

Lehrack, Dorit

Working Paper

Environmental NGOs in China - partners in environmental governance

WZB Discussion Paper, No. P 2006-009

Provided in Cooperation with:

WZB Berlin Social Science Center

Suggested Citation: Lehrack, Dorit (2006) : Environmental NGOs in China - partners in environmental governance, WZB Discussion Paper, No. P 2006-009, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB), Berlin

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/50252>

Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

Terms of use:

Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.

You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.

If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.

Dorit Lehrack

**Environmental NGOs in China –
Partners in Environmental Governance**

Best.-Nr. P 2006-009

**Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin
für Sozialforschung (WZB)**

Oktober 2006

**Beim Präsidenten
Emeriti Projekt**

Contents

Executive Summary 5

1. Overview: On the history of and the need for NGOs 7

2. On the legal status of environmental NGOs 12

2.1 Registration obstacles for local environmental NGOs..... 12

2.2 Registration obstacles for international NGOs 15

2.3 Restrictions in fundraising both for international and local NGOs 15

2.4 New regulations for the work of foundations..... 16

3. Working areas of Chinese environmental NGOs 17

4. Strengths and weaknesses of, opportunities and risks for China’s
environmental NGOs 21

5. Trends and Tendencies 22

6. Recommendations 26

List of Abbreviations 28

References 30

Executive Summary

This paper is a snapshot of the potential of Chinese environmental NGOs¹ to effectively address environmental problems and needs, alone and in partnership with others. As environmental NGOs have only been on stage for the last ten years or so and as they undergo dynamic changes, a thoroughly conducted scientific analysis about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks is not possible yet. However, as the author has more than six years working experience with different Chinese environmental NGOs across the country, some empiric findings can be given, and some trends and tendencies be predicted.

The paper starts with a look at the history of NGOs in China with a specific focus on environmental NGOs, followed by problems and chances caused by the present legal status of the groups. It then describes the main working areas of Chinese environmental NGOs, illustrating them by giving some representative examples. After a brief analysis, the paper proposes current trends and tendencies about the development of China's environmental NGOs. The main trend is that Chinese NGOs, independently on their origin (grass root, semi-state organizations or Government-organized non-profit environmental organizations) will gain more respect and influence in both environmental awareness raising and as competent partners in policy formulation and law enforcement, if the State institutions concerned will involve them in planning and developing processes in an early stage and assist them in their capacity building.

¹ NGOs in this paper means citizen and not-profit organizations, such as charities, social organizations, environmental groups, intermediary groups, and so forth.

1. Overview: On the history of and the need for NGOs

The concept of NGOs – in the sense of having engaged civilians who care about and contribute voluntarily and organized to a sustainable development of China – is still relatively new and not always understood. Most NGOs in China have been founded after the year 1995, the year of the world women’s conference being held in Hairou, nearby Beijing. Before this event, most Chinese did not know what a NGO looks like, what role and function it could have in assisting the government in executing its tasks or in advocating for the interests of beneficiaries.

With the beginning of the opening and reform process, Chinese scholars started intensive research on the development of China’s new Civil society and its actors, hereby recognizing the need for more private, individual engagement as the State was not able or did not want to be involved in tasks, which could be conducted by non-State actors. There was and still is some confusion whether NGOs – being the organized form of civil society activism – could partner with the government or would rather be an opponent. Independent on the process of opinion building, the NGO sector grew steadily. So grew the so-called non-public economy.

With the reform process, China experienced a stricter task sharing of government, business and the new non-profit sector. In the beginning of the new century, the government promoted the motto of “small government and big society“, which replaced the former understanding of “government is doing everything”. Social (or public) organizations filled the gap that was left by the shift of governmental tasks. In 1993, some 30.000 NGOs were already recorded, whilst in 1996, statistics showed about 200.000². Economic development and the State politics of opening and reform resulted in an increasing demand for

² Wu Zhongze, 1999.

“mediators” in order to bridge the gap between the governing institutions and the people on the ground. So-called government-organized NPO’s³ (also called GONGOs) and big mass organizations, such as the All China Women’s Federation or the All China Youth Association became more important. They were aimed to articulate the needs and demands of their beneficiary groups. At the same time, they were intended to act as mediators between different stakeholder groups’ interests, such as the booming economy and its impacts on local population and local environment.

GONGOs, founded and financed by the State and being liable to the State, did not consider themselves as a kind of „opposition“ to the State, but as a “sensor” to communicate problems, interests and needs of their representative groups in a direct way to the government, which the government, in return, could quickly address with laws, regulations and policies. In this respect, a well-functioning GONGO-system could assist the government in drafting precautionary measures to safeguard internal stability, including environmental safety.

The ongoing shift of former governmental tasks to society at large resulted in strengthening and fostering civil engagement. This development was accepted and supported by the 15th General Conference of the CPC that declared the strategy of „fostering and developing social intermediary agents“, in order to put the social reforms into practice.

Beyond the State supported activities of semi-state organizations or GONGOs, uncountable citizen initiatives (grass root organizations founded by individuals in a bottom-up process) started to get active. These across the country mushrooming groups could hardly be steered or supervised by the State.

³ Government-organized not-for-profit working organizations.

Activities of the new grass root groups sometimes resulted in conflicts⁴. In the second half of the 1990s, the government started to review and update the laws on registering and supervising NGOs, a process that is not completed up to today. The approach towards public organizations at the beginning of the new century could read like this: “Intermediary agents are an important force in a community developing. All intermediary agents abiding by law and regulations, that are welcomed by the public and advance development of the community, will be supported by the ministry in order to give full play of their functions“.

The group of environmental organizations played a special role amongst the public organizations. Most of them are founded in the 1990s, after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. This group was also separated in GONGO’s, top-down founded organizations, amongst many others the China Environmental Fund, founded by Yu Keping, or the recently founded China Association for Culture and Environment, set up by the Vice Minister of SEPA, Mr. Pan Yue, and grass-root (bottom-up) organizations, such as Global Village of Beijing, Friends of Nature, or Green Earth Volunteers. The bottom-up founded organizations are “products” of visionary founders who mainly got educated abroad and therefore had been introduced to the concept of active NGOs in the “Western world”, such as Sheri Xiao Yi Liao, Founder and of Global Village of Beijing.

The growing environmental awareness which resulted in founding of unaccountable environmental initiatives is a result of the increasing awareness of environmental devastation across the country, despite good environmental laws and many efforts of the central government to reduce the negative environmental impacts of economic growth. The environmental statistics is still scary: China’s per capita water resource is less than 2.200 cubic meters, which is

⁴ Office of Laws and Regulations, 2000.

only a quarter of world average. The per capita arable land of China is less than half of world average. China uses 10 percent of the world's arable land to feed 22 percent of the world population. Economic growth is based on steady supply of energy; besides the pure quantity of energy supplied, efficiency of use plays a major role. However, China is one of the least energy-efficient nations. It consumes more than three times the world average to produce one Dollar of GDP – 4.7-times the average of the USA, and even 7.7-times the average of Germany. The shortages in energy supply in summer 2005 led to power cuts in many cities of the country.

It is not only the lack of resources that is problematical, it's also the level of pollution and the overuse of resources. More than 70 percent⁵ of China's lakes and rivers are polluted, one-quarter of its citizens do not have access to clean water. Less than 20 percent of solid waste is being treated, and 6 out of most polluted cities in the world are in China⁶. The World Bank estimates that pollution costs in China are above \$ 54 billion a year in environmental degradation, loss of life, and disease. With 26 million cars on the roads and the number expected to double by 2010, automobile exhaust will account for about 65 percent of air pollution. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002, Prime Minister Zhu Rongji announced that "...by 2005, the tendency of ecological degradation will be on the whole arrested, and the total discharge of major pollutants will drop by 10 percent compared with 2000". In May 2005, the authors of an environmental assessment report had to admit that China saw virtually no improvement in 2004 over 2003.

China's environmental groups started to address all kinds of problems mainly in their regional and local context. Their geographic distribution, therefore, is quite

⁵ Quoted from "Cleaning up China", 2005-6-15, Business Week.

⁶ World Bank Report, 2004.

unequal. The province of Yunnan has the highest density of environmental groups. This is probably because of a strong link of Yunnan and the neighbouring South-East Asian countries of Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, which have rather developed environmental NGOs due to shared climate, topographic and cultural conditions (Mekong river basin, etc.), and also because Yunnan is favoured by the donor community. Whilst we see a number of well-developed environmental groups in big cities, such as Beijing, Chongqing, Wuhan, and Nanjing, but also in Heilongjiang or in Liaoning, in “business-oriented” cities, such as Shanghai or Shenzhen, one hardly can identify any environmental groups. This applies also for poor and/or remote provinces with some exceptions in Qinghai (protection of Qinghai plateau), Shaanxi, or Gansu.

Besides the local environmental NGOs, international environmental NGOs have entered China because of its role as a global player in almost any environment-related issue. WWF is working in China already for more than 10 years, specialized on nature conservation and integrated protected area management. Greenpeace opened its Hongkong office in 1996 and runs a Beijing branch since 2002. Its present focus is campaigning against illegal logging operations, promoting renewable energies, and assisting research on genetically modified plants (especially, GMO rice). IUCN has a representative in Beijing. Environmental Defense runs an office in Beijing which promotes CDM and assists SEPA in policy formulation. Nature Conservancy is mainly active in Yunnan in the area of biodiversity conservation and protected area management.

Though the international environmental NGOs are welcomed in China as working partners, in the long run, local and national environmental NGOs will have to build capacities to be the new stakeholder group in environmental protection and sustainable development.

2. On the legal status of environmental NGOs

2.1 Registration obstacles for local environmental NGOs

Despite the ongoing support by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the supervising institution for China's NGOs, and its local representatives, and the support by other ministries, like SEPA or SFA, environmental NGOs in China have to work under difficult and somewhat outdated conditions. The registration process that is required to make their activities legal is difficult, registration sometimes even impossible, and in some regions quite expensive. We learned from a Xinjiang based environmental NGO, which wanted to get registered in Urumqi that the registration fee was about 30.000 RMB. Finally, the group gave up.

Though this case may be an exception, the legal framework for NGOs is rather hampering than fostering their development. Only a few NGOs could manage to register with the Ministry of Civil Affairs or its local departments. Those, which cannot or do not want to register (Global Village of Beijing did not want to), have the option to register as non-profit companies, which is rather easy to do. Or they work without registration, and so run the risk of being closed down.

The fact that the government is reviewing the NGO legislation (which origins in the 1980s with some updates in the late 1990s) but so far could not come up with a more satisfying solution, may be seen as a problem of resources and capacities in the ministries concerned. Yet, as a new legislation has not been put in operation, this is the biggest obstacle for the development of the much needed new civil sector in environmental governance.

There are three main requirements to get a formal registration for **local NGOs**:

- **The “sponsor”-system – double control**

Each NGO needs a “sponsor” (also called a “mother-in-law”). This would be a State institution or an organization that would adopt the NGO and function as its legal body. The NGO itself cannot get a legal status independently, it is only granted through the State partner institution. Finding a sponsor isn’t a problem for the State-founded GONGOs – in their case, the founding organization is the born sponsor – but it is complicated for bottom-up founded grass root NGOs.

State institutions are not keen to partner with newly founded NGOs because they act as their “legal representative”. In case something is happening that would have juridical consequences, it is the sponsor organization that is going to be held liable – not only the NGO. As the supervising (power) tools of the “mother-in-law”-organizations are very limited (in many NGOs it would not have the majority of votes in the General Assembly or the Board of Directors), it is becoming more and more difficult to identify such a partner, unless relationship (*guanxi*) is very strong – or unless the sponsor has a clear benefit of the partnership.

- **The exclusivity rule**

A second obsolete but still applied regulation says: “Only one NGO of the same purpose can be registered at the same administration level”. In practice that would mean that if there was an environmental NGO in Yunnan addressing illegal logging that would have succeeded registration, no others aiming at the same purpose could become registered. This regulation was once put in operation in order to avoid competition among NGOs and between NGOs and State institutions. Today, this regulation won’t be very strictly, it depends on the corresponding decision-makers. But, as this regulation is still in place, it is sometimes impossible for NGOs to register, when there is already a similar one.

- **Work only allowed at the registration level**

A third obstacle is that NGOs in China must restrict their activities to the region they are registered in. They are not allowed to establish branch offices in any other place. This regulation was thought to control growth and power of NGOs. Supervising institutions should be able to watch the activities of the NGO within their area of competence and power.

As a result of these outdated regulations, most NGOs, especially bottom-up founded grass-root NGOs, cannot succeed with a formal registration. This means, in return, that most potential partners, such as State institutions of donor organizations are not permitted to partner with them, as the formal registration is a pre-condition for any kind of official cooperation, - for examples with the Ford Foundation, EU Delegation, and foreign development agencies.

However, there have been some improvements in the working conditions for NGOs over the last years. One is that membership fees are not anymore regulated by the State. Until two years ago, membership based organizations, such as CANGO, could only request 300 RMB a year from their member organizations. This regulation has been released. It is now a point of negotiation between an organization and its members what membership fee shall be paid, and it depends very much on the quality of service the NGO is ready to offer.

The Ministry of Civil Affairs, supported by a NGO research centre, affiliated with the Qinghua University in Beijing, and assisted by scientists and more developed NGOs, such as the China Association for NGO cooperation (CANGO) makes great efforts to revise the legal framework, but could only achieve small results so far. Most NGOs, therefore, circumvent the State registration procedures and register themselves either as a non-profit company or not at all. This however means they have to pay income tax on their

fundraising income if they cannot achieve getting a charity status granted. For example, Global Village of Beijing just recently re-registered as an environmental education institution (NPO), and was tax released as it got charity status.

2.2 Registration obstacles for international NGOs

There is no official registration procedure in China for international NGOs. They can register as companies (WWF China is a non-for-profit enterprise), or they would partner with third institutions, such as the China Academy of Science (CAS), the China Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) or others as project partners. Greenpeace China was registered as a project partner to the Beijing based University for Minorities, now trying to get a “real formal registration”. Environmental Defense is registered through CANGO as a project partner.

2.3 Restrictions in fundraising both for international and local NGOs

Many international NGOs that like to settle in China misbelieve that a formal registration would allow them to raise funds. This, however, is not true. Whilst the registration laws are under the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the laws on donations and regulations on tax exemptions are under the Ministry of Finance, respectively the State Tax Bureau. Already in 1997, China has issued a law on donations that would promote donations of individuals and companies to charity purposes and would enable them to claim tax reductions. But, this law was never put into practice. This means, an organization that would like to organize a charity event, still needs a special permission to collect the money and channel it to the beneficiaries. Without such permission, no one is allowed to collect money in streets, for example. When the Salvation Army tried a street collection in Shanghai, police stopped the activity.

The restrictions for fundraising apply to local NGOs too. The only possibility, permitted so far, is to collect money for “direct project funding” and channel the money to these projects if this is the purpose of the NGO. Hereby, some overheads can be budgeted, but they normally do not allow growth or capacity building of the implementing NGO. Thus, fundraising restrictions are another big obstacle for a sound development of China’s NGOs.

2.4 New regulations for the work of foundations

Since 2005, there is also some relaxation in the registration of international and national foundations. The government had to admit that foundations funding support is a desired and necessary resource to China, and therefore the cash flow from foundations to the problem zones in the country should be eased.

Despite the difficult registration and fund raising situation, most NGOs in China develop a pragmatic, but well-working approach for survival and growth. Local fundraising is not prohibited as long as it serves the purpose of the organization. Project-implementing NGOs charge overheads as their most important financial base. NGOs establish networks through the Internet or in direct contact, what circumvents the “no branches allowed”-rule and makes them powerful and more flexible. Even with the rigid regulations, Chinese NGOs find a way out of the dilemma by creatively using the chances, relations and contacts they were able to establish.

This does not mean that NGOs stop advocating for a better legal framework. Many workshops, both locally and internationally staffed, are being organized every year, and a lot of activities of MOCA⁷ have been conducted to come up with a well-working legislation. A great problem for the Chinese government that could not be answered satisfactory so far, is how to keep decent control over

⁷ Ministry of Civil Affairs.

the fast growing sector. Here, the control by NGO membership and the society itself (good governance principles) should be stronger promoted.

3. Working areas of Chinese environmental NGOs

The working areas of China's environmental groups are as diverse as the NGOs themselves are. Still, the main working area is to create environmental awareness amongst the population. This is mainly referred to the local environment the NGO is working in. Most small local NGOs address problems such as:

- Making children aware of the beauty of nature
- Collecting waste and promoting waste prevention and waste management
- Watchdog the polluters of nature and rivers and claim improvements
- Promote and conduct afforestation projects (tree planting campaigns).

The self-understanding of most Chinese environmental NGOs is to promote and assist implementing the good Chinese environmental laws. In this sense, they grasp themselves as a “prolonged arm” for SEPA and other State institutions, aimed to improve the environmental situation in the country and to enforce implementation of laws.

Some more developed environmental NGOs start to tackle more complex topics. For example, they promote:

- Sustainable consumption as a means to create a more harmonious society and protect scarce resources
- Energy conservation and energy efficiency
- Protected area management in an environmentally and socially sustainable way

- Sustainable forestry and afforestation, linked to watchdog and campaign against illegal logging
- Protection of endangered species – enforcement of CITIES
- Policy input and draft policies in all these respects
- Enforcing State laws on EIA, especially with regard to new hydropower dam construction
- Opposing increasing individual traffic, and promoting public transport
- Assisting scientific research in areas such as use of genetically modified organisms
- Promoting organic agriculture and establishing market access
- Issuing facts and findings of environmental data.

To present some examples:

- **Global Village of Beijing – the sustainable consumption project**

The Global Village project facilitated an awareness campaign to promote sustainable consumption – use less, use longer, use better. It conducted a workshop funded by the Heinrich-Böll-Foundation and intended to start a discussion process of how to create awareness of consumers to consume in a more sustainable way. This campaign was based on a discussion about (old) Chinese values and beliefs, which paid due respect to nature and wise use of resources.

- **Green Earth Volunteers of Beijing – the Nu river field research**

Green Earth Volunteers, led by a former environmental journalist, highlighted environmental and social problems related to a big dam project at Nu River in Yunnan province. It focused on ecological and social risks, whilst project promoters focused on economic benefits. It stipulated environmental impact

assessments which had to be conducted by law – but won't, if no one cares about enforcement. The group, together with a network of other Chinese environmental NGO, brought a team of journalists, scientist and NGO members to the field, discussed the impacts of the dam with the local Nu population and other stakeholders, highlighted the results in the media and finally achieved that this project would not be approved without a correct EIA required by law.

- **The 26-degree campaign**

A group of ten environmental NGOs, amongst them the China Association for Culture and Environment – an environmental GONGO⁸ - the China Association for NGO cooperation (CANGO), Global Village of Beijing and Friends of Nature, promoted energy efficiency by increasing the temperature of Beijing's air conditioners to 26 degrees Celsius in the summers of 2004 and 2005. The campaign stayed for the win-win effect of protecting the environment, saving resources, and protecting the health of human beings – awareness raising for sustainable development. The campaign was successful after the government issued a regulation that no air conditioner in public buildings should be turned lower than 26 degrees.

- **Media campaigns by Global Village of Beijing (GVB) and Friends of Nature (FoN)**

Both NGOs release reports about the state of the environment in China. FoN conducts an annual survey about the state of nature and environment. GVB managed over a period of several years to get a slot in television to broadcast self-produced films about different environmental topics. It also runs a monthly workshop to brief journalists on different environmental topics.

⁸ Government-organized NGO, founded by SEPA.

- **Environmental management in small and medium enterprises**

The Institute for Environment and Development (IED) runs a series of workshops for managers of small and medium enterprises to train them in environmental management, especially to prepare them for environmental audits. This project is supported by various donor organizations, such as the Ford-Foundation.

- **Clean air campaign**

Environmental Defense, Office Beijing, and the China Association for NGO cooperation designed and are about starting a large campaign aimed to raise awareness on Beijing's air pollution. The campaign will have several components, such as promoting the use of public transport, promoting renewable energies, and promoting change of individual consumption behaviour of Beijing's inhabitants.

- **Protection of Poyang-Lake**

In partnership with State institutions and foreign development agencies, such as GTZ, the Mountain-River-lake-Association for Sustainable Development was contributing to the integrated regional development plan to protect the Poyang-Lake and its surroundings. The NGO conducted a needs survey with the local farmers and fishermen and later drafted together with them an activity plan to develop a more sustainable income basis. The work of this group was recognized as very successful. The Poyang-Lake and the Association represent China in the living-lake network, an initiative of the German Global Fund for Nature.

4. Strengths and weaknesses of, opportunities and threats for China’s environmental NGOs

The following brief analysis is the summary of the result of strengths and weaknesses analyses (SWOT) with environmental groups representatives done in a range of training sessions of the CANGO Vision Training Centre (see *www.cango.org*). Again, this is not a comprehensive survey, but summarizes the main points collected by roughly 300 participants over the last three years.

SWOT analyses, conducted by trainees at the Vision Training Centre

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Understand their topics ○ Understand the local situation ○ Able to communicate with local population – simple language ○ Able to address topics to the local authorities ○ Willing to learn – to achieve goals ○ Motivated staff ○ Willing to network with others – together we are stronger ○ Willing to participate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Not able to communicate with higher authorities (being afraid, language) ○ Sometime not able to read/ understand reports/ data/ facts from authorities ○ Not able to raise more support ○ Internal staff turnover (poor salaries, frustration) ○ Sometimes only a “Leader with some assistants” ○ Not able to participate in processes in an equal way (no time, no money, no expertise) ○ Not able to plan and conduct goal-oriented environmental projects and/or campaigns ○ No funding for the organization – don’t know how to survive

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Environmental degradation so strong, we have to act together ○ Role of China as a global player – international attention ○ Government needs NGOs – more support and participation ○ More participation offers ○ More openness about environmental situation in the media ○ More freedom to complain about environmental polluters ○ Very good environmental laws ○ Government wants to enforce environmental laws, helpers needed ○ School support to environmental education – big topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Obsolete legal framework – no security ○ Restrictions in fundraising ○ Opposition from local authorities - local population ○ Blamed to be “trouble-maker” – to be opponents to economic growth ○ NGO is not developing sustainably – risk to fall apart if leader disappears ○ Personal risks, if being put in an “environmental police” role ○ Over-participation – no capacities, overburden

5. Trends and Tendencies

○ Partnership between State institutions and environmental NGOs

Amongst the group of NGOs, China’s environmental NGOs are widely recognized and respected. Compared to six years ago, many State institutions, such as SEPA and SFA, have started partnering with environmental NGOs. There is increasing trust in the competence and effectiveness of these NGOs.

Examples are:

- A group of Chinese NGO representatives had been invited to attend the WSSD in 2002
- Semi-State NGOs, such as the China Association for Culture and Environment, organize trainings to improve capacity of Chinese environmental groups
- Chinese environmental NGOs are invited to official events, such as meetings of the Global Environment Facility (GEF)
- Representatives of Chinese NGOs are invited to participate in policy drafting, for example for the guidelines for public participation/public hearings in EIA procedures
- NGOs, such as WWF China or Friends of Nature have an expert status in drafting policies on protected area management.
- Greenpeace China was partnering with SFA in the campaign against illegal logging done by Asia Pulp & Paper (APP) in Yunnan

In return, by involving NGOs in policy debates, they build expert knowledge and competence, hence are increasingly able to act as equal partners. This trend is expected to continue in the future.

- **Environmental awareness raising and enforcement of laws**

Most environmental groups will focus on behavioural change of individuals and on implementing China's laws on the environment. This includes:

- Environmental awareness campaigns
- Environmental education
- “Watchdog”-function – violating environmental laws made public

This understanding of their role corresponds with the role, the State would like to see. It supports the motto of “creating a harmonious society”. There is no competition with or opposition to the central government's policies, but NGOs

may come “between the fronts” of what the central government is trying to enforce and what provincial governments and/or business do not want. Both the Nu river campaign and the APP campaign speak for this development. There is the risk that the State uses environmental NGOs as “environment police”, what should not be their role.

- **NGOs will build and work in networks**

Environmental NGOs have the capacity to network quickly and effectively. This increases the outreach of their activities. A network also circumvents rigid registration rules. Networking capability is a strong asset in disseminating environmental facts and data, in environmental education activities or in environmental campaigning (see the examples given above).

- **NGOs as a resource in policy formulation**

NGOs are familiar with their key competence topics, both in theory and practice. As mediators between different actors and without a “business” interest, they should be considered as an “objective source for information”. In this respect, NGO expertise should be used as a valuable resource in policy formulation.

- **NGOs to communicate between different stakeholders**

Especially in communication about policies and their implementation, NGOs are able to “gather” the corresponding local actors and develop with them implementing plans. This may be used in campaigns such as how to improve environmental governance at the local level. This, however, would require to train NGO representatives on the topic and to further develop their knowledge and skills.

- **Legal framework for NGOs to be improved**

It is expected that the legal conditions (registration requirements) will be relaxed for the group of grass root organizations, which then would have to proceed to a simplified registration process. Still, the problem of how to govern the NGO-sector as a whole has not been resolved by the Chinese State authorities. So, we do not expect that the present system - to be registered through a sponsor institution - will be cancelled, unless it is replaced by a new system of efficient control.

- **Fundraising to be eased**

As described before, there are no limits in project fundraising, as long as the money goes directly to a project. There is an intensive discussion in China on how to implement the law on donations that would allow fundraising from individuals, also for the organizational development of NGOs. Observers expect that fundraising will be eased over the next years to mobilize resources from individuals.

- **Capacity building for expert NGOs**

There is a strong need for expert NGOs on different topics - such as promotion of renewable energies and energy efficiency, promotion of organic agriculture, afforestation, and others. This requires higher awareness of the State institutions and a budget to assist NGOs in getting acquainted with new topics and working effectively and efficiently on those items.

6. Recommendations

In order to qualify environmental NGOs as equal partners in promoting environmental governance in China, it is recommended:

1. that the role and function of environmental NGOs be specified in the process of promoting environmental governance;
2. to organize meetings inviting the most experienced environmental NGOs and representatives of international NGOs, to introduce them to the topic of modern environmental governance;
3. to request the presidents/executives through their network of NGOs across the country to propose a number of participants for specific training measures on the topic;
4. to agree on a budget line for NGO trainings on the topic of establishing a network of skilled and experienced experts on environmental governance;
5. to disseminate information, facts and data with respect to the topic of governance;
6. to set up a website with best practice examples, which can be replicated elsewhere in China;
7. to request NGOs to set up training for journalists on the topic of environmental governance;
8. to set up an annual award for best practical cooperation of local environmental bureaus and local/national/international NGOs.

List of Abbreviations

APP	Asia Pulp & Paper (Sinar Mas Group)
CANGO	China Association for NGO cooperation
CAS	China Academy of Sciences
CASS	China Academy of Social Sciences
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CPC	Communist Party of China
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EU	European Union
FoN	Friends of Nature
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GONGO	Government-organized NGO
GTZ	German Development Agency – Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
GVB	Global Village of Beijing
IED	Institute for Environment and Development
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
MOCA	Ministry for Civil Affairs
MRLSD	Mountain-River-Lake Sustainable Development (NGO)
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NPO	Non-profit Organization
SEPA	State Environmental Protection Administration
SFA	State Forest Administration
SWOT	Strengths-Weakness-Opportunities-Risk (Analyses)
WSSD	World Summit for Sustainable Development
WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature

References

Beyond the literature quoted in the footnotes, further reading is recommended:

1. Introduction to the Development of China's Civil Society Organizations (Wang Ying, Sun Bing Yao, Research Report, 1999)
2. The Emerging of China's Civil Society and its Significance to Governance (Yu Keping, Director CCCPE, 2003)
3. Departure to Civil Society – Role, Status and Perspectives of NGOs in China (Dorit Lehrack, CIM-Aktuell, 2002)
4. Role and Function of NGOs in China (Dorit Lehrack, Green Pages of Asia House Essen, March 2004)
5. The Current Situation of Sustainable Development in China and the Role of NGOs (Dorit Lehrack, SinoMonitor, August 2005)
6. NGOs and the search for Chinese Civil Society – Environmental NGOs in the Nujiang Campaign (Michael Buesgen, Insitute of Social Studies, The Netherlands, November 2005)

