

depictions of the SCS but also examines the reasons behind these misconceptions. He argues that conflating a government prestige project like the SCS with the expansion of China's public security apparatus entails considerable risks.

The main contribution, however, lies in the book's aspiration to "reconstruct the jigsaw-puzzle of the SCS" (p. 7). The seemingly straightforward question the author addresses – what is the SCS – has been giving scholars, journalists, managers and politicians headaches. By addressing all facets of social credit, the book covers a wide spectrum of themes, including financial credit reporting, food safety regulation, surveillance, scoring technologies and CPC theory of governance. Brussee succeeds in walking a fine line between rigorous inquiry into primary sources that detail the workings of the SCS and providing accessible explanations to broader questions that emerge from the investigation. Instead of developing a theoretical argument himself, he creates a complete framework of the SCS. Given that social credit research to date is scattered across multiple disciplines with little reciprocal engagement, often building on different presumptions about the very core of the project, the book's account of the SCS serves as an invaluable starting point for future research.

Raising questions across a wide field of contentious issues in China, from banking to central–local government relations to handling of personal data, this book offers an engaging read for students in the field of China studies and professionals alike. Scholars with an interest in social credit find a reliable roadmap, a contextualization of current debates, as well as some juicy hypotheses. The book's fresh and engaging style, balancing personal notes with in-depth policy analysis, renders it an enjoyable read.

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The Labor of Reinvention: Entrepreneurship in the New Chinese Digital Economy

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Lin Zhang's new book examines entrepreneurship and its promise and disappointment in a digitalizing China. After the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, the party-state called for "mass entrepreneurship" to attempt to address the growing employment challenges. Between 2011 and 2019, Zhang conducted multi-sited interviews and observation to assess how the changing cultural political economy has affected people's lives. The author found that many aspirants in urban and rural areas, as well as those in the diaspora, responded to the call by grasping new opportunities that emerged in the internet-based working world. The results of China's "regime of entrepreneurial labour" are varied, as narrated in the three main parts as follows.

Part one traces the historical background of socialist modernization and techno-nationalism in Beijing's Zhongguancun, known as Silicon Valley. As the capital of the People's Republic of China, Beijing mobilized scientists and engineers in leading universities and government research centres to cultivate science and technological capabilities in the Zhongguancun district. In the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), when the Chinese higher education system was gradually rebuilt,



researchers and academics increasingly partnered with private-sector information technology (IT) institutions to boost GDP growth. A nascent class of “elite entrepreneurs” with prestigious university educations and strong relations with the government steered corporate strategies for economic development. In contrast, “grassroots entrepreneurs,” in the absence of political ties and education credentials, struggled to secure investment funds or government clients in the competitive market.

Land and real estate property prices have gone up in megacities like Beijing. “To get rich,” the mantra of state planners and Big Tech firms, has yet to be realized and for most remains far out of reach. In fact, low-end, cash-strapped rural–urban migrant entrepreneurs are squeezed out of high-end technological parks at the city centre. Moreover, female tech founders, despite acquiring communicative skills and specialized knowledge about digital platforms, are often subordinated in a male-dominated computer and internet sector. “The limits of entrepreneurialism as a governing ideology for empowering the less privileged,” in Zhang’s analysis, are all too clear (p. 66).

Part two follows the author’s return to her hometown and to neighbouring e-commerce villages in northern Shandong. By the early 2010s, Alibaba, benefiting from the national infrastructure of telecommunications networks, had already extended its trading and logistics networks to the countryside. Tech-savvy migrant returnees from cities, along with family members and relatives, could set up online stores to produce and sell various commodities through Alibaba’s Taobao e-marketplace. The alleviation of extreme poverty and the revitalization of a family-based rural economy are to some extent made possible by digital-platform based micro-entrepreneurship. The integration of the spheres of production and social reproduction is taking place through the platformization of the Chinese countryside.

Rural women workers are drawn into the bottom rung of e-commerce production chains as outsourced labour, where they can earn some money while taking care of small children and the elderly. This informal home-based work is embedded in traditional gender relations, hence often inhibiting women’s career progression. Moreover, the remuneration of the “manual labour” of handicraft makers is far less than that of “mental labour” of e-marketing. Socio-economic differentiation between ordinary villagers and e-commerce managers has widened within rural communities.

Part three explores the self-branding of resellers in the terrain of social media. Female entrepreneurs – young, urban, and well-educated – leverage their transnational mobility to buy foreign luxury goods and then sell them at a markup to customers in China, taking advantage of the Chinese tax and customs laws. The reseller informants are studying abroad or residing in the US, Europe, Japan, South Korea and Dubai, while keeping in touch with family and friends back in China. For a subset of married women, they perform affective labour by delivering motherly advice to build rapport with their fans via major social media platforms such as Douyin (the Chinese version of TikTok), Bilibili and Xiaohongshu. The internet opens not only a socializing avenue but also a virtual space for achieving newfound freedom and economic independence.

The social construction of ideal “enterprising femininities” among the top resellers, however, conforms to the prevailing norms of heterosexuality and essentialized beauty standards in society. “The business,” as the author succinctly points out, “supports individualistic pursuits of self-expression, consumption, and looking good” (p. 210). Simultaneously, older and lower-class women are excluded from the “she economy.”

Overall, the reinvention of one’s identity and subjectivity to become an entrepreneur through harnessing new technologies is highly uncertain and often disappointing. Zhang unveils the profound contradictions in China’s digital transformation. It is widely recognized that small-scale entry-level entrepreneurship opportunities are abundant. Further along the entrepreneurial journey, however, precariousness is a recurrent theme in the fierce market. Female workers and entrepreneurs, in particular, express frustrations in fulfilling multiple roles in “preexisting systems of differentiation and inequalities” (p. 179).

The Labor of Reinvention will inspire research on digital entrepreneurialism and labour studies. Amid geopolitical tensions, analysts have focused on the dynamism of the Guangdong–Hong

Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area as a strategic tech hub in global capitalism. Young graduates from Hong Kong, for a notable example, are urged to contribute to the national quest for greater technological self-reliance. Echoing Zhang, I find it more important for critical social scientists to promote human progress through sustainable science and technology in China and far beyond.

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Rival Partners: How Taiwanese Entrepreneurs and Guangdong Officials Forged the China Development Model

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A considerable amount of research has been published on the parts played by Taiwanese entrepreneurs (Taishang), Chinese officials and migrant labour in the export-oriented industrialization of China since the launch of its reform and opening policy. Wu Jieh-min, a research fellow at the Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, in Taiwan, has himself regularly published on this topic since the 1990s. However, the present book – originally published in Chinese in 2019 – represents a politico-economic history spanning 40 years of China’s development, thanks to an analysis rooted in first-hand data collected throughout the period, and in a comprehensive theoretical framework. One can presume that the audience of such a lengthy book is confined to the academic sphere, including students. But in the future, anyone wishing to go beyond simplistic formulae summarizing the narrative of China’s so-called economic miracle will have to read this detailed, nuanced, yet overarching research.

In its structure, the book goes from the general to the particular – i.e. the author’s main illustrative data – and back to a comparative perspective on China. Drawing on the existing literature, chapter one states the focal point of this research – the embedded relationship between foreign investors and the local institutional structure – and describes the sources and research methods. Chapter two offers an overview of the origins and development of the so-called Guangdong model. Chapters three and four provide an in-depth description of a Taiwanese leather goods manufacturer’s business activities, in Taiwan and subsequently in China. The manufacturer experienced three stages of development: first, it was a Taiwanese trading company (1979–1988); second, it rented a building and established a factory in Dongguan, Guangdong (1989–1994); and third, it built its own factory, enhanced product quality and production capacity, and was taken over by the second generation of management until it stopped doing business in China (1995–2010). These two central chapters offer empirical data supporting the main argument of the book, namely that the operational mechanism of economic rent motivated Chinese local governments and officials to actively attract outside investment and to cooperate with the development of foreign-invested enterprises on a basis of mutual agreement or tacit approval. Chapter five proposes an institutional logic of Chinese-style exploitation: situated in a system of differential citizenship, the migrant working class suffers the double exploitation of the state and capital. While chapter