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About the Author

Mireia Paulo Noguera comes from an academic background in Tourism, specialising in planning and sustainable development. She then obtained a BA in International and Intercultural Studies, and a BA in East Asian Studies, specialising on China. Mireia Paulo Noguera has worked for several organisations in Togo, India and China. This experience provided her with a rich knowledge in the field of international cooperation, in particular with regard to the sustainable development of rural areas. She studied at Beijing University for two years thanks to a grant from the “Fundación del Instituto de Crédito Oficial español”. In 2010, she obtained an MA in European Political and Administrative Studies at the College of Europe in Bruges, supported by a scholarship from the Spanish Foreign Ministry. Currently, she is the executive director of ADASI association. This paper is based on her MA thesis submitted at the College of Europe (Charles Darwin promotion).

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Abstract

The economic reform in China did not take into consideration consequences such as social adaptation and land degradation. As a result, civil society and environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are becoming more active and visible actors in China's environmental politics. Chinese civil society is involved in environmental issues by carrying out government functions, but it lacks capabilities and resources to tackle environmental matters alone. This paper examines the European Union's (EU) cooperation with China in the fight against climate change. It asks to what extent the EU has realised the importance of Chinese civil society in the environmental field and how the latter can play a role in the strategic partnership between the EU and China. It is argued that the shift in the behaviour of Chinese society and its relationship with the government could further improve the EU-China partnership in the fight against climate change. The EU needs to understand the role of Chinese NGOs in implementing and improving environmental policies in China. The approach of Civic Environmentalism, which focuses on local efforts, introduces a bottom-up perspective in the environmental dialogue. The case of the EU-China Biodiversity Programme serves as an example to illustrate the usefulness of such an approach.

1. Introduction: climate change as a challenge in EU-China relations

Climate change is a global problem and changes in global average surface temperature have been noticed in recent years. Although the awareness of the effects of climate change was initially raised in industrialised countries, most of the world's population is still unaware of its development and consequences. The effects of climate change call for accountability from every single government making sacrifices to combat this global problem from a long-term perspective.

China is one of the most diversified countries in the world in terms of fauna, flora and landscape. There is strong criticism from public opinion and the media emphasising China's dreadful environmental protection record, such as the toxicity of the Songhua River, Yangtze floods and sandstorms. Not only Western countries are paying attention to this situation, but also the Chinese government and society, since environmental degradation has seriously impacted on their lands. For instance, government awareness of environmental issues has prompted new legislation since 1997.¹ However, the main problem remains in the implementation and monitoring stages due to the lack, among others, of economic resources.

China is the world's fourth largest economy, its third largest exporter, the EU's second biggest trading partner, and the world's most populous country.² China's size represents a serious impact on environmental issues because its population keeps growing and the demand for energy consumption is ever increasing.³ Additionally, its rapid economic growth has led to significant income and regional disparities, creating vulnerable social groups and environmental degradation.⁴ Since the end of the twentieth century, Chinese policy-makers have focused on the harmonious society (小康社会, xiǎokāng shèhui), which aims to achieve a reduction in the development gap between rural and urban areas.

The European Union would like to engage China in international negotiations and strengthen its strategic partnership on climate change. It wants to assist China in

¹ S. Peters, 'First ASEFUAN Dialogue on Climate Change', Barcelona and Madrid, IESE Business School, University of Navarra, 24-27 November 2009.

² J. Kynge, *China Shakes the World: the Rise of a Hungry Nation*, London, Weidenfield and Nicolson, 2006.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ European Commission, 'A Long-term Policy for China-Europe Relations', COM(1995) 279, Brussels, 1995, retrieved 16 November 2009, ec.europa.eu/external_relations/china/docs/com95_279_en.pdf, p. 4.

reducing the negative social side-effects of economic reform, contribute to poverty alleviation, and ameliorate the fight against environmental degradation in China.

At the same time, civil society and environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS) are becoming more active and visible actors in European and Chinese environmental politics. In both cases, they have a significant role mobilising society by using favourable political conditions.⁵ Environmental policymaking is often determined by strong government action. Nevertheless, many of the current environmental problems faced are local in scope.

This situation raises several research questions: Why does the EU want to improve its cooperation with China in the fight against climate change? To what extent has the EU realised the importance of the Chinese civil society in the environmental field? How can Chinese civil society and ENGOS play a role in the strategic partnership between the EU and China?

The first part of this paper is dedicated to the description of the EU-China strategic partnership on climate-change issues as well as the evolution of Chinese ENGOS and their relevant work in the environmental field. The second part analyses the Biodiversity Programme which exemplifies the work of ENGOS in China in implementing and monitoring regional projects. In addition, it shows that collaboration between governments and civil society is fundamental for the fight against climate change and that the traditional top-down approach is not adequate to solve China's environmental problems. Including a bottom-up approach by incorporating the Chinese civil society is beneficial not only to combat climate change, but also to promote European values and European environmental leadership.

2. Analytical framework

This research uses, on the one hand, a top-down approach where rules are developed at a higher level of the decision-making ladder and passed down along the hierarchy for implementation. On the other hand, the bottom-up approach is based on local activities of a different nature, "initiated by local and grass-root organizations".⁶

⁵ G. Yang, 'Environmental NGOs and Institutional Dynamics in China', retrieved 14 November 2009, bc.barnard.columbia.edu/~gyang/Yang_ENGOS.pdf, p. 1.

⁶ M. Yohanne, 'Environmental sustainability and regulation: top-down versus bottom-up regulation', Munich Personal Repec Archive, *MPRA Paper*, no. 413, 2007, retrieved 17 March 2010, <http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/413>, pp. 7-8.

The EU is not a state; it is a unique kind of international actor.⁷ It possesses a large collection of independent legal/institutional, technical and financial resources.⁸ Additionally, it has instrumental power and it is involved in multilateral processes, as well as strategic and regional partnerships.⁹ The Union is a global actor through its trade in goods and services, its development policy and Common Foreign Security Policy (CFSP). The EU's actorness in the environmental field and its impacts on the outside world requires an understanding of its internal structure. The 1987 Single European Act was a milestone in the evolution of the Community's role in environmental protection because it introduced specific legal provisions and the subsidiarity principle for this field. Moreover, it has been recognised that environmental issues cannot be separated from trade, agriculture, energy or scientific research.

Since the signature of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992 and the ratification of its landmark Kyoto Protocol in 2004, the opportunity and obligation for the EU to lead and sustain the emergent climate-change regime has been *in crescendo*. Since the climate change issue was included in the security debate, due to the fact that it has direct effects on citizens and trade, the EU has become an important and active actor involved in the fight against climate change.¹⁰ Thus, the EU's green leadership is also motivated by its foreign policy objective. The EU realised that leadership in climate change can provide more recognition and authority from the international community.¹¹ This is related to the concept of sustainability, which means awareness of the connection between economic, social and environmental problems. This concept was expressed in the 'Local Agenda 21'.¹²

⁷ C. Bretherton & J. Vogler, *The European Union a Global Actor*, London, Routledge, 2006, 2nd edn., pp. 12-22.

⁸ C. Hill & M. Smith, *International Relations and the European Union*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 157.

⁹ C. Franck & G. Duchenne, *L'action extérieure de l'Union européenne: rôle global, dimensions matérielles, aspects juridiques, valeurs*, Bruxelles, Bruylant-Academia, 2008, p. 62.

¹⁰ Helly & Petiteville, *op.cit.*, p. 252.

¹¹ J. Orbie, *Europe's Global Role, External Policies of the European Union*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2008, pp. 170-176.

¹² A. Thierstein & M. Walser, 'Sustainable Regional Development: Interplay of Top-down and Bottom-up Approaches', Institute for Public Services and Tourism IDT-HSG, retrieved 17 March 2010, p. 3.

Sustainability has become a key concept for Chinese leaders as well.¹³ The economic reform process and China's political reforms in 1978 have become a main process in the contribution to social change. For instance, this is visible in elements such as the revision of the Constitution, the separation of the Party from the government, the use of rule of law, and so on. Therefore, emerging civil society organisations have become more influential and have even been promoted by the Communist Party (CP) itself.¹⁴

Civil society is defined "as being comprised of all civil organizations and civil relations that are outside the state, the government system, the market and the commercial system".¹⁵ Moreover, it has different meanings in Chinese: *shīmín shèhuì* (市民社会), *mínjiān shèhuì* (民间社会), and *gōngmín shèhuì* (公民社会). I will use the last term, *gōngmín shèhuì*, because it adapts better to the concept and political implications that it has in both society and political arena. This concept has a positive connotation: it encompasses a political aspect, and it is based on the responsibility of society towards public goods and good behaviour. Regarding civil society in Europe, there is no similar single definition.¹⁶

For this paper it is essential to understand Chinese civil society because its role facilitates the comprehension of: the implications for China's political future; a deeper understanding of changes at the grass-root level with possible implications for foreign policy; and where the Commission's development funds are to be lodged.¹⁷ At the same time, the role of the civil society organisations in China could further the EU-China strategic partnership through an improvement of their situation and cooperation with the government. This enhancement will provide an excellent opportunity for the EU to ensure international environmental leadership. Therefore, I apply to the bottom-up approach, as a recent theory that emerged in the United States at the end of the 1980s, Civic Environmentalism.

¹³ W. Chandler et al., 'Climate Change Mitigation in Developing Countries, Brazil, China, India, Mexico, South Africa, and Turkey', Pew Center on Global Climate Change, October 2002, retrieved 2 February 2010, www.pewclimate.org/docUploads/dev_mitigation.pdf, pp. 22-23.

¹⁴ 章百家，*中国共产党与中国社会的发展进步*，五洲传出版社，北京，2007，pp. 23-42.

¹⁵ S. Crossick & E. Reuter, *China-EU a Common Future*, Singapore, Hackensack, N.J., World Scientific, 2007, p. 229.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 229-235.

¹⁷ K. Morton, 'The Emergence of NGOs in China and their Transnational Linkages: Implications for Domestic Reform', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 59, no. 4, December 2005, pp. 519-532.

This approach is still premature – so far Europeans and Chinese scholars have not exploited its implications. However, in my opinion, it suits the scope and the contents that this research tackles because it explains how communities, through their citizens, can develop their capacities based on sustainable development which are basic to combat environmental problems. The message of Civic Environmentalism is simple and clear; societies have to take care and take actions to protect their own environment; it is their obligation and responsibility.¹⁸ For this purpose, it is necessary to improve public environmental awareness. This awareness will help to analyse the link between nature and community, which means to think and act locally.¹⁹

3. The EU-China strategic partnership on climate change

The origins of the bilateral relationship between the EU and China are rooted in trade, but as this relationship has evolved, it has also become more complex and broader. On the one hand, environmental problems became part of a new security concept; on the other hand, the awareness of society was exerting more pressure on leaders. For these reasons, environmental matters were included in the agenda of the EU-China partnership.

The willingness to tackle solutions for environmental matters can be traced back to the Rio Summit in 1992.²⁰ The bilateral relations between the EU and China were further promoted when the Kyoto Protocol was signed in 1997 under the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.²¹ This Protocol meant that the EU had to assist China in achieving its main goals: the reduction of emissions.

Furthermore, the draft 'EU-China Environmental Profile' was published in 2005.²² The document enumerates the fields where the EU could provide assistance to Chinese authorities in the domain of sustainable development; for instance, on environmental education, research and data provision, environmental capacity building, etc.

¹⁸ M. Landy & C. Rubin, 'Civic Environmentalism: Developing a Research Agenda', Roundtable on science & public policy, George Marshall Institute, Washington, D.C., 30 June 2003, retrieved 15 March 2010, www.marshall.org/pdf/materials/200.pdf, p. 6.

¹⁹ M. Landy & C. Rubin, 'Civic Environmentalism: A New Approach to Policy', George C. Marshall Institute, Washington, D.C., December 2001, retrieved 15 March 2010, www.marshall.org/pdf/materials/87.pdf, pp. 2-11.

²⁰ Yu Hongyuan, *Global Warming and China's Environmental Diplomacy*, New York, Nova Science Publishers, 2008, pp. 74-75.

²¹ European Council, 'General Affairs and External Relations', press release from the 2771st Council Meeting, 16291/06 (Presse 353), Brussels, 11-12 December 2006, retrieved 15 November 2009; available at <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/06/st16/st16291.en06.pdf>, p.10.

²² Crossick & Reuter, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

Additionally, the EU specifies in the 'China Strategy Paper 2007-2013' that Europe has "significant economic and political interest in supporting China's sustainable development and transition to a stable and open country".²³ Therefore, among the most important issues on their bilateral agenda, climate change and energy should be underscored.

Dialogue between actors is a fundamental tool in order to help interlocutors to arrive at a better mutual understanding. Thus, improvement and increase of the number of issues that this dialogue tackles are needed.

3.1 Dialogue between the EU and China

Dialogue is an essential diplomatic instrument and it has two main functions: to create a more constructive approach by disseminating respective divergences and to provide the opportunity for the EU 'to sell' its model of environmental governance. The dialogue on environmental issues began in 1996 when Commissioners and lower level European officials visited China. It has a very broad character and it has been growing enormously.²⁴ The dialogue was upgraded to the ministerial level in 2003.²⁵ Since that moment, several steps have been taken, and the most recent one was the roundtable 'Climate Change and engaging China-Crossroads of 21st Century Foreign Policy' on 2 February 2011 in Brussels. This roundtable served an exchange of views, furthering industrial, trade and development cooperation policies, among other issues.²⁶

However, the EU-China dialogue received criticism for being empty of substance. Many critics argue that this partnership is highly political in nature, but there is an absence of real action and trust.²⁷

3.2 Cooperation on climate change

Cooperation on climate change is the consequence of mutual interests, national and international security, and domestic pressure emanating from society. For the

²³ European Commission, 'China Strategy Paper 2007-2013', Brussels, 2006, retrieved 18 November 2009, ec.europa.eu/external_relations/china/csp/07_13_en.pdf, p. 3.

²⁴ J. van Halem, 'European Foreign Policy Instruments: A Case Study of China and Iran', Bruges, College of Europe, Master's thesis, 2005, pp. 28-29.

²⁵ EU Committee at the House of Lords, 'Stars and Dragons: The EU and China', Vol. 1, House of Lords, 7th Report of Session 2009-10, London, The Stationery Office, 2010, 125-132.

²⁶ Engaging China on Climate Change Conference – Brussels 2 February 2011, retrieved 26 February 2011, http://eeas.europa.eu/china/climateconf/index_en.htm

²⁷ Ludlow, *op.cit.*, p. 47.

EU, it is fundamental in becoming a leader in fighting climate change, to strengthen its 'green diplomacy' and international role, to reap commercial benefits and to develop stronger cultural bridges between government and society. At the same time, China wants to save face in front of the international community; it wants to be perceived as a more responsible and peaceful actor.

Cooperation on climate change also requires cooperation in the energy sector. Energy consumption is one of the major causes of greenhouse gas emissions and reduction of natural resources. For this reason, both actors are aware that they need to improve their clean technology and to promote their technology deployment and dissemination. In order to do so, it will be necessary to reduce costs and to avoid problems such as legal matters and Intellectual Property Rights issues.²⁸ Thus, in 2002 the EU-China Energy Environment Programme was established.²⁹

In 2005, at the 5th EU-China summit, a Joint Declaration on climate change was adopted.³⁰ This summit confirmed the establishment of the EU-China Partnership on climate change, including clean energy and the promotion of sustainable development. The same year the EU-China Action Plan on Clean Coal Technologies, the EU-China Action Plan for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energies and the EU-China Dialogue on Energy and Transport Strategies were introduced.³¹

During the 5th meeting of the bilateral consultation mechanism under the EU-China Partnership on Climate Change in August 2008, Runge Metzger, Head of Unit for 'Climate, Ozone and Energy', stated that the EU was achieving its Kyoto objective as highlighted by the '2020' goal. At the same time, Metzger's Chinese counterpart, Mr Yu, pointed out that China faced "pressure from two sides: (1) to maintain its development and focus on the elimination of poverty; (2) to deal with the protection of its environment and the fight against climate change."³² During this bilateral consultation, the Chinese underlined the need to improve several areas: joint

²⁸ J.H. Barton, 'New Trends in Technology Transfer: Implications for National and International Policy', ICTSD Programme on IPRs and Sustainable Development, February 2007, *Issue Paper*, no. 18, retrieved 12 December 2009, <http://ictsd.org/i/publications/11550>, p. 16 of pdf file.

²⁹ See the 'Annual Summary Report 5 of Renewable Energy International Cooperation Programs', retrieved 1 April 2010, www.cresp.org.cn/english/encontent.asp?id=449.

³⁰ 'EU and China Partnership on Climate Change', press release, MEMO/05/298, Brussels, September 2005, retrieved 15 November, <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/05/298>.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² 'Minutes of the 5th Meeting of the Bilateral Consultation Mechanism under the EU-China Partnership on Climate Change', press release, Paris, August 2008, retrieved 15 November 2009, [www.uncsd2012.org/files/bureau_doc/Minutes%20of%20the%207th%20Bureau%20Meeting%20\(Final1\).pdf](http://www.uncsd2012.org/files/bureau_doc/Minutes%20of%20the%207th%20Bureau%20Meeting%20(Final1).pdf)

activities; activities implementation; and implication of more Chinese experts in these activities. While the Chinese side did not want to include energy activities in this framework, European officials disagreed with this opinion.³³

In December 2009, the Copenhagen Summit took place. The 'Copenhagen Accord' was settled as a basic agreement including some aspects of the climate change framework for the short-term future.³⁴ Yet, the agreement was not binding. The EU experienced a drawback in its environmental leadership role. Due to structural problems, the Commission lacked a coherent policy and a unified voice, thus member states' interests provoked the dilapidation of the EU's position. Developing countries, including China, argued that "historic emissions should be taken into account when sharing the burden of reductions".³⁵

In spite of some Chinese opposition, a new law promoting the use of renewable sources of energy was passed in December 2009. China's goal was to produce about 15% of its energy mix from renewable energy by 2020. It also planned to cut carbon emissions by 40% to 45% (from 2005 levels) by 2020.³⁶ This was seen as a paper measure; China could issue many environmental laws, but implemented none of them. However, the Chinese law on renewable sources of energy has only just been passed; it is not possible yet to assess its positive or negative effects.

After analysing the EU-China strategic partnership on climate change, there is a need to understand Chinese NGOs' role, conditions and capabilities in order to observe the importance of a bottom-up approach.

4. Conceptualisation of NGOs and ENGOs in China

The environmental degradation suffered across China has contributed to an increasing awareness of the problem among government officials and society. As a

³³ European Commission, 'China-EU Partnership on Climate Change: Rolling Work Plan', August 2008, retrieved 16 November 2009, ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/pdf/china/rolling_work_plan.pdf.

³⁴ China Textile Team, 'The Copenhagen Climate Change Agreement: Failure or Success?', *China Textile Magazine*, 4 March 2010, retrieved 10 April 2010, <http://chinatextile.360fashion.net/2010/03/the-copenhagen-climate-change.php>.

³⁵ L. Werring, 'Negotiating a robust climate policy: Overcoming national interests for the common good', *CIEP Briefing Papers*, Clingendael International Energy Programme, November 2009, retrieved 10 January 2010, <http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/papers/?volume=2009>, p. 4.

³⁶ F. Jotzo, 'What China Really Delivered at Copenhagen', *East Asia Forum*, 17 February 2010, retrieved 20 April 2010, www.eastasiaforum.org/2010/02/17/what-china-really-delivered-at-copenhagen.

result, ENGOs have been growing like mushrooms across the country. The growth in NGOs is also a consequence of the reforms started under Deng Xiaoping in 1978. These reforms brought more flexibility to the economy and social system.

ENGOs started to appear at the end of the 1990s in China. They played a special role, mainly because they were separated from official NGOs and top-down organisations, the so-called CONGOs.³⁷ ENGOs are considered to be better organised and more successful at mobilising public support than NGOs working in other fields, especially because they do not touch upon politically sensitive issues like migration.³⁸

4.1. Chinese and international ENGOs

An NGO is defined as a "self-governing legal person relatively independent, voluntarily based, and non-profit".³⁹ This Western concept, however, does not match the Chinese definition of the term, because in China, NGOs can be led by government officials. There are two types of NGOs: (1) the officially organised NGOs, such as the Chinese Environmental Science Institute (CESI); and (2) the popular NGOs such as the Global Village of Beijing. Thus, the NGO Administrative Bureau of the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MOCA) defines NGOs as "organizations formed by citizen volunteers which carry out activities aimed at realizing the common aspirations of their members in accordance with organizational articles of association".⁴⁰

According to MOCA statistics, by the end of 2006, there were 186,000 CONGOs and 159,000 popular NGOs.⁴¹ The exact number is difficult to know since many organisations are not registered, even though NGOs need to register with MOCA, or in a government or party department, to obtain legal recognition and in order to manage operations.⁴²

³⁷ D. Lehrack, *Environmental NGOs in China – Partners in Environmental Governance*, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung, October 2006, retrieved 4 November 2009, bibliothek.wz-berlin.de/pdf/2006/p06-009.pdf, p. 9.

³⁸ Y. Lu, 'Environmental Civil Society and Governance in China', Chatham House, *Briefing Paper*, ASP BP 05/04, London, August 2005, retrieved 27 October 2009, <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/publications/papers/view/-/id/298>, p. 2.

³⁹ Werring, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Y. Lu, 'NGOs in China: Development Dynamics and Challenges', The University of Nottingham, China Policy Institute, *Discussion Paper*, no. 18, April 2007, retrieved 16 November 2009, www.nottingham.ac.uk/cpi/documents/discussion-papers/discussion-paper-18-ngos-in-china.pdf, p. 4.

⁴¹ Wang Ming, 'NGOs in China', in NGP Research Center, Tsinghua University (ed.), *The 500 NGPs in China*, Beijing, United Nations Center for Regional Development, 2002, pp. 1-7.

⁴² S. Wang, 'NGOs Tread Lightly on China's Turf', *Asia Times*, 12 September 2009, retrieved 22 October 2009, www.atimes.com/atimes/China/KI12Ad02.html.

4.2. Chinese networks and international links

Chinese NGOs networks are a relevant instrument in the cooperation between NGOs and civil society organisations. They provide the opportunity for faster and more effective work. They also improve the dissemination of environmental research. In addition, environmental actions, campaigns and activities can be better organised.

Several networks have been established in China; for instance, the China Association for NGO cooperation (CANGO), created and registered in 1992. Its main aim is to enhance Chinese civil society groups, serving as an information-sharing platform. The Centre in Qinghua University in Beijing provides scientific and research assistance to NGOs. One of the latest official networks created thanks to government support was the All-China Environment Federation (中华环保联合会, *zhōnghuá huán bǎo liánhé huì*). It comprises civil society organisations and individuals with the objective of promoting links among government and society.⁴³

Moreover, transnational links have also been growing, especially during the last two decades. This is due to the fact that Chinese NGOs have been increasingly participating in international conferences and campaigns, increasing the understanding between Chinese and international NGOs' behaviours. Of course, the use of new channels of communication has helped to improve the international cooperation between them and the civil society groups. A recent example of this collaboration is the campaign launched by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), 'Earth Hour' week, which took place between 22 and 28 March 2010.⁴⁴ This campaign has been coordinated internationally and in China the NGO has been able to involve government, society and enterprises. The outcomes were a success; 34 cities were officially registered and joined the campaign.⁴⁵

Today, there are thirty-three international NGOs (INGOs) registered in China. The presence of INGOs in China is relatively recent, with two main exceptions: WWF and the International Crane Foundation, which began their work in the mid-1980s.⁴⁶

⁴³ See All-China Environment Federation at www.acef.com.cn.

⁴⁴ 'China's landmarks go dark for Earth Hour', *WWF China Newsletter*, January – March, 2009, retrieved 25 March 2010, www.wwfchina.org/english/downloads/newsletter/Newsletter1-3.09.pdf.

⁴⁵ Interview with a responsible of WWF China, 1 April 2010.

⁴⁶ N. Young, 'Introduction: Searching for Civil Society', in *250 Chinese NGOs: Civil Society in the Making*, Beijing, China Development Brief, 2001.

4.3. Use of classic and modern channels of communication

Many Western citizens believe that an 'oppressor' like the CP will not allow any detrimental issue to be expressed through the media. This might be true concerning sensitive matters, but it does not occur in relation to environmental issues. Chinese media are considered the 'green' media of Asia.⁴⁷ This is evident in the extensive coverage of environmental issues in newspapers and TV news. Changes in the political system have affected the media as well. This is the case of the WWF, whom the media often use for interviews, and at the same time they also receive free commercial space in newspapers or even on publicity boards in airports.⁴⁸

In addition, environmental issues are related to the state policy of sustainable development and encumbered with moral and political meanings.⁴⁹ A clear illustration of this situation was the Nujiang case in 2003. Nujiang is a free flowing river, which was included by the UNESCO as a world heritage site. However, the national Huadian Power Corporation wanted to build 13 hydroelectric dams along the river. ENGOs and media collaborated together to mobilise public opinion against the project,⁵⁰ even though this project involves the classical problem of conflicting interests between environmental and energy security sectors.⁵¹

Mao Yushi, a leading economist in China, pointed out that the freedom of expression is increasing in China, an expansion directly related to the use of the Internet.⁵² Since 1998 the Internet was popularised and the number of users grew impressively. ENGOs recognised the advantages of this new communication tool.⁵³ Examples are the Green-Web and Greener Beijing.⁵⁴

The Internet provides an excellent channel of communication and brings new opportunities, especially for those NGOs that have problems with the registration

⁴⁷ W. Bo, 'Greening the Chinese Media', *China Environment Series*, no. 2, 1998, pp. 39-44.

⁴⁸ Interview with a responsible of WWF China, 1 April 2010.

⁴⁹ H. Kanping, 'Harmony in diversity: the relationship between environmental journalism and green NGOs in China', *Green NGO and Environmental Journalist Forum*, pp. 30-31.

⁵⁰ Morton, *op.cit.*, pp. 525-526.

⁵¹ 石潭, '怒江建坝遭遇不当质疑?', 中国水力发电工程学会, 13 December 2003, retrieved 4 December 2009, <http://www.hydropower.org.cn/info/shownews.asp?newsid=201>.

⁵² Morton, *op.cit.*, p. 527.

⁵³ K. Latham, 'New media in China: problematising the public sphere', School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 'China 2009 State of the Art Conference', Brussels, 3-4 December 2009.

⁵⁴ See the 'Green Web' in Chinese, sponsored by the NGO & NPO of Environmental Protection, at <http://www.green-web.org>, or the WWF China web, also in Chinese, at <http://www.wwfchina.org/bbs/viewthread.php?tid=199553>.

process,⁵⁵ with regard to contacting the media, attracting society's attention, or even winning the respect and trust of the population.

4.4. Role and influence of the ENGOs in China

Deng Xiaoping's reforms granted more flexibility to the political system. This situation prompted the government to launch a new slogan, 'small government and big society' (小政府大社会, *xiǎo zhèngfǔ, dà shèhuì*). This new idea provided more opportunities to NGOs because the Chinese government views NGOs as helpful assistants in maintaining stability and developing a harmonious society. Guangyao Chen, Director of the NGO Bureau in MOCA, identifies the role of these organisations as a bridge for mutual communication.⁵⁶

This perception is maintained because NGOs focus on areas such as general education, environment, public health, children, technology, or poverty alleviation. NGOs also cover functions that are useful for the government, such as providing social services or promoting community development. In addition, NGOs do not participate directly in the governance of society, and they do not seek to confront the government. There is a 'self-censored' attitude, a pragmatic approach to their work.⁵⁷ Chinese ENGOs prefer to use mechanisms other than public confrontation; for example, the creation of the Centre for Legal Assistance to Pollution Victims has no other aim but to protect victims of pollution.⁵⁸ This means that the government is decentralised and thus allows more space to the civil society.

NGOs are not alone; media and intellectuals share the same objectives. They also promote ENGOs' actions through international conferences, seminars or workshops such as the Centre for NGO Research at Qinghua University (清华大学研究所家西晋, *Qīnghuá Dàxué yánjiū suǒjiā xījīn*)⁵⁹ or the Centre for Civil Society Studies at Peking University (北京大学政府管理学院, *Běijīng Dàxué zhèngfǔ guǎnlǐ xuéyuàn*).⁶⁰ In some cases, NGOs' work has been published in the state-run media.

⁵⁵ Yang, *op.cit.*, pp. 54-55.

⁵⁶ C. Chu, 'Running Head: China NGOs The Role of NGOs in China', *Quarterly Journal of Ideology*, vol. 31, nos. 3 & 4, 2009, retrieved 4 November 2009, [www.lsus.edu/la/journals/ideology/contents/vol32/NGOs in China article 2008.8.pdf](http://www.lsus.edu/la/journals/ideology/contents/vol32/NGOs%20in%20China%20article%202008.8.pdf), p. 6.

⁵⁷ Lehrack, *op.cit.*, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁸ D. della Porta & D. Rucht, 'The dynamics of environmental campaigns', *An International Quarterly*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2002, pp. 1-14.

⁵⁹ 'NGO 在教育援助中发挥什么作用?', 清华大学 NGO 研究所贾西津, September 2004, <http://learning.sohu.com/20040906/n221900589.shtml>.

⁶⁰ For more information see www.sg.pku.edu.cn/news/News_View.asp?NewsID=451.

As a matter of fact, NGOs are becoming involved in the agenda-setting process and policy development or assist the government to draft sections of the law. However, they are not always able to influence the later stages of the decision-making process. Therefore, ENGOs are an effective driver for more democratic reforms, for example: (1) educating role and spreading of the rule of law; (2) stimulating public participation; (3) limiting local corruption through a process of accountability; (4) creating bridges to import international practices; and (5) strengthening stability.⁶¹ The Chinese government is aware that it does not have the capability or resources to face this situation and to enforce its policies single-handedly. For instance, MOCA cannot sponsor all NGOs, since MOCA's Popular Organisation Management Bureau (POMB) only has a few dozen staff members who work on drafting strategies, providing guidance, and prosecuting illegal activities.⁶² Thus, NGOs can help promote stability and legitimate the CP.

The Biodiversity Programme is an excellent example of the analytical framework proposed because it entails top-down and bottom-up approaches. There is an amalgam of actors involved in this programme working together to improve the biodiversity situation in China. They have understood that a local environmental problem might have global consequences. They have also observed that the presence and work of Chinese ENGOs might be very useful to implement sustainable development strategies in local areas where Chinese government might not have the same power or access as civil society organisations do.

5. The case of the Biodiversity Programme

EU-China cooperation on environmental protection is based on the European Commission's China strategy paper for the period 2007-2013 and on a cooperation framework. This framework involves bilateral, regional and research cooperation programmes as well as political dialogue. Additionally, the Commission's cooperation budget for China was about €65 million per year in 1998. Today, it amounts to €128 million.⁶³

⁶¹ B. Gemmill, M. Ivanova & C.Y. Ling, 'Designing a New Architecture for Global Environmental Governance', World Summit for Sustainable Development Briefing Papers, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), London, 2002, retrieved 3 December 2009, www.poptel.org.uk/iied/test/searching/ring_pdf/wssd_21_international_environmental_governance.pdf, p. 9.

⁶² Lu, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

⁶³ European Commission, 'China Strategy Paper 2007-2013', *op.cit.*, p. 3.

The Commission is aware that most of the programmes related to environmental matters cannot be handled just by the Commission delegation in Beijing or by Chinese counterparts. Thus, it also collaborates with the European Investment Bank, the World Bank, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).⁶⁴ The Commission's counterpart for cooperation programmes is usually the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation (MOFCOM). Both parties normally discuss strategies and programme outlines.⁶⁵

The EU-China environmental cooperation includes dialogues and other channels; one of these channels is the cooperation programme. In this paper, the 'Biodiversity Programme' is analysed for several reasons: the protection of biodiversity is one of the top priorities, the other two are water pollution and air quality; it involves civil society organisations as partners; and reflects top-down and bottom-up approaches. This case study reflects the shift in the behaviour of Chinese society and the increasing role of ENGOs. It also shows how these ENGOs can participate in implementing and monitoring field projects and be part of a cooperation programme with promising results.

5.1 The structure of the Biodiversity Programme

The EU-China Biodiversity Programme (ECBP) was born thanks to the commitment of both parties to the international Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It is a joint initiative between the EU, UNDP, MOFCOM and the Ministry of Environment Protection.⁶⁶ It was designed by DG Development through the Financing Agreement AIDCO/2004/6069, approved by the European Commission and MOFCOM in 2005. The programme was launched in June 2005 for a period of five years.⁶⁷ It is based on three main components: (1) central policy development; (2) visibility and awareness; and (3) a portfolio of 18 field projects. The general objective is to reduce the loss of biodiversity in China, and the specific objective is to improve policy, guidelines and capacity to implement the CBD. In order to accomplish these objectives, the ECBP

⁶⁴ European Commission, 'On the implementation of the Communication 'Building a Comprehensive Partnership with China'', COM(2000) 552 final, Brussels, 8 September 2000, retrieved 19 November 2009, p. 14.

⁶⁵ Interview with an official, DG Environment, European Commission, Brussels, 21 January 2010.

⁶⁶ UN, 'EU-China Biodiversity Programme', United Nations Development Plan, Beijing, 12 May 2008, retrieved 10 April 2010, <http://www.undp.org.cn/projects/48197.pdf>.

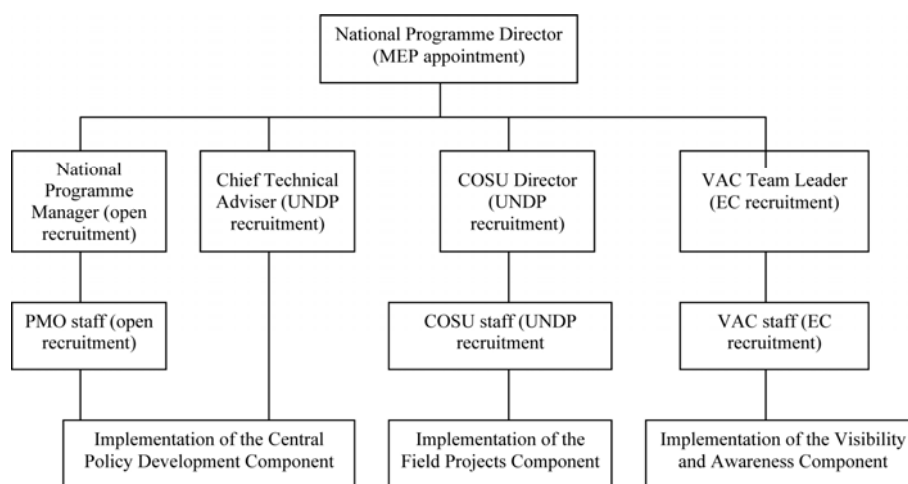
⁶⁷ J. Caldecott, C. Vanpraet & M. Cai, 'Mid-term Evaluation of the EU-China Biodiversity Programme', Les Isnes, AGRIFOR Consult, July 2009, retrieved April 9, 2010, erc.undp.org/evaluationadmin/downloaddocument.html?docid=2607, p. 9.

seeks to influence policy-makers, to develop a new thinking and to increase awareness.⁶⁸

The ECBP is the EU's largest overseas biodiversity conservation programme. The Commission's total contribution is €30 million; from this amount, €21 million are allocated to field projects. The total amount is divided into two parts: €27.5 is attributed to the UNDP under Contribution Agreement ASIE/2005/110-046, while the second part of €2.5 million is again split into two parts: €2 million are allocated for the visibility and awareness component (VAC) actions, and the rest (€0.5 million) is allocated for monitoring, evaluation and audits.⁶⁹ With regard to field projects, the ECBP always grants half of the total amount and the rest is paid by the specific project partner.⁷⁰

The complexity of this programme demands an accurate explanation of the different actors and institutions involved. The ECBP structure has three units/offices: Project Management Unit, Country Office Support Unit (COSU) and VAC, each with clear and distinct responsibilities.⁷¹ Figure 1 displays the different actors and institutions involved in this EU-China joint effort:

Figure 1: Structure of the ECBP according to the Project Document



Source: Caldecott et al., 'Mid-term Evaluation of the EU-China Biodiversity Programme', *op.cit.*, p. 11.

⁶⁸ See '2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership', retrieved 16 April 2010, www.ecbp.cn/en/project.jsp?autoid=197.

⁶⁹ Caldecott, Vanpraet & Cai, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

⁷⁰ Data from the European Commission, '2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership', *op.cit.*

⁷¹ Interview with an official of the COSU, 29 April 2010.

5.2 Field projects

The 18 field projects were selected from 99 project proposals. For each of the selected projects a Grant Agreement was signed with UNDP. The EU, Foreign Economic Cooperation Office, UNDP and MOFCOM all reviewed and agreed to the procedures and to the guidelines in place.⁷² The purpose of the field projects is to explore possibilities for nature conservation, by building partnership, innovation and cost sharing, providing, at the same time, lessons and conclusions. These results generate more effective actions to preserve biodiversity.⁷³ The field projects are managed, technically and financially, through regular communication and the submission of quarterly reports, bi-annual reports and annual reports.⁷⁴

Each of the 18 projects has different partners, most of them based on civil society and ENGOs. There are eight ENGOs from a total of fifteen partners. They work or collaborate on eleven up to eighteen projects; some organisations are in charge of more than one field project. Except for one ENGO, the rest are INGOs, although the majority of their staff members are Chinese citizens.

The following table analyzes the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats of this EU-China Biodiversity Programme. The assessment is based on interviews with different actors involved in this programme as well as on visits to three field projects. The aim of the analysis is, on one the hand, to highlight the positive results and, on the other, to comment on some aspects that could be improved for future programmes.

Figure 2 provides a SWOT analysis of the EU-China Biodiversity Programme: its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ ECBP, '2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership', *op.cit.*

⁷⁴ Interview with an official of the COSU, 29 April 2010.

Figure 2: SWOT Analysis of the Biodiversity Programme

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ECBP focuses on policy advice and support to the Chinese reform process, based on a top-down and a bottom-up approach. • Human resources development, which ensure sustainable development and long-term perspective. • At the intermediate level, there is leadership as the programme steering committee meets on a regular basis and takes the relevant decisions. • The Chinese government promotes an integrated approach. • Vast amount of end beneficiaries: there are 18 field projects, and more than 70 partners. • Awareness of the public concerned. • Call for proposals for the field projects to bring government and NGOs to work together. • Field projects are using efficiently the resources to obtain positive results. • The field projects promote ownership of projects and sustainability for the local population. • ECBP organised field project workshops on a regular basis, for coordination and exchange of information. • The Chinese government encourages ENGOs to collaborate. • Creation of a steady platform for ENGOs and government to collaborate together. • Chinese media as an ally for ENGOs. • Participation of the scientific community. • Empowerment of the Chinese civil society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of ECBP initiatives and ideas into the 12 five-year plans. • The ECBP established cooperation committees, and improved coordination in integrating biodiversity into different sector planning. • The Commission launched the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010. • China's progress towards the 2010 biodiversity target is improving. • National biodiversity information service launched in 2009. • In November 2009, the ECBP Key Stakeholders (EU, UNDP, MOFCOM and FECO) agreed that 8 projects would be extended until 15 July 2010, 4 projects until 15 October 2010, 2 project until 15 January 2011 and 4 until 15 April 2011. • Good coordination among PMO, COSU and VAC; frequent interactions (the three components are in the same office). • Improvement of the biodiversity integration into local planning, providing new policies on a long-term perspective in China. • Manuals and guidelines are being used in actual implementation of future activities, e.g. land use planning. • Pressure on key decision-makers in provincial and county government by giving field projects information to media. • Strengthening of the ENGOs networks; cooperation between ENGOs and INGOs. • ENGOs as intermediaries between government and population, connected to the grass-roots, new space for democratisation. • NGOs are more cost-efficient than government institutions, lower operation costs.

Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU's strategy for the ECBP is very holistic and it has broad goals, difficult to measure. • Operational strategy based on indicators, top-down approach. • Short period of time for field projects (2-3 years) is not suitable for a biodiversity programme. • Cooperation between MEP and VAC team is weak. • VAC does not have education capacity to support the field projects. • The National Programme Director has not been fully involved in the programme, e.g. link to other ministries weak. • Coordination and information among Chinese institutions and ENGOs is not fluent and updated. • Slow implementation, e.g. some projects need studies from experts, tender system slow. • Scarce visits from Chinese official institutions or local agencies. • Reports on activities and outcomes are not shared among all the partners. • Difficulty to measure public awareness: data does not exist. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission's acknowledgement of the Chinese domestic political and social situation. • None of the field projects had included project closure activities in their design, e.g. preparing the final reports, transfer of purchased equipment. • Lack of ownership; local people are not included during the planning of the ECBP. • EU internal problems: lack of human resources (it is not in the field, it has no direct contacts with the local partners), and lack of capabilities (budget constraints, expertise). • To work with a science-approach is not efficient, e.g. researchers cannot always recognise the causes of poverty. • Influence in policy development unequal in all field projects, counties and provinces. • Scientific data has to be treated with caution: a past history of data falsification. • Lack of research of the overall results of each field project and to what extent they have produced a positive impact on the local society.

Source: Own elaboration based on interviews and visits to the field projects.

5.3 Analysis of the ENGOs working in field projects of the Biodiversity Programme

To achieve major goals and changes regarding environmental issues and climate change effects, it is clear that a top-down approach is needed in China. However, one must try to understand the specific Chinese characteristics, for instance, economic and social reforms, culture and the diversified and aggravated environmental conditions. These facts force the need to tackle the problem from an integrated approach, which will provide the same importance to the bottom-up approach. In fact, many environmental improvements come from grass-roots actions, upon which the government thereafter acts. Thus, the Chinese government engages ENGOs to collaborate with its strategy. By getting closer to central and local government, and by replacing government functions, they have the chance to influence key actors.

Therefore, the ECBP could not work and achieve the same positive results without the participation of ENGOs. The ENGOs participated in two main activities: being part of the VAC team, by assisting in the accomplishment of the objective of increasing awareness in society, and by implementing concrete activities in field projects or the whole field projects in a few cases. Regarding the VAC team, there have been about 20 NGOs working on the programme for short-term periods. These ENGOs were usually Chinese and have been directly contacted via the VAC team.

All the projects have been passed jointly. Almost all the ENGOs use an integrated approach and collaborate with many partners at all levels. They work to strengthen their links. For example, universities previously cooperated with them by sending groups of students during vacation to perform certain activities. At the same time, all ENGOs cooperate with the Chinese government institutions or the private sector in different projects, campaigns or activities regarding climate change, carbon reductions, etc.

ENGOs prefer to collaborate with the government by giving advice on local community rules, policies and activities. Even if they try to contact the media, central and local government institutions, and the Chinese people their influence still is very limited, despite their attempts to foster closer cooperation. More than producing real changes in policies and on decision-makers, they can only try to stop certain government or industrial actions, but they will only succeed in a few cases.

Generally speaking, ENGOs have limited economic resources, and they lack human resources if one considers the quantity of work which needs to be completed. This situation might affect the implementation process where there are still, in general, many problems to be solved. It seems that many of the difficulties suffered during implementation are related to confusion and complications in terms of coordination with higher political and institutional levels. By contrast, ENGOs believe they have achieved positive results regarding public awareness in the local community.⁷⁵ Thus, projects are welcomed from society. However, the awareness of Chinese society about biodiversity and related issues, in general, is still very limited. Finally, all the ENGOs would like to maintain cooperation with the Commission delegation. They believe the projects should continue because such problems cannot be solved in the space of two or three years.

⁷⁵ Based on interviews with different responsible persons of NGOs working in the ECBP.

6. Conclusion

I undertook this investigation with the idea of arriving at an understanding of EU-China cooperation regarding the fight against climate change. The questions raised were whether the EU had realised the importance of civil society organisations in China in the field of environmental protection and how the latter could play a role in the strategic partnership between the EU and China.

I showed that the EU and China make a joint effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and also address other environmental aspects, such as the loss of biodiversity that seriously affects the ecosystem which regulates the climate. This is one of the reasons why the environmental field remains a priority for the EU and China, but it also shows that the EU should further exploit this cooperation in order to reinforce its environmental role and international leadership. I argued that the traditional top-down approach is not adequate to solve the Chinese environmental problems. The case of the EU-China Biodiversity Programme demonstrated the usefulness of introducing a bottom-up approach in order to improve the EU-China strategic partnership regarding climate change matters.

Although both partners are very important for each other, their current strategic partnership seems to have just one major topic on the agenda: trade. Yet, Chinese officials recognise that in the environmental field they want to learn from the EU's model and adapt it to their system and culture. However, they do not accept impositions and do not like to be told how to act. The EU should not expect that China will take decisions in the European way. In addition, this attitude would simply widen the distance between these partners, instead of building the much-needed strengthened ties. Thus, the EU's approach should search for those common points that will help in seeking unity rather than creating further distance. For instance, China wants to tackle climate change problems which run the risk of increasing the instability of Chinese society. This concern is in accordance with the European environmental and foreign policy. Therefore, the EU, by assisting China to improve its expertise in technology and its social awareness, will contribute to increase trust and steady bonds with its partner. At the same time, it will shape its presence as an environmental leader being recognised as such by the international community. This is the sort of pragmatic attitude and actions the EU should further adopt, while at the same time leaving aside rhetoric and idealistic thinking.

Chinese society already takes advantage of both top-down and bottom-up approaches. Although the influence of these NGOs is not very effective, their role is crucial. Since ENGOs are linked to the grassroots level, they are the vehicle through which bridges can be built between government and citizens. This is the reason why the Civic Environmentalism approach was used in this research. It is an excellent strategy for governments to develop environmental legislation and to empower citizens to take responsibility in the fight against climate change. Civic Environmentalism supports the idea of introducing a bottom-up approach for EU-China cooperation in the fight against climate change.

The Biodiversity Programme is an environmental cooperation programme which sets up a platform of multiple partnerships between international, national and local government and NGOs, all aiming for increased environmental protection. It exemplifies how ENGOs working in the field projects have become change-agents by providing the opportunity to review laws, policies, plans and environmental awareness. The case study illustrates the domestic shift in the behaviour of Chinese society and its relationship with the government. The ECBP is perceived as a model of the biodiversity conservation strategy, which fully fits into the China Biodiversity Partnership Framework. However, national parks are excluded from the ECBP, which is in contradiction with the goal of biodiversity conservancy, in addition to the fact that many field projects are located in or near national parks.

The Chinese government is aware of the usefulness of ENGOs. Chinese politicians know that without adequate resources local and rural areas cannot be reached and the monitoring of projects cannot be implemented. Thus, the benefit of these ENGOs is not only to create a new, more transparent and democratic mechanism, it also improves the working relationships and cooperation between government and society in China. For this reason, it is very interesting for the European Commission to include these new actors. The ECBP is one of the best examples of this argumentation, but it is also the only one so far. Hence, the Civic Environmentalism approach is a concept that the European Commission could more commonly use in its future programmes.

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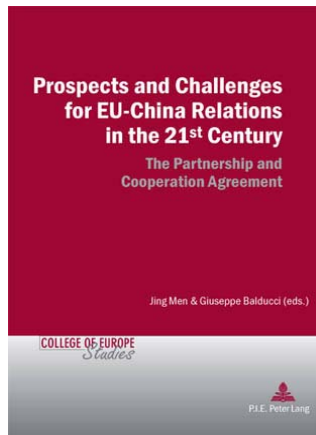
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