

Environmental cosmopolitanization ‘with Chinese Characteristics’: a possible legacy from recent environment policy developments and experimental collaborative projects?

Time span 2000-2010.

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I prefer the edge: the place where countries, communities, allegiances, affinities, and roots bump uncomfortably up against one another- where cosmopolitanism is not so much an identity as the normal condition of life. Such places once abounded. Well into the twentieth century there were many cities comprising multiple communities and languages – often mutually antagonistic, occasionally clashing, but somehow coexisting.

Judt, T 2010, ‘Crossings’, *The New York Review of Books*, March 25-April7, vol. LVII, No.5, p.15.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to discover whether or not engagement in cosmopolitanization processes between China and international environmental organizations, especially the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), might have helped remedy the dilemmas posed by China's environmental predicament in the decade 2000-2010. I chose Ulrich Beck's concept of cosmopolitanization processes in risk societies to examine the 'spacial and temporal dimensions' (Goldstein, 1989:537) of the Chinese environmental arena in this decade. China's environmental crises were multifarious and often catastrophic in their effects on local populations. The central government needed funding, environmental expertise and technology. Exchanges with organizations like UNEP were frequently adversarial. There were historical, economic and political reasons for this state of affairs. National and international issues influenced the authoritarian central government to decide that national concerns would take precedence in international environmental agreements. However, despite these and other international exchange difficulties, the Chinese government accepted the United Nation's program of Sustainable Development and attempted to implement it because the program might benefit the environment but still permit maintenance of economic growth. Implementation of environmental projects was always fraught with formidable impediments but policy developments did begin to include cosmopolitanization possibilities in a series of experimental environmental projects which, despite often negative evaluations, did introduce collaborative ventures involving international assistance. Citizen participation in local environmental projects was a central concern in this study, but despite policy exhortations to promote their involvement, actual participation was limited to groups of officials and particular environmental organizations. It was obvious that had public participation existed in practice the collaborative projects would have encouraged stronger cosmopolitan exchanges. Nonetheless, by about 2012 there was some evidence of an opening up that improved engagement with international environmental regimes and this change, while not transformational, could encourage more useful cosmopolitan relationships during the 21st conference in Paris in 2015.

THESIS DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint award of this degree.

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Welcome to the Anthropocene Epoch

'Thus we find ourselves in the Anthropocene. Today, even if the population were to decline substantially or land use to become far more efficient, the extent, duration and intensity of human activity has altered the terrestrial biosphere sufficiently to leave an unambiguous geological record differing substantially from that of any prior epoch. Earth's biodiversity, biogeochemistry and evolution are now profoundly reshaped by us – and therefore are in our hands' (Ellis, 2011:2).