

- 5 In what ways does the Chinese relationship with the environment mirror that of all humans living on the planet? Can you find any resemblances between the Han Chinese modern relationship with nature and that of global modern society, and what are the differences? Do you feel that the prospects for China to address its environmental concerns are better than those for the globe as a whole, worse, or the same?
- 6 How is Chinese national identity different from yours? How is it similar? Can you identify an environmental issue where you could find common ground with Chinese attitudes? Is there any evidence in your country of a sustainability ethic? If so, what are its core elements?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Forum on Religion and Ecology (Yale University), at: <http://bioethics.yale.edu/resources/forum-religion-and-ecology>
- Gary Marcuse, "Searching for Sacred Mountain" (Film), available at: <http://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/searching-sacred-mountain-religion-environment-gary-marcuse-shi-lihong>
- Orville Schell, "China: Humiliation and the Olympics," July 2008. Available on the *New York Review of Books* website.
- TRAFFIC information on TCM and the trade in endangered species: www.traffic.org
- Lu Xun, *The True Story of Ah Q* (1921), Marxists Internet Archive, at: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lu-xun/1921/12/ah-q/index.htm>

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Public Participation and Civil Society: The View from Below

Chinese civil society faces severe limitations in its ability to organize, communicate, and conduct activities. Yet even as there are tremendous changes with respect to the environment from the top down, as well as new demands for pollution controls and food safety from influential middle-class consumers, the grass roots are feeling their power and becoming active. They often form partnerships with the upper reaches of the bureaucracy in order to pressure corrupt developers, self-interested local officials, lower- and middle-level bureaucrats and polluting factory operators. Almost all citizens' groups cultivate ties with top leaders and agencies as a form of protection and assurance of a green light for their activities.

It is important not to over-generalize about Chinese civil society, for China is a large, diverse, and unevenly developed country, with unequal distribution of resources and local empowerment. The eastern seaboard and urban areas have different characteristics and dynamics than rural areas and interior western provinces. Nonetheless, even in remote areas such as the Nu River region near Myanmar and the Upper Yangzi near the Tibetan Autonomous Region, there are signs of an increasingly vibrant civil society. Indeed, environmental organizing in Yunnan province in the Southwest is in some ways more free than in Beijing. Moreover, as we will see in the next chapter, some less developed regions of Western China are hothouses of biodiversity inhabited by ethnic minority nationality people, who often have political reasons for resisting the dominance of the Han. This combination contributes to

environmental activism in remote areas where it might not be expected and draws the attention of urban elites intent on intervening in dam projects and resource extractions that degrade landscapes and threaten biodiversity. However, because of the politically sensitive combination of minority populations and resources problems, the government often construes such environmental activism as ethnic unrest. Minorities are thus at a double disadvantage when polluting or extractive industries arrive in their regions.

Not all Chinese public participation is expressed through citizens' groups. Complaint hotlines provide government-organized safety valves for individuals to register discontent with polluting factories (Brettell 2008). Moreover, "environmental mass incidents," as the government calls such protests, are astonishingly numerous. In some cases, public participation is fueled by localized pollution and arises spontaneously through cell-phone messaging and social media such as *weibo*, the Chinese version of Twitter. In other cases, NGO activists lead the way to greater citizen participation by conducting information sessions and providing advice and legal support.

Despite such new opportunities, there is continued repression of environmental activists and ordinary citizens who face monitoring, detention, or imprisonment because of their protests. Information may be censored, activist groups are watched, and there can be heavy penalties for unsanctioned public assembly. Even top environmental officials' candid statements about China's dire environmental conditions and the need for more transparency of information about pollution may carry political risks.

This chapter presents a snapshot of China's emerging environmental civil society. We explore the regulatory and financial framework in which such organizations exist. We discuss the challenge for civil society groups seeking to influence public behavior and power, especially under China's authoritarian conditions – Chinese ENGOs have built on the standard tactics of international ENGOs in spectacularly

creative ways in order to craft a more sustainable way forward. Then we illustrate these tactics through a series of more-or-less chronological examples, from the first effort to save the Tibetan Antelope through cutting-edge efforts to use class-action lawsuits to hold polluters accountable. These examples will allow us to "meet" some of China's environmental heroes and key organizations. Next we discuss citizen activists, who are thrust into political roles when their communities face powerful environmental challenges. We conclude with a short discussion of the role of foreign ENGOs and government-organized NGOs (GONGOs) and think tanks.

OPERATING FRAMEWORK

In China, citizens' groups (non-governmental organizations) are classic illustrations of the Gramscian argument that civil society is often penetrated by the state as a way of manipulating culture so as to gain consent for government rule. The Communist Party issued regulations regarding the registration of social groups as a priority immediately after the 1949 Maoist revolution, when the Chinese government viewed independent social organizations as potential threats to the governance of the Communist Party. Under the 1950 registration measures, most social organizations were suppressed as feudal or reactionary organizations, while the few that survived were subsumed into the government system or transformed into government affiliates.

During the Mao years, particularly during the 1966–76 Cultural Revolution, independent social organizations simply could not exist: Aside from Communist mass organizations such as the Young Pioneers, Communist Youth Leagues, and neighborhood associations that were effectively decentralized monitoring networks to allow the Party to keep tabs on citizens, other social groups were treated as counter-revolutionary and their leaders persecuted. Although the ultra-leftist, often fascist Red Guard organizations arguably had their

own aspects of public participation and democratic expression, the period was marked by extreme violence toward religious groups, artists and writers, educated people of all persuasions, and anyone with foreign ties. Dictatorship, anarchy, chaos, and economic stagnation marked the decade.

After Mao died and Deng Xiaoping came into power with his economic reforms and modernization platform, more space became available for individual expression, freedom of information, and participation in unofficial social groups. From 1979 to 1989, the number of national-level social organizations increased 16-fold, reaching an official figure of 1,600. Recent Civil Affairs Bureau figures show officially registered groups numbering as many as 500,000. A social organization must be authorized by a government agency in order to be legally registered; some social groups have nicknamed their supervisor their “mother-in-law.” The supervising agency is responsible for the group’s ideology, finance and personnel, research, contacts with foreign organizations, and donations from overseas (Teets 2014). Registration is very difficult because most governmental agencies are hesitant to take responsibility for the behavior of a citizens’ group. Having a supervisory body also undermines a group’s independence, so some organizations register as business entities, while many more operate underground without legal identities, such as the illegal pro-Vatican Catholic Church and various human rights and democracy groups. By some estimates, almost 90 percent of China’s social groups are unregistered and cannot have a bank account under the organization’s name or enjoy other perquisites like tax breaks. This lack of financial recognition complicates their ability to receive donations and makes their activities expensive.

Despite these difficulties, NGO registration policy seems to be easing in some cities in recent years, especially for pilot projects. In 2008, Shenzhen opened up registration for social organizations in the fields of social welfare and charity, and in July 2011, Minister of Civil

Affairs Li Liguo announced that the whole country would adopt a similar social organization registration policy. Such groups are now supposed to be able to register directly with civil affairs departments, and supervisory bodies will no longer be needed (*China Daily* 2011). However, the situation for environmental NGOs remains fraught with challenges and the details of the more permissive registration system have yet to be worked out. One encouraging development is the emergence of domestic foundations, often tied to corporations that are willing to support ENGOs. This avoids the limitation on accepting foreign funds, which became very strict in 2015, and has been a great boon to China’s environmental movement.

Understanding the acceptable limits on public activities is a subtle game: permission often rests on political patronage and the degree of freedom that happens to be available in the country at a given moment. Groups have an uneasy alliance with the government that Jessica Teets (2014) calls “consultative authoritarianism,” whereby the government and civil society learn from each other and groups tacitly agree to provide some public goods that the government cannot. However, such groups struggle to define their political space, as freedoms are constantly shifting. They contract during major Party congresses, for example, and during anniversaries of civil unrest. Often, the demarcation line is not visible until it has been crossed.

CIVIL SOCIETY STRATEGIES

In Western debates over civil society, some “realist” political scientists argue that NGOs do not matter much in shaping world events; the state is the main actor in both domestic and international affairs. However, an increasingly large and influential group of scholars sees such groups as wielding significant power and participating in governance. Civil society organizations control information, shape behavior, serve as consultants to governments, influence consumer

choices and power, and exert pressure by bearing witness to the actions of corporations and governments and holding them accountable. The groups link across state borders in a "global civil society" such that at times they do not seem firmly fixed within one state or another, forming alliances and commitments to causes that transcend traditional state boundaries (Wapner 1995). Moreover, there is a rich relationship between environmental activism and the development of civil society in general. Given that in China civic groups that focus on human rights and democracy are quickly suppressed, some activists have found the "space" for organizing around environmental issues to be attractive. As a result, active and creative people who wish to engage in public participation sometimes engage in environmental protection. Some international scholars have directed attention to environmental groups as a way of measuring more broadly the potential for democratic change in the country. At least some of this interest comes from right-wing academics interested in seeing whether the power of the Chinese Communist Party is weakening (Diamond 2009).

While a detailed discussion of the scholarly debates about NGOs as political actors is too complex to present here, it may be helpful to consider some of the sources of power available to citizens' groups. One useful typology comes from Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1998), who identify several basic modes of NGO engagement, among which the politics of information, accountability, and symbolism are the most relevant for the Chinese situation. "Information politics," historically the earliest and most traditional form of NGO power, comes into play when a group gathers and disseminates information via newspapers, magazines, and other media. For example, conservation groups which conduct or convey scientific research about threats to specific species – as the Audubon Society did in the late 19th century to discourage the use of bird feathers on hats – or groups that produce and disseminate nature films, derive power and influence simply by publicizing that material.

"Accountability politics" involves holding governments and corporations accountable for public commitments they have made in public forums like the U.N., in treaties they have signed and ratified, or in corporate mission statements. It pressures institutions to adhere to codes of conduct that they have endorsed, or to uphold laws to conduct Environmental Impact Assessments. Chinese ENGOs are not only becoming empowered to hold their own governments accountable but are also joining forces with citizens' groups around the world in this effort. For example, in collaboration with an international ENGO called TRAFFIC, Chinese groups monitor compliance with the 1973 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). They are trying to force the government to deal better with the illegal wildlife trade that is rampant in public markets throughout the country. Although CITES cannot address domestic consumption of endangered species because governance of species is considered a matter of national sovereignty, the treaty restricts the import and export of threatened creatures and as such is one of the only weapons such groups have available. Human rights NGOs have long used accountability politics to try to pressure the Chinese government; China has associated itself with 22 international human rights treaties, including the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the U.N. Covenant on Economic and Social Rights, and the key U.N. Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (which China has signed but not ratified). Among the environmental treaties that China has signed, the 1989 Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Wastes and Their Disposal is also highly useful for Chinese citizens' groups. Moreover, Chinese ENGOs are increasingly engaged in pressuring their government on international negotiations on climate change. Fortunately, China freely acknowledges that anthropogenic climate change is a real threat.

"Symbolic politics," by contrast, uses images, media, and dramatization techniques to mobilize opposition or consumer behavior.

Greenpeace International, with its Quaker roots in “bearing witness,” specializes in this technique, made famous when it used inflatable boats to confront giant factory whaling ships and also videotaped the vulnerability of the whales and the heroism of its activists. With the expansion and popularization of social media technologies, symbolic politics has in many ways become the most powerful of all tools available to Chinese ENGOs, as in May 2013 when Greenpeace protested the Sichuan government’s redrawing of a panda reserve’s boundaries so as to construct a phosphate fertilizer mine. The campaign featured photos of an activist in a panda suit standing before a desecrated landscape, paws covering its weeping eyes.

Chinese ENGOs have incorporated these strategies and expanded their range in dramatic fashion, even though – or perhaps because – they remain constrained by the need to register with the government and haunted by the threat of closure (Lü and Turner 2006). They are expanding their range from traditional programs of environmental education and non-confrontational activities like trash pick-up and tree planting and are now assuming advocacy roles similar to those adopted by ENGOs in other parts of the world. They are courageously adopting tactics more commonly seen in less authoritarian countries, such as putting up banners in public places and mounting actions designed to garner media attention. As we shall see in greater detail below, Chinese ENGOs are taking the lead to pressure the government for greater transparency in disclosing air and water pollution statistics, while taking on powerful corporate interests like the multinational corporations Monsanto (for genetically modified foods) and Hewlett Packard (for failing to remove toxic components from computers). The adoption of these strategies represents a maturing of Chinese activism and an indication of increased confidence and willingness to take on politically difficult issues. It may also indicate that activists feel safer. The central government’s stated commitments to environmental protection provide them with tacit permission, as these official

pronouncements open up avenues for “accountability politics.” Citizens now have ammunition to hold government agencies to their promises to clean up pollution, improve public safety, and put China on the road to sustainable development. Let us now explore some of the ways in which Chinese activists have put these tools to work, as they have matured from the mid-1990s until today.

INFORMATION POLITICS AND NETWORKING

One of the earliest and most famous Chinese environmental NGOs was founded in 1993 (and officially registered in 1994) by Liang Congjie, who passed away in 2010. His remarkable story is worth telling, as he is considered the founder of China’s environmental activist movement. Liang was the grandson of the great early twentieth-century reformer Liang Qichao, who led the 1898 Hundred Days Reform and advocated for constitutional monarchy in the waning days of the Qing dynasty. Exiled to Japan and later becoming a lecturer in the U.S., Liang Congjie’s grandfather met Theodore Roosevelt and tried to stimulate in China an interest not only in Western technology but also in Western forms of political organization. Associated with the revered “father of the nation” Sun Yat-sen, his reputation as one of the great figures in the history of modern China is unassailable.

Liang Qichao’s son, Liang Sicheng (the environmentalist Liang’s father), was a famed and then persecuted architectural preservationist. After the Mao revolution, Liang Sicheng fought tirelessly, if ultimately fruitlessly, to save Beijing’s ancient city walls from demolition and to chronicle the forms and styles of Chinese architecture being lost. During the Cultural Revolution, Liang Sicheng was viciously victimized for what were considered his reactionary ideas about preserving the artifacts of feudal society. According to his wife, whom I met in 1983, during his final days he was held prisoner in a damp

cellar where water sometimes rose to his waist. He was made to bow and apologize to his tormentors, who sometimes urinated through the cellar window to humiliate him. He was eventually "persecuted to death," like so many others of China's greatest and brightest, in a period of extremism and violence from which China has yet to recover or fully understand.

After the Cultural Revolution, Liang Sicheng's reputation was rehabilitated and his greatness widely acknowledged. His son Liang Congjie, who had also suffered during the Cultural Revolution, was treated with the respect accorded to China's greatest public intellectuals. This heritage provided him with a unique level of political protection, and helps explain how he was able to take risks at a time when the regime still treated civil society groups with great suspicion.

When I first met Liang Congjie in the early 1980s, he just had regained access to his family's traditional Beijing home after it had been confiscated, and was working as an encyclopedia publisher and translator. Even then, he was deeply worried about environmental issues, but knew that the confrontational techniques used by international groups would be too dangerous to use in China. But he had the vision, and the political protection, to establish Friends of Nature together with a small group of other intellectuals concerned about the environment. His pedigree gave them the freedom to do what others could not, and his sophisticated awareness of the risks allowed them to navigate a sensitive situation.

One of the causes considered politically safe in the early days was the effort to save the Tibetan antelope, or *chiru*, whose underbelly fur is highly sought for making scarves called shatoosh, said to be so fine that they can be pulled through a finger ring. Many of the poachers are ethnic minorities and the fur is generally smuggled to India for sale in the West, so the Chinese central government was apparently willing to tolerate this information campaign. Still, it was dangerous, and two Tibetan wildlife officials were killed during the 1990s for

their efforts to stop poachers: Suonan Dajie died in a gunfight and his brother-in-law Zhaba Duoje, was murdered in his home four years later.

Another early activity of Friends of Nature was to bring environmental education directly into towns and villages in a car decorated like an antelope. However, the most significant aspect of the *chiru* campaign was its role in creating networks of environmentalists throughout the country. In the 1990s, saving the antelope became one of several causes that lent itself to Internet organizing. The effort spread to universities throughout the country, contributing to the formation of student groups, which often conducted activities under the aegis of their schools' Communist Youth Leagues as approved clubs. These networks became an important source of information exchange and organizing ability for China's environmental movement with respect to other topics.

Liang Congjie was a dignified, humble, and dedicated person. He told me on numerous occasions how difficult it was to run the organization. He feared it would be shut down if he went too far, and restricted membership to 10,000 in order to avoid appearing as a threat to central authorities. Still, he needed to find activities for Friends of Nature's passionate members. Unlike in the West, where environmental organization members often write a check and receive a magazine, umbrella, calendar, or tote bag, Chinese members expect to participate actively. Perhaps this is a legacy of Mao-era mobilization campaigns, where people were organized for mass activities like building small dams or killing "pests" like rats and mosquitoes. Membership was not automatic; candidates had to write a letter to Friends of Nature explaining why they wanted to join. Liang and his small staff organized trips for volunteers to plant trees, pick up garbage, and conduct other activities that the government would not find threatening. Liang also translated or arranged to have translated numerous environmental books by Western writers. This publication

effort eventually blossomed into Friends of Nature's annual publication of the *China Environment Yearbook*, in cooperation with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Press, which presents a collection of views of the year's challenges from an NGO perspective. Also translated into English, the volumes offer insight into everything from legal challenges against poorly planned dams, to the Green GDP effort to overviews of the year in environment from the perspective of NGO leaders (2007–2015).

Since those early days, many environmental groups have formed, but Friends of Nature paved the way. It served as an incubator for numerous environmentalists who then went on to form their own groups, including the photographer and journalist couple Xi Zhinong and Shi Lihong. The famous couple worked to try to save the Yunnan snub-nosed monkey in Deqin, China's "Shangri-la," filming the illegal logging that was destroying monkey habitat and moving with their baby to that remote region. Xi's photos of the monkeys have become icons of the Chinese environmental movement, and he and his wife have continued to photograph, write, and make films about other environmental causes like the planned dams on the Nu River and Tiger Leaping Gorge, using their organization Wild China as a platform. In the provinces, other well-known groups include Green Hunan, with a network of volunteers trying to protect the Xiang River, Green Han River, which was founded by "environmental grandma" Yun Jianli, and Green Camel Bell in Gansu, established by Zhao Zhong to protect the environment in the Lanzhou area. This limited list does not begin to account for the numerous environmental student clubs and other green groups that have become so fashionable among young people worried about the state of China's environment and eager to join a global movement for protection. According to the Chinese website of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, as of 2013, of the 289,000 social groups officially registered, 6,636 of them were ENGOS. Imagine, then, how many more are unregistered.

A SPECIAL ROLE FOR JOURNALISTS AND FILMMAKERS

A powerful and typically Chinese tactic is the ENGOS' alliance with courageous investigative journalists and newspaper editors, who have demonstrated a powerful interest in environmental stories and have often become advocates for justice in cases of pollution, poorly designed and constructed dams, and threats to wildlife (Geall 2013). Chinese journalists have long played a role as advocates for the disenfranchised by speaking truth to power and providing a conduit for information from the grass roots to top leaders who might be in a position to provide justice. There is a long Chinese tradition of appealing to a higher authority for redress of wrongs, traceable to a Confucian system in which those with higher status have an obligation to take care of those below them. Liu Binyan's memoir, *A Higher Kind of Loyalty* (1990) [*Di Er Zhong Zhongcheng* 第二种忠诚] explores this moral obligation in eloquent language. As a result, petitioning higher authorities to come "down" to a locality to investigate and correct an injustice is a longstanding cultural practice – the petitioner often makes a journey to seek a personal audience with the powerful official or journalist and try to present a document detailing the grievance. This is often a victim's first resort, rather than taking a tort to a court of law.

Disenfranchised citizens and pollution victims thus frequently bring their complaints to the media. As already noted, top environmental officials have supported investigations over the years, creating a huge wave of environmentally themed stories in the press. The path-breaking news magazine *Southern Weekend* [*Nanfang Zhoumo* 南方周末] repeatedly publishes environmental stories at considerable risk to its editors and writers, but despite firings and demotions, the publication's prestige and moral authority have allowed it to remain open. Blogs, the Internet, and instant messaging have also opened up space for the conveyance of environmental information and organizing, as

mentioned above. The journalist Liu Jianqiang fought tirelessly against a dam being planned for Tiger Leaping Gorge, one of China's most spectacular free-flowing rivers and tourist spots. Using accountability politics, he exposed local leaders' failure to conduct environmental impact assessments as required by law. Eventually fired from *Southern Weekend*, he now works for the online information website, "China Dialogue," and as mentioned in the previous chapter, is the subject of a film on Chinese environmentalists' interest in Tibetan Buddhism.

Many of the leading environmental activists in China today were originally journalists. They were the first to explore and expose the devastating pollution that has left nearly half of the population without a supply of clean water and one-third breathing polluted air. Shi Lihong originally wrote for *China Daily*, her husband Xi Zhinong was once a cameraman for China Central Television. Ma Jun wrote *China's Water Crisis*, a journalistic exposé of the pollution of the Yellow River, before founding the Institute for Public and Environmental Affairs (IPE), which organizes and publicizes information about pollution sources. Wang Yongchen, whose Green Earth Volunteers fight dams in the Southwest, has a background in radio.

Another prominent journalist who has taken a leading role in the Chinese ENGO movement is Feng Yongfeng, who writes for the *Guangming Daily*. Feng founded Green Beagle, a cutting-edge citizens' group that has involved Beijing citizens in monitoring their own air quality. In 2006 he created a community-based learning group called Nature University, using the concept of learning from nature in nature (classes are held outdoors). The idea is to build a stronger sense of public participation in environmental issues by fostering people's love of the outdoors.

Until recently, the most famous illustration of the special role for journalists was the campaign against dam-building on the Nu River in Yunnan, which borders Burma and is a spectacular and remote wilderness spot beloved of eco-tourists and rafters. An NGO founded by

social scientist Yu Xiaogang, Green Watershed, clashed with local officials when Yu circulated evidence that farmers on the Mekong River (Lancang in China) had been poorly compensated when they were forced off their land. He teamed with filmmaker Shi Lihong to create a documentary about the abject poverty of the relocated former farmers. They then showed the film to villagers living along other rivers targeted for dams. Local authorities threatened Yu, but the plight of the farmers reached the national press. When then-Premier Wen Jiabao urged caution in hasty dam-building, it was hailed as a victory, as shown in the Canadian documentary, "Waking the Green Tiger." The outcome of this struggle seems once again unclear as China is placing more emphasis on the development of hydropower in China's far West as a means of meeting its energy goals and reducing carbon emissions, and several Nu River dams are back in the planning stages.

In another form of investigative journalism and information politics, Chinese ENGOs have increasingly turned to citizen and consumer survey research as a source of power, publicizing their findings on websites and via social media and also partnering with official news outlets, think tanks and governmental agencies to make their findings known. According to the *China Daily*, the E-waste Civil Action Network conducted a study revealing that 60 percent of Beijing's e-waste is being sold to trash collectors, who pay more than government recycling stations, and that the waste continues to end up in Guangdong Province, where cities like Guiyu are hubs of the underground market. The group surveyed 342 residents in downtown Beijing and found that most knew about the dangers of e-waste and placed great hope in NGOs to deal with the problem: "We'll work more actively in the future, as the public expect more from us than from the producers," Lai Yun, director of Greenpeace's pollution control project, told *China Daily*. Lai added that his group is trying to create a mechanism whereby e-waste can be returned to producers for cleaning or disposal. "We hope more international brands will participate in

reclaiming their products. This way, they'll be willing to perfect the design of their products to make them easy to be dismantled later" (Wu, Wencong 2011).

In February 2015, the use of investigative journalism to address environmental issues became a national phenomenon. Chai Jing, a renowned and widely respected former reporter from CCTV, unveiled her TED-style yearlong investigation into China's noxious air pollution in the form of a 104-minute online documentary called "Under the Dome." For the first few days after its release, the documentary was visible on many public websites, including state media such as the *People's Daily*, a rare occurrence in China's heavily censored Internet world. Powerful, touching, and convincing, Chai's film received more than 200 million online views in the first 48 hours and prompted 280 million posts to Sina Weibo, becoming what many hoped would be a turning point in environmental awareness. Some have estimated that almost half the population of China was directly or indirectly affected by the film, when group viewing is included in the calculation. The newly appointed minister of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, Chen Jining, sent Chai a message of appreciation saying that the documentary reminded him of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*.

Chai Jing had gained national recognition through her courageous frontline coverage of the 2003 SARS epidemic, coal-mining and pollution accidents, and through her best-selling memoir, *Kanjian*, or "Bearing Witness." "Under the Dome," a self-funded and independent production largely driven by Chai's personal motivation as a concerned mother trying to safeguard her newborn daughter's health, and strengthened by her extensive connections with influential policy makers and scientists, marked a departure for her and for the environmental movement. Her personalization of the issue gripped viewers who had already learned to trust and admire her, and she used her enormous social capital and access to explain the sources of China's

smog and to gain credibility. Never before had a single action had so much impact.

Some believe that the film's success would have been impossible without official approval, at least from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and other institutions hoping to gain more power and resources on the eve of the annual meetings of the National People's Congress and Chinese People's Political Consultative Council. However, three days after the release of the film, propaganda authorities circulated an official directive requiring websites to discontinue availability, effectively shutting it down for anyone without access to an international work-around to the YouTube version (English subtitles available). The official directive cited the need to create a favorable atmosphere for the upcoming annual meeting of China's top legislative bodies.

Even overshadowed by this political about-face, "Under the Dome" stands out as the most powerful environmental wake-up call for China ever. As one online commentator summarized, "Chai has performed many roles beautifully – a concerned mother, a well-versed and plain-spoken journalist, an articulate presenter, a proactive citizen, and, critically, an effective self-made public relations specialist" (Zhao 2015).

UNDERCOVER INVESTIGATIONS AND NAMING AND SHAMING

Chinese ENGOs sometimes conduct undercover investigations, secretly taking water samples from factory effluent pipes when local people contact them to complain. Depending on what the laboratory analysis (often conducted in Amsterdam or London) reveals, Greenpeace may decide to launch a "naming and shaming" campaign against the factory and the multinational company it supplies. These campaigns often blend information, accountability, and symbolic politics, using social media and modern marketing to go directly to the

consumer, both within China and overseas, leveraging global civil society and stronger NGOs overseas to attack a brand and threaten a corporation's bottom line. The most famous of these campaigns is Greenpeace's Detox campaign, designed to pressure companies to stop dumping chemicals into the Yangzi River. (The "X" in Detox is written like the character *shui* 水, or water, which it resembles.) Beginning with Nike, Adidas, and Puma, they created embarrassing images showing companies as addicted to hazardous chemicals. Greenpeace members were asked to "Sign the petition to tell Nike and Adidas to Detox Now!" After Puma and Nike caved in to consumer pressure, an August 2011 email campaign intensified the focus on Adidas:

We began the Detox campaign in June with a "Nike vs Adidas" challenge, but Puma was first off the mark with its commitment to eliminate all hazardous chemicals from its supply chain and products. Nike last week committed too, leaving people to wonder what Adidas thinks about its customers and the environment. According to China's *Statistical Yearbook*, the apparel, footwear and caps textile industry discharge 805 tonnes of industrial waste water every second. Our latest Dirty Laundry report reveals that the clothes in your local sportswear or fashion outlet may contain nonylphenolethoxylates, which break down in water to form nonylphenol – a toxic, persistent and hormone-disrupting chemical.

Later that month, Adidas announced that it too would commit to zero discharge of toxic chemicals.

Greenpeace's attention soon shifted to some of the top brands in the fashion industry, including Zara, Victoria's Secret, Benetton, Levi's, Burberry, and Mango, many of which have promised to detox. A "Detox the Catwalk" campaign identifies the leaders (Benetton, Burberry, Esprit, H&M, Limited, among others); the "greenwashers" (Nike, Li Ning); and the losers (GAP, Versace, D&G, among others).

Corporations know that if they are perceived as environmentally friendly they will gain buyers, but if they become negative targets, it can hurt their bottom lines. This worries multinational corporations in China, not only because they tend to export to places where Greenpeace and other environmental NGOs have strong voices, but also because an increasingly large percentage of their sales are to domestic consumers who are also paying attention to the environmental costs hidden in what they buy.

CELEBRITY AND CEO ACTIVISM

Corporations and CEOs have sometimes played a highly positive role in promoting public participation around environmental issues, often through attached foundations. In April 2013, Alibaba founder Jack Ma announced the company's release of water pollution kits for the cheap price of \$10; these kits can identify pollutants in freshwater sources and users can upload results online to a digital map (Shifflett 2015).

The Society of Enterprise and Ecology Foundation (SEE), which receives regular donations from more than 100 successful entrepreneurs, is the most active domestic foundation dedicated to supporting China's grassroots ENGOS. Some SEE entrepreneurs, often enjoying a high level of social recognition and attracting millions of followers on social media, are not only donating money but also becoming vocal in addressing environmental challenges using their significant social influence. Ren Zhiqiang, a real estate tycoon, serves as current president of the SEE Foundation and is widely known by his nickname "Cannon" Ren, often "firing" at political wrongdoing and driving public opinion on social and economic reforms.

Corporate CEOs are not the only famous people who have put their weight behind Chinese environmental causes. The international conservation group WildAid has in recent years enlisted the basketball celebrity Yao Ming and kung-fu star Jackie Chan in its campaign

against shark-finning. The use of celebrities to shape and change public opinion and behavior, so common in the West (see Pamela Anderson's work for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals; Robert Redford, Leonardo DiCaprio, Pierce Brosnan, and Tom Hanks for the Natural Resources Defense Council; and Harrison Ford, the Dixie Chicks, and others for Conservation International), is just beginning in China. It is a fruitful strategy for raising awareness of the environmental impacts of consumer choices. The anti-shark fin campaign uses the slogan, "When the buying stops, the killing can, too." It has started to make shark fin soup unfashionable. Vendors' profits have dropped, major hotels have removed shark fin soup from their menus, and the Chinese government has banned the soup from official banquets. Shark fin consumption is deeply entrenched in traditional Chinese gastronomic tradition, as noted in the previous chapter, for both its imagined medicinal properties and its role in displaying wealth at banquets and weddings. But the rapidity with which shark fin soup is being removed from menus in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong is extremely encouraging and gives hope that other destructive behaviors can also change if celebrities attach their reputations to the cause.

TRANSPARENCY POLITICS

When ordinary citizens have independent, non-governmental sources of information, they are empowered to pressure governments and corporations to change behavior. In authoritarian China, however, such sources are not readily available and civil society has used a different tactic – organizing official data to make it accessible. Transparency politics is one of the most exciting fronts in Chinese ENGOs' struggle to put China on a more sustainable path. Unlike information politics, transparency politics actively uncovers suppressed data and uses the Internet and other electronic media to empower the public with information. To address China's devastating pollution crisis, the public

needs to know who is poisoning their air and water. Civil society has long been using independent investigation as an effective way to expose pollution sources, but their findings are limited when compared to the massive scale of pollution and are sometimes challenged by authorities as being unreliable.

In 2008, the State Council issued a regulation on the disclosure of government information, and the MEP followed with a specific decree on what kind of environmental information would be made public. Chinese ENGOs took this as a chance to advance China's freedom of information. Beijing-based Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs (IPE), founded by Ma Jun, is the most active ENGO fighting the battle for transparency. The group created a nationwide "Pollution Map" to systematically organize official pollution records, and it has tried to make authorities accountable for exposing the pollution sources, as is required by a 2008 regulation that is not widely implemented.

In collaboration with the U.S.-based Natural Resources Defense Council, the group also launched a Pollution Information Transparency Index, or PITI, to evaluate the environmental transparency of a total of 113 Chinese cities. Each city is given a score from 0 to 100 based on four indicators of how systematic, timely, comprehensive, and user-friendly the local EPB is in disclosing pollution data to the public. The first assessment showed that China's overall information transparency was low: the average PITI score for 113 cities was 31 out of 100 points, and only four cities had a score greater than 60 points. Thirty-two cities scored less than 20 points. In the following annual assessments, the average PITI scores saw only moderate increases until a major breakthrough came in 2014, when thousands of the nation's biggest emitters were legally required for the first time to disclose real-time emissions data through online public platforms. The data had been shared exclusively with environmental bureaus for years, with few repercussions. Now the public reporting initiative has allowed IPE to

develop a mobile phone app that consolidates official emissions data and makes it readily available to everyone.

Despite improvements, transparency in China still has a long way to go. The inconsistency in the officially released data often leads to misunderstanding and even mistrust. Chinese ENGOs are still learning how to make the best use of this suddenly more available data. They are learning to challenge data quality, and perhaps most importantly, to translate the information into a form that the general public can understand. The IPE staff's labor of love, copying and pasting thousands of pollution records from regional and local EPB websites, has deeply empowered the Chinese people. By the end of 2014, IPE's Pollution Map database had collected more than 180,000 such records and spurred more than 1500 email and telephone responses to the information. Under pressure from public scrutiny, China's polluters are starting to talk about what they did wrong and take actions to clean up. Pressure is also building from international customers, because of the combination of transparency politics and another tactic called supply chain analysis, which we discuss next.

SUPPLY CHAIN ANALYSIS

Greater access to data makes it possible for green groups and consumers to hold international manufacturers accountable for the pollution footprint in their Chinese supply chain, which traces where raw materials are sourced and the environmental record of every manufacturer involved in creating the components that go into a consumer product. By scrutinizing the global political economy of supply chains, uncovering levels of contractors and subcontractors, and demanding that multinational corporations take responsibility for the environmental performance of their direct and indirect suppliers, ENGOs are "greening the supply chain" in an activism that has become truly global. The IPE collects official government pollution data on business entities and

puts them into a searchable database. Through a "Green Choice Alliance" network of 51 participating NGOs, it uncovers violations of suppliers of famous brands and engages companies to demand that they change their behavior, clean up, and compensate those affected.

The most famous example of this technique is the effort to expose Apple Computer's toxic supply chain. The "poison apple" campaign involved an alliance of multiple ENGOs, sophisticated use of international ties, and even confrontations on Apple's home territory in Cupertino, California. Friends of Nature, the Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs, Green Beagle, Envirofriends, and Nanjing Green Stone exposed serious problems in 27 factories in Apple's supply chain, notably Taiwanese-owned Foxconn, a touch screen manufacturer in Shenzhen, where 14 workers committed suicide in 2010. Over the course of seven months they interviewed villagers affected by chemical plants supplying Apple components and took water samples that revealed serious pollution levels. They produced extensive reports that they made available electronically (2011). These exposés came to global attention, and in alliance with United States-based NGOs like the Natural Resources Defense Council, IPE's Ma Jun went to California to meet with and pressure Apple executives. Chinese groups have continued to work to make Apple transparent and responsible for its suppliers, forcing Apple to undertake regular talks with environmental groups and to reform its manufacturing processes. The campaign seems to be paying off as Apple's performance has become much better. This campaign demonstrates increased sophistication in networking and the use of the media to disseminate findings. It shows willingness to take risks by conducting undercover investigations, fearlessness in taking on a powerful multinational corporation whose business is important for China, and ability to connect with ordinary villagers who trust such groups to be their voices for justice. Finally, it shows the capacity to form transboundary alliances with members of global civil society to pressure a transnational corporation (Xie 2011).

USE OF THE COURTS

Another significant trend in domestic environmental politics is the rise in frequency and scope of environmental litigation and citizens' growing awareness of the courts as a venue to resolve environmental disputes. There are still tremendous weaknesses in the Chinese legal system with regard to implementation and enforcement, and the number of such lawsuits is difficult to quantify. However, the increase in the use of such tactics is a signal of rising confidence in the rule of law and a growing sense that citizens have right to a clean environment that the state has an obligation to protect. Although the use of the Chinese courts on behalf of pollution victims is far from new, the strategy appears to have achieved broader acceptance, with even ordinary farmers aware of the possibility of litigating their cases. This marks a new tool compared with the traditional Chinese culture of dispute resolution, whereby, as noted earlier, wronged citizens seek to bring a petition to a higher authority by traveling to the front gate of an agency and trying to pass a letter to an influential person inside. When this fails, they display a large poster on the sidewalk outside detailing their woes, or try to use personal influence or bribery to try to gain redress. Today, China has more than 360 specialized environmental courts, tribunals, panels, and circuit courts located throughout the country, but the number of trials brought to the courts remains limited. In Jiangsu province, for example, in 2013 there were more than 50,000 environmental petitions but only 85 cases were settled through the legal process.

The Center for Legal Assistance to Pollution Victims receives hundreds of appeals for help every month and focuses on aiding the vulnerable and holding polluting factories accountable. The organization has been operating since 1998 at the Chinese University of Political Science and Law and is registered with the Ministry of Justice. In the past five years, the Center has fought more than 70 cases involving about 20,000

people. It fields inquiries ranging from those of a humble farmer whose ducks were poisoned by chemical pollution to fish farmers whose lawsuit led to the shutdown of a paper mill in Shandong. Wang Canfa, the founder and director, has gained protection in part by cultivating a high international profile and by housing his Center within a university with close central government ties. He has also participated in drafting numerous environmental regulations. The Center is partnered with the Vermont Law School to sponsor environmental law and policy workshops and conferences, including one at National Judges College in Beijing, and their U.S.–China Partnership for Environmental Law recently helped to found China's first environmental public interest law firm (Vermont Law School 2010). These efforts follow decades of legal exchanges organized by the American Bar Association, the U.S. Department of State's International Visitors' Program, and the National Committee on U.S.–China Relations. However, the focus on environmental law through programs like that of Vermont Law School is comparatively new.

Wang Canfa's group advocates for victims; it has been much harder for Chinese courts to agree to hear cases brought by groups whose members are not themselves directly harmed. The first exception was a public interest lawsuit brought by Friends of Nature and the Chongqing Green Volunteers in 2011 against a company that had dumped 5,000 tons of chromium-contaminated waste. The acceptance of the case by the local District Court in Qujing, Yunnan was considered a historic breakthrough as the first suit brought by grassroots ENGOS. However, at the time there were no legal provisions for NGOs to serve as plaintiffs and this was a rare occurrence. Even the All China Environment Federation (ACEF), a government-organized NGO under the control of the MEP, was rejected for the eight environmental public interest lawsuits it tried to bring in 2013. So when a chance came to clarify the legal standing of ENGOS as plaintiffs during the revision of the environmental laws, civil society was eager to participate in the

consultation phase. As discussed in the previous chapter, the process took three years and four revisions, with heated public debate on the issue.

The first draft did not include “public interest litigation,” and the second proposed that environmental public interest litigation could be filed only by the ACEF and its local affiliates. The third draft was more inclusive, but it was restricted to NGOs registered at the central-governmental level, which in practice was not much help as most grassroots NGOs are registered at the city level. The fourth and final drafts saw great improvement in that a large pool of NGOs (some estimated 700 groups) is finally eligible to bring environmental public interest lawsuits.

Despite the promise of the new law, the possibility of winning environmental lawsuits remains limited. The above-mentioned Qujing chromium contamination case remains unresolved, as the NGOs struggled to pay for expensive damage assessment fees. Friends of Nature has since set up China’s first fund dedicated to providing financial support for ENGOs working on environmental litigation, with the support of Jack Ma’s Alibaba Foundation.

Leading efforts by China’s legal scholars and ENGOs have shown that these channels are becoming increasingly viable as ways to address environmental issues in China. However, the list of obstacles remains long. “The fundamental problem is how to make the courts stop being selective about what cases they accept,” said IPE’s Ma Jun in a Reuters interview (Wee 2015), underlining the concern that interference from local governments leaves courts struggling to make independent judgments.

CITIZEN ACTIVISTS

Not all Chinese civil society environmental activists belong to organized groups. Ordinary citizens have learned to use social media to

circumvent government filters and censorship, as when the phrases “taking a walk” and “going sightseeing” were used in several cities to coordinate public protests, and when in 2008 citizens of Shanghai opposed the building of a magnetic levitation rail line through their neighborhood and organized themselves to “take a walk” on certain days. The phrase is so innocuous and the words in it so common that it cannot be filtered and banned, and participants cannot be arrested because they can claim that they just happened to be in the area. One of the better-known Weibo posts was a February 2013 message by Zhejiang eyeglasses entrepreneur Jin Zengmin, whose sister died at an early age of cancer. Jin offered 200,000 renminbi to a top local environmental official if he would swim in the shoe factory-polluted waters of Rui’an, near Shanghai, for 20 minutes. The official refused and the challenge went viral, becoming a powerful example of the Internet’s potential as a tool to pressure local agencies to do their jobs.

Online petitioning has also become a critical form of social mobilization. Internet petitions to clean up Beijing’s air have included demands for greater information transparency and the distribution of free face masks. In an international echo of the tradition of appealing to powerful figures, in May 2013 a Chengdu resident opposing an oil refinery posted a petition on the U.S. White House website. The petition received several thousand signatures, and the police visited the petitioner to demand that she take it down, which she could not do.

Many ordinary Chinese have motivations for environmental activism thrust upon them when their villages are contaminated by factories and strange cancer clusters appear, or when a lake that they rely upon for fishing becomes toxic. Even fairly uneducated peasant-farmers can become activists in such situations, especially if the pollution or dam gains the attention of an NGO or journalist. One such example is that of the farmer profiled in a remarkable documentary, “Warriors of Qiugang” (Yang 2010). Educated environmental activists provided support to this local leader in his efforts to get a pesticide and dye

factory to close down and clean up, but the risk and determination was his alone. Despite the fact that the private owners of the factory had strong ties to local leaders, villagers fought desperately through petitions, lawsuits, and demonstrations, and eventually succeeded in getting the factory to shut. As of the end of the film, however, villagers continued to die of cancer and the toxic waste remained.

This sort of peasant-farmer activism is less likely to succeed than efforts of more educated middle-class citizens. In the Northern city of Dalian in August 2011, for example, citizens protested against the Fujia paraxylene (PX) plant, whose dyke was breached by high ocean waves during a typhoon. As readers will remember, PX is a toxic petrochemical used in the fabric industry to make polyester and other synthetics, and the citizens of Xiamen on the Southern coast successfully fought a similar PX plant in 2007, when citizens mobilized themselves via cell phone messages to rally against a plant planned by the Xianglu Tenglong Group. The 2011 protests in Dalian seem to have met with the most rapid government response so far. Such protests can be understood as a wave of “not in my back yard-ism” (NIMBYism) on the part of a newly empowered Chinese middle class. Unfortunately, in most cases, as elsewhere in the world, NIMBYism often results in the removal of the offending project to a more vulnerable, less well organized community, as we will see in the next chapter.

Dalian citizens, learning from their Xiamen neighbors, also used cell texting to organize protests against the plant. According to one news story, “Protesters including children marched holding banners that declared: ‘I love Dalian and reject poison,’ ‘Return me my home and garden, get out PX, protect Dalian,’ and ‘Return my future generations’ beautiful home’” (Wee 2011). The authorities, too, seem to have learned from the Xiamen example. The Communist Party chief and the mayor quickly promised to shut and relocate the plant. Protesters were not satisfied without a firm timetable, and their anger broadened against government corruption in general: The plant had been in operation

several years before the requisite environmental impact assessment was conducted and approved. In the face of organized, educated, urban middle-class mobilization, the government backed down. Greenpeace’s China program director Ma Tianjie told *The Hindu*, “We are seeing more and more cases of middle-class urban residents saying no to polluting projects, and getting involved in such issues . . . In urban areas, people are increasingly more aware. With online tools like microblogs, it is also becoming easier to communicate issues to the public” (Krishnan 2011). Indeed, these protests seem to be increasing as the middle class in other cities learns of the success of such protests. Soon after the Dalian incident, protesters in a city near Shanghai demonstrated against a chronically polluting solar panel production plant, while in December 2011, protesters in the fishing village of Haimen in Guangdong province blocked an expressway in opposition to a planned coal-fired power plant, claiming that existing plants had caused cancer and a drop in fishing yields. This protest ended in violent confrontations with riot police and a suspension of the project. Protests over similar issues have followed regularly. Calls for government transparency and accountability are thus increasingly accompanying the thousands of “environmental mass incidents.” Exact figures are difficult to determine, with many reports mentioning 80,000–100,000 mass incidents per year, not all of them about the environment. That the government reports such incidents in the official press is encouraging, perhaps indicative of increased confidence in addressing public outrage.

There are many other cases of local citizens trying to hold polluting enterprises accountable, but their stories are largely left untold to the outside world. Consider the parents of children with lead poisoning, or the residents of Panyu, Guangdong Province, whose citizen lawsuit eventually forced the Dongtai tannery to pay compensation after discharging contaminated wastewater. Also largely unknown to the international community is the story of local Huai River defender Huo Daishan, who was motivated to do something about the extensive

chemical effluents in the river when his childhood friend died of cancer, or the effort in Hunan province's Xiangtan city, where an ordinary citizen's online "green appeal" petition to clean up Yujia Lake successfully pressured officials to promise to reverse pollution trends.

Often this kind of activism is met with threats and political repression, as these "ordinary people" do not usually have the backing of international ties or sophistication in navigating the political system, unlike highly educated urban activists. They are fighting powerful developers, factory owners, and political interests. Many farmers faced with dislocation for dams simply acknowledge their own powerlessness in the face of the state. They know the risks in resisting and believe it to be dangerous, if not futile. They fear the experience of Lake Tai activist Wu Lihong who, after tirelessly fighting to clean one of China's largest and most polluted bodies of water, was sentenced to prison in 2007 on a trumped-up charge of extortion and blackmail. Zhejiang activist and founder of "Green Watch" Tan Kai was arrested for illegally obtaining "state secrets" in 2005 and denied legal representation. He served a full 18-month sentence. An activist working to clean up Dianchi Lake in Yunnan Province was threatened and beaten. In addition, farmers resisting forcible relocations for the Three Gorges Dam have been arrested and prosecuted. Meanwhile, as mentioned, nature reserve officers have died fighting poachers, like the previously mentioned Tibetan brothers-in-law who died defending the Tibetan antelope.

In sum, the tools and techniques available to Chinese ENGOs and ordinary citizens have evolved dramatically since the mid-1990s, creating a sort of "environmental activism with Chinese characteristics," in which tacit alliances with sympathetic government officials and agencies allow Chinese civil society to operate in a political space where boundaries are not completely clear, but have been steadily expanding in exciting new ways. However, the best efforts of Chinese citizens to speak out against pollution and to curb the corrupt practices that have

so profoundly destroyed the environment have thus far yielded only limited success. Sam Geall's excellent edited volume of case studies, *China and the Environment: The Green Revolution* (2013) provides greater detail about some of the campaigns mentioned above, and about the immense challenges that Chinese ENGOs and ordinary citizens are facing.

GOVERNMENT-ORGANIZED NGOS (GONGOS)

In addition to ENGOs founded by intellectuals, students, and grassroots environmental activists, ENGOs established by governmental agencies and governmental officials also play an important role in international environmental cooperation, environmental education, and environmental campaigns. These groups can play a very positive role for the environment, for in reality Chinese political life takes its cues from the central government and the central government is far from monolithic. Such GONGOs are often strong voices for environmental protection from within the government (Wu, Fengshi 2002). Among top-down organized and funded GONGOs, one of the largest is the above-mentioned All-China Environment Federation (ACEF), founded in 2005 under the patronage of the State Environmental Protection Administration (now Ministry of Environmental Protection). Its website describes it as a non-profit national social organization, but we can easily see the close governmental ties in its mandate:

The Federation aims to implement the strategy of sustainable development, achieve the goal of environment and development as set out by the State, and to safeguard the environmental interests of the public and the society. The major tasks are to keep contacts with influential and high-profile senior personages, unite a variety of social groups, and play the role of solidarity and coherence; put forward proposals on government environmental decision-making; provide services on

environmental laws for the public and the society; enable the public and the society to get access to environmental information, and conduct activities for environmental publicity and education; promote the sound development of China's environmental NGOs and help them build and obtain their due position in international communities; and undertake other work as entrusted by the government and relevant organizations.

Another prominent GONGO is the China Environmental Protection Foundation (CEPF) established by Qu Geping, the first Administrator of SEPA, whose book on China's population we have already mentioned. The organization can be traced to the seminal 1992 U.N. Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where Qu Geping shared the \$100,000 UNEP Sasakawa Prize for his contributions to environmental protection. In accepting the award, he announced he would use it to establish a fund for environmental work in China. One year later, with support from SEPA and other central governmental agencies, the CEPF was raising funds for environmental protection, facilitating environmental cooperation between China and other countries, and issuing grants for environmental projects. Most board members of the CEPF have governmental backgrounds and, like the All-China Environment Federation, the CEPF's supervisory body is the Ministry of Environmental Protection. It has awarded the China Environment Prize to individuals and organizations that have made prominent contributions to environmental protection since 2000, and funded numerous environmental projects, such as the Ecology Great Wall project, which supports tree planting and sustainable agricultural programs in rural northwest China.

Some university think tanks, like Ma Zhong's Beijing Environment and Development Institute at Renmin University, also occupy middle grounds between state-run institutions with considerable leeway and truly independent citizens' groups. However, although the number of

GONGOs is far more numerous than those mentioned here, there are fewer than that of the bottom-up organizations, and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and local environmental bureaus have begun to cooperate directly with grassroots ENGOS.

ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ENGOS

International NGOs have been eager to work in China but have faced numerous difficulties getting visas and permits and finding Chinese partners, a basic requirement to be able to operate inside the country. Tsinghua University has estimated that as many as 10,000 international NGOs are active in China, not only on environmental issues but also on poverty reduction, governance, journalist training, and other public concerns. One of the best respected of these, China Development Brief, is an informational and networking project for foreign development, charitable, and environmental groups. Founded in 1996, it was shut down in 2007 after more than a decade of dedicated work when the government created visa problems for English director Nick Young. He was accused of conducting unauthorized surveys and was forced to leave the country. Still, an all-Chinese version of the organization survives. Some fear that the spring 2015 regulations requiring international NGOs to register with a Chinese government entity, forbidding them from raising money within the country, and otherwise restricting their activities in the country, are intended to curtail their influence and in some cases simply drive them out.

The large international conservation NGO World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) was the first international ENGO to have a significant presence in China, and has worked in China's Western provinces of Yunnan and Sichuan for decades, adopting the giant panda as its international logo (Schaller 1993). Conservation International and the Nature Conservancy have more recently established strong programs, with the Nature Conservancy undertaking to develop and conserve

some of China's most beautiful but endangered regions through its Yunnan Great Rivers project. Conservation International has seen its role primarily as a networker and facilitator, although it also develops conservation models and remains a strong player on the ground, educating consumers in big cities on how to reduce the consumption of wildlife products.

Many other international environmental groups also have an active presence in China. The Natural Resources Defense Council is working on climate change, green building and clean energy, environmental governance and green supply chains. Environmental Defense has pioneered carbon trading experiments using market-based approaches to conservation. The World Resources Institute works on population and health as well as transportation. The Sierra Club focuses on energy and trade issues. Pacific Environment focuses on transboundary problems in the Pacific Rim. The International Fund for Animal Welfare, which faces a tremendous task because of China's abominable practices of animal cruelty, is trying to pass animal welfare laws and create a shelter system. One of the early groups to make contact in China was the independent Friends of the Earth Hong Kong (Hong Kong has been part of China since 1997 but operates under a more democratic political system). Greenpeace, which is widely admired and respected in China, similarly based most of its work from Hong Kong, but its Beijing office and large in-country staff have now grown. The group has taken on such causes as e-waste, genetically modified organisms, toxics, and information transparency around air pollution. Such groups generally nurture strong alliances with the Ministry of Environmental Protection as a way of gaining assurance that they will be able to continue their work. While such alliances may limit them, they reflect the Chinese political reality that NGOs need support, whether from the state or from foreign donors. In fact, even the voices for environmental protection within the central government are not immune from political threat. By working

together, civil society and the parts of the central administration trying to shift China onto a more sustainable path strive to strengthen each other and carve out additional political space.

In addition to the big international NGOs with a presence in China, there have been increased efforts by smaller issue-oriented NGOs and domestic groups to link with neighboring countries to tackle transboundary issues. International Rivers, based in Berkeley, California, has partnered with small NGOs in the lower reaches of the Salween River in Myanmar and Thailand, as well as China to work against the dams planned for the Nu River (as the Salween is called in China). Through blogging, public media campaigns, documentary films, and other modes of political engagement (primarily of the symbolic politics type), the group has helped Chinese grassroots groups coalesce around an issue which is both romantic, in that it appeals to young Chinese students' sense of adventure tourism and interest in the exoticism of ethnic minority areas, and hard-hitting, in that it goes to the core of China's energy policy. After fervent public opposition, in 2004 the Chinese government suspended plans for the dams pending further environmental review (Mertha 2008), but the 12th Five-Year Plan put some of the Nu River dams back on the table. Despite opposition, hydropower remains a centerpiece of China's renewable energy portfolio. The Japanese nuclear disaster caused the Chinese to be more cautious in their nuclear plans, especially in earthquake-prone regions, putting renewed pressure on rivers. Even the massive dam on the Upper Yangzi River at Tiger Leaping Gorge, cancelled after local protests, could yet be revived, or moved upriver toward Tibet.

This chapter has illustrated the connection between environmental protection and political repression in developing countries. In developed countries, activists often work in different spheres than do those concerned with human rights. However, in the developing world, this sharp distinction often does not exist, for two main reasons: First, the

political rights of environmental activists to free speech and assembly, due process, and freedom from torture are often violated, so environmentalists can potentially become human rights victims themselves. Second, in the developing world, with its intense pollution problems, the right to clean air, water, and food is clearly identified with the right to life, the most fundamental of all the human rights. At the global level, an effort to articulate these connections has been ongoing in the form of the Earth Charter Initiative, where a multinational team of activists and civil society groups has drafted a document expressing the connections among ecological protection, justice, peace, democracy, and human rights. Although activists hope that it will someday formally be signed at the United Nations like the human rights covenants, to date the initiative has flourished primarily at the grass roots. The charter has been endorsed primarily by civil society groups, although international organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) have also supported it. The Initiative's official mission is "to promote the transition to sustainable ways of living and a global society founded on a shared ethical framework that includes respect and care for the community of life, ecological integrity, universal human rights, respect for diversity, economic justice, democracy, and a culture of peace." By articulating values in this way, the Earth Charter Initiative shows how civil society can participate in global governance without formal governmental approval or power.

QUESTIONS FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

- 1 Can you identify some of the creative ways that Chinese advocacy groups have attempted to achieve their goals? Can you suggest additional strategies they might employ? What are the strengths and limitations of Internet-based activism?

- 2 How does the situation of Chinese activists shed light on the relationship between environmental protection and human rights? Compare the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with the Earth Charter (both easily available online). Which would be easier to implement and enforce in China and in your own country? Where are the areas of overlap and divergence?
- 3 What is the role of China's middle class in environmental change? Is its newfound wealth a positive or negative force, or both? What is the connection between the rise of the middle class and civil society?
- 4 What do you think about the role of GONGOs in China? Are they an effective way for the government to mobilize people while exerting a measure of social control? Do different advocacy groups have different approaches to try to create social change? Where are the leverage points for social change in your community?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- "Apple Opens Up: IT Industry Supply Chain Investigative Report, Phase VI," by Friends of Nature, Institute for the Public Environment, Envirofriends, Nature University, and Nanjing Greenstone. Available at: 114.215.104.68:89/Upload/Report-IT-Phase-VI-EN.pdf
- "Rainmakers," a documentary by Floris-Jan Van Luyn. Information available at: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1688074/>
- "Shielding the Mountains," a documentary by Emily Yeh. Information available at: <http://www.tibetsacredmountain.org>
- "Shifting Nature," part three of the PBS documentary "China from the Inside" by Jonathan Lewis. Information and trailer available at: <http://www.pbs.org/kqed/chinainside/nature/index.html>

- “Silent Nu River,” a documentary by Hu Jie. Information and trailer available at: <http://www.visiblerecord.com/en/films/?id=C010>
- “Under the Dome,” a documentary by Chai Jing. Available (with English subtitles) on Youtube.
- “Waking the Green Tiger,” a documentary by Gary Marcuse. Information and trailer available at: www.facetofacemedia.ca/page.php?sectionID=2
- “Warriors of Qiugang,” 39-minute documentary by Ruby Yang and Thomas Lennon. Full film available at: http://e360.yale.edu/feature/the_warriors_of_qiugang_a_chinese_village_fights_back/2358/
- U.S. Embassy-Beijing, list of Chinese environmental NGOs at: http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/esth_engo.html
- Wolfgang Sachs, Environment and Human Rights, Wuppertal Paper No. 137 (September 2003), Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment, and Energy. Available at: <http://www.uibk.ac.at/peacestudies/downloads/peacelibrary/environment.pdf>

6

Environmental Justice and the Displacement of Environmental Harm

The inseparable links between environmental sustainability and social justice are increasingly well recognized. Without social justice, the extraction of resources all too often simply displaces harm across time and space, postponing our confrontation with the limits of the planet's bounty and concealing the costs of our consumption. Some would also extend the concern for justice across species, as humans encroach on the habitat of other living creatures and drive them to extinction, tearing apart the web of life on which we ultimately depend. This chapter focuses on achieving justice across geographic space in the human world. First, however, let us reflect on the temporal dimensions of this problem.

Great attention has been paid to the fact that the world is reaching the limits to resources – indeed, our basic understanding of sustainability rests on the effort to achieve equity between those now alive and those not yet born, or justice for future generations. Unfortunately, traditional economic systems, from Marxism to capitalism, have failed to account for the depletion of natural capital and have often measured environmental degradation or resources consumption as simply another form of economic activity contributing to growth. The inadequacy of these theories is clearly demonstrated in our study of the environmental crisis in China: Aggressive development without internalization of real environmental costs, left unchecked, could undermine many of China's gains. Minerals, fossil fuels, timber, and agricultural resources are growing scarce, even as China's heavy pollution, which is