LIN ZHANG. *THE LABOR OF REINVENTION: ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE NEW CHINESE DIGITAL ECONOMY. NEW YORK: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS 2023, 312 P. ISBN: 9780231195317*

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Lin Zhang's book examines the proliferation of digital entrepreneurship in post-2008 China, revealing both its promises and frustrations. This research challenges the uncritical celebration of entrepreneurialism and problematises the entrepreneurialisation of labour through multi-sited interviews and observations. By juxtaposing the lived experiences of differently positioned subjects—including urban elites and grassroots entrepreneurs engaged in IT start-ups, rural peasants involved in family-based e-commerce, and transnational middle-class female resellers—the book uncovers the inherent structural inequalities and tensions within digital entrepreneurship.

This book consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 provides a historical overview of China's socioeconomic restructuring and the rise of entrepreneurialism. As China reintegrated into global capitalism in the late 1970s and confronted challenges such as the crisis of its export-oriented and investment-driven economic model, the 2008 global financial crisis, and the US-China trade war, it embraced entrepreneurialism, promoting 'mass entrepreneurship and innovation' as a strategic alternative development path. The author, however, argues that while entrepreneurialism offers empowerment, freedom, autonomy, and choice, it also exacerbates precarity, inequality, and risk. As a new regime of autonomous and flexible labour, the discourse of digital entrepreneurship encourages individuals to reinvent themselves as self-reliant labourers and risk-takers.

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the entrepreneurial reinvention in Beijing's Zhongguancun (ZGC), also known as China's Silicon Valley. Chapter 2 traces the evolution of state-entrepreneur relations in ZGC. During the Mao era, Beijing mobilised scientists and engineers from leading universities and state-owned research institutes to enhance ZGC's scientific and technological capabilities. Following the reform and opening up in 1978, many of these individuals turned to nongovernmental IT businesses and pursued entrepreneurial ventures. However, the state's power did not retreat; instead, its socialist redistributive goals continued to shape the lived experiences of various generations of ZGC's IT entrepreneurs. Elite IT entrepreneurs, equipped with strong educational credentials, technological expertise, and political networks, found it easier to secure funding, resources, facilities, and patronage. In contrast, grassroots IT entrepreneurs often felt marginalised in this competitive landscape. Consequently, this state-led entrepreneurial reinvention has predominantly benefited a few well-positioned and connected entrepreneurs.

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Chapter 3 discusses the controversies surrounding China's Mass Entrepreneurship and Innovation Space (MEIS). Before the 1990s, China's entrepreneurial space, including incubators, accelerators, and coworking offices, was primarily supported by government institutions and state-owned enterprises (SOEs). However, due to market-oriented reforms, this state-led entrepreneurial environment evolved into a hybrid model characterised by enterprises affiliated with universities or SOEs. Simultaneously, state-led financial liberalisation attracted a surge in global venture capital, causing the MEIS to increasingly prioritise profit-driven motives. This convergence of political and commercial interests incentivised government officials at all levels to maximise the value of ZGC's real estate, leading to a profit-driven, financialised approach that squeezed out small to medium-sized high-tech start-ups and ultimately compromised the state's techno-nationalist development goals.

Chapters 4 and 5 explore the lived experiences of rural entrepreneurs in the villages of Shandong Province, China, known for their e-commerce handicraft production. The 2008 global financial crisis intensified the rural crisis in China, giving rise to e-commerce entrepreneurship as an alternative path for rural development that seeks to reconcile the tensions between sustainable development and social equity. The rise of entrepreneurialism and platformisation attracted many migrant returnees and marginalised urbanites to engage in entrepreneurial activities in the countryside. Together with their families and relatives, they set up online stores on e-commerce platforms to sell various commodities. This new form of rural 'platformised family production' (104) integrated existing family-based labour arrangements with platform-mediated business models and revitalised the rural economy.

However, the inherent contradictions of rural digital entrepreneurship have become increasingly prominent in recent years. The labour that underpins rural digital entrepreneurship—particularly that of women at the lowest end of the e-commerce supply chain—is often obscured by the rhetoric of entrepreneurship. Despite claims of digital empowerment, platformised family production remains deeply entrenched in traditional gender roles and patriarchy. Furthermore, the exclusion of older generations from digital technologies has intensified both gender and intergenerational inequalities. Another significant challenge is the growing saturation of the rural e-commerce market, which has led to price wars, vicious competition, and the proliferation of counterfeit goods. This tension undermines community solidarity and hinders efforts towards technological independence and domestic innovation. Moreover, successful peasant e-commerce entrepreneurs are adept at branding and self-branding, effectively linking their rural entrepreneur identities to society, the market, and the state. This connection enables them to gain greater media exposure and policy support, which subsequently translates into economic, cultural, and political capital. However, this transfer of capital primarily benefits local elites, thereby exacerbating class inequalities in rural China.

Chapter 6 shifts the research focus from urban and rural contexts to the transnational mobilities of female *daigo* entrepreneurs. *Daigo* typically refers to young, urban, middle-class, and well-educated women living or studying abroad, who exploit loopholes in Chinese tax and customs laws to resell luxury goods purchased overseas to clients in China. This entrepreneurial practice requires female resellers to perform affective labour, cultivate 'enterprising femininities' (209) on social media, and establish rapport with their customers. Through this feminised entrepreneurial labour, these resellers achieve both freedom and economic independence. However, they also encounter challenges, such as the need to respond to constant customer demands, navigate government scrutiny, and fulfil domestic responsibilities while managing their entrepreneurial lives.

Overall, this book offers an ambitious exploration of digital entrepreneurship in China, making it ideal for readers interested in digital entrepreneurship and structural inequalities. The research highlights critical tensions between urban and rural areas, elites and grassroots

classes, central and local authorities, individualism and collectivism, innovation and copying, modernity and tradition, as well as gender disparities. Two key aspects of the author's innovative approach stand out in particular. First, the author introduces an analytical framework that examines digital entrepreneurship as labour, thereby making the labourers behind these practices more visible. Another significant contribution is the emphasis on the crucial role of the family in entrepreneurial reinvention. By serving as both a unit of social reproduction and economic production, the family strengthens the resilience of grassroots entrepreneurs.