Dean of and a professor in the department of sociology at Renda.
97 Attentive readers will have noticed that only 14 days separate the Tiananmen massacre from the foundation of the CISM. Although there is no hard evidence other than the list of founder members to support our interpretation, it is highly probable that in the aftermath of the tragic events of June 4, 1989, anxious to minimize the negative global reaction to Deng’s manu militari handling of the democratic movement, a group of high-ranking state officials founded the CISM as a means of rebuilding diplomatic relation between China and the world. The stated objectives of the Institute also tend to support its envisioned role as a Chinese Track-II diplomacy vehicle: that objective states that the “CISM has built good relationships with international and domestic governmental organizations, academic bodies, and NGOs. Internationally known as the “strategic think tank of China,” it plays an important role in the field of civil diplomacy” (CISM 2014).
captures one aspect of Sun et al.’s idea of public intellectuality, since Hao’s term suggests the willingness of such an intellectual worker to labour within the logic of the state. However, as the following discussion shows, *the 1998 paper* does much more than that as the three sociologists’ position-taking goes beyond merely providing policy suggestions; it also attempts to participate in the reshaping of the dominant concept of *social*.

### 9.6.2 - State and Capital Connections: Naming the Elite

It is fair to say that the three intellectuals cover a lot of ground in their 17-page article. With the main argument of the essay, they first highlights, as many social actors in Mainland China had done in the late 1990s, the sharp discrepancy between the equalizing effect of market mechanisms in the 1980s and the sudden reversal of this trend over the next decade, which was marked by the explosion of social inequalities.

However, what distinguishes the trends and crisis paper from other such analyses is that it also elaborated a critical theory of the Chinese power elite by linking social structure, economic and power. The 1998 paper is crafted as a careful explanation of the hidden social mechanisms that facilitated and exacerbated the rapid growth and persistence of social inequalities throughout the 1990s. As Sun et al. (1-2) put it, what we need is “a better understanding of the kind of social forces that are holding hands on the fundamental tendencies of Chinese society.” Although most Chinese social scientists presented the structural transformation of the society as a consequence of economic reforms, as might have been the case for much of the early 1980s, virtually none have ventured to point out that during the 1990s, new social configuration that emerged in early post-Mao China was a surreptitious force driving economic and political development on the Mainland.

Therefore, the originality and challenge of the 1998 paper was its argument that the political, economic, and technical intelligentsia [技术知识分子] collaborated during the first 20 years of the Reforms. In other words, the paper asserted that this alliance had significant decision-making power in government affairs. Sun et al. were not suggesting a vulgar conspiracy theory whereby this alliance constituted a unified *group-for-themselves* ruling the country; rather, while they recognized the multiplicity of groups within the alliance, they pointed out that only those elites which had the means to defend and advance their own interests within the Chinese political system. In a paper published in 2008 in the English-language academic journal
Modern China, Sun Liping (107) repeated—nearly word for word—the sociological explanation for the alliance described in the 1998 paper:

The formation of elites in China during its market transition has not been a process of replacing different types of elites with new elites, but a rise of a new group of elites who control the total capital, consisting of cultural, political, and economic capital. Their primary capital is the political or administrative power in their own hands or those of their parents.

It is, however, in the trends and crisis paper that the term total capital [总体性资本] was first used by Sun et al. to conceptualize the phenomenon of capital—economic, social and political—flowing mostly among a small number of elites of different types.98

The summary above aimed to highlight the bold qualities of the analysis developed by Sun and his two future Tsinghua colleagues. Indeed, their exposé critically described the country’s transition from a totalitarian regime (2-4) to a political system controlled by elites monopolizing total capital. In the 1990s, Sun et al. were certainly not the first to think or speak such criticism. As Chapter 6 points out, the brutal and violent end of the 1989 Democratic Movement made obvious to many Chinese intellectuals how fiercely the Party-State was protecting its own interests. One can thus assume that in the 1990s, behind closed doors intellectuals throughout China widely exchanged strongly negative views about the CCP’s co-opting of power and market. In that sense, the trends and crisis paper was most certainly not an extemporaneous act, but rather a long-awaited and rehearsed gesture by three intellectuals well-trained and -equipped for the task. Compared with the temporal fragility of orality, the 1998 paper was without doubt an event, since it gave such criticisms about the social, political and economic developments of Mainland China a durable material ontology (see Medina 2014) and the ability to circulate beyond their context of production. As Walter Ong (1982: 7, 12) put it: “Writing, [as] commitment of word to space . . . tyrannically locks [ideas] into a visual field forever.”

9.6.3 - Breaking the Connection Between Party-State and People: Naming the Social I

One surprising characteristic of the 1998 paper given the logic of China’s directed public sphere (Cheek 2006a; 2010) was that its confident criticism of the Chinese government was neither buried in the body of the text nor wrapped in heavy theoretical language (apart from

98 Ivan Szelenyi’s Making Capitalism without Capitalists counts as the most influential contribution to Sun Liping’ sociological thinking (SY-ID 2012).

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“total capital”), as one might expect it to have been. Certainly, any direct criticism of the government remains a risky business in Mainland China today. Yet the authors’ intervention was absolutely clear, critical, and bold. Beginning on page 2, Sun et al. drew the reader’s attention to the fact that the concept of “state” [国家] as used in that text referred not to its dominant meaning—the national state and its representation of the population [国家的代表性], but rather to the state’s structure as mobilized by totalizing interest groups eager to advance their own agenda. Furthermore, Sun et al. (2) emphasized that it was the obvious autonomy of the state and its capacity to reach its own goals and interests, not its role of acting as the people’s spokesperson, that had to be recognized in order to move forward.

That such a critical piece was even allowed to go to print is surprising.99 However, one of the discursive strategies that made it possible for the paper’s critical position-taking to appear in intellectual circles concerned its discussion of the middle class. As the first section of this chapter outlines, in the 1990s the government was engineering the development of a middle class (see Tomba 2004), a social stratum envisioned as the pièce de résistance of the country’s social order. Just as Old Lu did in his 2002 report, Sun et al. here acknowledged the government’s vision that the middle-class-in-the-making could potentially reduce the social friction the country was experiencing g (4-9).100 However, the three authors went on to argue, since the middle class was still just a small minority of the population in the late 1990s, its role as a strong social stabilizing force was still a future-oriented concept. More importantly, Sun et al. criticizes the CCP by stressing that the grasp of the total elites on the national resources and institutions was hampering the emergence of the middle class as a social force [社会力量]. Essentially, although the authors recognized that the developing middle class could have a stabilizing force, they argued that, in the contemporary context, that emergent social category lacked political capital. They also asserted that because of the nature of China’s political system, not only the middle class but also the poorer strata of the population had no way of expressing their views, no channel for the legitimate representation of their particular interests.

99 The fact that the paper was officially published by China’s Strategy and Management Institute’s research group on social structural transformation [中国战略与管理研究会社会结构转型课题组] most certainly increased the symbolic capital or say the theory effect of the 1998 paper.
100 For instance, on page 8 the authors note that “the middle class occupy the theme of society, as it is one important structural element for the stability of our contemporary society” [中产阶级占据社会的主题，是现代社会走向稳定的重要结构因素].
9.6.4 - State and Political Representation: Naming the People’s Political Agency

The three Chinese intellectuals therefore were taking a position in the symbolic struggle over the shift from classist language to social-strata discourse. From their standpoint, state sociologists working within the framework of social stratification theories were ultimately technical intellectuals legitimating the government’s vision of the new social order. For Sun et al., most attempts at the turn of the twentieth first century to discover the social topography of the emerging Chinese society by mobilizing Chinese social scientists failed to acknowledge the phenomena of social polarization and conflicts of interest (8).

A third-way approach to intellectuality emerged as the group of sociologists sidestepped the state performativity associated with concepts of class and strata in favor of the more inclusive and emancipatory concept of society. They refused to assign any definitive social categories (e.g., middle class, small- and medium-scale business owners, working class, peasants, and migrant workers) as to what counts as society. Instead, their textual intervention attempt to ascribe a democratic social meaning to the concept of society, stressing the necessity, for sake of social stability, of recognizing and developing society’s mechanisms of self-organization, defense, and expression of interests against the state, the market, and the alliance between them (Sun et al. section 4.5:10). This position is develop not only in section 4, “Social Fragmentation and The Development of Society’s Self-Organization,” (9-10)101 but also in section 6, the very last portion of the paper, entitled “The Reconstruction of Society: Structure, Institution, Organization” (16-17).102 In fact, the spatial organization of the text reinforced the two overarching arguments contained in the 1998 paper. Right from the start, the text proposed a critical re-interpretation of the concept of state by challenging the dominant discourse linking government with political representation; and the very end of the text proposed that society (understand as social groups) should develop its own political agency of representation.

The trends and crisis paper boldly entered a symbolic struggle over the redefinition of such political concepts (in a Koselleckian sense) as state and people/society. The coining of terms such as “alliance” and “total elite” name the reality of the state thus persuasively attacking the stability of the CCP and its ability to represent the people. The logic of Sun et al. begins with

101 [社会碎片化与社会自组织的发育]
102 [社会重建：结构，制度，组织]
the argument that since the state is unfit to perform the political delegation of the Chinese people, society should have the right to represent its own interests. Consequently, the second important symbolic struggle of the 1998 paper is to re-define *society* as including people’s rights to self-organization, self-defence, and self-expression of their individual interests.

In short, the paper advocates that the people *serve themselves*. “A society where everybody can express themselves is a healthy society,” Shen mentioned in interview. As the very first words of the abstract of an article Shen (2008c: 399) published in 2008 clearly state: “the mission of sociology is the production of society.” For Shen’s friend, Sun Liping, the cause of the problem is that after 1949, “all the previously independent social forces in China were deprived of their independence” (Sun 2008: 96). Remembering his first visit to the U.S. in 1994, when he saw old hippies at Berkeley still protesting against the Vietnam War or for other political causes, Shen declared, “in the West, society can organize itself without constant government intervention.” Later on during the interview, the sociologist said “where society comes from is an extremely important question. Because you [Westerners] are born is a country with a society, [the very concept of society] is taken for granted. This is completely different for us. We have to start anew.”

9.7 - From the Production of Market to the Production of Society

It is in that sense that Shen’s participation in the 1998 paper epitomized his shift from being a statist sociologist preoccupied with the construction of a strong socialist modernity and with research questions such as the birth of market, to being a sociologist invested in the study and the production of China’s society. The next chapter documents how, after his move to Tsinghua, Shen managed to build sociological theory and construct his intellectual self-concept so as to actively participate in the construction of the social in a form of sociological intervention that ‘rightly’ or say correctly interacted with China’s dominated social groups. In terms of Shen’s archived Marxism, it is crucial to note that while it remains minimal the 1998 paper did subtly mobilize Marx’s theory of binary social polarization, the working class or proletarians on one side and the bourgeois on the other (Marx and Engels 1977: 35-48) when discussing the potential role of the middle class in contemporary China in the section (4-9) entitled The Reorganization of Social Forces: Middle Class or still Binary Society (4).\(^\text{103}\) Without directly

\(^{103}\) [社会力量的重组：中产阶级还是两极社会？]
mentoring Marx, the section points to the idea that if the middle class is still in its infancy and social inequalities continue to increase, the phenomenon of extreme social polarization must be considered. Sun et al. were thus suggesting the potential relevance of Marxist social analysis in the understanding of social development trends since the 1980s; and as a result, Shen was slowly re-mobilizing his Marxist self-concept.

In October 1999, exactly one year after the publication of the trends and crisis paper, Shen co-published a short paper in *China Youth Science and Technology* [中国青年科技], the official publication of the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League. To publish in such a dedicated Party journal should not be taken as a sign that Shen was playing a clear-cut game, be it one of orthopraxy or orthodoxy. Rather, Shen’s third-way politics blur the two: his publishing in this journal was shaped and driven by his orthodoxy while the audience-that-mattered remained the powerful Party-State. The title of the paper itself indicated that Shen was continuing on from where he and his colleagues Sun and Qiang had left off in the 1998 paper: the new piece was called “From People Organization to Social Organization” [从“人民”团体到“社会团体”]. Drawing on New Institutionalism’s concept of isomorphism, Shen and Sun (1999b) argued that since its foundation, the Chinese Youth Foundation (CYF), an NGO registered with the Ministry of Civil Affairs as a social organization, had been under the tight control of three powerful organizations: the Central Committee of the Youth League, the People’s Bank of China, and the Ministry of Civil Affairs. The CYF had thereby been left with virtually no autonomy. As Shen and Sun put it, “the paradox is that Chinese NGOs are in fact G-NGOs (Governmental-NGO) [as] CYF is a social organization in name only . . . it is, in fact, merely a Party-mouthpiece” (18).

This paper revealed a pattern for all of Shen’s writings from 1997 through 1999. Indeed, following the modus operandi of both his 1997-1998 editorial addresses and the 1998 paper, the

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104 [共青团中央]
105 [制度的形同制度]
106 Article co-published with Sun Wusan [孙五三], a former CASS IS colleague of Shen at CASS IS, not with Sun Liping.
107 [团中央]
108 [中国人民银行]
109 [民政部]
110 [党的喉舌]
very introduction of this paper drew the reader’s attention to the political differences between social organization and people/civic organization. Consistent with the position proposed in the trends and crisis paper, Shen’s objective was to move away from the concept of people and toward that of society (that is, social organization), stressing the capacity of society to self-organize without the state’s intervention. As Shen et al. explains:

At first sight it seems as if the two concepts of “people/civic organization” and “social organization” appear to be identical—it can be difficult to differentiate them and thus extremely easy for outsiders to discriminate clearly between the two—nevertheless in Chinese society, which is just like an encyclopaedic dictionary, the fine distinctions in the background of a word may possibly imply different meanings. Before the reform era the former phrase [“people/civic organization”] was already a familiar one, pointing at one type of existing form of Party and government organ belonging to a formal organization who enjoyed constitutional power and its average member, an official. Such organizations enjoy the Party-State allocation of monetary resources. The latter concept is a new idea that emerged after the beginning of the reforms and that refers to [social organizations] legally registered in Ministry of Civil Affairs records. As such [the Party-State] allows various kinds of social mobilization movements to take their course in the handling and managing of the people, and to organize their own directions. A considerable number of [these social organizations’] members don’t actually possess any formal state official status or capacity, [and] the material resources [of these kinds of social organizations] are more likely to be raised independently (17).

It is interesting to note that while Shen’s modus operandi remains the same, his own symbolic capital have radically increased since the 1998 paper. Indeed, although the Tsinghua’s Department of Sociology was officially opened in early 2000, in this paper discussed above, Shen already presented himself as a professor at the Tsinghua’s Department of Sociology as the title appears under his name on the first page of the article. An important strategy of self-presentation that increased the symbolic power of his political intervention. However, speaking with authority for the social also bring his share of tension, as the next section explains.

9.8 - From Naming the Social to Naming Sociology

This last short section of the chapter discusses both (1) the tension between the 1998 paper and the idea of spokesperson, and (2) the ideological continuity between the paper and the founding of the Tsinghua’s Department of Sociology in 2000.

Although is not possible here to assess the effects that the paper’s conceptual contributions to discussion of society had on the vitality and mobilization of popular social movement in contemporary China, certainly the third-way positioning of Sun et al. in this paper made them more visible by distinguishing their work from other intellectual projects. Indeed, at
the end of the 1990s, the three intellectuals were not the only ones attempting to enrich the socio-political discursive realm of concepts by trying to make dominated, “invisible” groups visible. New expressions such as *impoverished group, disadvantaged group, and substratum social group* (Merle 2007a: 46-47) appeared elsewhere to characterize the most deprived populations.

However, as the previous section of this chapter indicates, the reception to the 1998 paper showed that Sun et al.’s third-way intellectual politics—a sophisticated and balanced textual gesture bridging political representation and scientific dis-interest as well as New Left and Liberal, and above all marking the shift from a language of class to one of social strata—was a successful move. As Dick Pels 2001: 14-15) argued, “[t]he originality and effectiveness of the third party precisely resides in its ability to escape the double bind of a binary opposition whose protagonists find themselves locked in an antagonistic complicity.” It is somewhat fascinating that exactly a century before Sun et al.’s third-way intellectual politics, Durkheim would also take a similar stance that would prove enormously important for the institutionalization of the French School of Sociology. As Tristan Riley (2011: 121) explains, in the French context of the Third Republic

“stock polar responses were doomed to lose out to responses that were able to tie together seemingly contradictory themes. [With his third-position i]n 1898, Durkheim constructed an intellectual position that entailed a mobilization of a new sacred category, that of the individual, which would become the political and intellectual focus of the members of his class (the former clerics).” If Durkheim articulated the concept of *individual*, Sun et al. ambitiously articulated the concept of *society*.

That being said, the ideational offerings put in circulation by Sun et al. in *the 1998 paper* in an attempt to liberate dominated groups from the representative hand of the CCP seem to present an obvious paradox: intellectuals were speaking on behalf of the voiceless—that is, speaking for those they argued should be speaking for themselves; meanwhile, these spokespeople remained in positions of power, accumulating capital for their courageous textual gesture. Sun’s comment in regard to the large reception of the paper confirms the accumulation of capital following its publication: he noted that the 1998 paper “received the attention of academic circles both inside and outside the country.” However, such a realist reading blurs material reward/strategies for capital accumulation with authorial intention. Acknowledging the importance of material reward and capital, which certainly proved important on the chance to

111 [贫困群体, 弱势群体, 底层社会群体.]
open a department at Tsinghua, should, however, not obscure the importance of authorial intention, which in this case had significant structuring effects on the authors’ future ideation and knowledge (Maton 2000: 149) as well as on field dynamics.

The issue of Sun et al. talking for the socially dominated or voiceless side, the fact emerges that the sociologists were pushing towards the establishment of a social system in which various social groups, including disadvantaged ones, could defend and represent their own interests. In that sense, contra most Chinese intellectuals like those in the New Left and Liberal who “tend[ed] to look down upon other groups because they believe[d] that they themselves [were] the best and most convincing speakers” (Hao 2003: 374), the three authors of the trends and crisis paper problematized and marginalized their own position as “people’s delegates” in pursuing a political goal—proto-social democracy—that would ultimately allow people to side-step intellectuals as their obvious representatives in all matters political.

The essential question for Sun and his two colleagues was thus, “How can we argue and fight for dominated Chinese social groups without falling into the very same logical representational trap we are trying to free them from?” Or “How can we only be a temporarily audible voice for the voiceless, the ones who name the nameless?” Essentially, the three intellectuals were acting upon but simultaneously resisting the idea that “[a]ll things [social]—all invisible . . . collectivities, interests, motives—are in need of a spokesperson or an intermediary who renders them present, who lends them an existence which is made to ‘bear,’ ‘weigh,’ or act upon other entities in the world” (Pels 2001: xii).

Although “intellectual work of performance and construction is usually not taken into full reflexive account by the constructors themselves” (Pels 163), in their interview with Aurore Merle (2004: 9), Guo Yuhua along with two of the 1998 paper’s three authors, Shen Yuan and Sun Liping, articulated the tension they were aware of in regard to the role of the spokesperson when they told the French sociologists that “taking the vantage point of socially dominated groups should not transform the social scientist into a spokesperson, since a spokesperson will necessarily develop a paternalist relationship with those being represented.” In short, the fact must be acknowledged that at the same time as they acted as spokespeople for disadvantaged groups, a highly respected role traditionally played by intellectuals and the state, Sun et al. addressed and attempted to minimize that social prominence.
9.9 - Naming Society, Naming Sociology and Naming Himself

Despite the absence of any hard evidence connecting the publication of the 1998 paper with the establishment of a department of sociology at Tsinghua in 2000 in a tight narrative, continuity between the two events is discernible. Beginning with the naming of the social in 1998 as the intellectuals disseminate the ideas of society’s agency, the establishment of the department of sociology at Tsinghua in 2000 enabled Sun, Shen, Guo, and Li as a social group to name their own sociological school “The Sociology of Communist Civilization.” Like any other social group—mingong, the working class, property owners—intellectuals are members of the social who must organize themselves to represent their own particular interests. In the case of these four sociologists at Tsinghua, their founding of the sociology department there embodied what they had argued for as a group two years prior, the “right” of society to organize, express, and defend their interests themselves. These were exactly the actions that their new institutional location would enable them to take. The naming of their sociological school was in itself a crucial conceptual moment. As Simmel explains, the content of human existence must be formally captured in a cultural form in order to fully exist and be recognized. Such naming acts are also extremely important in intellectual contexts; very few sociological schools have named themselves over the last 30 years in Mainland China (Roulleau-Berger et al. 2008).

As this chapter explained with the 1998 paper, Sun et al. attempted to name the social differently from how the CCP defined it, in a way that freed the people from the Party’s representational gaze. In terms of ‘rewards’, as the next chapter analyzes, this paper facilitated the relocation of Shen and his colleagues to Tsinghua in 2000, where they founded a new department of sociology and so opened up the possibility of redefining what sociology meant and could do in Mainland China. Also, installed at Tsinghua after 2000 and playing the game of orthodoxy—that is, working towards the construction of society—Shen would be eager to de-archive his Marxist identity and attempt to name himself as an intellectual.

For instance, after Shen moved within the walls of academia in 2000, the liminality of his intellectual self-crisis would be guided by his own reading and re-theorizing of French sociologist Alain Tourain’s concept of sociological intervention. For three years, in a return to his Maoist roots and in the company of a multi-disciplinary team of scholars and graduate students from Tsinghua, Shen would spend all his weekends in the countryside, both educating
and studying rural industrial workers as the group instructed them in basic rights, English, and computer science (SY-ID 2012, also see Merle 2004).
Chapter 10 - From Nameless to Public Sociologist: The Quest for an ISC

Once at Tsinghua, we could meet several times every week to discuss and debate. Scattered at different institutions across Beijing we could never have been able to do anything.

Shen Yuan (in interview), Beijing, 2012

10.1 - Introduction

This chapter focuses on Shen’s making of his intellectual self-concept as his participation in the foundation of the Department of Sociology at Tsinghua concretize the fading of his orthopraxic game. In order to shed light on Shen’s intellectual trajectory since the late 1960s, so far this sociological narrative has tried to account for the dual effects—structured and structuring—of his habitus, of his political contexts, and of the emerging field of sociology. This chapter, however, devotes less attention to the contexts, political, institutional, or intellectual, that Shen had to navigate during the first decade of the twentieth century.

Instead, the chapter first describes the establishment of the Department of Sociology at Tsinghua in 2000, paying particular attention to Communist Civilization, the new paradigm around which the group of sociologists was working. It will be shown that the coining of “the sociology of Communist Civilization” was both sounds ideologically and scientifically, thus enabling the blessing of the CCP for the group of intellectuals to pursue their sociological endeavors. The remainder of the chapter follows Shen’s quest for an intellectual self-concept that could embrace many hard-to-reconcile embodied and ideational elements: (1) Shen’s specific ideas regarding theory and practice, (2) his Marxist intellectual identity, (3) his zhiqing habitus, and (4) his identity as a sociologist in which Alain Touraine’s idea of sociological intervention and Michael Burawoy’s public sociology

10.2 - The Department of Sociology at Tsinghua University

After months of preparation, in May 2000, the Department of Sociology at Tsinghua University, Beijing, was officially established on the second floor of the gerontology research center (Merle 2007b: 7). As the fishery council and the Institute of Philosophy did during Shen’s PhD program, the department would provide Shen and his colleagues with a retreat, a space for intellectual development. As the sociologist recalls, at that time

we wanted to create an academic environment that was alive, an academic environment capable of facing up to the complexity and the richness of social life. . . . We were hoping to have the capacity to (1) tackle the real problems of Chinese society, but at the same time we wanted to be able to (2) establish a constructive dialogue with contemporary social theory. At the time, we had the impression that this ideal could not be realized in the other
departments; and that we would be obliged to found a new department . . . in which we could pursue research projects in common, in which we could debate and exchange our ideas. (Merle 2007b: 23)

10.3 - Tsinghua University: Sociology of Communist Civilization

Chapter 9 explained that the 1998 position-taking of Sun et al. brought them from naming the social to naming their own school of sociology. That is, they named a scientific paradigm that captured a vision and new di-visions for Chinese sociology, something which Sun and his comrades meticulously developed during the 1990s: in Shen’s words, “something different” (SY-ID 2012).

What started in the 1990s under the leadership of Sun Liping as a Beijing University-based oral history research project striving to gain a better understanding of the influence of Communist power on Chinese society—both during the Maoist regime and after—played a definite role in what Claude Dubar called “Chinese sociology’s Copernican revolution” (in Merle 2007a: 50). In less than 20 years, the rehabilitated discipline went from acting primarily as a social policy-knowledge agent for the state, a kind of tamed socialist sociology, to an entity that might be able to formulate an ‘independent’ research paradigm centered on the study of Mainland China’s experience of CPC’s rule since 1949. This shift bears the clear marks of both the reflexivity acquired by Shen and his colleagues in the aftermath of the Tiananmen massacre and their increasing dissociation from active participation in the CCP’s socialist modernization plans for the country. What is more, by taking the Chinese historical experience of Maoist ruling as its research object, Shen and his colleagues rehabilitated Marxism as a possible theoretical orientation for Chinese sociology. This “Copernican revolution” of Chinese sociology would therefore also act as a rite of reintegration for Marxism, giving it once again a theoretical role in classical sociology and thus allowing Shen to finally de-archive his Marxist identity and embark on his quest for an intellectual-self concept, as this chapter later explores.

Shen understands the paradigm of Communist Civilization for Chinese Sociology as a general framework for analysis:

[the formulation of Communist Civilization is] an important step forward. We shouldn’t imagine that all Chinese sociologists know what they are studying. When they begin [the research process], they don’t have a total concept. They say, ‘I’m studying the family’, or ‘I’m studying the factory’—but they don’t know that the family or the factory are systems produced by Communist Civilization. They will go and carry out surveys and conduct
interviews while having no awareness of that. Their main problem is that they can’t see the forest for the trees. But the family or the factory that are studied, if you don’t first make them part of an enquiry into Communist Civilization, well, you’re making a serious mistake. The biggest mistake made in Chinese sociology is that it hasn’t defined the subject for research. When we mention Communist Civilization, [that means that] we can study it from different angles. This can help us to explain how to use Western theory to confront the problems of China. Otherwise, the problem is insoluble. (Merle 2007b: 29)

Sun Liping articulated the question similarly when he said “the problem faced by sociologists in China today is not capitalism but a social transition, and more generally, the transformation of the Communism Civilization” (Merle 2007a: 41). For Sun, the study of Communist Civilization is full of promises for the sociological community: “we have every reason to believe that such a civilization and its transition must become a new source of inspiration and stimulation for sociology, even for all the social sciences” (Sun 2008: 94). As Sun sees it, facing the enigmatic birth of modernity, European thinkers such as Marx, Durkheim, and Weber participated in the foundation of classic Western sociology. Thus, the transformation of the Communist Civilization they now face enables them to significantly enrich the sociological tradition founded in the West.

As the reader will see by this point, the modus operandi of Shen and his colleagues have always meticulously attended to both the conceptual level of sociological affairs and sharp political realities. Their new paradigm of Communist Civilization should be understood as existing between two moments or perhaps modalities of ideation: the social and the epistemic. First, as a social mediator between the fields of politics and sociology, the CC is a language of legitimacy that facilitates the emerging autonomy of the sociological field at the same time as it tacitly acknowledges the political order. The paradigmatic term Communist Civilization passed the test of orthopraxy because it suggested to the government that these sociologists were accepting the ideological/historical heritage of the political rulers. Second, as an epistemic mediator, the paradigm guided the group of sociologists in a specific way of doing research, a way that set them apart from other schools of thought in the field. As Shen explains below, such a conceptual offering is also a sociological invitation to epistemic reflexivity. Shen invites Chinese sociologists to abandon the State’s sociological agenda and to study the “functioning logic of Communist Civilization”112 (Merle 2007b: 25). With this paradigm and programmatic statement, the group was bidding for sociology’s autonomy, the point Shen was making when he

112 [共产主义文明的运作逻辑]
argued that “[t]he biggest mistake made in Chinese sociology is that it hasn’t defined the subject for research” (Merle 2007b: 10)—something that the state had done for the discipline for more than 20 years but that the discipline itself had not yet undertaken. Shen Yuan offers us sociology’s own first definition of its field:

Chinese society also belongs to Communist Civilization. Communist Civilization is a complex community: it includes a whole range of institutional arrangements [制度安排], but also a number of ways in which individuals can act. It also includes all sorts of ideologies. All of that comes together in everyday life. We shall observe the formation of a “manuscript” [文本], but also the norms for action that are present in people’s minds. We say that all these things together form a complex totality that is Communist Civilization. Its formation, its development, its changes, we define all these as the subject for research for Chinese sociology. (Merle 2007b: 9)

10.4 - Liminal Production: Between Economic Sociology and Labor Sociology

During his first two years as a faculty member at Tsinghua, Shen published three research articles based on original materials gathered during his oral history fieldwork in the 1990s. It is interesting to note that these papers are the first research works published in academic journals that the Beijing native listed on his CV—and he was now 47 years old. All three articles, ‘The Story of Brands,’ ‘The Birth of a Market,’ and ‘The Case of the Drawing of Lots: North China Market Businessmen’s Principles of Fairness and Equity,’ were initially translated from Chinese into French for publication. These texts embodied an interesting mid-point intellectually between Shen’s research interests in economic sociology and especially markets in the 1990s, and a nascent concern for social actors and their abilities to act and resist, as indicated by the trends and crisis paper.

Overall, the three papers were all interested in documenting two main things: (1) practical forms of conflict resolution and principles of justice renewal in contemporary China, and (2) the state-society interaction in a historical period of social transition. Interestingly, there is the sharp contrast between Shen’s boundary-making textual intervention advocating for a reflexive deployment of sociological concepts and theories (e.g. editorial addresses), and his own sociological knowledge production, which was virtually free of theory and concept. The latter was “a kind of sociological work that read more like a historical narrative or even as very good work of fiction or story,” a Chinese scholar told us in Beijing, sharing his impressions about

113 Later published in Chinese [沈原：“商的故事”，《林耀华教授纪念文集》，民族出版社, 2005年1月]
Shen’s ‘Story of Brands.’ “I didn’t know sociology was like that, I thought it would be filled with abstract and heavy theory,” he added.

For instance, the very first lines of the article “The Case of the Drawing of Lots: North China Market Businessmen’s Principles of Fairness and Equity” explained that Cicero said that historians should tell true stories and, in fact, one could say the same thing about sociologists: the only difference is that our stories are not from dusty archives but from today's definitely living world. And it is from this everyday world that the story I propose to tell you here comes from. (Shen 2001: 205)

Why was Shen so apparently reluctant to discuss theory or concept in his knowledge production? It was his “sensitivity to the ordering function of language and the constructivist truth that words can make and break things” (Pels 2003: 117) that prevented Shen from filling his texts with such ideation. Wanting to follow and document social actors’ daily practices of conflict resolution, Shen tried to limit the deployment of his own symbolic power. In fact, after three articles, Shen published nothing for four years. After the first interview with the Chinese sociologist as we were walking back to his home department together, we asked him why he had published so much less than his colleagues at Tsinghua. Shen stopped walking to emphasize his answer: “I do not want to publish only to publish. I want my contributions to mean something. My colleagues always tell me to publish more. It goes in one ear and out the other.” Earlier that day, while talking with him in his office, Shen Yuan had described how he had just spent the few last days in the megalopolis of Chongqing visiting a project sponsored by UNESCO, a living center for minggong offering housing, food, and entertainment for less than one US dollar per

114 Shen’s methodological discrimination between history and sociology is aligned with Alfred Schutz’s phenomenological division of the lifeworld between the world of contemporaries and the world of predecessors: the former can allow a direct experience of the flow of consciousness of others, whereas the latter can only be encountered indirectly, mediated with material traces of the past (1967).

[Cicéron a déclaré que le historiens se devraient de raconter des histoires vraies et, en fait, on pourrait dire la même chose des sociologues: la seule différence vient de ce que nos histoires ne sont pas tirées d’archives poussiéreuses mais d’un quotidien bien vivant. Et c’est de cet univers quotidien que vient l’histoire que je me propose de vous raconter ici.] My own translation from the French.

115 For instance, in the same period (2000-2002), Li Qiang published a staggering 34 articles (LQ-TH 2011).
day. When asked if that project was part of his own research, he smiled: “no, I just wanted to see.”

Between 2002 and 2004, although Shen did not publish, he was busy. He supervised three master’s students and taught a series of graduate seminars on classical and contemporary sociological theory, economic sociology, and criminal sociology (SY-TH 2011). But more importantly, the Chinese intellectual was working on a radically different project, an ambitious institutional visitation that the next section of this paper discusses in more detail. With the latter endeavor, Shen continued to study social actors and their abilities of action and resistance, but with two differences. First, his focus shifted from markets and business owners focus to the links between markets, business owners, and exploitation of the workforce. This shift is clear from a comparison of Shen’s 2002 ‘The Birth of a Market’ (2002a) with his 2007 ‘The Production of Society’ (2007a). Furthermore, from narrating the unfolding of a story with care not to deploy his symbolic power as the researcher involved in that story, Shen’s sociological articles became interventions that both documented the domination of the working class and empowered them as a social group capable of defending themselves against both market and state.

10.5 - Utopian Project: Sociological Intervention in the Chinese Countryside

Two years after the establishment of the Tsinghua’s Department of Sociology, the Government of Holland gave Shen a two-year research grant (for 2002-2004) allowing him to undertake a project that he called the Construction of Baigou Migrant Workers’ Night School. Baigou, Hebei, was the site where, in the 1990s, Shen had gathered oral history from peasants and business operators, interviewed local officials, and collected research materials. But this time, Shen went to Baigou with a radically different ambition: to research, teach, and organize the migrant workers. At the same time, 2003-2004, in the sociology department at Tsinghua Guo Yuhua, Shen’s colleague, was offering a graduate seminar on resistance movements in China’s countryside while Dingxin Zhao, a visiting professor from the University of Chicago, was introducing masters and PhD sociology students to theories of collective action and social

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116 [就是看看吧]
117 [2002 - 2004，荷兰政府资助课题]
118 [白沟农民工夜校建设]
119 The township of Baigou “is located at the triangle hinterland of Beijing, Tianjin and Baoding cities and it also intersects with Xiong County, Rongchen County and Dingxing County. It has 33 village streets, taking up an area of 54.5 km, with a town district of 13 km” (Hu 2007: 263).
movements (Merle 2007a: 48). Without calling their demarche radical, Shen and Guo were clearly doing sociological work differently; while other sociologists were helping to build a new social order around the middle class, these two were helping dominated social groups such as migrant workers to organize themselves into “a cohesive social force” (Sun et al. 1998).

On November 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 2003, during her seminar on rural sociology, professor Guo talked about the “vocation” of researchers in this field, “insisting that they . . . must constantly adopt a reflective attitude towards power relationships” (Merle 2007b: 8). She addressed her graduate students as follows: “Why should we think about the resistance of the peasants? The most widespread argument within the government, among researchers or city-dwellers, is the need for social stability—a view that considers the peasants in terms of their numbers. By adopting this argument, we adopt the viewpoint of the dominant class. We ought to be on the side of the peasants” (Merle 12). As Lee and Shen (2009) said of Chinese statist sociology, “sociologists [who] see society too much like the state and without venturing into the workplace, or exploring the life worlds or subjectivities of the workers . . . [are] unable to truthfully reflect labor experiences [as] they also fail to help Chinese workers to be reflexive of their own historical conditions and potentials” (114). Rectifying that failure was exactly what Shen proposed to do with his project of sociological intervention.

Shen (2008c: 402) narrated the inception of the project:

It is . . . difficult for [any outsider] to enter household factories [in the countryside] and make contact with the workers. However, in 2002, an incident involving the death of six young female workers due to benzene poisoning gave us the opportunity to enter these factories. Local government was forced to improve the work conditions in some 3000 household factories, scattered in 33 villages around the township. We invited some doctors from Beijing as volunteers and formed a medical-legal service team to go into the villages and provide free health check-ups for these workers. As the workers congregated around the village committee, waiting for their health inspection, my team members (mostly graduate students from the sociology and law departments from my university) distributed booklets on labour law to them. At the same time, team members lectured about labour law on-site. This was perhaps the first time during 20 years of industrialization that knowledge about labour law had been brought directly to these villages.

Thereafter, for three semesters between 2002 and 2004 accompanied by “his team of young and brilliant sociologists at Tsinghua University – the MIT of China” (Burawoy 2008:}

Shen Yuan, the leader of the enterprise (Hu2007: 263), would leave Beijing Friday afternoon to spend the weekend in Baigou at the night school that had been set up in one of the factories to “provide workers with courses in labor law, English, and computer” (Hu ibid). As Shen (402) explained,

instructors covered various topics in their courses, such as labour contracts, work time and salary and compensation, and held discussions with workers. These preliminary steps in providing training in computer science and English not only improved their skill sets, but most importantly they increased the workers’ self-confidence in this age of globalization and high-tech. Since we started the health examination services and distribution of legal information, about 2300 workers have received these services.

This work was consistent with Sun et al. (1998)’s ideas about social self-organization but with a decisively Marxist perspective, since one of the project’s goals was to lay the foundation for the growth of self-consciousness amongst the participants. As Shen’s student Lina Hu pointed out, “these groups spent many hours reflecting and examining the nature of the struggle they engaged in and, under the probing questions of the research team, raised their consciousnesses” (Hu 270, also see Shen 2008c: 402).

Shen’s project is reminiscent of Qiubai Qu’s visits to factories and villages in the late 1920s. A founding member of the Department of Sociology at Shanghai University and future secretary general of the Chinese Communist Party (1927-1929), the Marxist intellectual, like his department’s faculty and students,

wanted nothing less than to rouse the workers to take part in revolution. . . . It does appear, however, that the department was so preoccupied by attempts to raise the consciousness of workers and students, to organize the urban masses, and to make revolution that social science research was all but forgotten. (Chiang 2001: 146-47)

As Chiang (143) explained, “[a]fter all, during those years of heightened tension and growing politicization, it was common for students in major coastal cities to set up free night schools for workers, launch welfare programs for the urban poor, and take to the street to protest imperialism as well as warlordism.”

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120 After completing her M.A. Degree in sociology at Tsinghua under the supervision of Shen Yuan, with whom she actively took part in the Baigou project, Lina Hu went to Berkeley to work on her PhD with Michael Burawoy (AG-ID 2012).
However, as Shen (2008b: 401) emphasized, “the night school project [at Baigou was] not a charitable project but a project with multiple academic and practical considerations. . . . By empowering and striking a conversation with these workers, we [tried] to discuss the possibility of the growth of civil society in China, reconstruct sociological knowledge and society in the field, and enrich the theoretical and practical scope of a civil society.” Therefore, unlike Qu’s efforts, Shen’s project also allowed its researchers to gather sociological evidence to document exploitation, the relationship between capital and labor, etc.

10.6 - From Sociological Concept to Sociological Self-Concept

What does this intellectual project reveal about Shen’s intellectual life? In other words, how did Shen mediate—and justify—his active participation in the self-organization of migrant workers into a working class that could speak for itself? Did he reproduce the phenomenon of self-effacing spokesperson (Pels 2001: 19), a form of ventriloquism that that render the role of intellectual intervention in social mobilization both invisible and unproblematic? Certainly not; in fact, one of the most fascinating aspects of Shen’s relationship with the ‘people’ is his propensity to recognize and problematize the tension of the spokesperson. Pels (174) described such intellectuals as those “whose distinctive ambitions engage them in productive, consciousness-raising tension with their primary constituencies—in a form of reflexive elitism which counts on their interested interaction rather than disinterested identification with the masses which they claim to represent” or work with.

To mediate his interested interaction with the social, Shen therefore mobilized the theory of sociological intervention proposed by Alain Touraine, the French Marxist he had met more than a decade earlier. A well-known sociologist of social movements, Touraine elaborated early in his career the practice of sociological intervention (SI). SI advocated that the sociologist actively intervene to bring out the social relations concealed behind a mesh of approved and organized practices. For Touraine, social movements are the central problem of sociology because they are at the heart of any analysis of how a society makes itself. Researchers following an SI approach transform their observations of actors into social action theory so as to enhance the ability of the actors to take action. In essence, such intervention helps actors to shake free of the constraints by which they are surrounded, to extend their field of analysis, and to become more capable of action.
Building on Touraine’s ideas, Shen proposed adding two conceptual layers to the practice of sociological intervention in order to adapt the theory to the Chinese context. As Shen put it, “faced with a society in which development is unbalanced, we might divide sociological intervention into two types: strong and weak strategies” (2008c: 399). Therefore, in regard to social groups displaying weak self-organizing mechanisms, such as the factory workers in Baigou, Shen felt that sociologists should search for new ways to increase the strength of their sociological interventions. On the other hand, for social groups such as urban movements, which displayed strong self-organizing mechanisms, sociologists should employ weak sociological interventions (401).

Shen’s first strong sociological intervention, the “real utopian project” (Hu 286) of the Baigou night school, ended in 2004 when the group of sociologists ran out of funds (SY-ID 2012). With a small smile, Shen explained that, monetary reasons aside, the high mobility [流动性] of migrant workers, season after season, made this type of work extremely hard to sustain (SY-ID 2012). While the project ended somewhat abruptly, it acted as rites of reintegration for Shen because it allowed him for the first time to undertake a project combining both sociological and practical dimensions—logo and praxis. It also marked the rural return of a zhiqing eager to both learn sociological knowledge and teach practical knowledge to the people. What is more, his adaptation of Touraine’s concept of sociological intervention not only enabled Shen to name his experience and his actions as a sociologist, it also carefully mediated and rendered visible his interested interaction with the social: strong intervention with the weak and weak intervention with the strong. The final step would be to find his intellectual self-concept.

10.7 - Naming Sociology: Public Sociology and The 2004 Presidential Address of Michael Burawoy

As the collective sociological intervention in the Chinese countryside led by Beijing-born sociologist Shen Yuan was coming to an end in the summer of 2004, the American Sociological Association was just hosting its 99th Annual Meeting in the city of San Francisco, where Michael Burawoy, a professor of sociology at the University of California, Berkeley, was elected president (ASA). In his 2004 American Sociological Association Presidential address, Burawoy (2005: 2) relied on the concept of public sociology to articulate his vision and di-vision of the discipline as practiced in the U.S. context--and in the process, to launch an attack on that discipline:
As mirror and conscience of society, sociology must define, promote, and inform public debate about deepening class and racial inequalities, new gender regimes, environmental degradation, market fundamentalism, state and non-state violence. I believe that the world needs public sociology—a sociology that transcends the academy—more than ever. Our potential publics are multiple, ranging from media audiences to policy makers, from silenced minorities to social movements. They are local, global, and national. As public sociology stimulates debate in all these contexts, it inspires and revitalizes our discipline. In return, theory and research give legitimacy, direction, and substance to public sociology. Teaching is equally central to public sociology: students are our first public for they carry sociology into all walks of life. Finally, the critical imagination, exposing the gap between what is and what could be, infuses values into public sociology to remind us that the world could be different.

Michael Burawoy’s calling for the building of public sociology not only resonates strongly in the U.S. context and in other Western countries but in China as well. In interview when we asked him to discuss his reaction when he first heard about Burawoy’s public sociology, Shen told us, clearly excited, “already our paper published in 1998 had the orientation of public sociology. . . Then, when we had the opportunity, the three of us together—Sun, Li, and Shen—came to Tsinghua to found the Department of Sociology. From the very beginning we [our department] retained a tradition of public sociology. [Although] at that time Michael Burawoy had not yet coined this idea, we had [already] thought that sociology had to intervene.”121 As Shen (1998: 124) had already written in the conclusion of his 1997 editorship address, “[we have] to project the voice of sociology in the understanding of important problems; that is, in regards to important problems related to economic reforms and social changes, from a sociological perspective [we have] to put forward possible programs of resolution.”122

At this point, although Shen was already practicing a form of public sociology, the practice was remained nameless. Szakolczai explained this Simmelian (see Simmel 1988) relationship between language (or form) and experience beautifully:

"private" experiences undergo nothing less than a change of state when they recognize themselves in the public objective of an already constituted discourse. . . ."Words wreck

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121[开始的机会我们就三个人一块过来建了清华的社会学系。所以说从一开始，我们就保留了一个公共社会学的一个传统。所以那时候 Michael Burawoy 还没提出来，我们就觉得社会学必须要干预…]
122[在重大问题上突出社会学学科的声音, 即在经济改革和社会变迁的重大问题上, 从社会学的角度提出可能的化解方案.]
havoc,” says Sartre, when [one] find a name for what have been lived namelessly” (2000: 231).

In his book *Historical Ontology* (2004: 5), Canadian philosopher Ian Hacking gave another name to this idea when he proposed “linguistic idealism as a name for the extraordinary idea that nothing exists unless it has been spoken about. To paraphrase Berkeley, to be is to be mentioned [or recognized].”

While Touraine provided Shen with a modus operandi to intervene in the production of Chinese society, Burawoy’s word captured something that Shen already knew but had left nameless. As the Chinese sociologist said, “this is what we were already doing,” talking of public sociology. Not only did the term public sociology name what Shen was doing and provide him with an intellectual self-concept, but Burawoy’s criticism of American sociology also offered a readily available di-vision of the sociological field—professionally, critically, politically, and publicly—with which the Chinese sociologist might make sense of the discipline in Mainland China. For instance, during an interview Shen remarked, slightly disappointed, that after the establishment of the department, Li Qiang slowly became more or less a policy sociologist working closer to the government and policy-makers while Guo Yuhua, Liping and himself remained devoted public sociologists. Shen also repeatedly criticized most Chinese academic sociologists for forcing the discipline towards over-professionalization, a path that leads academic sociologists to work on sociological problems, not real social problems. Shen’s self-narrative even depicted a sociological division of multiple publics amongst him and his two close colleagues, Guo dealing with social movements online, Sun with journalists, economists, and blogs, and Shen with NGOs, mingong, and labour more generally.

Since Burawoy’s address, in the vast majority of his intellectual production, Shen has referred to himself interchangeably as either a public sociologist or a sociological Marxist, the latter also the phrase with which Burawoy describes himself. Between 2006 and 2014, for instance, nine of the 13 academic papers Shen published refer to either or both public sociology and sociological Marxism. The sharp increase in his scholarly publication after having found

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123 Geertz’s notion of culture or ideology as developed in his seminal work *The Interpretation of Culture* (1973: 312) certainly captured this very idea. E.g., “Culture, here, is not cults and customs, but the structure of meaning through which men give shape to their experience.”

124 (1) “Social Transformation and the Reformation of the Working Class,” 2006b [社会转型与工人阶级的再形成]; (2) “The Production of Society,” 2007a [社会的生产]; (3) “Another 30 Years? The
his intellectual-self concept indicates the powerful impact of identity in giving sense and direction to one’s purpose, as the discussion in the section below investigates in more detail. At this point, however, the concepts of Public Sociology and sociological Marxist deserve some attention. They clearly suggest a hierarchy which mirror the intellectual trajectory of Shen’s self-concept. Indeed, although the idea of sociological Marxism has allowed Shen to combine his commitment to the discipline of sociology with his (de)-archived Marxist identity, it also indicates Shen’s primary identity as a Marxist, as this research have argued. Also, the idea of public sociology perfectly captures Shen’s moral and existential commitment to interaction with society and politics, an intellectual willing to play the game in a field with porous boundaries.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, his newly found intellectual self-concept seems to have had an almost immediate effect on our sociologist. In January 2005, less than five months after Burawoy’s Presidential Address, Shen published three papers all addressing a wider “public,” the establishment, policy-makers, and educated elites. For instance, the first paper, ‘The Four Basic Principles for Founding a Harmonious Society,’ was published in *Forum for Development*, a magazine hosted by the Shandong CCP provincial party committee. The second article was published in *Frontier Perspective* the same month. ‘The Power for the Lower Social Groups is the Most Important [Tasks] for the Construction of an Harmonious Society’ touched upon the same subject matter. Finally, the third article, ‘What We need is a Market Economy, Not a Market Society,’ was published in the *Trains of Thought* section of the February edition of the magazine *Financial Digest*. All three textual interventions bore the mark of a public sociologist eager to engage in a symbolic struggle over how to define the social in contemporary construction of society from the perspective of sociology of transformation,” 2008d [又一个三十年？转型社会学视野下的社会建设]; (4) “Vers les Droits du Citoyen: la Défense des Droits des Propriétaires Comme Mouvement Citoyen Dans la Chine Contemporaine,” 2008b; (5) “L’hégémonie Fondée sur les Relations Dans L’industrie du Bâtiment,” 2008a; (6) “The Re-emergence of Grass-Roots State : an Ethnography of Town Government,” 2009a; (7) “Labour Research from the Perspective of the Sociology of Transformation,” 2012b [转型社会学视野下的劳工研究]; (8) “Housing Politics—B-city’s Owner Right Protection and Practical Research on the Construction of Community,” 2012a [居住的政治——B 市业主维权与社区建设的实证研究]; and (9) “Worker-intellectual Unity: Trans-border Sociological Intervention in Foxconn,” 2014.
China, an attack on the conceptual resources of the CCP that was especially significant given the Hu Jintao administration’s coinage at the time of a series of terms around the concept of society, terms such as “Social Construction, Social Management, [. . . and] Community Development that were to populate heavily both government confidential documents and the mass media” (Shen 2008d). Also, the idea of Harmonious Society was about to be enshrined by the CCP as Hu Jintao’s doctrinal contribution to the construction of a strong socialist society (Zheng and Tok 2007). For Shen, such powerful conceptual changes emanating from the CCP all disregarded the society’s self-organizational abilities.

Unlike in the last two chapters, the goal here is not to proceed with a Koselleckian/Bourdieuian analysis of Shen’s position-taking but to highlight the effects of Shen’s new identity on his intellectual life. Certainly, as with the 1998 paper, the dynamics of the political field help considerably to provide an understanding of both the timing and, to some extent, the form of Shen’s output. The same is true for these three papers published in early 2005. Taken together, they are a response to what Shen saw as the authoritarian state’s centralist and controlling way of building the social, a response he had already put forward in 1998. The difference here—putting aside the context—is Shen’s recently discovered intellectual self-concept—and the associated sociological tools, which gave him the energy and confidence to engage in different types of work.

This confidence is evident in two clear signs. One is that, while these three papers are extremely short—half-page texts—they were Shen’s first such public declarations of his intellectual stance. The second, more significant sign appeared one year later, in 2006, when Shen published his contribution to the theoretical development of Touraine’s theory of sociological intervention (discussed above). The abstract for the English version of this article (2008c), indeed, epitomized his confidence in its opening lines: “The most important mission of sociology is perhaps to push forward the production of society. Sociologists should not only in the theory but also in the practice of sociology help resist pressures from the state and the market on the one hand, and assist society to emerge and grow on the other” (2008c: lines 1-4). And in

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131 [社会建设], [社会管理], [社区发展]
132 [和谐社会]
133 Response in the sense of a reaction-attempt to engage in symbolic struggle.
134 Article, ‘Strong and Weak Intervention: Two Pathways for Sociological Intervention.’
the last sentence of the abstract, he proclaimed that sociologists’ “most important task from now on is to combine social practice and social knowledge effectively” (2008c: lines 9-10).

Furthermore, applying Burawoy’s reading of Karl Polanyi’s The Great Transformation (1944), Shen was now able to historicize the task of the production of society. As a result, Shen was now able to organize Chinese post-Liberation history into three distinct phases (see Shen 2006, 2007, 2008, 2012). As Micheal Burawoy (2008: 438), Shen’s last master of ceremonies, put it, pointing to these three periods (1949-1978, 1979-2008, and 2009-2038), “Shen Yuan starts from China after 30 years of state-regulated economy, followed by 30 years of market reform; he now calls for 30 years of producing society.”

Then, two years later, in the 2010 paper he published with Sun Liping, ‘Long-Term Social Stability Via Institutionalized Expression of Interests’—an paper Shen considers as the sequel of the 1998 paper (SY-ID 2012)—each temporal section of the past-present-future continuum was actually named. Under the pen of the group of sociologists, the first 30 years of state-regulated economy (1949-1978) formed a political moment characterized by a totalitarian regime (see also the opening paragraph of Shen 2008d). The following 30 years of market reform (1979-2008) constituted an economic moment described as restricted liberalism. In regard to the future, the authors saw the enormous task China faced as 30 years (2009-2038) of the production of a society, a social moment.

10.8 - Conclusion

Certainly, a more finely focused textual/contextual analysis of the explosion of Shen’s intellectual production between 2005 and 2014 would explore in detail the sedimentation of his intellectual self-concept, the importance of Polanyi, Gramsci, and the like on the shaping of his sociological output and political activism (see Lachapelle, unpublished) or even the recent radical tone of his latest publication published with Ngai Pun, Guo Yuhua, Huilin Lu, Jenny Chan and Mark Selden, ‘Worker-Intellectual Unity: Trans-Border Sociological Intervention in Foxconn,’ which suggests a new urgency in the need to defend and produce the social:

What are the implications for global public sociology and labor studies when more than a score of Foxconn workers jump to their death and when a wave of protests, riots and strikes

135 The same year Shen (2008d) had published an article in Chinese called ‘Another 30 years? The Construction of Society From the Perspective of The Sociology of Transformation’ [又一个三十年？转型社会学视野下的社会建设].
occur in their wake? This article documents the formation of a cross-border sociological intervention project and illustrates how sociological research fueled regional campaigns that gradually developed into a global campaign. This experience confirms the premise that “social science” should never be separated from “politics” (2014: 209).

This collective research follows a tragedy in 2010 when more than 9 young Foxconn factory workers have attempted to end their life by jumping out the building of the company, resulting into 7 deaths and 2 injuries. Following the vague of suicide, on May 18th, 2010 Shen initiate (SY-ID 2012) and published a text entitled ‘Open Letter from 9 Sociologists: end the tragedy at Foxxoon’ on the website of Sina Tech News (Shen, Guo, Lu, Pun, Dai, Tan, Shen, Ren and Zhang 2010).

As this thesis has discussed, in Shen’s intellectual life—from his very beginning at the Institute of Sociology through to his re-positioning at Tsinghua—social science has never really been separate from politics. Even Shen’s time as a zhiqing (“knowledge youth”) showed him the strong yet peculiar connection between power and knowledge. As Foucault tried magisterially to show in his life-work, knowledge and power are never separated; if they appear to be, the historical task remains the same: to unearth the mechanisms stabilizing the assemblage of values, facts, and people. Indeed, the creation of the Department of Sociology at Tsinghua around the paradigm of Communist Civilization must not be seen as a heroic attempt to separate knowledge and politics. Rather, its success lies in separating (as far as possible) state power from sociologists’ own knowledge production and re-organizing the knowledge-power connection according to their own politics of social production. In Bourdieu parlance, the success of this group of sociologists rests in their participation in the emergence of the relative autonomy of the sociological field in contemporary China. As the first decade of the twenty-first century went by, Shen appropriated Western ideation and practices with which to manufacture his own knowledge-power connection.

Nevertheless, since the year 2000, most, if not all, of the ideation structuring his intellectual life and production were from a Marxist position, and therefore consistent with the argument that Shen at this point de-archived the Marxist identity he had laid aside for the previous 20 years. What is more, the fact that Shen started publishing in a sustaining rhythm at
50 years of age cannot be explained simply along Bourdieu's lines\textsuperscript{136} by his position at Tsinghua, or in other words by his entire capital—social, symbolic, scientific. Instead, as this chapter makes clear, the act of discovering his own intellectual self-concept was a powerful structuring ideation that extended beyond habitus and field-dynamic.

\textsuperscript{136} Also see Evasdottir (2004: 226-244) on publishing practices in Chinese archaeology. The scholar explains that because only a small numbers of Beijing-based oligarchs have access to prime archeological sites and thus to good materials for scientific writing.
Chapter 11 - Contributions and Limitations

11.1 - Introduction

The aim of this thesis had been to present a sociological narrative of the intellectual trajectory of Shen Yuan with two main questions in mind, one pertaining to Shen’s emergence as a public intellectual in contemporary China, and the second to his making as a public sociologist. In regard to the first, as the introduction asks, Shen’s path raises that issue of how to make sense of his intellectual choices, from his work in the 1980s for the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences think-tank, where the goal was to advance the CCP’s vision for China’s economic modernization, right through to his continuing commitment as a founding member of Tsinghua’s sociology department to constructing an active and civil Chinese society able to defend itself against the power of both the state and the market. Connecting the two questions that the thesis addresses is its argument that Shen’s position-taking in 1998 was a liminal moment in his life, since it marked his break with state research and facilitated his participation in founding the sociology department at Tsinghua. To use the conceptual language mobilized in this thesis, this 1998 paper marked a liminal event that facilitated the Chinese intellectual’s shift from playing a game of orthopraxy to one of orthodoxy. As Chapter 10 describes, the fact that shortly after the publication of the 1998 paper Shen moved away from his involvement in the state apparatus to Tsinghua University indicated the importance of his position-taking.

Shen’s co-authorship of that paper and his move to Tsinghua afterwards increased his need to find his own intellectual self-concept, both as a way to deal with the problem of speaking for others and as a means of facilitating his participation in the production of the social in contemporary China. Thus, the second hypothesis proposed in this thesis is that the way in which Shen articulated Alain Touraine’s idea of sociological intervention and Burawoy’s concept of public sociology after 2000 provided the Chinese intellectual with what he needed to define himself as a Chinese intellectual eager to interact with society and to act in its construction. This self-identification process also allowed Shen to name his Marxism. The findings explained in Chapter 10 have shown that Touraine’s and Burawoy’s theories did much than provide Shen with a self-conceptual story-line about who he is and what he can do as an intellectual. In fact, Burawoy’s ideas provided the Chinese sociologist with a new vision and di-vision of the discipline that led Shen to see sociology as professional and academic, public and critical, and policy-related; while Touraine supplied him with a model of action. These key influences meant
that his first years at Tsinghua included for Shen “processes having to do with the quest for self-concept coherence” (Gross 235).

11.2 - Contribution I: Intellectual Self-Concept and Archived Identity

From the point of view of the New Sociology of Ideas (NSI), Shen’s intellectual history strongly exemplifies not only the trajectory of a noted intellectual but also the process of knowledge production in a radically different civilizational context than those that traditionally investigated according to the NSI. The research conducted for this thesis confirms the importance of the idea of intellectual self-concept, a notion that Gross (2008) proposed his study of the American philosopher Richard Rorty, as public sociology has exerted a powerful effect on Shen’s trajectory since 2005. However, this narrative of the Chinese intellectual’s journey since the 1960s also reveals at least one condition that seems to be a necessary condition for an intellectual self-concept to have this degree of influence: a field’s relative or emergent autonomy. The establishment of a department of sociology at Tsinghua in 2000 signified the struggle of a group of intellectuals to gain such autonomy for their discipline. Shen’s move to Tsinghua, his participation in this struggle, and his coining of Communist Civilization were vital to Shen gaining both a space in which to re-articulate what sociology was and an ideation about what its practitioners should do. The relative autonomy of the field of sociology from the CCP’s parameters allowed Shen to engage in a game of orthodoxy in which his Marxist identity was his compass in matters of logo and praxis.

This research has also contributed to the sociology of intellectual life by offering the original concept of archived identity. Based on the idea of orthopraxy, the concept of archived identity points to the fact that although intellectuals, like any other social actors, are “bearers of identity” (Gross 2008: 238), that identity is not always actively structuring ideation in matters of strategy, or decision-making in intellectual life. As the changes in Shen’s Marxism show, under an authoritarian configuration of knowledge and power during the last two decades of the twentieth century Shen had no choice but to archive his identity and rely on the orthopraxic repertoire of the CCP, the Confucian intellectuals serving the state. Correlatively, this research has shown the analytical power of the dual concepts of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. More research is need to understand the dormant phase of self-concept called here archived identity: that is, the processes and mechanisms by which identity is disabled, as well as the reflexive work required to kept it alive, potentially transform it, and re-activate it over time.
11.3 - Contribution II: Conceptual Literacy

Along with the objectives mentioned above, this research has also strived to offer some analytical clarity in answer to the question, ‘What does a public intellectual do?’ As the introduction indicates, this research investigated what Shen did as a public intellectual that moved him beyond uncritical and commonplace definitions of a public intellectual, such as that he or she is merely “a critical commentator addressing a nonspecialist audience on matters of broad public concern” (Posner 2001: 5); or more generally, that a public intellectual is one who uses “what they [see] as their authority or standing within society to take a firm stance, to mobilize the wider public and bring about socio-political change” (Baert 2011: 410). Chapters 8 and 9 have shown that in a study of what public intellectuals “really” do, Bourdieu’s term *symbolic struggle* and Kosseleck’s *concept* are more analytically sound than a general idea of engagement in public debates and public issues. With the 1998 paper, then, Shen entered a symbolic struggle with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and educated elites over the redefinition of sacred concepts such as *state, people, and society*. Thus, Shen and his colleagues launched a symbolic attack on the conceptual resources of the CCP. One of the contributions of these two chapters is to show the analytical power of Kosseleck’s *Begriffsgeschicht*—a major twentieth century school of thought in intellectual history—only rarely utilized in sociology (see Strydom 2000)—to highlight the classic question for any realist sociologist of intellectuals: what it is that public intellectuals do that matters?

That being said, the concept of *conceptual literacy* was coined to capture a traditional tool of intellectuals: the ability to manipulate words and ideas for political purposes; in other words, to employ their particular, powerful political skill-sets to define and defend their activities within their fields. As Karabel (1996: 210) put it, “from the perspective of those who wield political and economic power, intellectuals possess crucial specialized knowledge as well as the important ideological capacity to legitimate (or, in some cases, delegitimate) the prevailing order.” This research has argued with Kauppi (2010: 3) that “concepts are . . . Shibboleths [and] only certain individuals know how to use them correctly”; that is, not all intellectuals can use them correctly or even safely. Indeed, as this research has explained, in the context of an authoritarian regime, the re-articulation of political concepts is a risky symbolic task, and conceptual literacy is the *sine qua non* condition for becoming a public intellectual.
More research is needed to study the acquisition and working of conceptual literacy in different cultural contexts. Building on Davies’s insights (2001) into the discursive rules of engagement in Mainland China that she called sinophone discourse—“key terms and preferred forms of argument” in China today (Cheek 2004: 21 unpublished)—such scholarship could show how intellectuals participate in transforming conceptual offerings structuring the social world. Such a conceptual sociology could highlight the working relationship among the trinity of intellectual life: intellectuals, discourse, and concepts. One of the most powerful yet under-acknowledged analytical insights in Koselleck’s Begriffsgeschicht is the argument that

although … concepts always function within a discourse, they are pivots around which all arguments turn. For this reason I do not believe that the history of concepts and the history of discourse can be viewed as incompatible and opposite. Each depends inescapably on the other. A discourse requires … concepts in order to express what it is talking about. (Koselleck 1996: 65)

11.4 - Limitations

The sociological question about the making of Shen as a public intellectual is a process-oriented puzzle aiming to unearth the experiences, friendships, institutions, training, readings, and events that facilitated his trajectory towards public intellectuality first and public sociology then. While this research has considered Shen’s zhiqing experience, his philosophical training, and his friendship with Sun Liping in Shen’s development as a public intellectual, a more encompassing research design might have been able to consider at least additional three formative moments in Shen Yuan’s life: (1) his pre-zhiqing upbringing, focusing on two central institutions, his family background and his early schooling in Beijing; (2) his zhiqing experience per se and his return to Beijing in the late 1970s; and (3) his experience at the CASS as a young researcher before, during, and after the Tiananmen massacre. Such data would have certainly provided a fuller picture of the influences on Shen’s habitus and political training as well as his first years after switching to sociology.

Also, although it has been argued that the 1998 paper played a liminal role not only in Shen’s intellectual life but also, to some extent, in the development of sociology in Mainland China, the research does not discuss (1) the events leading to and the composing of the paper, or the authorial intentions and contributions of each writer; or (2) the relationship between the 1998 paper and the opening of the department in 2000. Such data would almost certainly have shed light on three significant years in Shen’s career.
Finally, the concepts of *archived identity* and *conceptual literacy* have not been given nearly enough attention to firmly established them in the sociological lexicon.
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Routledge.


Appendices

Appendix A - Letter of Initial Contact

English Version

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Dear [personal name and official title here],

Hello! I am a Master student in sociology at the University of British Columbia, located in the city of Vancouver, in Canada. I am contacting you in the hopes of securing your assistance with my research on social knowledge production and intellectual in contemporary China. I have a longstanding interest in structural history of knowledge production and institutions in Modern China. On this trip to China I am planning to work on my MA thesis which focus on constructing an intellectual biographical trajectory of Doctor Shen Yuan. I am especially interested in learning more about the numerous social processes and mecanism and the changing institutional environment that Chinese academics face in post-Mao period. More specifically related to Doctor Shen’s intellectual life, I also hope to understand more clearly the rationale and context behind his participation in Sun Li Ping’s , creation of Qinghua University Department of and finally foundation of Social Development. In brief, by studying Doctor Shen’s intellectual itinerary and production, one of the most influential contemporary Chinese social scientists, I wish to understand the set of cultural, historical, social, political and institutional factors that shape his mental work.

This is why I have contacted you. Given your position and expertise with [organization], I hope to have the opportunity to interview you about these matters. I anticipate that an interview might last between 30 and 90 minutes.

If you are willing to meet with me, I would be most grateful. When I conduct interviews, I follow the standard procedures that researchers at my university adhere to. The interview will be confidential: Only I see my research notes, and I only use them for my research. I keep my research notes locked and secure. I will not use your name in my notes or in any of my research reports. You will not have to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering, and you can stop or cancel the interview at any time. If, after the interview, you decide that you do not want me to use the information you gave me, you can contact me and I will follow your wishes.

I will call you in a few days to inquire about the possibility of setting up an interview. Or if it is more convenient, you can contact me directly at the mobile telephone number written at the bottom of this letter. If you have any questions about me or my research, I would be more than happy to answer them. Again, I would be most grateful for your assistance.
Sincerely,

François Lachapelle  
Master of Art Candidate  
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Grant Recipient (2011-2012)  
Micheal-Smith Travel Research Fund (2012)  
Research Funds on Society and Culture Grant Recipient (2012-2013)  
Department of Sociology  
University of British Columbia  

[Date of letter here]

Contact information:

Internet:  
http://www.soci.ubc.ca/

Mail:  
François Lachapelle  
Department of Sociology  
6303 NW Marine Drive  
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1  
Canada
Appendix B - Letter of Self-Introduction

English Version

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Department of Sociology
6303 NW Marine Drive,
Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6T 1Z1
Tel: (604) 822-2878 Fax: (604) 822-6161
www.soci.ubc.ca

[date]

Hello!

I am a Master of Arts student in the Sociology Department at the University of British Columbia (UBC); my English name is François Lachapelle, my Chinese name is Lan Bufan. UBC is located in the city of Vancouver, and it one of Canada’s three largest universities and top-research institutions.

In 2008, I completed my bachelor degree in Chinese studies and History at the University of Montreal. I then lived two years in China studying Chinese civilization and languages (Modern Chinese, Classical Chinese and dialects—Cantonese, Sichuanese and Dongbeihua)—at Harbin Institute of Technology (Harbin, 2008-2009) and Sichuan University (Chengdu, 2009-2010).

My sociological and historical interests touch upon the sociology of knowledge, social sciences, intellectual, and academia. More specifically related to China, I am interested in researching producers of knowledge in contemporary China, especially social scientists and public intellectuals as well as social conditions of scientific practices and mental work in contemporary China.

On this trip to China I am planning to work on my MA thesis which focus on constructing a short sociologically-inclined intellectual biographies of Doctor Shen Yuan’s professional trajectory. I am especially interested in learning more about the numerous social processes and mechanisms as well as the changing institutional environment that Chinese academics face in post-Mao period. More specifically related to Doctor Shen’s intellectual life, I also hope to gain a better understand scientific production and sociological project by looking at various aspects of his professional trajectory. For example, I wish to shed more light on the following point; how exactly did Doctor Shen became involved in Doctor Sun’s project of historical dictionary of Chinese communist civilisation. How did Doctor Shen and Doctor Guo’s participation in this project evolved toward the idea of founding the Department of sociology at Qinghua University. I am also interested in how China’s institutional structure of social knowledge have changed over the last three decades. In brief, by studying Doctor Shen’s intellectual itinerary and ideational production, I wish to understand the set of cultural, historical, social, political and institutional factors that shape his mental work.
It is for this reason that I have contacted you. I hope I will be able to interview you, in order to better understand the social conditions of knowledge production in contemporary China. If you are willing to be interviewed, I will follow the standard procedures that researchers at my university adhere to. The interview will be confidential: Only I see my research notes, and I only use them for my research. I keep my research notes locked and secure. I will not use your name in my notes or in any of my research reports. You will not have to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering, and you can stop or cancel the interview at any time. If, after the interview, you decide that you do not want me to use the information you gave me, you can contact me and I will follow your wishes.

May I interview you? Afterwards, you can use the phone number below to contact me. If you have any questions about myself or my research, I am happy to provide you with more explanation.

Regards,

François Lachapelle
Master of Art Candidate
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Grant Recipient (2011-2012)
Micheal-Smith Travel Research Fund (2012)
Research Funds on Society and Culture Grant Recipient (2012-2013)
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