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**Environmental Activism and
Political Intermediation
-Local Flexibility in Managing
Protests in China**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

2017

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Declaration for SOAS PhD thesis

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Abstract

This thesis reveals the underlying mechanisms of local flexibility in managing protests in authoritarian China. Chinese governments are sensitive to popular protests. However, we can still find a relatively high degree of accommodation on environmental protests claiming for policy adjustment in recent years. Why do any local states that are not held accountable to people through democratic ways would like to listen to environmental activists by sacrificing economic benefits, but others not? Instead of just looking at environmental activists that have been studied in most of the literature of Chinese politics, this research pays specific attention to the political intermediation as the process in which local civil society is able to communicate effectively with the authoritarian state. With new empirical data, this study is able to discover the ways in which different patterns of intermediaries repackage local environmental claims as representatives that local officials would like to listen.

The bureaucratic hierarchy in China not only shows its policy ambivalence about how to balance tradeoffs between environment and development, but also its political ambivalence—to what extent the authoritarian regime tolerates the pluralism since the bureaucracy itself is not coherent. Central government sends mixed signals towards environmental activism and only parts of them can be accommodated. Local officials are often subjected to different incentives and constraints. This research highlights the environmental advocacy coalition and shows that intermediary figures, such as experts, local People's Congress/Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference delegates who share political weight but not necessarily have formal standings within the Party power, can establish effective communications between social activists and decision makers. When these figures are respected by political power without inherently contention and possess social capital as far as the civil society concerns, local officials are more likely to accommodate the interests of environmental activists and alter their policy preference. This research finding extends the term of 'consultative authoritarianism', and contributes to the literature in both contentious politics and authoritarian politics.

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List of Abbreviations

Advocacy Coalition Framework	ACF
Association of Ocean Protection	AOP
Cadres Performance Evaluation System	CPES
Central Leading Group for Inspection Work	the Group
China Central Television	CCTV
China National Offshore Oil Corporation	CNOOC
China National Petroleum Corporation	Petro China
Chinese Academy of Science	CAS
Chinese Environmental and Scientific Academy	CESA
Chinese Political People's Consultative Conference	CPPCC
Chinese Communist Party	CCP
Cross-border Environment Concern Association	CECA
Disclosure of Government Information	DGI
Ecological Civilization	EC
Economic Special Zone	EPZ
Economy and Information Technology Bureau	EITC
Environmental Impact Assessment	EIA
Environmental Non-governmental Organization	ENGO
Environmental Protection Bureau	EPB
Environmental Protection Law	EPL
Environmental Public Interest Litigation	EPIL
Fragmented Authoritarianism	FA
Friend of Nature	FoN
Green Earth Volunteer	GEV
Government-organized Non-governmental Organization	GONGO
Green Cross Association	GCA

Green Watershed	GW
Huadian Power Company	Huadian
Liquefied Natural Gas	LNG
Local People's Congress	LPC
Ministry of Civic Affairs	MCA
Ministry of Environmental Protection	MEP
Ministry of Industry and Information Technology	MIIT
Nantou Peninsular Environmental Contact Group	NPECG
National Development and Reform Committee	NDRC
National Energy Administration	NEA
National People's Congress	NPC
Non-governmental Organization	NGO
Not In My Backyard	NIMBY
Nu River Hydropower Project	NRHP
Paraxylene	PX
People's Congress	PC
Public Security Bureau	PSB
Shenzhen Energy Group	SEG
Shenzhen Human Settlement and Environmental Commission	Shenzhen HSEC
State Environmental Protection Agency	SEPA
State Oceanic Administration	SOA
State-owned Enterprise	SOE
Village Regulation and People's Convention	VRPC
Yunnan Petroleum Refinery Project	YPRP

Chapter 1 Introduction

In 2013, I was working in an international environmental organization in Beijing, the capital city of China. My purpose was to investigate the role and process of non-state organizations in advocating pro-environmental policies under the authoritarian system. In May, a city-wide environmental protest took place against a petrochemical project that been under construction in Kunming, the capital city of the remote and poor province of Yunnan. Leaders of this environmental organization in Beijing decided not to support the local Yunnan environmental activism and kept away from this incident. Soon afterwards, the local state demobilized the citizens' protest and the project continued.

This was not the first time that Chinese urban citizens had taken to the streets to claim their environmental rights. Six years before this Yunnan protest, Xiamen citizens launched a protest against a similar petrochemical project in their city, and the result was the surrender of local government and the relocation of the project. Xiamen is a rich coastal city located in south-east China. It was one of the earliest beneficiaries of China's 'reform and opening up' policy since 1978.

The responses of local states toward the Yunnan and Xiamen environmental protests were obviously different. Although there was an attitude of reversal within the Xiamen government, local officials chose to accommodate environmental activists' demands. In contrast, local officials in Yunnan kept refusing to respond to the environmental claims coming from both ordinary citizens and local environmental organizations.

I had come to Yunnan in 2014 and Xiamen in 2015 to compare environmental activism in poorer areas with environmental activism in wealthier areas respectively, but I found that both of these areas had active environmental civil societies. In Yunnan, there exists large numbers of environmental NGOs (non-governmental organizations) because this province is distinctive for its biological diversity. Not only are the grassroots NGOs active in environmental protection issues, but also organizations from foreign countries are working in Yunnan. In Xiamen, there are vibrant social groups at the community level working on environmental protection and education because of the emerging middle class and educated populace. However, the majority of the grassroots environmental NGOs kept silent about this anti-

petroleum project movement in Xiamen. Why was the local state's attitude in Xiamen more accommodating than that in Yunnan? It was not because Xiamen was more industrialized nor because Xiamen's environmental quality was worse. It also was not because Xiamen's environmental NGOs are more tolerated by local government than those of Yunnan so that local social groups in Xiamen had a capacity large enough to win over the developmental agencies.

In Yunnan, however, I also discovered an alternative pattern of environmental activism in the same geographical region. Green Watershed (GW), an environmental NGO in Yunnan that I visited, received different policy responses from local government during their two environmental campaigns. The first was the anti-Nu River hydropower project which has run since 2004 when GW built up the coalition with other local and national NGOs to oppose the developmental plan initiated by the national economic department. They received support from media, scientists and sympathetic cadres. Under such pressure, the state council and the then Premier Wen Jiabao decided to suspend the dam project. In contrast, a decade later, the anti-petroleum action initiated by GW faced greater difficulties in organizing coalitions with other social actors and gaining support from officials within the bureaucratic system.

Here comes the puzzle. Conventional wisdom (Huntington, 2006) points to the idea that the key issue of stability in transformation societies is whether a strong political party exists that is capable of integrating the masses, representing a broad variety of economic, political and social interests, and successfully producing legitimacy and stability. Studies of China's contentious politics also find that Chinese popular resistance is increasing because authoritarian regimes are characterized by the lack of political opportunities for collective actions. Scholars argue that China's authoritarian regime is resilient enough that social disturbance and political stability could stay coexistent (e.g. Oi, 2003), and the Chinese party-state is able to maintain social stability because the central government assigns responsibility for dealing with popular resistance to lower level authorities and grants them conditional autonomy (Cai, 2008a). Following this line of argument, we can observe that the central government avoids instances of resistance to ensure state stability and the local government has more power in dealing with local contentions. As cases show above, however, how could the Yunnan government behave so differently towards

environmental activism in the Nu River hydropower project and the petrochemical project?

In early 2015 I arrived in Shenzhen, a special economic zone in Guangdong province that is adjacent to Hong Kong. The environmental citizenship in Shenzhen is also very vibrant but demonstrates a much more rational manner. During the interactive process between state and society, there was no large social unrest. Local officials responded to the environmental demands very quickly and maintained a relatively higher degree of accommodation to local actors than in Xiamen. I talked to the previous director of Shenzhen bureau of environmental protection who dealt with the cancellation of a coal-fired power plant. Surprisingly, I found that during the whole process the local environmental agency did not back the environmentalists' actions, which means there was no alliance between local environmental cadres and environmental actors. Escalation of environmental activism frequently occurred in urban China because the local state has always set economic targets as the priority by sacrificing people's long-term environmental interests.

What makes Shenzhen government so accommodating, even without the usual support of the environmental bureaucracy? Why would any local state that is not held accountable by citizens through democratic means listen to social actors by sacrificing economic benefits? In general, how can we explain the variation of local environmental activism and the variation of local state responses in China?

The answer to these questions, I argue, lies in the recognition that there exists the political intermediation that acts as formal or informal communication between environmental activists and authoritarian officials. Its centrepiece is the examination of *political intermediation*—that is, of the varying channels and processes through which intermediaries are featured as trusted figures who can activate negotiating channels of communication with authoritarian decision-making bodies during the course of social environmental contention, making protesters' and social organizations' demands acceptable and understandable to officials in a non-threatening way. These include the linkage with civil society and exertion of influence through the involvement of experts who possess knowledge power, through the brokerage by delegates from local and national People's Congress (PC) and Chinese

People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), and through those decentralized community delegates' workstations that can make representative claims.¹ Scholars who study Chinese politics and authoritarian politics have largely ignored these intermediation processes. This study finds that when the intermediary mechanisms exist in society with social bases, there will be discussions and negotiations between environmental activists and local state officials. Therefore, what accounts for the variation in environmental activism lies in the interaction between state officials, typically local officials who find ways to permit or suppress social activism, and the social actors. It turns out that intermediaries vary in localities and their roles can be quite different. In other words, different kinds of political intermediation functioning in localities will influence the interaction between local officials and environmental activists.

This research demonstrates that in an authoritarian regime like China—where the state dominates the agenda-setting power, and social groups, such as environmental NGOs, are weak or dependent on the state—environmental activists may still have possibilities to change the state policy instead of counting on social resistances. Under such context, local actors can activate channels of communication with decision makers through what I call 'intermediary figures', who do not necessarily have formal standing within the Communist Party power but who share moral standing with both local officials and civil society without threatening the formal authority.

In this thesis, I raise that there exists environmental advocacy coalitions in China and state that political intermediation functions in China's environmental policy advocacy through aggregating intermediary figures into environmental advocacy coalitions, or making use of pre-existing or newly established organizations embedded with intermediary figures for alternative channels of information communication. Under such mechanisms, environmental actors adopt strategies to influence the behaviour of governmental authority in order to achieve their policy objectives. Environmental activism in Shenzhen and Xiamen shows different patterns of intermediaries who are

¹According to McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001), 'brokerage' refers to the linking of two or more currently unconnected social sites by a unit that mediates their relations with each other and/or with yet another site. The broker can not only connect the two of them but also can speak on their behalf to the object of their claims. For more understanding of brokerage in contentious politics, see McAdam et al. (2011).

not inherently contentious. In Yunnan, the intermediary figures exist in the anti-Nu River hydropower project campaign whilst being absent in the anti-petroleum project case, thus leading to different configurations of the environmental coalition power. When there are local intermediaries who can repackage societal environmental claims into certain kinds of representation, and have direct communication capability to deliver information to decision-making bodies and are able to exert pressures on them, local governments are more likely to listen to the social grievance. When environmental activists fail to establish effective communications with formal decision makers and there is the absence of intermediary figures whilst only ‘peripheral activists’—actors who have passive relations with the local state—remain and are not able to build effective advocacy coalitions, local officials are more likely to be repressive.

This research shows that the process of political intermediation can account for why environmental advocacy coalitions in China vary so widely in terms of their policy advocacy outcomes. By analysing empirical data, I show the conditions that build up the environmental advocacy coalitions, identify what intermediaries are within each coalition, show different institutional opportunities or constraints contributing to various patterns of intermediaries, and assess the functionality of these intermediaries.

1.1 Environmental Activism and Regime Stability

Social activism impacts political order and regime stability. The condition for any activism is the presence of social conflicts, be they political, economic, social or environmental issues. Governments, regardless of their regime type, face threats of social contention from below. The public may reject the existing political order through strikes, protests, campaigns and other forms of collective action. Here ‘regime stability’ refers to a positive functionality and political performance by adapting to an ever-changing environment and maintaining this equilibrium. Indicators such as legitimacy, social order and consistency can be measured as a regime’s degree of stability. In democratic countries, mass mobilization may either help to reinforce the existing political order when the threat from below may ensure leaders comply with unfavourable electoral results and step down from office (Little et al, 2015), or it may threaten continued democratic rule (Lipset, 1959).

It is significant for authoritarian systems like China to maintain their regime stability because the occurrence of social resistance means the existence of problems with social control or the weakness of authoritarian government (Lohmann, 1994). Unlike democratic systems where politicians need to meet the interests of their constituencies and more political opportunities are provided for social actors, people in authoritarian regimes are denied the right to challenge the authority. Chinese people favour stability and fear political disorder since they experienced the turbulent Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution under Mao era. However, with the economic liberalization and the diversification of social interests since the 1980s, the authoritarian state faces pressure to respond to social contention by careful combination of co-optation, repression and adaptation. Since the reform era, citizens' resistance under changing society, such as the emerging labour contention and environmental protests, has become a serious concern for the Chinese state, because it has violated the political discourse to build a 'harmonious society' from the central government. Leaders in China hope to avoid a situation similar to the Soviet Union of the late 1980s, when social movements and the emerging independent organizations led to the colour revolution, which in turn overthrew the Communist regime itself. China seems to be attempting to avoid any new revolutions or sudden political change since the reform period.

Research on popular contention in China focuses on the patterns of contention and the discretion of the state's responses in interpreting citizens' protest. Local governments are the primary targets for protesters (Cai, 2006; 2010; O'Brien & Stern, 2007). 'Rightful resistance' (O'Brien & Li, 2006) demonstrates the situation when villagers in rural China deploy policies, laws and commitments of the state to the local officials who have ignored those principles. It is a form of popular contention that operates near the boundary of authorized channels, employs the rhetoric and commitments of the powerful to curb the exercise of power, hinges on locating and exploiting divisions within the state, and relies on mobilizing support from the community (O'Brien & Li, 2006, p. 2). Cai (2008a) argues that local governments chose different modes of responses to popular contention, such as concessions, concessions with discipline, tolerance and repression. He (2008a) argues that the outcome of popular resistance is largely determined by the cost of concessions and the forcefulness of

resistance. His research provides an analytical framework in understanding the impact of protests on policy implementation for local states.

The authoritarian state faces pressure to respond to growing environmental contention. China needs to increase people's living standard through economic development and gain public support to reinforce the legitimacy of its rules. However, during this process, the authoritarian state has been trapped into a dilemma between economic development and environment protection, and the emerging environmental activism also has threatened the social stability that the central authority wishes to maintain. Environmental activism in China emerged in the early 1990s when the state started to consider issues of environmental protection and thus lent environmental activism certain legitimacy. The environmental social organizations were established to assist the state in achieving the goal of sustainable development. However, in order to control society, the state has largely restricted the function of these organizations and they are not regarded as independent groups.

Therefore, it is important to study Chinese environmental activism through the various forms in which environmentalism has manifested itself, including environmental NGOs, citizens' protests and complaints, and advocacy from concerned figures. In framing environmental issues, Chinese green activism engages in environmental politics through 'de-politicization' approaches. Unlike Eastern European countries, environmental activism in China does not target political intention, but environmental rights that are demonstrated in the policy arena. Policy battles between powerful economic bureaucracies and enterprises, and the environmental advocacy coalition can be easily found during the last decade. The rise of environmental contention among citizens and the survival of environmental social groups are under the political constraints of authoritarian regime (Deng & Yang, 2013; Ho, 2007; Johnson, 2013; Wu, 2009). The majority of environmental NGOs practice self-censorship (Yang, 2005).

Rather than forming close links with greening constituents, most environmental groups cultivate ties with sympathetic officials through 'embedded activism' (Ho, 2007). Ho (2007) argues that the relationship between environmental groups and the state is not about control, the full penetration of the former by the latter, or a direct confrontational dichotomy between the two. Instead, the complex ties and networks between NGOs and state personnel and agencies mean the blurring of boundaries

between state and civil society, in which the embedded structure leads to successful advocacy. As public participation is increasingly encouraged in China, the emerging legislative framework for participation has allowed green civil society to engage in a 'rules-based' form of activism (Johnson, 2010).

Practically speaking, environmental activism matters intrinsically for the regime stability that authoritarian state wishes to preserve. Politically speaking, how the state responds to environmental activism has major ramifications for the development of state capacity and the adaptation of authoritarian regimes. Scholars argue that authoritarian systems like China have behaved relatively successfully in generating stability and legitimacy by reforming the political system under internal and external pressure in transition (Manion, 1996; Shi, 1997). For example, the Chinese state adapts to new social and economic realities through reliance on informal institutions that incorporate a revived private entrepreneurial class into the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (Tsai, 2007). The notion of 'authoritarian resilience' shows that new channels for political participation provided by the party-state such as the legal system, mass media, letters and visits also help to create regime legitimacy at the mass level (Nathan, 2003).

The resilience of China also has effectively balanced vertical threats from popular contention and horizontal threats from bureaucratic insiders through two institutional adaptations. The first is the decentralization that transfers power from centre to sub-national units in terms of internal security, administrative power, and fiscal resources. A political system will maintain social stability if the political arrangements allow the state to adopt repression whilst reducing the damage to the regime's legitimacy and then preventing concessions to the contention (Cai, 2008a). Therefore, local authorities are granted more autonomy in dealing with popular resistance while maintaining the legitimacy of central government by distancing the latter from blame-generating situations when local governments use repression (Cai, 2008a). The decentralization of coercion diminishes vertical risks but creates potential challenges from other bureaucratic actors within the system.

The second institutional adaptation is the cadres' management system. Local officials are promoted or punished on the basis of their achievement of performance objectives, such as items of economic growth, social stability, and fulfilment of certain central policies and targets of environmental protection. Generally speaking,

they have strong incentives to prevent protests and pursue economic development in their localities. Through these two institutional arrangements, local states have enjoyed significant autonomy in decision-making whilst there is still a need to align with the policy priorities from the superior officials.

However, Cai's (2008a) analysis of the interaction between the local state and protesters does not put local officials in the hierarchical bureaucratic structure and discuss the different incentives of local officials, nor does it involve the role of non-contentious social actors in making policy change as well. O'Brien and Li (1999) provide an actor-centred analysis of the behaviour of street-level bureaucrats to see how central principles of cadres' management interact with local incentives structured to foster policy outcomes.

Based on such scholarship, this research turns to highlight the process in which societal advocacy coalitions enter both bureaucratic policy-making and implementation process, whether they are contentious or not. Owing to the tremendous variation in the power of environmental activism in various policy battles, contemporary China provides an ideal setting to examine the factors contributing to the effectiveness of environmental advocacy coalitions. The interactions between local officials and environmental activists significantly vary in the dynamics of China's policy process on environmental issues. Some environmental advocacy coalitions are strong enough to influence the policy-makers, and thus change the policy outcome; some environmental advocacy coalitions fail to confront developmental bureaucracies and enterprises. These dramatic differences in environmental activism take place under different conditions and pose a significant problem in their own right for the growing green population in China. Analytically, the extensive variation in state responses under different social and political conditions within the same country also presents us with a need to rethink the checks and balances of power in policy-making under authoritarianism.

1.2 Explaining the Adaptation of Local Government

What might explain the variation in state responses? One school of thought highlights the *state-civil society relationship*. Civil society in democratic ideology depicts an autonomous state-society relation and civil society operates in a separate social sphere from the political sphere of the state (Foley & Edwards, 1996). Research on

authoritarian politics argues that all societal groups are incorporated into state organizations as ‘transmission belts’—the model of corporatism to integrate interest articulation into state agencies to control it and not allow social mobilization that might possibly be used against the state (Schmitter, 1974).

However, since the 2000s, the state–civil society relationship in China has changed from corporatism to a hybrid model of consultative authoritarianism that combines the autonomous civil society found in liberal models with mechanisms of state control found in corporatist models (Teets, 2014, p. 7). The model of ‘consultative authoritarianism’ raised by Jessica Teets is characterized by a more autonomous civil society, whereas the social groups and former government-organized groups gain more operational autonomy, such as in designing projects, securing diverse sources of funding, and independent hiring. Local officials have developed a toolkit of indirect incentives to control group activities, rather than direct methods such as control over budgets and hiring.

The process of rational learning motivates policy change and shifts officials’ relationships with civil society. Decentralization theoretically increases the provision of public goods because local governments can provide the services more cost effectively, and it creates more responsive institutions by bringing government decision makers into closer proximity with the affected constituency (Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2006). However, local governments have less capacity to meet these needs and have to collaborate with an emerging civil society. Therefore, policy learning is a deliberate attempt on the part of government officials to adjust the goals or techniques of policy in response to past experience and new information—policy changes as the result of such a process (Teets, 2014, p. 18). The consultative authoritarianism model has changed the nature of policy-making by including non-state actors such as environmental NGOs.

Looking at the three preceding localities suggests, however, that this perspective might not be sufficient to explain the variation in state responses to China’s environmental activism. The case of Yunnan shows that vibrant environmental social groups, in co-operation with the local state, were not necessary conditions for the state’s accommodation. The case of Xiamen, also suggests that even through no organized environmental groups engaged in the environmental coalition, the local state can still listen to the environmental activists and prevent future contestation.

Why is the adaptation of local state to environmental activism not correlated with state–NGO relationships? In light of this observation, the more operationally autonomous civil society in co-operation with the local state might trigger policy learning for the local state, but policy learning does not mean the social groups have higher chances to alter the policy. In the policy process of China, the powers of decision-making are highly concentrated. Even though opponents have been given an opportunity to deliver information, state officials may not necessarily permit space for people to have a discussion in the formal administrative system and ensure that decisions are responsive. Environmentalists must have ways to exert pressures on local officials to ensure the local state responds to social demands. What might some of these ways be?

The question brings us to the second school of thought about environmental activism and state response, which focuses on *bureaucracy and policy entrepreneurs*. When investigating how policy has been made and implemented, political scientists often look first within the formal bureaucratic process. The ‘fragmented authoritarianism’ (FA) model is used to describe China’s policy-making process as they move from a highly centralized authoritarian model to a more decentralized one (Lieberthal & Oksenberg, 1988). This framework analyses the power configurations and bargaining processes within the state. According to Lieberthal and Lampton (1992), the process of setting and implementing policies for a diverse range of policy issues operates with obstacles when policies go top-down the bureaucratic hierarchy. Since the economic reform in the late 1970s, government actors below the top leadership level have become fragmented and policies have become incoherent because of decreasing coercion, the encouragement of bureaucratic entrepreneurship, decentralized decision-making power and the weakened role played by political ideology in policy-making (Lieberthal & Lampton, 1992).

However, the original FA model cannot account for complex socio-economic changes that have occurred since the reform era. Andrew Mertha (2008) argues that the FA framework remains applicable to the policy-making process in China today, but with some revisions. His main argument is that the fragmented structure of authority within Chinese policy allows policy entrepreneurs to enter the policy-making structure without being coercively expelled. The ‘policy entrepreneurs’ are actors who advocate for proposals to ‘occupy spaces from which they can articulate and amplify their

issues in ways that engage the political process rather than existing outside of and in direct opposition to it' (Mertha, 2008, p. 7). The main component of policy entrepreneurs in this framework includes environmental NGOs, media and disgruntled officials. The policy entrepreneurs themselves do not guarantee that such policy change will occur. According to Mertha (2008), policy entrepreneurs combined with 'issue framing' —'organizing information in a manner that conforms to the structure of a good story (p. 12)'—can guarantee the occurrence of policy change by linking coalitions and mobilizing broad-based support. The dominance of issue framing developed by policy entrepreneurs, and the extent of public support and the personal characteristics of the policy entrepreneurs constitute the main factors affecting the outcomes.

This revised model of fragmented authoritarianism contributes to a better and more precise interpretation of authoritarian systems' decision-making processes, as in China and the tendency towards pluralism in hydropower politics. This model examines the bargaining and negotiation in the policy process that occurs between the state and NGOs. However, I find this model cannot fully apply to China's adaptation to environmental activism.

First, this model neglects the incentives and interests of local states that have to respond to both the superior state and social pressures. It is significant to analyse the rationale behind various responses of local officials in China. The authoritarian nature of this country means that state officials may not necessarily permit space for people to have a discussion in the policy process. Second, other important actors should be taken into consideration as well. One significant group of actors is the local elites who possess more political and social resources compared with NGOs and media, and who keep relatively good relationships with local states. They are close to local communities, have formal or informal connections to formal authorities with political weight, and to some extent they can change local scenarios.

Finally, two variables explained in the revised FA model—policy entrepreneurs and dominance of oppositional issue frame—are sometimes not isolated, and even overlap when explaining the various policy outcomes. The 'policy entrepreneurs' point to the media and NGOs that form coalitions, communicate information and win broad support in their environmental advocacies. The degree of policy entrepreneurship in

fact will affect the ways in which entrepreneurs can frame their issues in gaining sympathies.

Yet if we return to our three localities, we will find that theories focusing on bureaucratic politics and policy entrepreneurs cannot fully account for their variations in environmental activism and state responses. The observations in Xiamen show that grassroots environmental NGOs had not engaged in forming coalitions and mobilizing the public, but local government still accommodated the environmental interests. In the Yunnan petrochemical project, the local government did not listen to environmental grievances, although environmental NGOs had attempted to seek opportunities to communicate with both national and local authorities.

In other words, there must be other significant individuals or groups playing a vital part in the communication and negotiation process, although we do not deny that NGOs, media and the general public might engage in the struggle. Theories of state—civil society relations, bureaucratic politics and policy entrepreneurs do not seem to provide a good explanation of the variation in environmental activism and state responses. We need to examine the factors contributing to various combinations of local power and explore the different mechanisms in which these environmental coalitions of power intervene in formal authoritarian bureaucracies. We also need to consider which local officials would respond when they are caught in the middle because on the one hand, they are told to keep social stability and, on the other hand, they need to maintain economic growth.

1.3 Political Intermediation and Environmental Advocacy Coalition

The solution of the research puzzle is to shift our attention from policy entrepreneurs to intermediary figures. This thesis argues that the responsiveness of local states to environmental activism hinges on the existence of intermediaries in localities.

Policy entrepreneurs are actors such as NGOs, media and peripheral officials, who are highly strategic and agentive. They wait for opportunities to arise to plug in their already well-developed strategies and to mobilize people particularly those outside the core groups of activists (Mertha, 2008, p. 6). Compared with policy entrepreneurs, the concept of intermediary figures is particularly relevant to authoritarian regimes. They are figures that operate within intermediary organizations or intermediary communications (such as local PC/CPPCC, representative community station points

and scientific research agencies), share political weight or moral standing in the state authority without necessarily having formal standing within the CCP, tend to be respected by political power without inherent contention, and possess the social capital as far as the public and NGOs are concerned.

Policy entrepreneurs, who are usually regarded as the direct or indirect opposition to the state policy and potential threats to the local state by the formal authorities, do not enjoy the above features of intermediary figures. As Mertha (2008) mentions, social demands have become important sources not only of policy input but also pressures on the policy-makers. However, not all groups benefit equally from political inclusiveness and some groups are positioned better than others when interacting with the formal authorities. Compared with intermediary figures, policy entrepreneurs are less able to establish communication channels with decision makers, and their roles are limited and peripheral in the bureaucratic policy process.

In China's environmental advocacy, intermediary figures, such as local congressional delegates, local consultative delegates and scientific engineers, are often aggregated into environmental coalitions. When public goods to be distributed contradict the public's interests and threaten the regime's legitimacy, the party-state has a tendency to alter its policy choice. At each stage, tremendous trade-offs are involved. The authoritarian state prefers to listen to the social elites who have formal or informal channels to move their issues onto the agenda and draft policies favourable to their coalition. They usually hold institutional or non-institutional positions, have close linkages with and are trusted by society, and can influence public opinion. More importantly, the authoritarian regime recognized their social status and their political roles can be empowered or not empowered by the party-state. Even when local officials restrict the mobilization of civic groups, they can still be responsive to social grievances through intermediary figures that find ways to communicate with local officials directly, or who transfer the issue to bureaucratic superiors with higher political salience.

The role of intermediary figures can be discerned when intermediary communications or organizations between authoritarian state and local society have been set up. These figures have strong links to decision-making bodies because they are historically or institutionally well-connected to state authorities, or because they control strategically important resources and knowledge, so they gain support within the government.

Decision-makers may be sympathetic to their demands and accommodate them, especially when their core interests will not be harmed. Among various patterns of intermediaries, intermediary figures with more forceful brokerage and less alliance with activists can exert more powerful leverage in political negotiation and increase the likelihood of tolerance from state officials. Intermediary figures can not only establish direct communication with local authorities to deliver information to decision makers, but also can engage in the formal negotiation and discussion process and exert pressure on governments. These figures are not environmental activists, but they are recognized as the representatives on behalf of local environmental civil society. In localities with active intermediary figures, citizens and officials are more likely to reach a consensus in certain issues through mutual policy learning and rational communication.

The dynamics of China's environmental politics show how different actors within the environmental coalition possess different amounts of resources, knowledge and political influence, which are important conditions for the formation of environmental advocacy coalitions. This research introduces a concept of advocacy coalition framework (ACF) to understand the interaction between social advocacy and policy change. This framework displays the dynamics between policy actors who have sought to participate and influence policy outcomes (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1994). This research questions the application of ACF under the context of authoritarian China, and states that the case of China offers theoretical potential to understand the environmental advocacy coalition in authoritarian systems. In China, there does not exist competing private interests and adversarial coalitions like those democratic countries, but there does appear the environmental advocacy coalition in the course of environmental activism. Environmental NGOs, concerned experts, activists, and other social elites constitute the environmental advocacy coalition with collective actions in the name of public environmental activists. The combinations of these actors use different resources and strategies to challenge the existing policy; local states need to establish certain channels of communication with various social actors, or might otherwise repress them. It may not be the policy entrepreneurs, but the intermediary figures in the coalition, who can mediate the environmental conflicts and achieve effective communication.

The decision-making of China's project-induced environmental policy has been increasingly pluralized (Mertha, 2008). However, the size and sophistication of China's authoritarian politics make for the variation of political participation and state responses. This research examines environmental activism in three localities at roughly the same period of time. In Shenzhen and Xiamen, local governments have both showed accommodation and adaptation, but with different patterns. In the case of Shenzhen, there is a clear pattern in which representative bodies are distinctive and intermediaries function in consistency across various environmental complaints. The state listens to local interests and there is a range of representative establishments because the local state interacts with social actors by active intermediating agents, such as representative agencies or local communities to absorb the divergent interests of stakeholders. Through these pre-existing and newly established communication organs, local congressional and consultative delegates build the network based on their constituency and obtain sympathy from local decision makers.

In Xiamen, we only have one case study, but it is well-developed. In contrast to Shenzhen, the intermediary figures here that brokered the deadlock are from a quite different group of people and different social positions, but they play similar intermediary functions. Therefore, the situation of political intermediation in Shenzhen is not unique. Intermediary figures of experts and national consultative delegates with expertise set up alliances with average citizens in a proactive campaign in the name of the public, and under the interactive learning process, the local officials accommodate the environmentalists. Experts draw on their network to build a coalition, communicate scientific knowledge through new media, and then put this issue into higher political salience. Substantial public participation is realized and the independent environmental impact agency is engaged. It is a case in which these intermediary figures can transform the conflicts up to higher decision makers and mobilize the public, which provides them with more chances to influence superior decision-making bodies.

However, the local state in managing environmental activism in Yunnan is quite controversial. The anti-petrochemical protests in Yunnan show the opposite situation from Shenzhen and Xiamen: environmental activists are ineffective in forming the environmental advocacy coalition. There is an absence of intermediary figures involved in the environmental coalitions. The function of those peripheral activists,

such as environmental NGOs, is restricted from the tight social control of the authoritarian state. Local NGOs are not able to establish effective conversations with the formal authorities. The only institutional opportunities for them are the support from the central environmental department and the anti-corruption campaign. However, the institutional weakness of the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) and the factional nature of the anti-corruption campaign mean that the possibility for peripheral activists to seek political opportunities is rather intangible. However, in the case of the anti-petrochemical campaign, we cannot conclude that intermediaries do not function in Yunnan. When we look back to the anti-Nu River hydropower project campaign, which involved almost similar groups of NGOs, we find a different track where intermediary figures, such as consultative delegates and experts, are engaged in the environmental coalition and provide support to the NGOs. This is suggestive because people as intermediaries in this case actually play a role similar to what we have seen in Shenzhen and Xiamen.

The conventional understanding of state–society relations in authoritarian systems is often depicted as either repression or incorporation, but this research shows there is the political intermediation that can provide channels of state–society communications and negotiations and increase the possibility that environmental advocacy coalitions are able to access the policy process without threatening the formal authority. Therefore, this research also extends the existing understanding of ‘consultative authoritarianism’. As noted above, this model is used to describe the authoritarian state–civil society relations in which selected social groups possess channels for limited participation in the policy process (Teets, 2014, p. 36). Other scholars also argue that Chinese government nowadays increasingly creates formal channels for citizens to voice their policy concerns in a consultative manner, such as consultative forums, village elections, participatory budgeting, councils and committees (He & Thogersen, 2010; He & Warren, 2011).² Do these consultative measures have their intended effects? Truex’s study on the National People’s Congress (NPC) online citizen voice mechanism shows that the introduction of new

² He and Warron (2011) point out there are still slight differences between consultative authoritarianism and deliberative authoritarianism. In China, ‘consultation’ implies that decision-makers ask for, and receive information from those their decisions will affect, while ‘deliberation’ implies that decision makers will do more than solicit input; they will enable (or permit) space for people to discuss issues, and to engage in the give and take of reasons, to which decisions are then responsive.

public participation mechanism is a mixed success for the CCP regime (Truex, 2017). In the long term, the consultative mechanisms may fail to respond to citizen expectations, especially when education levels and access to uncensored news media continue to rise. These limited consultative reforms will have heterogeneous effects on the population, and Truex's survey result shows the innovative measures increase satisfaction with the regime only for citizens with low political access and low expectations for government performance (Truex, 2017).

The concept of political intermediation developed in this thesis shows that consultative measures without engagement of these intermediaries, which are willing to and able to take the intermediary function between civic activists and local officials, cannot function well. For example, public hearings, as one of widely used forms of consultative measures in Chinese environmental governance, facilitated the state adaptation in Xiamen whilst did not work in Kunming. It is possible to have a positive state response without popular contention if localities have intermediaries such as agents in local representation or prestige scientists who share political weight in the formal state and possess social capital in civil society. Accordingly, we could expect to observe an improvement in the functioning of these consultative measures to improve state responsiveness. Consultative authoritarianism ends up with different patterns at local levels, such as public hearings, CPPCC delegations, and community consultative committee, but what seems to be the key in the consultation is that there are intermediaries that can repackage local environmental claims into certain kinds of language that state officials would like to listen.

1.4 Overview of the Thesis

This research seeks to solve two puzzles: one empirical and one theoretical. The empirical problem is how to understand China that appears to be riddled with paradoxes when it comes to environmental activism and state flexibility: the authoritarian regime is expected to repress the social activism, whilst it also gradually introduces a set of limited participatory channels for social actors in pursuing their policy preference. China has the question of scale. As Kostka and Mol (2013) state, there are diversities on the efficacy of participatory experiments and innovations in local environmental politics, and environmentalists are highly dependent on local conditions. This situation is indicative of the paradox between the repressive authoritarian system and the progressive environmental state within China. The

theoretical puzzle is how to theorise the role of intermediary figures in China's environmental state–society relations. When Teets (2014, p. 4) indicates that civil society increases pluralism or articulation of diverse societal interests, which is essential for good governance, the political intermediation is not mentioned in the state–society interactive process. Nevertheless, Teets (2014) points to the significance of negotiation between the hybrid state–society relations which is not a dichotomous choice between 'total independence' and 'total cooption'.

The empirical context of this study is urban China. In order to provide a foundation for the enquiry of this research, Chapter 2 sets the scene from the ambivalent states, and it explores the paradox between the repressive regime and the progressive environmental state. Meanwhile, this chapter looks at local officials who face multiple incentives, such as economic development, social stability or political openness. It also explores the ways environmental activists, such as NGOs and protesters, claim their environmental interests when interacting with state authority. Chapter 3 critically introduces advocacy coalition framework (ACF) and proposes the concept of political intermediation. I highlight how the environmental advocacy coalition, especially those intermediary figures, interacts with the authoritarian state to achieve their policy objects through various mechanisms of communication and organization.

Explaining the role of political intermediation and various state responses is the focus of this thesis's remaining chapters. Chapter 4 – 6 form the heart of the thesis and suggest these variations are best accounted for by the intermediary mechanisms. Through in-depth case studies, these three chapters examine the interactions between governments, especially the local states that find ways to repress or accommodate environmental demands, and environmental coalitions. The case studies allow us to trace exactly how different kinds of configurations of environmental coalition power affect state responses differently. These analyses strongly suggest that environmental coalitions with intermediary figures that are able to establish effective communication channels with formal authorities are more likely to obtain better state's responsiveness and policy outcome than environmental coalitions without these figures.

In Chapter 4, I look at a relatively pluralist scenario in the Chinese policy process when the intermediaries that act as local representation facilitate the communication between local state and civil society. These intermediaries possess the social capital and are responsive to their constituencies in their localities. Chapter 5 explores a

different intermediary pattern in which scientists with moral standings and expertise authority in urban China are found to engage in the policy process and in alliance with citizens' environmental activism. In Chapter 6, I turn to compare two mechanisms of environmental advocacy within the same geographical locality that can hold certain conditions constant, such as provincial government, local political culture or history, while focusing on the different combination of coalitions, state responses and thus the policy outcome. These two cases in Chapter 6 compare different processes of environmental advocacy and assess under what conditions the intermediation processes can be established between local actors and states, especially by analysing the incentives and interests of local officials.

These chapters indicate that findings of political intermediation reveal the underlying mechanisms of local flexibility in managing protests in authoritarian China, but does it have any implications for general authoritarian systems? Chapter 7 suggests that local officials in authoritarianism are not always the 'bad guys', and they can be quite receptive to form the communication with the civil society, and accommodating with the 'consultative authoritarianism'. This can be the reflection of the strong state capacity when authoritarian state becomes more adaptive in policy alteration.

1.5 Data and Methodology

The large range of regional variation in China makes the initial selection of the research sample difficult. Moreover, the topic of this research—environmental activism and state responses—is considered politically sensitive by the government in China, so it is more difficult to locate the research site. Largely due to political sensitivity and the lack of access to valuable data, there is scarce previous research that studies, in detail, the political dynamics of environmental protests and advocacy coalitions engaged in energy project decision-making with multiple stakeholders involved.

The purpose of this research is twofold. First, although I do not aim for broad generalized findings given the two constraints and the limited research funding, I do try to find a relatively generalizable pattern that is explainable in China. Thus, I choose cases that have comparable variances in terms of the power configurations of environmental advocacy coalitions. Second, to develop a deep understanding of how environmental advocacy influences policy outcomes, it is necessary to investigate in

detail how local environmental activism interacts with state authorities at both local and national levels. Spending time conducting interviews and participatory observations in the field thus becomes necessary.

In this work, I used qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, participatory observations and archival examinations to investigate environmental activism in China's energy-induced policy-making. In-depth case studies and qualitative methods can produce strong observations and evidences in describing variations in variables. Case study research can describe and explain complex and entangled groups' attributes, patterns, structures, or processes (Verschuren, 2003). The discovery of potential causal relationships may depend on how the variation in these variables is postulated.

Thus, this research used process-tracing to analyse the cases from the start to the end of interaction between environmental activism and the authoritarian state. It is a useful tool for theory testing and development not only because it generates numerous observations within a case and between cases, but also because these observations should be linked in particular ways to constitute and explain the causal inference. The qualitative research allowed me to make inferences about interaction effects between different explanatory variables and to gather more observations of the implications of the theories to be tested. In addition, I used a comparative study because it provides 'unexpected differences, or even surprising similarities, between cases, [as] comparison brings a sense of perspective to a familiar environmental and discourages parochial responses to political issues' (Hopkin, 2002, p. 249). I compared cases in three regions—Yunnan, Xiamen and Shenzhen—and examined the underlying causes of the power configuration in environmental coalitions and the various state responses to explain the causal relations between protests and policy change.

I conducted extensive fieldwork that was divided into two periods. From March to August 2013, I worked as a researcher for an environmental ENGO in Beijing. I had access to national level environmental campaigns to observe how environmental NGOs engaged in the daily work of policy advocacy in the authoritarian system and collected data on environmental protests in China for this research. In this initial stage, I got an overview of actual practice of environmental advocacy from a non-state organization and a broad understanding of environmental activism in China in terms of state-civil society relations, which helped to select specific cases in the

second period. Another important contribution of this initial period of fieldwork was the networks established with national and local environmental NGOs leaders, which has been crucial to my second stage case study.

The in-depth case study lasted from August 2014 to June 2015. I interviewed various stakeholders involved in these three regions. My interview involved local governmental officials, grassroots cadres, local PC and CPPCC delegates, scientists, NGOs members, university scholars, journalists and individual protesters. These interviews allowed me to gather valuable insights and obtain primary data. The interviewees' demographics are listed in the Appendix. Meanwhile, it was also necessary to collect data from government archives and newspaper articles, as they were the official version of the facts regarding policy-making, debates, and institutional change. This information helped me to understand the decisions made by both local and central governments, which supplemented the semi-structured interviews.

Gathering data through case studies helped to trace the evolution of environmental advocacy coalitions and the significant role of intermediaries. This data helped me to examine how state and non-state actors bargain through mutual negotiation and accommodation and to compare how different environmental coalitions and different degrees of flexibility of local officials emerged from different contexts. The theoretical arguments developed in this thesis are not intended to account only for the situation of environmental activism in China but also hope to draw attention to the interaction between formal and informal actors in ways that help improve our understanding of social contention and state responses in many other authoritarian systems.

Chapter 2 Political Ambivalence: State and Society

As noted in the first chapter, China's authoritarian regime has been featured as an adaptive party-state. Unlike its counterparts in the Soviet Union and East European countries who seemed to toll the death bell of communism, authoritarian China survived the Cultural Revolution under Mao and the regime crisis sparked by the 1989 Tiananmen incident. The remarkable economic miracle since the economic reform not only made China the world's second largest economy, but also generated unprecedented environmental degradation throughout China. A nation's economic development will necessarily cause environmental stress—and China is no exception. The difference is that the pollution in China is more severe because China does not have the vast arable land, like Canada and the United States. Meanwhile, the large population has increased the tremendous environmental burden. China is the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases, having overtaken the United States in 2007, and was responsible for 27% of global emissions in 2014 (Albert & Xu, 2016). It has made China's international standing very awkward as the country hopes to take the leading role in handling global environmental governance. Environmental degradation exhausts public patience with the pace of reform. The party-state faces increasing scrutiny and public discontent, which to some extent has endangered domestic stability. Citizens are questioning the government's performance and challenging state authority through growing environmental contention.

There is a paradox in China's environmental governance: Chinese central leaders, on the one hand, show a great awareness of environmental problems and have become very progressive in initiating the environmental reform by establishing a formal environmental administration and constructing a comprehensive set of environmental laws. On the other hand, however, the central state continues to largely posit on the goal of attaining higher living standards underpinned by improved economic performance, thus in practice officials do not implement many environmental policies. Many scholars in Chinese environmental politics have studied to what degree the Chinese authorities' attempt to protect the environment have been translated into environmental governance outcome (Rooij & Lo, 2010; Tilt, 2007).

The party-state itself is ambivalent about how to balance the trade-off between environmental protection and economic growth. Moreover, this chapter argues that

the bureaucratic hierarchy also shows its political ambivalence--to what extent the authoritarian party-state tolerates the pluralist interests, as the bureaucracy itself is not coherent. The CCP has brought in innovative measures to achieve environmental 'good governance', such as letters and visits, environmental litigation, information transparency, environmental NGOs and public hearings. While the authoritarian state also claims to achieve harmonious civilization, it means to maintain stability and prevent protests. Local governments in China are responsible for dealing with many instances of resistance in China; in many cases, their mode of response is repression.

Therefore, this is the crux of the authoritarian dilemma over flexibility: given that the delegation of power inevitably creates the agency problem, characterized by information asymmetries between principal and agents, the interests of local officials do not always align with the central government; sometimes local states take various measures to shut down activism before protests escalate to large social unrest, which contradict to the central will of openness and transparency. This chapter explores the implications of this dilemma from two points: first from the bureaucracy, focusing on the commanding heights of leadership and the officials in implementing policy goals, and second from the environmental activists, who utilize various mechanisms to make their environmental claims.

The view from the ambivalent state, where the chapter opens, explores the paradox between the repressive regime and a progressive environmental state, and outlines the conflicting preferences sent from the bureaucracy. It looks at local officials who face multiple incentives such as economic development, social stability or environmental protection. In fact, the political ambivalence is visible from the central leadership bureaucratically down to the township level, and in many parts of the state, local officials do not have the resources or political will to keep up with the environmental issues. The section then turns to look at how environmental activists claim for their environmental interests under the situation of both pluralism and control. The final section discusses consultative mechanisms that protesters can utilize and are shaped by political ambivalence, particularly on conflicting pressures to address pollution, maintain stability and maintain economic development.

2.1 Political Ambivalence

The Chinese state is not a single-minded organism. Migdal (2001, p. 22) argues that states are both ‘the powerful image of a clearly bounded, unified organization’ and ‘a heap of loosely connected parts’. Scholars have used the term of ‘ambivalence’ to describe the dual nature of the Chinese state (Levy, 2007, p. 47; Shue, 2004, p. 41; Stern, 2013, p. 4; Yang, 2008, p. 131). Environmental activism offers a window onto what I call political ambivalence: the simultaneous existence of opposing preferences from multi-layered bureaucracy sums up the official attitude towards the institutions which provide resources for environmental contention. As Stern (2013, p. 99) notes, states often

behave as if they are ambivalent. Up and down the chain of command, far-flung collections of individuals, factions, and bureaucracies routinely send mixed signals about any number of issues, from policy priorities to the best way to win a claim.

The FA is a well-known model to describe China’s policy-making process. It claims that China’s bureaucratic structure is a complex one with a web of authorities and responsibilities, and leaves much room for political interference as conflicts and divergent views exist. Under this model, policy is a result of consensus building and compromise among a welter of conflicting state agencies (Lieberthal & Lampton, 1992). This thesis goes beyond the fact that the Chinese state is fragmented, and draws on a more dynamic view of state–society interactions. The party-state sends mixed voices on the attitudes towards environmental activism, and only parts of the societal contention are accommodated. The combination of monitoring problems in central authority and the incentive structure in local officials means that local states can respond to environmental activism with accommodation, concealment or repression. That is to say, on the one hand, incorporation and openness encouraged by the party-state legitimize and burnish the rule of the CCP; on the other hand, the pluralism in environmental decision-making will endanger the authoritarian regime stability.

2.1.1 Principal–Agent problems

The tension of policy process in authoritarian systems can be seen as a principal–agent problem. The relationship between policy-makers in the centre and policy

implementers at the local levels is asymmetrical. It can be understood as one of a 'principal' and its 'agent'. For example, the central government (principal) wants the local governments (agents) to implement the environmental regulation policies. In exchange, the agents receive gratification from the principal. However, although principals and agents depend on each other, they may have different agendas. The agents might be quite unwilling to do the principal's bidding and the agent will receive punishments if it deviates from the principal's policy (Göbel, 2010).

How will the principal know? In an authoritarian regime, due to the lack of auditing infrastructures, as well as distances of time and space, there will be information asymmetry that can be quite beneficial to the agents. In China, the central government and even the provincial governments often find themselves in the dark when they want to assess how well their orders have been implemented. In order to pursue their own interests, local officials tend to block the flow of information upwards, which may be harmful to their political performance. When incidents occur, for example the environmental protest, local officials report the situation to their superiors internally by themselves (*zijibaodao* 自己报道), so they may conceal or otherwise suppress the protests before it extends to a larger scale. Sometimes the central government will send investigation teams to monitor local officials who fail to do its bidding and punish unresponsive local officials, but in most cases the resource for top-down monitoring is quite limited from the central government.

Therefore, the principal-agent theory can be applied in interpreting Chinese bureaucratic relationships, particularly between the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the environmental politics. When multiple bureaucracies or levels of government take part in policy-making, they express mixed signals (Stern & O'Brien, 2012). Different officials from multiple agencies introduce various interests, agendas and voices. The bureaucratic hierarchy decreases the likelihood of a single, clear message as policies make their way from higher to lower levels with opportunities for distortion (both deliberate and inadvertent) along each step of the way (Wedeman, 2001). Policy distortion can be seen as policy outcomes produced at the local levels that are not congruent with the commendable policy goals set by the central government. Policy directives sent by the centre are sometimes not accompanied by detailed implementation plans but rather with encouragement to 'taking actions

suitable for local circumstances' (Mei, 2009), especially for those ambiguous, less-evaluated and less-monitored mandates.

Chinese administrative units are generally interconnected both vertically (*tiao*) and horizontally (*kuai*) as the 'matrix muddle', and this *tiao/kuai* administrative structure describes the internal division of power (Lieberthal, 1995). The *tiao* relationship refers to the vertical (functional) lines of authority from ministries of the central government down to various provincial and local agencies. The *kuai* relationship refers to the horizontal (geographical) level of authority exercised by territorial government on agencies of various functions within their areas of jurisdiction. Each governmental unit within the administrative system has to report both to an upper level department of the same function and the government of a geographical area.

These vertical–horizontal government apparatuses belong to different information channels and power distributions, although in many cases their responsibilities overlap in policy areas. For example, the provincial EPB (Environmental Protection Bureau), on the one hand, reports to its upper level functional department, the MEP, and supervises the work of EPBs at the municipal and county level. On the other hand, the provincial EPB is organized as one part of the provincial bureaus and needs to be under the jurisdiction of the provincial government and the party branch of the province where it is located. The provincial party organizations and government have more power over personnel, financial and evaluation issues, and the EPBs need to collaborate with other agencies at the provincial level to achieve the strategic goals set out by the provincial government.

2.1.2 Incentives of local officials

In multi-layered bureaucracies, officials in different positions in the hierarchy often have different interests and are subject to different incentives and constraints. The local state has been a crucial agent in flexibly adapting central intention and social forces as it acts as the bond between state and society. Local governments are distinct entities apart from central government, interest groups or social pressure, with their own interests and resources when making and implementing decisions. Rational choice theory is useful in explaining the behaviour of local officials in the reform era when traditional Marxist ideology had nearly collapsed and financial benefits were put in command (Zhong, 2003). The fundamental assumption in rational choice

approach is that human behaviour can be best understood as maximizing or optimizing material self-interests when confronting incentives and constraints. It is assumed that Chinese local officials are self-interested and their main interest is to keep their positions and further their political careers and status associated with their positions.

The key goal for local officials is to seek and maximize their own political power. In democracies, obtaining votes is the major incentive for those officials who hope to be elected by local voters. In China, however, promotion becomes an effective political incentive to motivate local officials, given the reality that China's local government officials are competitively selected and appointed by the Party Committee. Upper level authorities use the top-down Cadres Performance Evaluation System (CPES) to ensure implementation compliance from local leaders. The incentives of promotion and bonuses are often embedded in the CPES. The Organization Department of the CCP Central Committee determines the general regulations of the CPES, which specifies sets of targets for local cadres to reach. Due to the fact that the assessments of achievements (*zhengji* 政绩) by local cadres are undertaken by superior levels of authority, the former tend to respond to the demands from the latter rather than local societies. Meanwhile, local officials tend to implement policies that have measurable (hard) targets, rather than unquantifiable (soft) ones.

The achievement standard consists of a comprehensive set of indicators set by the CCP. Scholars argue that economic growth has become the most consistent and significant measure of political achievement (Mei, 2009, p. 74). Since the reform period, the economic growth has been featured as the 'absolute principle' of officials at various levels. Meanwhile, local economic growth will increase local revenues, which provide conditions for further development in the context of fiscal decentralization. In China, local officials are perceived to focus on the creation of favourable conditions for economic reform, including 'planning, bureaucratic coordination, arrangements of finance, procurement of inputs, development of infrastructure etc.' (Blecher 1991, p. 267). Oi (1992, 1995) also argues the ways in which local authority functions as a 'local corporatist state' when local states treat enterprises within their administrative range as components of a larger corporate whole. Local officials have the political interest to respond to their political lobbies. In China and elsewhere, some interest groups have strong links to decision-making

bodies because they are historically well-connected to state authorities or because they control strategically important resources, thus gaining patrons within the government.

Moreover, officials need to face all kinds of social contention opposing their existing policies. Because local officials are assigned the responsibility of maintaining stability, they have a strong incentive to prevent popular resistance. Social stability is very important and the number and scale of ‘mass incidents’ and ‘petition’ cases are treated as inflexible targets that must be met. Sometimes, officials’ failure in dealing with social stability may trigger ‘veto’ over all other achievements they used to make¹. To avoid such strict punishment, local officials sometimes will conceal or repress social contention before the information reaches their superiors. The capacity weakness of state bureaucracy as mentioned, such as the monitoring problem of principals, provides chances for local agents to de-escalate the social opposition.

The incentive of morality is receiving increasing attention from local officials. From a cognitive perspective, a key dimension of the decision-making process is whether or not, and in what ways, agents come to understand their aims, potentially changing their beliefs and attitudes in the process. Therefore, the moral incentives in China’s context—e.g. sustainable development and ecological civilization—of good governance in terms of rule of law, accountability and transparency are significant for achieving a desirable policy outcome in the long term. Edin (2003) and Kennedy (2007) have shown that soft targets can turn into hard ones, when the pressure of achieving these targets comes from the central government. Recently, apart from economic growth and social stability, the target of environmental protection has increasingly weighed more heavily in CPES, and the evaluation of environmental policy implementation has been greatly refined.

2.1.3 The paradox of tolerance

How to monitor local officials’ misconduct has become a problem for Chinese political rulers (Bernstein & Lü, 2003; Cai, 2000; Naughton & Yang, 2004; Wedeman,

¹ With SARS, for example, a public health crisis in China in 2003, the mayor of Beijing, Meng Xuenong, resigned owing to his failure to deal with incidents. In the early stage of the crisis, he concealed the extent of SARS to the central government. The health minister and the state council were poorly informed and did not focus on the SARS threat, thus leading to a national public health crisis.

2001). The central government has set up institutions to allow ordinary citizens to report officials' misbehaviours through 'letters and visits' (*xinfang* 信访), the 'reporting' (*jubao* 举报) system (O'Brien & Li, 2006), and the People's Congress (PC) at each levels. Recently, the central government also introduced consultative measures, such as transparency reform and public participation. These innovative institutions help generate information for the regime (Lorentzen, 2014; Truex, 2014), and solve monitoring problems. In addition, as stated above, these measures can also be seen as the feature of 'consultative authoritarianism', where the authoritarian regime gradually encourages pluralism.

However, institutions of openness and transparency may in turn facilitate social activism and popular resistance. Activists seek to change official behaviour in their localities and participate in official institutions through 'boundary-spanning' forms in which contention takes place in the grey area between officially permitted and transgressive acts (O'Brien, 2003). Contentious politics can operate partly within official and prescribed politics when concerned officials champion popular demands. The boundary-spanning contention is highlighted when the activism is tolerated by some officials while not tolerated by others because the state is unpacked into institutionally situated officials with their own preferences and interests (O'Brien, 2002). Meanwhile, innovative participatory channels may temporarily increase stability, but this will gradually raise expectation of social actors who may request for further responsiveness (Truex, 2017). If local governments do not respond to their demands, more serious social grievance will emerge. Therefore, institutions intended to channel citizen input into enhancing authoritarian rule may instead encourage 'troublemaking' to social stability and authoritarian rules (Chen, 2008, 2012; Distelhorst, 2015).

Incentives of local officials often compete with each other. Local officials have to choose the way that is the least harmful to their interests. In most cases, they have a strong incentive to prevent social contention. Some local officials have tried to shut down more institutionalized channels of participation and appeal to pre-empt popular contention and prevent 'petition chiefs' (O'Brien & Li, 2006, p. 37). For example, the collective petitions are the basic mode of collective resistance, but the number of each group of petitioners should not exceed five. The state also does not permit civil groups to participate in social contention, in part by regulating civic organizations into

social services delivery (Hildebrandt, 2013; Teets, 2014). Environmental NGOs also need to perform ‘self-censorship’ before channelling complaints, and the state will punish civic organizations that mobilize collective actions.

Authoritarian states tend to be highly reliant on repression, while democratic states more often are inclined to a mix of concession and repression (Goldstone & Tilly, 2011). Local officials in China are responsible for handling instances of resistance. Repression has been used to deal with actions concerning lawful claims. The ‘rightful resistance’ may be repressed when protesters fail to receive support from the central government (O’ Brien & Li, 2006). Meanwhile, it is difficult for local officials to make concessions because it is costly. Addressing social grievances requires local governments to change their policies, which may violate their interests. Some large protests involving serious casualties or gaining the attention of the media are more likely to trigger intervention from the central government, but many small scale protests are exclusively handled by local officials (Cai, 2008a). Grassroots cadres may use coercive methods, such as fines, arrests and detention, to achieve the harshest forms of control. Therefore, China faces a paradox in tolerating social interests: on the one hand, the party-state encourages institutions to channel social grievances to enhance its legitimacy; on the other hand, the party-state strictly controls social activism who may threaten its authoritarian rules. Local officials enjoy the autonomy to repress to social contention, especially when the activism threatens local officials’ performance in maintaining social stability and local developmental targets.

2.2 Inside the Bureaucracy

The authoritarian ambivalence over environmental issue plays out in policy battles among bureaucracies, interests groups, and social power. Among layers and sectors of state agencies, bureaucratic actors show their competing interests and preferences in environmental issues. China began to establish its ‘environmental state’, including drafting environmental laws, regulations, and policies, as well as establishing governing institutions since the early 1970s (Mol & Carter, 2006). The state apparatus in authoritarian China remains of dominant importance in environmental governance and policy making. Yet the environmental state in China is clearly undergoing a transitional process that elsewhere is labeled political modernization, traditional

hierarchical lines and conventional divisions of power are also transformed (Mol & Carter, 2006). In 1984, environmental protection was defined as a fundamentally national policy. Subsequently, a national regulatory framework was formulated, comprising a series of environmental laws, executive regulations, standards and measures.

Environmental policy making and implementation are operated under China's bureaucratic governance system. There is a clear trend of greater decentralization and flexibility instead of the traditional command-and-control and hierarchical environmental governance. However, ambiguous legislation, a lack of authority and resources of central environmental department, and a lack of public participation in environmental policy making process have also been partly blamed on deficiencies in the environmental state. In addition, local pro-development officials have been blamed for obstructing effective enforcement of environmental regulation and governance, which contributes to the poor capability of local EPBs.

2.2.1 The absolute authority of the Communist Party in environmental protection

Since the 1980s, the party-state has gradually developed a comprehensive framework on environmental policy making (see Table 2.1). At the national level, the decision makers of environmental discourse and relative policies include the Central Committee of the CCP, the People's Congress and several central departments. The Party and the central Politburo raise abstract concepts and strategies of environmental protection, and the specific policies are formulated by the State Council and its attached departments under the supervision of National People's Congress. During the evolution process of national rhetoric on environmental issues, the Communist Party has always shown its absolute and centralized authority in policy making and implementation.

Communist Party/ Central Politburo/ National Party Congress  Political Discourse of Environmental Protection	National People’s Congress  Environmental Laws	State Council and its Organs  Environmental Policy Tool
‘Sustainable Development’ (Jiang Zemin, 1997); ‘Scientific Outlook on Development’ (Hu Jintao, 2003); ‘Ecological Civilization’ (Xi Jinping, 2015)	Made 24 laws on environmental protection: Laws on Environmental Protection; Laws on Environmental Impact Assessment; Forestry Laws; Law on Conserving Energy; Agriculture Law; Law on Water and Soil Conservation; Water Law; Fisheries Law, etc...	Specified the political discourse and laws on environmental protection into regulations and rules in operation: Environmental Responsibility System; Energy Emission Reduction Project; Indicators of Environment and Resources in the Cadres Performance Evaluation System...etc.

Table 2.1 Environmental policy framework in the national level

The evolutionary process of rhetoric in shaping China’s environmental protection framework can be viewed through changes in three national concepts: Sustainable Development, Scientific Outlook on Development, and Ecological Civilization, which show the distinctive features of leadership power succession in transition and gradual reforms of industrial development and environmental governance. The report of the 15th National Congress of CCP in 1997 established the national strategy of ‘Sustainable Development’, which was the first time when China had put forward political discourse on environmental protection. It proposes correctly handling the economic development with the population, resources and the environment, and achieving harmonious relationships between development and environmental protection. The 16th National Congress of CCP in 2002 amended the Party Constitution and added the content of ‘Sustainable Development’ to it. The control and adjustment of the industrial sector is also a clearly part of the sustainable process of economic development in China.

According to the 17th Party Congress in 2007, the leadership raised the Scientific Outlook on Development. This notion ‘takes development as its essence, puts people first at its core, sets comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development as its basic requirement, and takes overall consideration as its fundamental approach’ (CCP, 2007). Premier Wen Jiabao persisted with Jiang Zemin’s ecological statement, and stated that development was not measured merely by the growth of GDP, and other social and ecological targets should also be involved. These new concepts indicated a shift away from the traditional development paradigm towards a more balanced approach to economic and social development.

The term Ecological Civilization (EC) first appeared in the official propaganda in 2007 and became the core ecological ideology of the CCP after Xi Jinping took on the power. According to the official document, EC refers to ‘an ideal civilization characterized by virtuous interactions between human and nature, one that follows harmonious social development, is developed from mankind’s spiritual and technological innovations, and which is accordance with the inherent rules governing the functioning of both nature and society’ (State Council, 2015). The EC emphasizes not only the economic efficiency of profit maximization, but also the ecological efficiency of the combination of natural harmony and the social efficiency. The Communist Party attempted to deal with the challenge of environmental degradation and crisis of legitimacy by systematically putting EC into political practice and launching a wide-ranging set of ecological reforms, such as gradually shutting down coal-fired plants, developing renewable energy technology in China and perfecting its environmental legislation. The Party also attempts to use EC as a pilot experiment to transform the economic development template in ways that can create opportunities for local development. These practices can be illustrated by how Xi Jinping interprets ecological civilization as ‘green mountains and waters are gold and silver mountains’ (绿水青山就是金山银山) (Xi, 2017).

These discourses have released strong political signals. Although the concern with economic growth is still the priority in formulating national targets, these macro-political languages to some extent reflect the Party’s greening ideology in governing the state. On the one hand, environmental problems are becoming an obvious challenge to the CCP’s capability to keep itself in power. The global pressure and civic activism simultaneously challenge the legitimacy of the authoritarian regime and

bring extensive social change to China. On the other hand, the significance of environmental issues in national agenda setting has been on the rise. The promotion of ecological civilization signals the ‘peak’ of the Party’s rhetoric on environmental problems. Two reports in the 17th and 18th Party Congress show that the CCP sees environmental problems not just simply as a dilemma between the economy and environment, but as a significant field for enhancing its governing capacity. During the practical process, the authoritarian system provides the framework in which a variety of actors operate during the negotiation process under levels of bureaucratic structures, thus the decision-making process turns out to be complex.

2.2.2 Central government structure

Under the leadership of the Party’s central committee and the Politburo, the highest administrative agency in China is the State Council. The State Council and its subordinate departments formulate concrete environmental and industrial policies under coordination and cooperation. However, the formulation of specific environmental and industrial policies is scattered among different departments of the State Council. According to the current environmental administrative system, more than ten departments have the power to make environmental and energy policies. According to the current Environmental Protection Law (EPL) in China, MEP is the central governmental department that is responsible for national environmental protection issues and accountable to the State Council, but other departments, for example National Development and Reform Committee (NDRC), Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), National Energy Administration (NEA), Department of Agriculture, Department of National Land and Resources, also greatly affect environmental decisions. The interpretation of central environmental protection rhetoric, such as the Scientific Outlook on Development and Ecological Civilization, differs between MEP and NDRC. The language of ecological civilization within NDRC is, however, tied closely with the needs of the economic development.

Throughout the decades, the supporter of openness and transparency in environmental governance was MEP. The engagement of environmental NGOs and civic engagement will boost the agency’s profile and counterbalance the powerful, economic-oriented NDRC. The consultative institutional reforms would grant the MEP high-profile power to stand in the public’s environmental interests. Some

reformers in MEP continue to favor NGOs, concerned activists and journalists to give pressures to polluters.

2.2.2.1 Energy Sector

The NDRC is the principal player in the policy area and it is a macroeconomic management agency under the State Council. Generally speaking, NDRC exercises far-reaching control over the large investment and long-term planning for policy-making in energy issues. The history of China's energy sector since the reform era can be traced back to the 1980s when the central government established a strategic coordinating agency in the field of national energy. In 1988, China reconstructed the energy sector and merged the Ministries of Coal, Nuclear Industry and Water Resources Conservancy into the Ministry of Energy (MoE). In 1993, the State Economic and Trade Commission (SETC) was established, absorbing the Ministries of Coal and Electric Power in 1997, which were merged with the SDPC to form the NDRC in 2003.

The NDRC studies and formulates policies for economic and social development, maintains a balance of economic aggregates and guides the overall economic system restructuring. Indeed, the NDRC is often viewed as the "small State Council" as the department enjoys tremendous power and administrative range (Mertha, 2008, p. 43). The NDRC is able to assert its inherited influence in the energy sector, especially when the development of energy is marked by the Communist Party as a strategic sector. The director of the NDRC has a higher rank compared with other central departments in order to coordinate its committee members. The provincial Development and Reform Commissions also follow this pattern. For example, the next step on the career path of the director of the provincial Development and Reform Commission can often be a promotion to vice governor or provincial vice party secretary.

Under the umbrella of the NDRC, the National Energy Administration (NEA) is the main organ in charge of energy issues, dealing with more concrete fields in policy-making, regulation, and research and planning. The units that are under the coordination of the NDRC include water resources, communication and infrastructure agencies, and energy sectors with many other central bureaus. The NEA ranks at the vice-ministerial level and equipped with nine departments, each taking responsibilities

from various areas of the energy sector, such as coal, petroleum, renewable energy and international cooperation. In 2010, the State Council established the National Energy Commission (NEC) which was situated within the NEA, headed by Liu Tienan (State Council, 2010). This newly established commission is positioned under the roof of the NDRC, which might be seen as an obsolete organ, since it does not offer any institutional capacity that existing organizations cannot provide, be it daily administration or connectedness with top-level decision makers (Grünberg, 2016).

Managing national energy sector, the NDRC is able to control the formulation of policy measures for the energy development. The NDRC remains the central actor in policy making on policy plans, overriding most other institutions with its influence. Generally speaking, an energy project needs to obtain approval from the NDRC and then be approved by China's central department for environmental protection through the strict assessment of environmental impact. Development and Reform Commissions at the provincial level are the key units responsible for formulating local energy plans and implementing central industrial and energy policies. The high concentration of power in the NDRC means that its policy output has significant political weight throughout the system across bureaucratic clusters. However, in coordinating with other departments such as the MEP, the strong and concentrated mandates of NDRC may sometimes weaken their coordination in energy-related issues.

The deputy director of NDRC, Liu He, is also the leader of the Economic System and Ecological Civilization System Reform Special Group (*jingjitizhi he shengtaiwenming gaige zhuanxing xiaozu*, 经济体制和生态文明体制改革专项小组) within the top coordinated reform group set up by Xi Jinping in 2013². Therefore, the leader of NDRC is directly in charge of ecological civilization promotion on the highest level, whereas the MEP does not have this privilege. However, in fact, no document from the central Party Committee indicates that either NDRC or MEP is the leader in the project of ecological civilization. Therefore, MEP can still have the hope to act as the

² Liu He took this position in April, 2017. Before him, the previous director of NDRC, Xu Shaoshi, was the head of Economic System and Ecological Civilization System Reform Special Group. See NDRC website, available at http://www.ndrc.gov.cn/xwzx/xwfb/201704/t20170427_845845.html, accessed on 2 June, 2017.

leader in the ecological civilization as its functions and responsibilities are self-evidently related (Wang, 2017).

2.2.2.2 Ministry of Environmental Protection

Institutional Overview

At the national level, the bureaucratic body that takes responsibility for environmental protection is the MEP. Its main tasks include drafting legislation, dealing with large-scale environmental accidents, approval of environmental impact assessment, setting up the pollution standards and international cooperation in the field of environmental protection. Under the National People's Congress, the Environmental Protection and National Resource Conservation Committee (EPNRCC) was established to provide regulatory proposals to the NPC Standing Committee (Ma and Ortolano, 2000, p. 14).

The MEP is replicated at the provincial, municipal and county levels by EPBs, which are responsible for ensuring the implementation of central environmental policies (Jahiel, 1998). EPBs oversee environmental impact assessments (EIA) of industrial projects, monitor emissions from factories, assess and collect pollution fees, and take legal action against polluting firms when necessary (Economy, 2005, p. 103). As noted above, local EPBs are accountable to both the higher level of environmental agencies and the local government, so local EPBs have to coordinate with other bureaus when the priority of the locality is economic growth.

Evolution, weaknesses and its mission

The central environmental agency has long been considered as a weak body compared with economic and industrial departments. In 1974, the National Environmental Protection Office (NEPO) was established, accountable directly to the State Council with the purpose of developing procedures and guidelines on environmental protection that are implemented by local EPBs. In 1984, NEPO was expanded and renamed as the National Environmental Protection Bureau (NEPB) and required to act as the secretariat of the newly formed State Environmental Protection Commission (SEPC). The latter body comprised the heads of other related ministries and agencies with links to the environment and resource use, and served to develop environmental policies, but also to deal with inter-agency debate. In 1984, environmental protection was defined as a basic national strategy and key principles for environmental protection were proposed. Until 1988, the State Environmental Protection Agency

(SEPA) was set up with ministerial level status to establish the environmental governance system. The coherent national governing institution over environmental issues means that the SEPA took over administrative responsibilities from a loosed environmental protection board to be able to raise the issue into a significant national concern.

However, the establishment of SEPA did not solve one of the key problems of environmental governance: the low priority given to environmental protection ministries vis-à-vis their economic counterparts. During the ten years of the 11th and 12th five-year plans (2006-2015), plans for pollution reduction and energy efficiency were set up alongside economic growth targets. The progress of empowering and improving China's environmental authorities is ambivalent. The interdepartmental struggles continue to weaken environmental authority at the central level. According to the law of Environmental Impacts Assessment (2003), prospective large industrial project (such as the growing petrochemical projects in recent years) developers need a pre-judgment from the NDRC before presenting an EIA to the MEP for administrative approval, which might undermine the supervision power of MEP in dealing with heavily-polluting energy projects.

Between 2005 and 2007, SEPA launched three 'environmental storms'. There were high-profile crackdowns on large-scale construction projects that have violated EIA law. The environmental storms, superficially at least, represented an attempt by SEPA to alter how local officials pursue economic growth through taking a tougher stance regarding the enforcement of environmental regulation. The first one targeted the illegal procedures of those projects taken without EIA process. On 18 January 2005, SEPA announced to suspend 30 major projects with total investments about 118 RMB across 13 provinces and municipalities for failing to comply with the 2003 EIA Law. The second one refers to the strategic EIA, where the overall strategic EIA from regions is compulsory for local industrial projects. Then in 2007, a third environmental storm was launched when SEPA imposed the strictest administrative penalties on polluting companies and districts by imposing four industrial and regional bans. This meant that no new projects under the jurisdiction of local governments and companies targeted by the storm would be approved until rectifying measures were taken.

During the three storms, it was obvious that SEPA had received high-level support from other parts of central governments and the central Party Committee that enabled it to bargain on powerful economic interests. In dealing with the trade-off with the Three Gorges Corporation (TGC), the NDRC also jointly issued a notice with the SEPA paying attention to environmental protection during the construction of hydropower plants. This means a pivotal turn for central policies. It seems that the central leadership hoped to take this opportunity for halting industrial projects to send strong signals to local officials against unrestrained development and to alleviate the complaints of public environmental grievances.

However, this campaign-style approach lasted just three years, and temporarily halted several major projects although it largely raised SEPA's profile, and many projects continued without taking EIA after the "storm". Pan Yue³, the vice director of SEPA and the leader of the environmental storm, he said

the previous projects that were temporarily halted, would continue to proceed without any environmental promises and violate EIA. The safety shelter of local government for the enterprises caused the environmental agencies plenty of trouble. In 2007, the SEPA only had 250 civil servants and 6 billion dollars' annual budget, but when pollution appeared we have to take the largest responsibility (SEPA, 2007).

The SEPA was upgraded to the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) for a full ministry level in 2008. This move did give the green watchdog a cabinet status, enabling it to have its voice heard in major economic development decisions. MEP is able to attend executive meetings and plenary meetings of the State Council, and thus influence the routine decision making. Although the ministry had a higher status and was better equipped with technology and expertise, it was still largely failing to keep pace with environmental degradation. The MEP and the local EPBs need to coordinate with other ministries, powerful state-owned enterprises, and local governments. Moreover, the links between the vested interests of polluters and

³ Pan Yue was the person who supported environmental information disclosure, public participation and the development of ENGOs. The professional experience working in the media from 1982 to 1993 largely influenced his attitude towards environmental governance. He attempted to alter SEPA from taking a back seat in the central bureaucracies to an agency that was well-known and making loud voices. The 'environmental storm' initiated by Pan Yue demonstrated that SEPA was not a 'rubber stamp'.

governments often result in glaring gaps between policy and actual enforcement, which give rise to pressures for the MEP and local EPBs. The MEP has disappointed the public by refusing to disclose information of a number of cases although it manifests itself as the pioneer in information disclosure. For example, from 2005 to 2013, the ministry had rejected lawyers' and environmentalists' requests many times to publish the findings of a nationwide soil pollution survey, for the reason that this was a 'state secret'.

Since Xi Jinping pushed forwards his ecological civilization concept, the MEP shouldered more expectations and responsibilities than other ministers. According to the revised Law of Environmental Protection (LEP) published in 2015, the MEP has the responsibility to 'push forward the process of information transparency, publish all information in environmental review of industrial projects and encourage public participation (LEP, 2015)'. The MEP finally published the soil pollution survey report before the LEP came into effect.

Meanwhile, to solve the monitor problem, since 2016, the State Council has sent central environmental protection supervisory commissions (*zhongyang huanjingbaohu duchaxiaozu*, 中央环境保护督察组) to individual provinces since provincial EPBs are less powerful to supervise provincial DRCs. Officials in ministerial levels directly lead these commissions. In localities, they are recognized as the environmental protection 'imperial envoys' (环保钦差) by dealing with environmental complaints and punishing polluting companies and irresponsible cadres. The supervisory targets not only contain local government, but also local Party Committees. Cadres' evaluation and promotion system will also take them into account. However, we can still not be able to foresee the practical effectiveness of the internal supervisory mechanism although the administrative level of supervisory commissions this time is much higher than those in the 'environmental storms' lead by SEPA in 2007. The regime's battle over pollution encounters strong resistance from local economic bureaucracies and companies. Pursuing GDP is still the priority for officials who need 'achievement' in order to stay in their positions of power and get promoted. Local cadres often choose to temporarily shut down polluting factories and restart the projects after supervisory commissions left their regions. The Party's internal supervisory structure has impeded the institutionalization of an independent supervisory agency owing to the lack of autonomy, despite the fact that the central

environmental protection supervisory commissions attempt to promote checks and balances within the system.

2.2.3 Local government structure

Local government, in terms of environmental governance and policy making and implementation, deserves more attention for three reasons. First, decentralization and economic reform have brought about significant changes to local government in the process of rapid urbanization, which may provide potential political responses to China's political development. Local governments have been given not only the authority necessary to reform local industries, but also the power to control financial resources at the local level. As a result, local government has obtained bargaining power in handling with the environmental rules and regulations from central government when pursuing its local developmental goals. Second, local EPBs are heavily dependent on both higher level environmental authorities and on local governments. Since the pressures on local government to increase economic growth are enormous in general, central environmental authorities have difficulties in imposing environmental regulations to local environmental bureaus. Third, the decentralization of China's governing bureaucracy and the degradation of local environmental conditions also show that the environmental risks are increasingly articulated by the local EPB. They face difficulty in both the improvement of agency capability and the power in tackling local pollution.

China's system of local administration is highly complex, comprised of provinces (including autonomous regions, centrally administered municipalities and administrative regions), prefectures (including autonomous prefectures and prefecture-level cities), counties (including autonomous counties and county-level cities), and townships/towns. These are the executive bodies of the organs of the state powers as well as local organs of state administration at the corresponding levels.

The local government is not a monolithic one, but composed of diverse actors and interests. Generally speaking, local governmental authorities, taking municipal government as example, are composed of four leadership teams (the so-called *sitaobanzi* 四套班子): municipal Party Committee, municipal government, municipal People's Congress (PC), and Municipal Chinese People's Consultative Conference (CPPCC). Of these authorities, the Party Committee is no doubt the most influential

decision-making body even though the PC is constitutionally the power centre and the government is constitutionally the executive body. Consequently, the municipal Party secretary, instead of the mayor, enjoys the largest decision-making power at the municipal level (See figure 2.1).

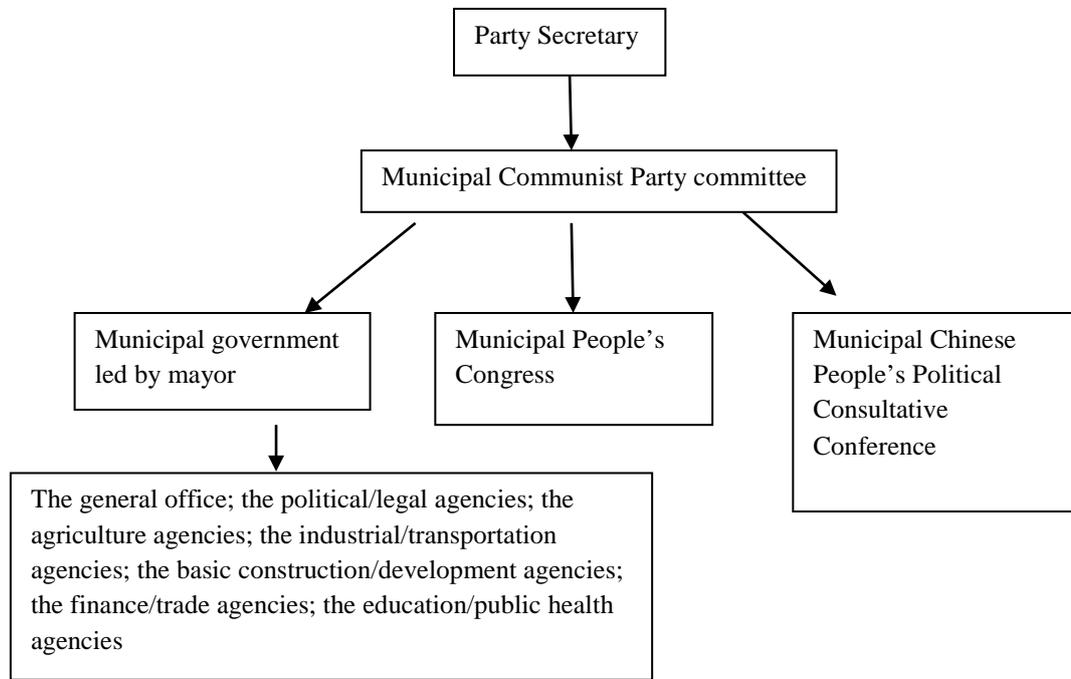


Figure 2.1 China's municipal bureaucratic structure

2.2.3.1 The Party Committee

The Communist Party Committee is the power centre of municipal governance in China. The Party is a vast organization that theoretically operates in parallel to government, but in reality is intimately intertwined with government. The committee is officially elected by the municipal Party Congress held every five years. All major municipal government decisions are discussed and made by this committee first and then are formally adopted by the government and relevant agencies. The authoritarian role of the local Party Secretary influences the local environmental governance and decision-making largely in the following three aspects:

Policy agenda setting

It is necessary to clarify the meaning of the agenda before we can understand policy agenda setting. An agenda is a collection of problems, understanding of causes, symbols, solutions and other elements or public problems that come to the attention of the governmental officials (Birkland, 1997, p. 8). Agenda exists at all levels of

government. Each organ of a bureaucracy has a collection of issues that are available for discussion and disposition. The policy agenda is the set of issues active and serious consideration by decision makers by anytime. The range of issue sharing in governments is virtually comprehensive, but the resources available to governments to solve these issues are constrained. In local China, the Party Committee is the key decision makers to choose certain policy issues.

The agenda setting power of the local Party secretary has been institutionalized through the Party Committee conference. Almost all the major decisions are made during this conference. The Party secretary has the power to hold and host the conference, as well as to decide the content and forms of the topics. In theory, group leadership should be implemented in the conference and each member of the Committee should have a ticket to make the choice (Zhong, 2003). However, in practice, the Party secretary has the “veto” power and the agenda setting always reflects the Party secretary’s personal will. Among the Party Committee conferences, many of the agendas include economic investments, demolition and construction and personnel arrangement with little focus on environmental protection. The issues of social stability are often ranked as the priority in the conference when emergency situation takes place. Some Party secretaries think that it is not necessary to arrange a specific Party Committee conference on environmental issues, and local governments can instead manage it.

Target setting

The local Party secretary needs to formulate the economic and social development strategy, combining central requirements and local conditions. Generally speaking, the models and targets set by the Party secretary will place the economic development as a priority, for the reason that GDP accounts for a large amount of the cadres’ evaluation system for promotion. While minimum requirements for environmental protection are set at the national level, local governments are responsible for managing environmental policy in their jurisdictions and often disregard national requirements when they interfere with other local objectives (Economy, 2011). Most local Chinese Party secretaries do not receive systematically education in the environmental protection, and their working backgrounds are more likely to engage with developmental issues rather than environmental areas. In order to achieve the ‘Great Leap Forward’ of industrial development, some local leaders will bring in

investments in heavy industries, e.g. the petroleum industry, which will inevitably cause environmental degradation. In order to keep the loyalty to the Party secretary, some officials in EPBs have to make a concession to their economic counterparts to support the local targets.

Personnel arrangement

The selection and appointment power of local EPBs cadres reside in the Party secretary, which shows the principle of the 'Party managing cadres' (*dangguanganbu* 党管干部). Therefore, the Party committee is more likely to promote those people who are more willing to support their strategy and policy targets. The promotion potential of the cadres of EPBs is relatively limited compared with people in the developmental agencies. The director of the EPBs is considered as in a 'risk' position because of the responsibility it undertakes, or the place for those "semi-retired" cadres who have no more potential to be promoted.

2.2.3.2 The local government

Local governments are made up of an extensive array of bureaux. The complex local government bureaucracy is often divided into several areas based on functions. The local Development and Reform Commission (DRC) is in charge of economic planning and regulation in localities. As the dominant agency in the local developmental state, the DRC obtains its benefits from the approval, development and investment in industrial projects, and the planning and construction of the infrastructure. When the target setting of local Party Committees is oriented to economic targets, the DRC becomes the most powerful agency and actively interacts with large and hegemonic industrial enterprises.

The Economy and Information Technology Bureau (EITC) is the local agency that manages the industry planning, policies and standards locally, and reports to the MIIT (Ministry of Industry and Information Technology). The environmental task of EITC is often been neglected by scholars although it takes a significant role in drafting local environmental protection plans, supervising recycling companies and cleaning energy for sustainable development. In some places, there is overlap in terms of the function between DRC and EITC in implementation of environmental policies and regulation for efficiency.

As the environmental administrative agency, the local EPB is often assumed to have the highest responsibility and authority for environmental governance. However, it is not easy to gain attention from local decision makers, and obtain enough financial resources and administrative power. These situations are obvious in the less developed areas like west regions. In Shenzhen, which is a quite advanced city in south China, since the ‘big bureaucracy reform’ (*dabuzhigaige* 大部制改革), the previous EPB has been transferred to the agency of Human Resettlement and Environment Commission, which has expanded to take more administrative function and obtain more resources than EPB.

2.2.3.3 The local PC/CPPCC

The local People’s Congress (LPC) and local Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) are two important local supervisory and consultative agencies in China, but they are not parts of the formal Communist Party power. In representative democracies, legislative institutions are intended to make public policy respond to the interests of their constituencies. In authoritarian China, the NPC is officially the legislative body, but the conventional wisdom regarding Chinese PCs is that these legislatures are rubber-stamping institutions manipulated by the party-state to endorse and legitimize the policies of government. Some scholars observe the increased supervision power of LPC, and think there is emerging a competition power relation between LPC and the local state (Cho, 2002). Studies on PC highlight that LPC’s supervision authority is greater than that of the NPC (Cho, 2009; Xia, 2008). A contradictory opinion holds that the increased power of LPC is an instrumental tool for central government to supervise the policy implementation of local officials rather than the power expansion of the LPCs (He, 2007).

Unlike the LPCs that may have supervisory powers to local formal politics, the local CPPCC is an advisory body with less leverage in decision-making process. It consists of delegates from China’s eight powerless official political parties, as well as public figures who are not members of the CCP. In fact, the assembly is a place where dissent is often tolerated and topics are deliberated, and might even serve as an outlet for the complaints outside the Party. The systems of CPPCC also show features of authoritarian deliberation in local states, where they are supposed to be partners with the CCP. The gradual institutionalization and routinization in the system of consultation means the CCP at various levels would like to consult with the CPPCC

on different issues. However, as an advisory body, the local CPPCC has no direct influence over the Party or government. Neither the Party nor governmental agencies have the obligation to follow the CPPCC's recommendations.

Among LPC/CPPCC delegates, members from the environmental civil society are very scarce. The majority of the delegates are from officials of state agencies, the managers of enterprises, and then public figures. For most delegates, the role of delegation is seen as political capital and personal honour rather than a bridge for local representation, civic participation and supervision. Officials who are delegates of the LPC at the same time are not possible to supervise their own power in China. Compared with powerful economic bureaucracy and business groups, the delegation power from civic environmentalism is very limited. These civic organizations have difficulties engaging in the formal organizational structures of delegation and consultation because it is difficult for ENGOs leaders to become members of local PC/CPPCC and have a voice in the agenda discussion. One of the exceptions was the founder of China's first grassroots environmental NGO 'Friend of Nature', Liang Congjie, who was also the delegates in the national CPPCC. Liang has been in the committee of Population Resources and Environment under the CPPCC since 1989, and his distinguished family background facilitated his activities of environmental protection.

Overall, the political system and political structure display the formal allocation of decision-making authority. As we can see from the above, in China's local political system, decisions are formalized in realms participated in by Party Committee members and relevant governmental officials. The Party secretary and the Party Committees are the top decision-making bodies. In recent decades, the Party has become much more actively engaged in governing, particularly in economic matters, which are supposed to be the functions of local government departments. This phenomenon means that the Party has penetrated into concrete administrative tasks in order to get its policy implemented more efficiently.

2.2.4 Business bureaucracies and local states

The administrative rank of each bureaucracy reflects its status and power. A provincial government has the same administrative rank (*buji* 部级) with the ministry. Following this rank, a bureau (*tingji* 厅级) is equivalent to the rank of a department in

the provincial government. These ranks are pivotal to governmental units because the same rank cannot issue binding orders to each other. Literally, this means that no ministry (such as MEP) can issue a binding order to the provincial government. It can only send orders to the EPB subordinated to the provincial government.

In China, some powerful state-owned enterprises (SOEs) also have an administrative rank. A national SOE, especially those SOEs affiliated to a central industrial department (*yangqi* 央企), will generally outrank a provincial industrial bureau. Most leaders of the *yangqi* are in the rank of bureau (*tingji*), but still there are 53 *yangqi* ranked in the level of deputy ministry (*fubuji* 副部级) under the management of SASAC (State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission), which is a ministry level of state department responsible for managing state-owned assets since the national administrative reform of 2003. In the 18th Party Congress of 2012, five directors of SOEs were nominated as members of the Central Party Committee, including the then Party secretary of Petro China Company, Jiang Minjie. With the improvement of the cadres' management system, the rotation between government and enterprises become a direction for officials' career path. More and more directors of SOEs achieve their career progress from *yangqi* to the 'number one' person in the locality or higher-level officials through years of SOEs background. Examples among them are Li Xiaopeng (from Huaneng Group to Party Secretary of Shanxi province, and then the director of the Ministry of Communication), and Su Shulin (formal manager of Sinopec to the Governor of Fujian province).

Informally, national SOEs are often ranked higher in the Chinese administrative hierarchy than the EPBs which are supposed to regulate these business actors. Officials have pressures to protect local industrial firms. Heads of these firms are often powerful local political actors and have many channels of influence over the local state. Executives of both SOEs and large private firms are often been appointed as delegates of local and national Chinese legislative bodies, providing them formal powers as well as many opportunities for interaction with governmental officials (Chen & Dickson, 2008). This means local governments have less bargaining power towards the business interests of large industrial firms, with the cost of environmental pollution in the region.

2.3 Environmental Activism

Although the Chinese party-state remains the dominant force and initiates institutional reforms in environmental governance, there is a growing civil society that further expresses their environmental interests and tries to participate in the formal policy-making process. Public interests in environmental issues fluctuate and people become impatient as pollution continues to worsen. Therefore, it is necessary to consider how the exercise of power further compromises the rationality of the policy process. The environmental field arguably involves the most visible activist community, a large number of grassroots NGOs and the longest history of public policy advocacy across issue areas in China (Hilderbrandt, 2011).

However, civic environmental groups are seen as non-profitable, difficult to win and sometimes, politically sensitive. Meanwhile, the state remains intolerant of organizations that attempt to mobilize collective contention which may threaten the single-party state. Returning to the theme of political ambivalence, this section explores the question on how environmental activists claim their interests in an authoritarian state that restricts the independence of civil society.

The environmental civil society benefits from the political ambivalence over pluralism. The pluralism is sometimes able to be tolerated by the authoritarian regime when social actors have successfully entered the political process precisely by adopting the strategies to work within the hierarchical bureaucracies. The authoritarian system provides space for environmental engagement in three aspects. First, it is believed that the limited capacity of the Chinese state to address social and environmental services provides opportunities for Chinese NGOs (Hildebrandt, 2013; Teets, 2014; White et al., 1996). Second, under the influence of Chinese political culture, individuals tend to rely on informal mechanisms rather than formal structures for their political participation. Officials' informal interactions with the public can often affect the decisions and policies they make (Shi, 1997). In this way, the public can affect political leaders without being formally organized. Third, institutional arrangements and legal framework have gradually become accessible to the public. The public is thus empowered to raise public appeals related to local officials' misconduct through legal documents and other instruments such as environmental impact assessments of industrial projects.

2.3.1 Grassroots environmental organizations

Chinese bureaucracy is still hierarchical, quite exclusive and non-transparent, and sends different signals to the society. Under such circumstances, how do Chinese environmental NGOs (ENGOS) participate in the environmental public sphere and gain their forces of policy advocacy?

It is very difficult for them to succeed in changing governmental policies because they are often seen as at the marginal positions and potential threats. Some of China's ENGOS and activists deal with institutional constraints by non-contentions means. Under the monitor of state authority, they tried their best to achieve their goals, maintain their autonomy and convince governmental officials. Tony Saich summarizes this type of micro-politics as 'negotiating with the state' (Saich, 2000), and Jennifer Tuner calls it 'pushing the envelope' (2004). Sometimes the social organizations work for the interests of local governments rather than work against their economic interests (Hildebrandt, 2014, p. 82). Local states have incentives to negotiate with social organizations because social organizations can benefit the state by assisting the state in policy implementation and social services. Many social organizations have acknowledged their role as service provider and partnership to the state, and this is one of the best ways to increase their political opportunities (Hildebrandt, 2014; Shieh & Schwartz, 2009).

Although environmental activism in China is still under strict control of the authoritarian state, the contention has provided citizens with opportunities to become agents of social change. The environmental activists have taken advantages of the fact that the state wishes to enforce environmental regulation at the local level, and developed alliances among themselves, with local officials as well as transnational actors. Mertha (2008) argues that how autonomous an NGO can be in China depends on how successfully it can mobilize resource within the extensive webs on the state apparatus. As noted in the first chapter, the development of state-civil society relationships in China has been described as 'consultative authoritarianism' (Teets 2013, 2014). Teets argues that there has been a shift from direct to indirect social control that has potential to foster 'a professional group but at the expense of community-based organizations dealing with right-based issues' (Teets, 2015, p. 175). As she notes, voices from social organizations can be heard more effectively through two channels, namely, information dissemination and interpersonal connections. The

process of rational policy learning motivates local officials to selectively accommodate the civil society (Teets, 2014).

In recent years, environmental NGOs and citizens have been negotiating with the state to carve out more spaces for themselves in the policy-making process and to bring their environmental concerns into public debates. There has been a dramatic increase in ENGOS in China, which have exerted an important influence on the rise of civil society. According to a survey carried out by the All-China Environmental Federation (2008), which is a government-organized NGO (GONGO) established by MEP, most of the Chinese environmental organizations are working on environmental protection education, environmental services, pollution investigation, advocacy, litigation and other relative activities.

2.3.1.1 Types of Chinese environmental ENGOS

There are various types of ENGOS currently active in China. They vary significantly from each other in terms of size, funding, and level of autonomy from the state. Two main categories of organization operate in environmental protection areas in China. They are GONGOs, and grassroots NGOs which include registered NGOs (in the local bureaus of civic affairs), non-profit enterprises, unregistered voluntary groups and student environmental associations.

GONGOs are government-sponsored non-profit organizations that resemble something in between a governmental agency and a non-governmental organization. Some scholars have called GONGOs a form of state or socialist corporatism in line with the Leninist-Maoist regime tradition (Wu, 2003). It is argued that GONGOs are not acting against the state but rather are organic parts of the governing body connected by a variety of financial, personnel and operational mechanisms (Wu, 2003). By creating GONGOs, the state is able to channel the diverse demands of environmental interests and arrange them in ways to support its own legitimacy. The state is aware of its own instability to deal with social welfare problems and hope GONGOs can contribute to solving these problems with their expertise and flexibility. There are currently several GONGOS active beneath the MEP, including the China Environmental Science Association (CESA), Chinese Environmental Protection Industry Association, the China Environmental Fund, and the All-China Environment Federation (ACEF). According to Wu (2003), GONGOs are getting more autonomy

since they are obtaining foreign funding, which enables them to implement projects more independently.

Grassroots ENGOs are distinguished from the GONGOs because they are not established by the government, but from the bottom-up. They are established by individuals, or groups who have the interest in the area of environmental protection. There are different sub-types of autonomous ENGOS, ranging from registered NGOs to student environmental associations. Registration is one way for social organizations to legitimize their existence and their issue areas under the monitoring of the state (Teets, 2013). This also shows that the party-state has sought to limit and closely regulate NGOs. In 1998, the government passed the 'Regulations for the Registration and Management of Social Organizations', which specified requirements for any groups wishing to register as a legal social organization. The Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA) regulates all social organizations by taking procedures of the 'dual management system': organizations need to register with the local Civil Affairs bureau, secure a government agency as a sponsor (*zhuguandanwei* 主管单位), and receive an annual review (*nianjian* 年检) from a local Civil Affairs bureau (Saich, 2000).

NGO registration in China is notoriously stringent. The groups that have registered must place themselves under professional management with their responsibilities regulated by state organs. However, large numbers of autonomous NGOs have not been able to find a governmental sponsor to acquire legal status. Hildebrandt (2011) holds that since the procedures for registering are so complicated that many ENGOs prefer not to register. This means that they are not able to conduct public fundraising, and they are more vulnerable to local government control, which further restrict their capabilities and the scope of their political activities (Hildebrandt, 2011).

There is also growing importance of international environmental NGOs, such as Greenpeace and WWF, in highlighting pollution problems within China and spreading green ideas. There was a lack of legal basis for foreign NGOs to get registered until 2016 the MCA published a new law to regulate international NGOs. According to the new law, these international NGOs must refrain from engaging in political or religious activities that will damage China's 'national interests' or 'ethnic unity', and these foreign NGOs also need to be supervised by the police authority. The law uses the banner of legal protection, but in fact limits the development of local

environmental civil society. This is consistent with the campaign initiated by Xi Jinping on doubts with foreign ideologies and other foreign influence on China's political and social development, and the more intensive control over society.

2.3.1.2 Development of grassroots ENGOS

In the field of environmental advocacy in China, the autonomous Chinese environmental NGOs which have emerged since the mid-1990s have obtained legitimacy from some Chinese policy elites and western donors, steadily extending their constituencies among citizens. These social groups serve to help pluralize the political process and enable them to become positive actors in environmental governance with the formal authority. The expansion of self-organized communities has provoked collective reflection on social norms and opened up new channels for political engagement. This section examines the emergence of these groups and the impact they have had, which is divided into two periods: 1994-2000, and 2000 onwards.

1994-2000

China's environmental NGO sector has developed fairly rapidly since the mid-1990s. The first autonomous environmental organizations was the Friend of Nature (FoN), founded in 1994. The Chinese leadership had seemingly come to realize that allowing more autonomous environmental NGO would help to improve China's environmental management and international image. The ENGOS are active in Beijing, Yunnan, Shanghai, Sichuan, Chongqing, and many other parts of China. Beijing and Yunnan are 'hotspot' areas of environmental NGO activities. They are active in Beijing because of the geographical proximity to the central governmental officials and in Yunnan because of the incredible ecological wealth and historically foreign support.

ENGOS were primarily focused on environmental education and awareness. For example, Global Village Beijing (GVB), which was registered as an enterprise in 1996, was able to broadcast its environmental education program with China Central TV (CCTV) entitled 'Environmental Protection Hour' (Ho, 2001, p. 910). GVB has also cooperated with Beijing's municipal government through establishing green neighborhood communities. Since then, Chinese local ENGOS increasingly conducted their work in grassroots communities and nurtured their environmental citizenship in urban areas. The Tianjin NGO Friends of Green has been running a 'beautiful

environment' education project participated in by university students in 2006. The environmental education is considered as a 'safe' area for activities, and virtually every Chinese NGO has been involved in environmental education or awareness at some point.

2000-present

The ENGOs have continued to develop and emerge as significant actors in environmental governance in China since the 21th century. There has been a dramatic increase in ENGOs in China, which exert an important influence on the rise of civil society (See Table 2.2). Some of them have participated in the policy process of China's environmental decision-making.

Time	Social Groups	Private non-enterprise units	Foundation	Total	Percentage of total registered social groups %
2007	5530	345	34	5709	1.48
2008	6716	908	28	7652	1.85
2009	6702	1049	35	7806	1.81
2010	6961	1070	47	8078	1.81
2011	6999	846	64	7909	1.73
2012	6790	1078	60	7928	1.61

Table 2.2 Ecological and environmental social groups registered in Ministry of Civic Affairs (2007-2012) Data Source: Ministry of Civil Affairs

Group networking is used to generate power and influence and to participate in the policy-making process. NGO activists are increasingly forging links with academics, specialists, local and national CPPCC/PC delegates in order to add legitimacy to their positions. Furthermore, NGOs have continued to cultivate close, mutually beneficial relationships with environmental protection officials, as well as journalists. Via individual networks with key officials in government, ENGOs have a better chance of influencing the political agenda, and are acknowledged by government as participants in the discussion of the policy process. For example, Green Earth Volunteers holds regular 'green journalist salons' for journalists attending these seminar-like events with environmental experts engaged in giving lectures. These forums are designed to create green public spaces to increase environmental awareness among citizens and exchange information to link the environmental networks. Yang and Calhoun (2007)

argue that a 'green public sphere' is emerging in China, whereby debates in the public sphere can facilitate pluralism and influence government policies.

More importantly, ENGOs have cooperated with each other in advocating changes in governmental policy in relation to specific issues. '26 degree air-conditioning' and the 'anti-dam' campaigns are two successful examples. In 2004, six ENGOs urged citizens to set their air-conditioners at no lower than 26 degrees in the summer in order to save energy. As a result of this campaign, the government released a regulation in June 2005 that forbade government buildings from lowering their temperatures below 26 degrees in the summer. This is the first time that Chinese ENGOs had come together in pursuit of a specific goal. The anti-dam campaign in the Nu River after the mid-2000s went even beyond national borders. Advocacy networks have been extended to not only key policy and political elites at the central and provincial government, but also to environmentally conscious citizens and marginalized populations. The decision to halt the project in 2006 was seen as a major victory for the coalition of environmental actors, including both Chinese and international ENGOs, media, scientists, and academics.

2.3.2 Claiming their own rights: environmental civic protests and NIMBYism

Authoritarian regimes are featured as lacking political opportunities for collective actions, but this does not mean that the social resistance does not occur under authoritarianism (e.g. Schock, 2005). The Chinese political system does allow for some expressions of localized grievances, be it through formal or informal approaches. In understanding collective contentions, scholars hold that popular contention in contemporary China has its own characteristics, compared with those found in democratic societies and other transitional states. The goal of contention is seldom to overthrow the authoritarian regime, but within the boundaries of authorized channels. 'Rightful resistance' argues that protests in villages appear as 'non-contentious' episodes, and usually combine legal tactics or official discourses (O'Brien & Li, 2006). Ho and Edmonds (2008) also call China's social contention as 'depoliticized politics' or 'self-imposed censorship'.

Regarding the scope of contention, popular protests in China are usually limited to the local level. Any protests that build national networks are likely to be strongly repressed, especially when they are perceived to be threatening the Communist Party.

Likewise, urban protests are usually based on specific and single issues, and seldom go beyond the original issue of contention (e.g. Cai, 2006). Large-scale actions have included a range of forms of action: collective appeals, petitions, peaceful demonstrations and spontaneous confrontational actions such as rioting, and sacking offices of officials. These actions can generate ‘non-negligible pressures’ to authoritarian governments, and move a group’s issue onto the government’s agenda and render this as an ad hoc priority for authorities (Cai, 2014). Piven and Cloward suggest that the power of weak groups depends on the ability to create ‘institutional disruptions’ that threaten social or economic operations (1979, p. 91).

However, local government tends to reflexively turn to coercive suppression whenever a popular protest ‘threatens social stability, policy implementation, or local officials’ image’ (Cai, 2008b, p. 24). Actions tend to cease quickly once their demands have been temporarily met (Cai, 2006; O’Brien & Li, 2006). Therefore, satisfying the demands of popular contention in China is only an option for local government to pursue its primary policy targets. Further, the divided state power helps to protect the legitimacy of central government since the decentralized power structure allows the central government to avoid direct blame and transfer complaints to local governments (Cai, 2008a).

2.3.2.1 NIMBYism in China

Policy battles between industrial enterprises and ordinary citizens can also be found during recent decades. The emerging NIMBY (Not in My Back Yard) environmental protests display China’s environmental movement is in its formation stage. NIMBYism is often used to describe selfish, irrational opposition by individuals or communities to the location of facilities necessary for the public good such as waste incinerations in their ‘backyards’. Since 1996, the number of environmental protests in China has been growing by 29% per year (Caijing, 2012). These recent environmental protests indicate a rising participatory demand among the middle class and signify the emergence of a fledgling version of ecological modernization in China (Lang & Xu, 2013). Johnson (2010) claims NGOs have engaged in patient, non-contentious campaigns through a ‘rights-based’ approach via formal channels and advanced their environmental agenda within the existing political system, but NIMBYs in China can instead adopt contentious tactics that exert considerable pressure on local officials to open participatory channels.

Scholars have collected data on Chinese environmental mass incidents during the last decade from the public media. Zhang and Yang (2015) demonstrate that there was a large increase in environmental mass incidents from 2003 to 2012, especially a surge from 2007 to 2011. The lower number of incidents of environmental protests before 2007 seems to suggest either a lack of reporting, or that the environment has only recently become a contentious issue capable of drawing large numbers of people onto the streets in China. Urban environmental mass incidents occurred most frequently in the provinces of south and east China, especially those coastal areas where industrial plants are more likely to locate. Generally, these plants are located in industrial parks or mining areas. In order to bring in investments and pursue GDP, local governments would like to choose the short-term behavior and loosen their environmental supervision of these enterprises, thus it is likely to cause environmental mass incidents in these areas.

From the perspective of protesters, they choose to go to the streets initially because they fail in pursuing legitimate channels of resistance, such as letters and visits or reporting, so these actors accumulate a lot of dissatisfaction. Collective resistance becomes a choice of some citizens because they believe that this mode of action can increase the chance of success. Protesters' complaints will be escalated as long as an environmental event takes place. The catalyst can be various factors, be it a sudden environmental pollution accident, or the re-operation of a shutdown factory. Recent cases of environmental movements in China show that there is a tendency for environmental protesters to go to streets for preventative reasons. The public often hopes to halt a certain project under the preparatory stage or when it is still under construction. The collective opposition against the planning projects as potential environmental threats may induce people to revolt.

2.3.2.2 Social movement theory and China's environmental protests

Chinese environmental movements are episodic and under strong control of the authoritarian state, while there is a continuity and connectivity between protesters, ENGOs, government officials and wider society. Scholars suggest that Chinese environmental movements may have shifted from single, episodic NIMBY protests to a sustained social movement with a national scale under a minimum level of organization (Deng & O'Brien, 2013). The overarching characteristics of Chinese environmental protests are similar to other social movements and not specifically

unique to China. Although there are various ways to describe the diverse nature of social movements, this section focuses on facets of social movement theory, and tries to explain Chinese environmental protests under a theoretical framework.

According to Meyer and Tarrow (1998, p. 2), ‘contentious politics occurs when ordinary people, often in league with more influential citizens, join forces in confrontation with elites, authorities, and opponents’. The political opportunity theory discusses how actors engage in the political system and lead to regime change. It argues that contention increases when people gain access to external resources that convince them they can end injustice and find opportunities in which to use these resources (Tarrow, 2011). The ‘opportunity’ here can be defined as the perceived ‘probability’ that social protest actions will lead to success in achieving a desired outcome. Any changes that shifts the balance of political and economic resources between a state and challengers, that weaken a state’s ability to reward its followers or opponents or to pursue a coherent policy, or that shift domestic or outside support away from the regime, increase opportunities (Goldstone & Tilly, 2001, pp. 182-183).

Social movement theory can also be applied to China’s environmental politics. The ‘probability’ of successful or failed achievement to a desired policy outcome that faces to social actors is shown in three aspects in China. The first is the role of ENGOs in environmental activism. Network analysis is capable of providing a general structural analysis of the social movement process. It is obvious that to mobilize individuals to participate in collective actions is not simply to build links among them; rather it is a dynamic process of meaning construction. Mobilization and networks facilitate identity construction and identity strengthening. As ENGOs and environmental activists increase awareness among the average citizens of long-term ecological consequences, more people may be willing to join street protests. ENGOs would like to make use of all kinds of ‘opportunities’ under the tolerance of authority, for example, professional background and personnel connections, to communicate environmental information and influence the policy agenda.

However, leaders of ENGOs in the context of authoritarian China are particularly cautious in getting involved in grassroots mobilization, and to some extent refuse to organize civic protests and extend their organizational basis. Authoritarian leaders know that an organized civil society may challenge state power, so they seek to contain, co-opt, and channel organizations away from facilitating popular protests

(Hildebrandt, 2013). In the overall landscape of social contention, we find there is a substantial separation between these two realms of civic protesters and environmental NGO activists.

The second aspect is protesters and their targets. In China's environmental protests, the mobilizing grievances are limited to their own constituencies, where these protests are linked to their own villages, townships and neighborhood communities. Most of the environmental protests are limited in the number of participants in a way of loosely organized, and many of them are compromised or suppressed by the local authority. In the fieldwork in Yunnan, I found that protesters in villages are more likely to receive compensation for requisitioned and polluted farmland or damaged health, than those citizens in the urban areas.

The third aspect is the openness conditions of formal or informal institutions. When institutional access opens, rifts appear within elites, allies become available and state capacity for repression declines, and challengers see opportunities to advance their claims. The innovative institutional channels and environmental information transparency provide spaces for protesters to gain information and bargain with industrial enterprises. Moreover, ambivalence of authoritarian system means that there are interleaving targets and interests among the bureaucracy of China. For example, environmental protection agencies such as MEP assert more pro-environmental policies, and central government is more likely to insert the greening ideology than local governments. Therefore, these agencies are more sympathetic to the environmental protesters and more likely to tolerate environmental groups and activists. In recent years, the situation has become more complex since the relations of 'enemy-friend' become dimensional. When a certain developmental project threatens the image (especially the green image) of a locality and contradicts with the 'achievement' of local cadres, local government and Party Committees are more likely to hold a friendly attitude towards environmental grievances. This will provide more 'political opportunities' for issue framing, policy advocacy and social protests for environmentalists.

2.4 Pressing for Good Governance: Encouragement and Discouragement from the Party-state

Bureaucratic power struggle helps explain the origins of political ambivalence in expressing mixed official preferences towards environmental activism. Citizens in China are highly attentive to cues from the state, especially when they are lobbying for change (Stern, 2013, p. 109). The most visible sign of encouragement was the environmental state reform stated above, especially when ‘ecological civilization’ was emphasized as basic principle by Xi Jinping. Although local states are often repressive to social activism, cautious innovations were also made by central government in order to channel environmental contention. These innovative institutions create new channels for political participation, and offers accepted politically frames for contention which might otherwise trigger opposition against the authoritarian regime. However, most local states are still eager for indicators of economic performance and officials are reluctant to accommodate environmental grievances if there are no interventions from superior authorities or other policy actors. Therefore, the authoritarian state also displays its discouragement to these reforms when environmental activists challenge the boundaries of political permissibility.

During the past two decades, the Chinese central government has pursued the strategy of ‘good governance’ by creating formal channels and promoting environmental information transparency. The ‘good governance’ discourse in the PRC first appeared to the public in a 1989 World Bank report where certain aid donors insisted that recipient countries should adopt good governance practices to maximize the effectiveness of developmental aid (Yu, 2001). A set of subjective criteria was identified, including accountability, transparency and public participation. The interpretation of ‘good governance’ practices in an authoritarian regime has faced heated debates in domestic China. Chinese academia is polarized between those who advocate these concepts and those who refuse to mention them (Guo, 2013). The proponents of good governance are intellectuals who stand within the party-state and seek ‘incremental democracy’ (*zengliangminzhu* 增量民主). They hold that by improving the quality of governance, for example rule of law, transparency and accountability, the central government could use institutional innovations as instruments to legitimise the Communist Party and depoliticize social contention. Yu (2009) suggests that democratic reforms should take place within the given political

and legal framework and should not violate the established constitution or other basic laws.

Officials in the MEP and other pro-environmental reformers have utilized this broader commitment of ‘good governance’ principles to advance a public participation agenda within the existing political process. These reformers intend to promote environmental policy implementation and the standing of MEP against its economic counterparts. ENGOs and environmentalists have strategically interacted with MEP officials with mutual interests to improve institutional conditions for public participation as a key goal for ENGOs and achieving their own organizational aims at the same time (Johnson, 2014). These strategic interactions have successfully urged the central government to establish public supervision mechanisms in terms of environmental problems (See Table 2.3). Meanwhile, the conception of ‘good governance’ has been embodied in many recent governmental policies under the prominent rhetoric of ‘harmonious society’ promoted by Hu-Wen and ‘establishing ecological civilization’ promoted by Xi Jinping.

Legislation/regulation	Effective date	Promulgating agency	Content
Environmental Protection Law	1989	NPC	Empowers the right of public participation in environmental protection issue
Measures for Environmental Complaint Letters and Visits	2007	SEPA	Regulates the complaint procedures
Environmental Impact Assessment Law	2003	NPC	State encourages experts and public participate in the EIA process
Administrative Licensing Law	2003	NPC	Public can apply for a public hearing over licensing decisions that affect them
Notice Regarding the Carrying Out of Environmental Protection Checks by Companies Applying to be Listed, and by Listed Companies Applying for Refinancing	2003	SPEA	Companies applying for listing must provide environmental information to local environmental bureaus
Temporary Measures for Public Participation in	2004	SPEA	Clarifies how and when public should be consulted over an

Administrative Licensing Hearings			administrative licensing decision
Decision on Implementation of the Scientific Development Concept and Strengthening Environmental Protection	2005	State Council	Calls for improved social supervision, advocates public interest litigation and public hearings
Temporary Measures for Public Participation in Environmental Impact Assessment	2006	SEPA	Clarifies the process of public participation during the EIA
New Measures for Environmental Complaint Letters and Visits	2006	SEPA	Strengthens to smooth petition channels
Regulation on the Disclosure of Government Information	2007	State Council	All levels of government should establish government information disclosure working mechanisms
Temporary Measures on Environmental Information Disclosure	2008	SEPA	Outlines 17 types of environmental information that need to be disclosed. Citizens can apply for administrative review and put forward lawsuit against governments that violate the obligation of information disclosure
New Environmental Protection Law	2015	NPC	Regulates the whole process of public participation in environmental protection and force the disclosure of EIA reports
Measurements of Public Participation in Environmental Protection	2015	MEP	Clarifies citizens can participate in environmental protection in six fields, including formulating and revising environmental regulations and standards, and drafting EIA reports.
Revisions on Environmental Impact Assessment Law	2016	NPC	The new Law does not allow the situation of projects' "construction before permission", which violates the principles of New Environmental Law

Table 2.3 Key laws and legislations on environmental 'good governance' in China

Can ‘good governance’ or ‘ecological civilization’ discourse play a role in either stopping pollution or spurring environmentalism in practice? This thesis argues that protesters are confronted with mixed signals on state preference that is often translated into the ground-level uncertainty. The following section shows several attempts made by central government, such as systems of complaints, information transparency, public hearings and environmental litigation, to illustrate the conflicting statements, regulations and policies.

2.4.1 Systems of complaints

Participation in China’s environmental decision making has traditionally been structured and institutionalized through the state and party systems. The authoritarian state has accommodated itself to facilitate the rise of collective petitioning. From the early 1990s, China has set up systems of complaints (such as letters and visits) to assist government monitoring and implementing environmental policies at the local level. This is because Chinese state continues to be attached to the complaints system, at a time when Chinese citizens are increasingly freed from the bonds of the work units system. For the party-state, it helps collect information through this ‘window’ and obtain comprehensive and timely messages on the society and the street-level cadres. For the public, it provides an institutional channel for them to address wide ranges of issues when the legal system is imperfect.

More recently, hotlines and digital complaints systems have further enhanced public participation in governmental environmental governance. Table 2.4 shows that since 2011, the digital complaints systems have to some extent gradually replaced traditional complaints methods. The complaints system was set up as a kind of ombudsman for direct complaint through which the public’s grievances can be reflected and addressed by the authority.

However, it is acknowledged that system of complaints is not an effective resolution to address the public’s complaints. An opinion argues that this is rather a way for the authoritarian state to exert social control over citizens who disagree with political authorities (Palmer, 2006). It is also very common for local cadres to delay, censor, conceal or block media coverage in petition cases. As an authoritarian regime, China has never had or yet to have a democratic political system for public discussion. Chinese local officials are held accountable to higher-level authorities rather than to

the public, so they are more likely to respond to citizens' legitimate demands when they face pressures from higher-level authorities (Cai, 2004).

Year	Number of letters	Number of visits	Number of persons	Completed cases of letters/visits	Number of telephone/internet complaints	Completed cases of telephone/internet complaints
2005	608245	88237	142360	----	----	----
2006	616122	71287	110592	----	----	----
2007	123357	43909	77399	----	----	----
2008	705127	43862	84971	----	----	----
2009	696134	42170	73798	----	----	----
2010	701073	34683	65948	----	----	----
2011	201631	53505	107597	251607	852700	834588
2012	107120	43260	96145	159283	892348	888836
2013	103776	46162	107165	151635	1112172	1098555
2014	113086	50934	109426	152437	1511872	1491731
2015	121462	48010	104323	161252	1646705	1611007

*Table 2.4 The number of complaints received by environmental protection agencies
Data source: 2005-2015 Environmental Statistical Yearbook (MEP)*

2.4.2 Information transparency

Pushing its transparency strategy, SEPA was the first national bureaucracy to specify the broad DGI (Disclosure of Government Information) regulations, and issued the 'Temporary Measures on Environmental Information Disclosure' in 2007. The measures state that every EPB should have its own open government office responsible for assembling information and make it possible, and also impose obligations of local enterprises to open up information about their environmental protection efforts and pollution emissions. The main motivations behind the DGI are to gain political credits for authoritarian state by 'improving the transparency of government work' and to 'improve administrative performance'. Publicizing such information about the sources of pollution may help the public have grievances and thereby mobilize them for political or legal action (Van Rooij, 2010). Those cadres who violate the rules of information disclosure will be responsible and accountable by their higher level supervisors. Industries who violate the rules will also receive penalties. Citizens can sue public authorities and companies that violate the DGI.

Introducing the transparent policy seems to enable SEPA to achieve its operational mandate of environmental protection under the weak enforcement by local state. However, scholars state that this regulation has failed to trigger major participation of citizens owing to the lack of implementation in local areas (Kostka & Mol, 2013). Projects in which information concerns national security, state's confidential information, commercial secrets, individual privacy and social stability, are reasons for enterprises to withhold their environmental information.

2.4.3 Environmental public interest litigation

Meanwhile, Chinese state has gradually institutionalized and regularized its socialist legal system as another way of building alternate source of regular checking in power. Seeking legal relief for environmental pollution has gradually become a strategic method for environmental activists in contemporary China. According to the current environmental laws, citizens have legal rights to sue public authorities and industries who violate regulations, and have petitioned local and national departments.

In the early 2015, the revised version of Environmental Protection Law (EPL) came into effect and the EPL granted environmental NGOs who are formally registered, the right to initiate environmental public interest litigation (EPIL). Since 2015, nearly 100 lawsuits have been filed by both NGOs and public prosecutors. The Friends of Nature, All China Environmental Federation and China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation (CBCGDF) are three civic groups who are actively engaging in suing polluters. Also in 2015, the National People's Congress approved a pilot project to allow certain public procurators to bring public interest cases against polluting enterprises and government officials. Although Chinese judiciary systems are always seen as the part of the authoritarian government, in general, Chinese prosecutors have shown an interest in environmental public interest litigation either in response to official signals that cutting back on pollution as the priority, or when they can demonstrate 'innovation' by doing something novel for political evaluation.

However, we could also find that officials discomfort with environmental lawsuits. Local regulations governing environmental disputes often regard lawsuits as unwelcome approach (Stern, 2013). Many courts refused to accept administrative cases filed by ENGOs. Meanwhile, there are an increasing number of regulations designed to keep lawyers to apolitical and disputes small-scale. The number of EPIL

cases and ENGOs filing these cases are very low. ENGOs, procuratorate and courts have all encountered challenges, such as lack of procedural guidance for courts to adjudicate cases, and the extremely high litigation costs ENGOs.

2.4.4 Public hearing

Public hearings and participation in the environmental impact assessment process are also part of recent innovations of institutional participation. Since the 13th National Congress of CCP introduced the objective of ‘democratizing decision-making and making it more scientific’, China has made progress in institutional innovations such as public hearings, public consultation and public deliberation. Chinese government also encouraged ministries and commissions to hold public hearings before finalizing policies concerning citizens’ own interests. As a result, many local governments invited stakeholders and experts to participate in the public hearing before final decisions have been made. ‘Authoritarian deliberation’ (He & Warren, 2011) is described to combine non-inclusive power and deliberative influence and reflect the complexity and pluralism produced by diversification of social interests.

The 2016 Environmental Impact Assessment law states that the public opinion should be taken into consideration in projects’ planning and construction processes. The public can be consulted through mechanisms such as public hearings and opinion surveys. Public hearings establish a more institutionalized arrangement for participation in China’s environmental policymaking. However, Johnson’s (2013, 2014) study on public hearings concerning renovations to the Imperial Summer Palace and the planning of waste incinerators in Guangdong, illustrates that a legal obligation to organize consultation with the public does not necessary mean that it will take place in the meaningful way. Scholars argue that Chinese people have ‘participation gap’ when the authoritarian system restricts the civic engagement (Kostka & Mol, 2013). In some cases the ‘participation gap’ has been challenged by central government through establishing a variety of experiments and new institutional arrangements in enlarging the participation of non-state actors in policy formation and implementation. However, most of these arrangements are just managed by the MEP and its subordinate agencies, while they do not touch upon policies of more influential ministries, such as NDRC and other industrial ministries. Moreover, policy making and implementation are highly dependent on local

conditions. In some localities, local governments and enterprises would tend to make decisions behind closed doors and be less tolerated in the participation of environmental decision making, either by concerned citizens, ENGOs or local media.

2.5 Summary

China has experienced a wave of large environmental activism against economic development projects. Rapid industrialization and modernization have caused continuous environmental degradation in both rural and urban areas. Monolithic industries and their patrons as the major interest group, dramatically benefit from the reform policy. In last two decades, we can witness the emerging environmental activism in China, through various forms including environmental NGOs, civic protests and complaints, advocacy from concerned activists and other environmental actions. Chinese government has attempted to manage its environmental problem as well as responding to the social grievance. China has established a nationwide environmental protection bureaucracy. The party-state occupies the dominant position in environmental governance, but shares responsibility with sub-national agencies and non-state actors who are actively engaged in the environmental governance and policy process. In several aspects China appears to be adopting a familiar western model as the 'good governance', such as expanding environmental capacities, emergence of more progressive environmental policies, and a shift from regulation to governance and information transparency. More and more citizens and social organizations participate into the decision-making process, for example through the public hearings, systems of complaints and legal routes. It seems that transformation towards decentralization have gradually shifted China's environmental governance model, and provide 'political opportunities' for social environmental activists to engage in policy process.

But this is just one facet of the story, political ambivalence of Chinese state implies it is difficult to promote environmental protection. In China's environmental politics, the party-state without being accountable to the public is not always accommodated environmental activists, and the situation of high degree of flexibility is the minority. Chinese bureaucracy is not a unified entity. The environmental advocacy is treated differently with repression, tolerance or concession. Local states have the discretion to

respond to the NGO leaders, journalists, concerned activists or protesters. The problem of state capacity, such as principal-agent problem and mixed incentives for local officials, shows that local states often subvert the central government's intentions. Local governments often prioritize economic growth and neglect environmental protection, so EPBs lack of power to enforce the regulation and supervise polluting enterprises. More significantly, the Chinese leadership was preoccupied with the rule that 'maintaining stability is the principle of overriding importance' (*wending yadaoyiqie* 稳定压倒一切) and thus to prevent social protests. The budget for internal policing has surpassed the social welfare in recent decade. Local officials face different incentives from both superior agencies and bottom-up voices, so they may be hesitated to accommodate environmental grievances.

Based on above considerations, we find that China appears to be a puzzling case, because the tolerance of environmental activism is highly dependent on local conditions as local officials may face different incentives and constraints. In terms of the authoritarian accountability, under what conditions these consultative measures stated above will be used by local states, or will be used in meaningful ways instead of becoming instrumental to local officials? In the next chapter, I will examine the rationale behind the variation of environmental activism to explore the complexity of China's authoritarian regime.

Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework: Advocacy Coalition, Political Intermediation and Policy Change

Examining the policy process inevitably brings us to the dilemma of policy formation: why do certain issues come to the attention of the decision makers within the political system while others do not? In other words, how do certain issues become salient? Furthermore, who participates in agenda setting and which institutions and groups have the greatest access to agenda setting? Proponents of power structure argue that decision-making takes place in a political context where some groups have access to or influence over decision-making and others are marginalized. Their access to resources and information is unequal. That is to say, there will be power inequalities among different groups or organizations in access to decision makers to influence the policy outcome (elaboration of this argument can be found in Bachrach & Baratz, 1962; Gaventa, 1982; Lukes, 1974; March & Rhodes, 1992). To prevent privileged groups from dominating the policy process, Western democratic countries have developed various institutional arrangements to ensure transparency and accountability of policy process, and to help those groups that lack representation in the political process to give expression of their interests. These institutions facilitate the representation of diffuse interests and citizens can participate in administrative rule-making.

Growing environmental protests and advocacies suggest that environmental activists in China also are attempting to influence the policy process. China has established consultative institutions to encourage the public to engage in the policy process. However, as a single-party state, the Chinese government displays mixed official preferences when activists engage in political struggle. Political ambivalence with the Chinese state means the entire administrative system cannot be seen as uniform. Therefore, it is not surprising that the accommodation of local officials to environmental contention is a major problem in the policy process.

China's cautious turn to public participation does not signal political liberalization, but authoritarian responsiveness, because environmental degradation has already caused growing pollution-related mass incidents (Stern, 2012). In practice, China's extraordinary economic success over the last two decades suggests that the authoritarian state's decision-making authority prefers to accommodate economic

interests, especially those of state-owned businesses with patrons in bureaucracies, instead of civic organizations and protesters who may challenge the regime stability. However, social actors, who are originally excluded from the formal political power structure in China, have continuously challenged the Chinese policy process under the bureaucratic structure. With the emergence of social forces, such as the diversification of social strata, changing labour and social mobility, rising consumerism and individualism, and environmentalism, China's policy agenda-setting is undergoing profound changes in terms of its initiators, contents, processes and outcomes.

This chapter is concerned with answering the following question: why do some local states adapt to the environmentalists and change their policies when environmental activists are less powerful to challenge the decision makers, while others do not? The answer to this question focuses on the environmental coalition and its interactions with local states. In this chapter, I will first critically introduce a concept of advocacy coalition framework (ACF) which explains the dynamics between environmental advocacy coalition and the decision makers on policy change. Explicitly, the ACF depicts the policy process as an adversarial competition where actors form and maintain coalitions, engage in analytical debates with the potential for learning, and advocate for their preferred policy alternatives.

However, the application of the ACF to an authoritarian regime like China is problematic. On the surface, several features of the ACF, suggest parallel information with some salient features of the policy process in China. Some notions of ACF such as 'coalition' and 'policy change' matter for the recent observations in China where the party-state sometimes accommodates social actors who protest against industrial pollution in the name of public interests. However, features of the ACF and of the China case derive from different causal mechanisms, have different structural relations and rhetoric, and the ways in which local officials accommodate or not accommodate social actors are fundamentally different. Therefore, the case of China offers theoretical potential. China is in the midst of a grand transformation, where both state and society are undergoing fundamental changes. In this thesis, I propose a notion of 'political intermediation' to explain how environmental advocacy coalitions, especially those 'intermediary figures', use resources and strategies to establish communication with decision makers in a non-pluralist system, and thus reach consensus with decision makers for policy alteration or policy reversal. Variations of

environmental coalitions are present due to the fact that dynamic coalition structures are emerging, the interaction between environmental actors and local state varies, and local states may either choose to build up negotiation channels with civil society through intermediaries, or repress the environmental contentions directly.

3.1 Concepts of Advocacy Coalition Framework

There are many approaches to understand policy change. One group of scholars argue that policies alter when independent ‘policy streams’ (problem, policy solutions and political opportunities) are coupled by policy entrepreneurs using a ‘window of opportunity’ (Kingdon, 1995; Zahariadis, 2007). The punctuated-equilibrium approach sees policy-making as a long term incremental policy change when micro-political intervention results in changing policy images and exploitation of policy venues by policy entrepreneurs (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; True et al., 2007). The school of policy network stresses that network structure and the interaction among resources independent actors promotes policy continuity (March & Rhodes, 1992). Non-incremental policy change is linked to network change due to exogenous economic and political changes (March, 1998; Rhodes, 1997). However, these frameworks are very imprecise in identifying significant mechanisms of policy change. They do not provide a set of clear theoretical propositions and relevant mechanisms within networks and external factors. For example, there are different types of potentially relevant mechanisms within networks, such as power struggles, consensus building, bargaining, deliberative process, learning process, and a variety of explanatory factors (e.g. different types of network structures, external factors.). Therefore, they are insufficient as the starting point for theoretical investigation and testing.

Among various theories on policy change, particularly on non-state actors in policy advocacy, Sabatier’s conceptualization of ACF shares most similar features with this research question. The initial version of ACF was found in *Policy Change and Learning* (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993) with its application mainly in the United States and Europe countries. The ACF provides a means for scholars to better understand policy coalition formation, actors’ behaviour, policy learning and policy change (Sabatier 1998; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith 1993; Weible et al. 2009). Their basic idea was to focus on an advocacy coalition formed around common beliefs and operating within a policy subsystem, as a way of understanding policy alteration. The

ACF integrates both top-down and bottom-up approaches within a policy subsystem, revealing the dynamics between state and non-state actors striving for policy change (Jenkins-Smith et al. 2014, p. 184). The subsystem often contains advocacy coalitions, through which actors pursue common policy goals. The ACF explicitly argues that most coalitions include not only interest group leaders, but also agency officials, legislators from multiple levels of government, applied researchers and perhaps even a few journalists (Sabatier & Weible, 2014).

The ACF assumes that the outcome of policy change can be achieved in the negotiations among policy coalitions, whose behaviour are affected by two sets of exogenous factors: relatively stable parameters and dynamic external factors (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, p. 193). Figure 3.1 shows the framework of the ACF process. On the left side are two sets of exogenous variables. One set contains relatively stable parameters, including (1) attributes of the problem area; (2) basic distribution of natural resources; (3) fundamental social-cultural values and social structure; and (4) basic constitutional structure. These parameters are hard to change except in the long term. These factors affect behaviour because they have fundamental influence over the political process owing to changes in law or basic political–social structures and values. The other set of parameters is more dynamic that can affect the subsystem actors. The ACF claims there are critical prerequisites for major policy change, including: (1) major social-economic changes, such as the rise of social movements (protests); (2) changes in public opinion; (3) changes in the systemic governing coalition; and (4) policy decisions and impacts from other subsystems.

These two sets of parameters affect the opportunities and constraints of subsystem actors. On the right side of Figure 3.1 is the flow of policy subsystems, which usually include agency officials and legislators from different decision-making levels and actors such as journalists, interested organizations and researchers. The framework assumes that actors within a policy subsystem can be aggregated into a number of advocacy coalitions composed of people from various governmental and private organizations who share a set of normative and causal beliefs and who collaborate over time.

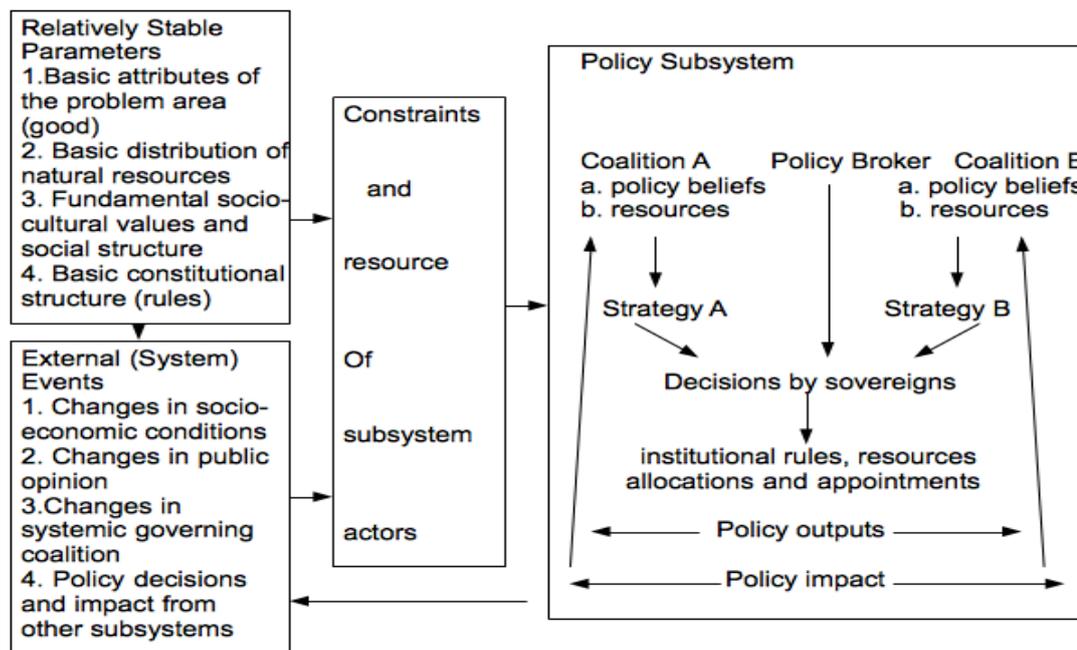


Figure 3.1 Diagram of ACF (see Sabatier, 2008)

Sharing a set of normative beliefs and engagement of co-ordinated activities connects the coalitions. According to the ACF, the belief system of each coalition is organized into a tripartite structure: deep core beliefs, policy core beliefs and secondary aspect beliefs. The deep core beliefs contain fundamental normative and ontological axioms applicable to multiple subsystems; the policy core beliefs are the ‘glue’ that holds coalitions together, representing basic normative and empirical commitments, including value priorities and basic policy preference. These are less rigid than deep core beliefs and their empirical elements may change over time. Secondary aspects include a multitude of instrumental propositions to achieve policy goals within the subsystem, such as desirable regulations, budget allocations and the design of specific policy instruments. These beliefs are narrower in scope and more likely adjusted in light of new data, experience or changing strategic considerations (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, pp. 192-196).

Each coalition adopts strategies to influence the behaviour of governmental authorities in an effort to achieve their policy objectives. This is done within a multitude of venues using a variety of resources and instruments (Sabatier & Weible, 2007), such as changes in rules, budgets, personnel or information. The competitive process between coalitions is not simply a case of one group seeking to assert its interest over another. Indeed, the ACF theorists claim that policy-oriented learning

takes place both within and between coalitions. The framework is served as a lens to understand beliefs and policy changes when there is goal disagreement and technical disputes involving multiple actors from several levels of government, interest groups, research institutions and the media.

The external shocks and the general accumulation of scientific/technical evidence contribute to major or minor policy changes (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999). External shocks are events that occur outside of the policy subsystem as mentioned. On the one hand, it may shift resources or open/close venues because of the renewed attention of the public or key decision-makers, thereby tipping the advantage to a different coalition for major policy change. On the other hand, external shocks can change the policy core beliefs of a dominant advocacy coalition in the policy subsystem. Policy change could be achieved through belief change via policy-oriented learning from the gradual accumulation of information, such as scientific study or policy analysis. Policy-oriented learning is 'relatively enduring alterations of thought or behaviour intentions that result from experience and/or new information that are concerned with the attainment or revision of policy objectives' (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999, p. 123).

Policy disagreements between advocacy coalitions often escalate into intense political conflicts. A third group (neutral) actor—termed a 'policy broker'—mediates conflicting strategies among various coalitions and its principle concern is to find reasonable compromise among hostile coalitions. Many different actors play the policy broker role, including elected officials, courts and high civil servants. A policy broker is usually trusted by both coalitions and has some decision-making authority. As the impact of policy output have been made at the operational level on the governmental decisions and new information arises from external dynamics, each advocacy coalition may revise its belief and/or its strategies; it may seek major institutional revisions at the collective choice level or even going outside the subsystem by seek changes in the dominant coalition at the systemic level (Sabatier, 2011, p. 104).

The ACF provides a systematic tool in analysing policy change. It provides a lens to understand policy not as a single point but as a dynamic process. It is one theoretical framework, among many, that simplifies the great complexity of social and political

systems with the goal of moving towards a positive understanding of the various drivers of policy changes at multiple scales (Sabatier, 1999).

The ACF also offers a systematic perspective from below, which is more in line with an empirical viewpoint of change and more able to cope with the complexities of policy processes in practice (Olsson, 2009, p. 170). By considering the macro conditions, such as changes in social-economic conditions and changes in public opinions that affecting advocacy groups' behaviour, scholars could use the ACF to understand policy change under the state–society perspective with multiple stakeholders involved. Most coalitions do not only include interest groups and non-profit leaders, but also legislators from multiple levels of government, agency officials, researchers and perhaps even journalists. It also considers the significant role played by science and technology information in political disputes and policy-making. The ACF acknowledges that scientists are key players in the advocacy coalition, fostering changes within policy subsystems (Weible & Sabatier, 2007).

However, the ACF has some weaknesses too. Scholars criticise its concept of a coalition as too static, failing to differentiate between types of coalitions (Peters, 1998). In each advocacy group, the status of individuals and groups are different based on their strategy, resources and the granting of their status by the government. This means the ACF has shortcomings when it comes to understanding policy dynamics in relation to external actors, such as other advocacy coalitions and political decision makers. The framework also provides limited explanations for processes of learning (Bulkeley, 2000) and how coalitions translate their beliefs into actual policy (Sato, 1999). The ACF has not developed a clear typology of such new information and technology that affects belief systems or the conditions for fostering learning among coalitions (Weible et al, 2009, p. 134). Lastly, the framework is founded on pluralistic assumptions, so it would be problematic as an approach to explain policy-making in other regime systems (Carter, 2001).

In response to its generalization problem, some scholars expand the ACF to include coalition opportunity structures (Sabatier & Weible, 2007; Jenkins-Smith et al, 2014). They focus on the degree of openness of political system (for example the accessibility of each venue and the number of decision-making venues) that allow actors to be involved in the policy process, and the degree of consensus needed for major policy change (Sabatier & Weible, 2007), which are assumed to influence the

resources and constraints of subsystem actors. But these new features do not necessarily mean that ACF can get rid of the ‘concept stretching’—using a framework originally designed to explain policy change in one sort of setting to explain it in a too different sort of setting, thus damaging the ACF and/or the new setting case (Han et al, 2014).

3.2 Regime Flexibility in Authoritarian Context: A New Approach

3.2.1 Environmental advocacy coalition and the Chinese context

Nevertheless, the ACF is an interesting and widely applied policy analysis. It provides an analytical framework to examine the key features of advocacy coalition and policy change, such as the coalition formation, policy-oriented learning, and typical political and social parameters accounting for policy change, which are obviously taking place in a Chinese context. Chinese environmental advocacy coalitions are constituted by environmental NGOs, experts, concerned activists and other social elites with collective actions in the name of public environmental interests, and they are sometimes supported by the environmental agencies that need to fulfil their administrative function. Members from environmental coalitions in China use resources and strategies to challenge the existing policy from a much inferior position compared to the authoritarian state, and local states actually respond to their claims with various attitudes.

These features in China are parallel to the ACF, but they have a significantly different set of dynamics. First, the theoretical premises of the framework recognize key features of pluralism, including factionalized, competitive and adversarial groups involving struggles over access to multiple venues for legislative influence based on Western philosophy (Henry et al, 2014). This is a concept whereby competing interests and status groups aggregate themselves into advocacy coalitions based on the different policy values.

In China, however, the authoritarian state is the embodiment of the nation or the people, as well as its rules. The agenda-setting power is highly centralized within the formal political structure. There are rare actors or institutions in China can justify anything in the name of narrow or private interests. Generally, Chinese environmental social organizations have two attributes. They can perform an instrumental role by providing some public goods to society, sharing responsibility with the government

and strengthening the governing capability of the state. They also are regarded as potentially challenging enemies to the state for their strong features of collective behaviour. Civil society in China is not independent and the party-state controls society through different means. Most of the time, these groups help the state to carry out its policies, but sometimes they do channel the demands of the masses to the leaders. The authoritarian party-state constrains the formation and operation of coalitions composed of societal actors who may threaten the social harmony. Local officials have political incentives to disarm environmental contention before it extends to larger scale. The environmental advocacy coalitions in China remain an informal network rather than an institutionalized condition. Therefore, the structural situation of 'adversarial competition' does not exist in China when environmental actors seek to establish communications with formal authority and exert pressures in decision-making bodies.

In addition, policy-oriented learning works in the process of policy alteration in China, but experiences different structural dynamics. The ACF has a particular interest in policy-oriented learning. The framework assumes that such learning is instrumental, and is most likely when there is a conflict between coalitions when each coalition has technical resources to engage in such a debate or these is a forum where prestigious enough to force professionals from different coalitions to participate. When the accumulation of technical information does not change the views of the opposing coalition, it can have an important impact on policy by altering the views of policy brokers (Sabatier, 2011).

Policy-oriented learning can rarely happen between coalitions in China, where no coalitions will survive based on adversity and competition. Local states in China might bring in the power of science when they have fewer incentives to suppress the local contention. Therefore, policy-oriented learning in China can happen between the environmental coalition and the decision makers. Scientists in the environmental coalition share knowledge and collect scientific data supporting their arguments and thus grant legitimate evidence to their policy preferences. Through policy-oriented learning, the decision makers may change perceptions of the previous policy effectiveness and perceptions of the probable impacts of alternative policies.

Lastly, China does not have what the ACF describes as the subsystem. A mature subsystem is defined by having specialized subunits at all levels of government to

deal with policy issues. They are constituted of actors from several levels of government and private organizations who are actively concerned with a policy problem or issue, such as agriculture, and who regularly seek to influence public policy in that domain. In most policy subsystems there will be numerous laws and policy initiatives at any given point, and the policy brokers in most democratic countries are the independent courts (Mawinney, 1993), elected officials (Munro, 1993) and high civil servants. Policy brokers noted in the ACF are usually trusted by both competing coalitions and have some decision making authority.

The case of China, however, displays quite a different situation. China is an authoritarian state with its large size and overloaded population, which leads to various processes of environmental contention and different policy outcomes. Party Committees at all levels dominate the agenda-setting in policy issue areas. Despite being a formally centralized and authoritarian system, in practice, there is the devolution of power from central to local areas by transferring directives.

To manage the question of scale, instead of distributing automatically resources to local areas, local states enjoy certain degrees of autonomy in managing these directives. The bureaucratic system sends signals from the central authority, so local officials within their regions as a whole need to respond to the central instructions in the ways of 'integration by imitation', which contains performances like learning experimental models, official reports, new laws and regulations, and conferences as a symbol of integration. In practice, local officials in China interpret central directives and take actions under local circumstances, rather than holding competing policy values among agencies and interest groups like the features in the ACF. Acts of social environmental advocacy are treated unpredictably and differently, with tolerance, expression and other possibilities. Rather than enforcing consistent standards, the central government grant local officials' discretion to judge if a boundary of participation has been crossed (Stern & O'Brien, 2012, p. 15). As a result, local states need to establish certain channels of communication with various social actors or might otherwise suppress them. The empirical data in China shows there is a spectrum of local state responses that is neither immediately acceptance nor immediately repression. They are actually continuing processes.

3.2.2 Political intermediation

The policy change in the ACF happens between adversarial coalitions within a subsystem under pluralist systems, while in China it takes place between the social advocacy coalition and the decision-making bodies. Two dynamisms on policy advocacy coalitions in China need clarification: one is the coalition building processes and the key actors within coalition; the other is the relations between coalition actors with external actors, such as the decision makers and the general public. Because local officials pursue economic interests, they can easily become patrons for those powerful SOEs and choose not to adapt to societal environmental claims. For those powerful SOEs recognized as *yangqi*, they always enjoy stronger political backing from the central bureaucracies. However, we could still find situations in China when the authoritarian state accommodates the interests of less powerful environmental coalitions—so how can we explain this?

The ability of the environmental coalition to influence the policy process in China, I argue, lies in the recognition that there are intermediation processes between environmental activists and local officials. A group of intermediary figures can activate channels of communication with decision-making bodies without threatening the authority. What accounts for the variation among environmental coalitions is determined by the interaction between state officials, typically the local officials who find ways to either permit or suppress, or who attempt to establish negotiation processes with the society and the environmental activists. The channels of communication between environmental coalitions and the decision makers could be set up through mechanisms of ‘political intermediation’. Political intermediation functions in China’s environmental policy advocacy activities when intermediary figures are aggregated into environmental coalitions or they use pre-existing or newly established organizations for alternative channels of information communication with decision makers. Under such mechanisms, intermediary figures build up the environmental advocacy coalition, adopt strategies, and interact with other coalition actors and decision makers to influence state authority to achieve their policy objectives.

The authoritarian party is often given the tasks of distributing benefits to citizens and spreading the regime’s ideology or policy views, as a means of building popular support for authoritarian system. The party-state has the possibility to alter its policy choice, especially when the benefits to be distributed contradict to the public’s

interests and threaten the party's legitimacy. The party-state prefers to listen to the social actors who are recognized as intermediary figures. These intermediary figures can act as representation of the civil society, broker the conflict dead lock, and transfer the environmental grievances into language that would be understandable or acceptable by local governments. In the interaction between environmental advocacy coalition and decision making bodies, intermediary figures are those social elites who operate within intermediary organizations or intermediary communications, share political weight and moral standings in the formal authority without necessarily having formal standing in the CCP, tend to be respected by political power without inherent contention, and possess social capital as far as civil society is concerned.

Why would the authoritarian government prefer to accommodate these intermediary figures? The conflicting attitudes of the authoritarian state towards political participation means that regime flexibility must be put into different circumstances, for example, with consideration of local incentives structures, and the configuration power in environmental coalitions and their interaction with local states. Since the reform period, social elite groups have made contributions to policy-making and implementation in China. These elites include village leaders, intellectuals, opinion leaders, experts and PC/CPPCC delegates at all levels.

In the environmental advocacy process, these people can be recognized as intermediary figures, although they are not within the party power structure. The reason why they are able to activate the communication channel with the local government is that these intermediary figures in China have crucial information and agenda-setting power, formally or informally connect well with the decision makers and most importantly, they share moral standing or political weight both within the formal authority and the civil society. Moral standing is a type of prestige (Tsai, 2007, p. 88). Prestige can be seen as 'the esteem, respect, or approval that is granted by an individual or a collectivity for performances or qualities they consider above the average' (Goode, 1979, p. 7). The higher moral standing of those intermediary figures can be significant political leverage in policy bargaining and increases the possibility of officials' accommodation to the environmental claims.

Intermediaries can exert political intermediation on the policy process as an intervention and impose political leverage over officials in three ways. First, their political status is recognized and respected by the authoritarian regime. They have

knowledge, capacity, resources, or a formal role in public agencies or other private sectors, taking responsibility for local problems and issues from being active with local government. Some figures can obtain patrons in the decision-making bodies and help their group or coalition influence policy-making. These figures have close links to decision-making bodies because they are institutionally or non-institutionally well-connected to the state authorities, so they can gain support from the local government. Agenda-setting and policy content could be altered by the presence of such official supporters.

Second, intermediary figures have moral standing in the public sphere and can influence public opinion. Thanks to their social network, knowledge and resources, they could be seen as representatives of civil society and act strategically from this position by using resources such as academy or community network. They usually have close linkage with the society, and they can use their moral standing to mobilize individuals outside their coalition to comply with their policy value, which again improves their political leverage for local officials to accommodate citizen demand.

Third, the authoritarian regime needs these people who share moral standing or scientific expertise to improve the quality of governance in various policy sectors. To maintain stability, authoritarian states also need to establish certain contacts with local civil society through intermediaries. With implementation of consultative institutions, these intermediary figures can express their professional policy preferences through these deliberative forums to put into public debates and deliver information to local officials in a much more transparent manner. Since the reform era, the Communist leaders welcome elites' opinions that will be beneficial for state's good governance without threatening the regime's stability and the party's core interests. As the decentralization of decision-making power, the central government has become much more tolerant to those local elites who have capacity to address problems of local governance, especially when the central policy priorities have altered or new policy priorities arise.

When discussing coalition dynamics, China's environmental politics show different actors within the environmental coalition possesses different amount of political resources, knowledge and influence, which are important conditions for political establishments of environmental advocates. Distinctions in the interactions between

environmental advocacies and local states are necessary to help us better understand the state–society relations of China in a more sophisticated approach.

3.2.3 Intermediaries vis-à-vis the local state

Historically, China's dynasties have a long tradition of welcoming gentry, intellectuals and other elites to submit ideas (*zoushu* 奏书) to the emperor. Contemporary China also follows this tradition. Since 1978, the CCP has improved political and social governance, enhancing its confidence in listening to different opinions. Elites contribute to policy-making and implementation as the local state becomes more tolerant of the participatory governance at the grassroots level. For example, the central government has institutionalized the village election in order to provide great accountability and transparency in the village level (O'Brien & Han, 2009). According to Mills (1956, p. 18), the elites are members of 'those political, economic and military circles, which as an intricate set of overlapping small but dominant groups share decisions having at least national consequences', and he argues that 'in so far as national events are decided, the power elite are those who decide them'.

This thesis partly agrees with Mill and argues that intermediary figures in Chinese politics are elites who are close to but not belonging to state power, who either have a political influence on decision-making in the localities where they belong, or who can access higher formal authorities and be recognized by the central party-state. When the core actors in the environmental coalition are recognized as intermediary figures, such as congressional/consultative delegates or scientists, and can activate direct communication with the state authority and exert pressure, local officials are more likely to listen to their environmental grievance. These intermediaries can assume various patterns, such as delegates from congressional or consultative organizations brokering the confronted deadlocks, concerned environmental experts, or community workstations as local representative agents, but each plays the same function of political intermediation that engages in interest representation on behalf of societal claims and links them to policy processes by influencing policy-making in substantive ways.

One pattern of intermediaries is community organizations that interact between environmental activists, whether in a formal or an informal way, and the local states

in contemporary China. These intermediaries exist in society with social bases, and there will be discussions and negotiations between the originally contentious protesters and repressive states. Intermediary organizations in an informal way can be those community stations launched by ordinary citizens and recognized by local authority, or established thanks to the efforts of local governments, but they are not part of local government. The community stations offer some bottom-up channels and incentives for ordinary people to participate in the community wide decision-making process. For example, the liaison persons in the LPC delegates' community workstations can collect residents' grievance to the decision makers through their corresponding LPC delegates. Those LPC delegates also have the willingness to be responsive to their own constituencies and deliver information to the formal authority.

Formally, intermediary figures also exist in the institutions of local congress and consultative conference where representative bodies are distinctive. Local PC/CPPCC delegates have no formal decision-making power in the state, but they do have certain kinds of political weight as they have presumably elected positions in their localities. If these representative delegates, who are previously seen as the rubber stamps of the legislation, can stand out to speak for the environmental protesters and share with environmental values, and even build up the environmental advocacy coalition, it is quite possible for the coalition to gain sympathy from part of the officials through their institutional channels, and thus their voice could not be ignored by the local authority.

Another pattern of intermediaries is scientists who engage in the intermediary communication between environmental groups and the local state. They usually possess knowledge and power, and they hold a prestigious position in the public sector. Meanwhile, their opinions are more likely to be listened and not seen as threats to the party-state because of their professional expertise and moral standings. As policy issues need science, science becomes politicized and drawn into policy formulation. Scientists often face the choice concerning what role they should play in political debates and policy formation. Some environmental experts in China play an important role in advocating their environmental ideology and they usually share a network in these cases. Their network develops according to their common value-based or their scientific judgements of what is required in a specific situation. These figures are representatives of environmental values and have expertise or positions

vital for the coalition's capacity to implement their policy objectives. If their pro-environment value is threatened, the network of experts may be mobilized quickly and the policy coalition will be established. However, there is division of camps inside the scientific engineers because some tend to speak for the powerful SOEs. Therefore, it is not their academic positions that label them as intermediary figures, but their intermediary roles. Likewise, the identity of congressional or consultative delegates does not guarantee that it will play the function of intermediation.

The scientists within China's environmental advocacy coalition show the following characteristics. First, there is a pro-environment-based commitment from the actors in the network. Second, they are capable of influencing public opinion when relevant issues are at stake. Third, they tend to avoid stating themselves engaging into political activities because of the political sensitivity under the authoritarian system. Finally, they have force in the policy formulation and policy alteration through their own institutional or non-institutional connections with decision makers.

3.2.4 Intermediary figures and representative claims

To what extent has the environmental coalition been able to further environmental claims in China? The record so far has been mixed. On the one hand, the environmental movement has induced the central government to introduce many new measures aimed at preventing and reducing pollution, as well as to encourage civic engagement in environmental governance. On the other hand, the authoritarian system has shown resilience to some major demands by environmental groups, especially when those demands conflict with the central government's economic goals, regime stability or the vested interests of economic bureaucracies.

This thesis states that political intermediation initiated by intermediaries can make representative claims for less powerful environmentalists. Although intermediary figures exist outside the realm of government, they provide crude interest representation for their supporters through their advocacy activities and often influence policy-making in substantive ways. Political intermediation attempting to influence policy on behalf of environmental activists shows a form of substantive representation as 'whether the policies of the representatives are in the interest of the represented' (Pitkin, 1967, p. 209), or as what Guo and Musso (2007, p. 312)

described as ‘organization acting in the interests of its constituents, in a manner responsive to them’.

Citizens in China, including the environmental groups, continue to depend on intermediaries to share political weight within bureaucracy and bring demand to the local government, which, in turn, depends on these intermediaries to maintain contact with the public. Therefore, in an authoritarian system, representation can be seen as a process of claim-making and an iterative, ongoing and dynamic process in which a great variety of actors and organizations take part. Unlike democratic countries, authoritarian China does not possess a separation of power between central and local levels where environmental groups can represent diffuse interests through elections. In this thesis, the view of the representatives is no longer associated only with people in government, but with anyone broadly in politics, be they experts, elites or other persons known for their environmental advocacies. Although China is improving its legal framework to facilitate public challenges to administrative decisions, it is hard for environmental organizations to have much influence over issues that fall within the jurisdiction of specific government agencies to make interest claims. Protest politics are limited and threatening means achieving policy aim, and thus these intermediaries may repackage protesters’ claims into more conventional forums, such as serving on advisory boards of local governments or public authorities. These intermediaries serve as representatives for the green citizens by exposing them to the process of deliberation, soliciting their input and demonstrating responsiveness to their feedback.

Therefore, crude representation can be found in an authoritarian system when growing social actors hope to engage in the policy arena. Experts in an authoritarian regime can help the public to articulate their environmental interests in the formal authority. Pitkin (1967, p. 117) stated that representation serves to ‘speak for, act for, and look after the interests of their respective groups’. He regards experts as a sort of representatives, for ‘whether we seek professional help or services, we are asking to be represented’ (Pitkin, 1972, p. 135). In these cases, experts who are seen as intermediaries are not just disinterested problem-solvers who simply apply some uncontroversial procedures at hand. Rather, these experts are deeply immersed in society and act on behalf of which to provide some scientific opinions. The

appearance of knowledge can be a ‘social power’, and an expert, or anyone who is seen as knowledgeable, is reliable and has credible indicators to formal authority.

Can delegates of congressional and consultative agencies outside the formal authority represent the public’s environmental interests in an authoritarian system? Witnessing the continuous expansion and institutionalization of the local PC and CPPCC in China, we find they gradually make representative claims and become a channel of information delivery to the party-state. Under such channels, different sectorial and thematic interests could engage in the structured process of representation and consultation recognized by the state authority. Manion (2014) argues that the local congressional representation in China is a reflection of geographic parochialism, which means that congressional delegates view representation as parochial responsiveness to constituents and the biggest component of this responsiveness is to deliver public goods. In the field of environmental issues, the amounts of proposals to local PC and CPPCC about environmental protection have dramatically increased in recent years. In 2015, the PC in different levels had received 8,704 proposals of environmental issues, and the CPPCC in various levels had received 11,213 proposals (MEP, 2016). The number shows that in recent years, many congressional and consultative delegates in different levels take up environmental claims from civil society and intend to influence policy-making—and they are actually playing the role of intermediation.

3.2.5 Variations of environmental policy advocacy coalition in China

Under the framework of political intermediation, this thesis examines how relevant environmental activists have various forces in the policy process, and their distances to the local power result in the different types of environmental advocacy coalitions. In this research, intermediaries are those figures who dominate or keep active in the local environmental campaign, interact closely with the formal authority, and usually they had ‘their people’ inside the official organizations. They can leverage their positions in creating the coalition, and share their reputation in the public. The policy change could be achieved through policy-oriented learning from the gradual accumulation of information, such as scientific study, and political discussion in public spaces. Those peripheral activists, such as restricted NGOs or individual protesters, have only limited forces for the policy process without representation.

Some environmental civic organizations cannot establish effective conversations with the formal authority although they obtain support from the general public. In China's industrial project, generally speaking, the main decision makers are the Party Committee and the economic bureaucracy; the function of environmental department is limited. The social actors play important roles in influencing the policy outcome and various types of environmental coalitions and comparing empirical cases identifies patterns of intermediaries.

The first type is that local intermediaries engage in or establish the network of environmental coalition through ranges of local representation, such as existing or newly established representative organizations, to influence the policy process. For example, in Shenzhen, a group of delegates from the LPC, local CPPCC and the LPC delegates' workstations were active in the environmental coalition as elites' establishment for information communication. These environmental intermediaries acted as distinctive forms that fulfilled the core role of representing social views to advocate the environmental concerns to local officials. The environmental coalition was set up by these delegates and won support from both concerned public and sympathetic officials. They had strong political and social resources in mobilizing external actors, for example, through the media and formal/informal communication venues with local citizens. The function of these intermediary figures could be achieved without the superior interference when all the process of negotiation and debates remained within locality and did not generate larger protests.

The second type is that scientists have alliances with average citizens in a proactive campaign in the name of the public. For some scientists, they have connections and share moral standings with decision-making bodies. In the Xiamen anti-petrochemical campaign, experts and media elites drew on their network and built up a coalition, communicated environmental knowledge through new technology, and then managed to put this issue into the higher political salience, such as national CPPCC. After a learning process interactive with activists, local officials chose to open up institutional channels for them to engage. Substantial participation was realized because citizens took part in the EIA procedures and two public hearings in a meaningful way. The local experts were not able to influence the local state initially, but it was a project where these intermediaries who shared scientific reputation can use laws and regulations that were raised by the party-state, to challenge the local state.

The third type is that the scientists have alliances with peripheral activists and seek superior supporters to exert pressure to local state. In the Yunnan Nu River hydropower project dispute, local ENGOs played an active role in the advocacy of stopping the hydropower development plans in Nu areas. Although their works were strictly monitored by the local state, these civic organizations gained alliance from intermediary figures, such as experts and CPPCC delegates. These figures co-operated with the NGOs, which were good at launching campaigns, using media to mobilize the general public. In response, the environmental coalition gained sympathy from the central government and there were two interventions by SEPA and the then Premier Wen Jiabao.

The fourth type is the absence of intermediary figures playing the role of representation and brokerage, and the peripheral activists fail to establish effective environmental coalitions. For peripheral activists, their function varies according to the degree of social control from the authoritarian state towards civic organizations. In the Yunnan petroleum refinery project, there was the absence of intermediaries engaged in the environmental coalitions. All the local PC/CPPCC delegates and academic experts kept silent and some of them supported the SOEs in public. Local ENGOs attempted to seek alliance with these elites but their requests were rejected. Civic groups were not able to establish effective conversations with the formal authority and they did not obtain support from local elites to establish powerful coalitions. The civic protests were also repressed in the name of political stability by the local state.

3.3 Explaining Environmental Policy Changes in China

This research draws on evidence from extensive fieldworks and data of three regions in China, and it attempts to identify the reasons for the various configuration of power in environmental coalitions and different responses from governments. I then analyse conditions that appear to explain the policy change when there are dynamic structures of environmental coalitions in China. The formation of coalitions, interactions between environmental coalitions and decision-making bodies, and the resources and strategies used by environmental coalitions can be affected by the broad political and institutional environment in which the coalitions and the key members are embedded (see Figure 3.2).

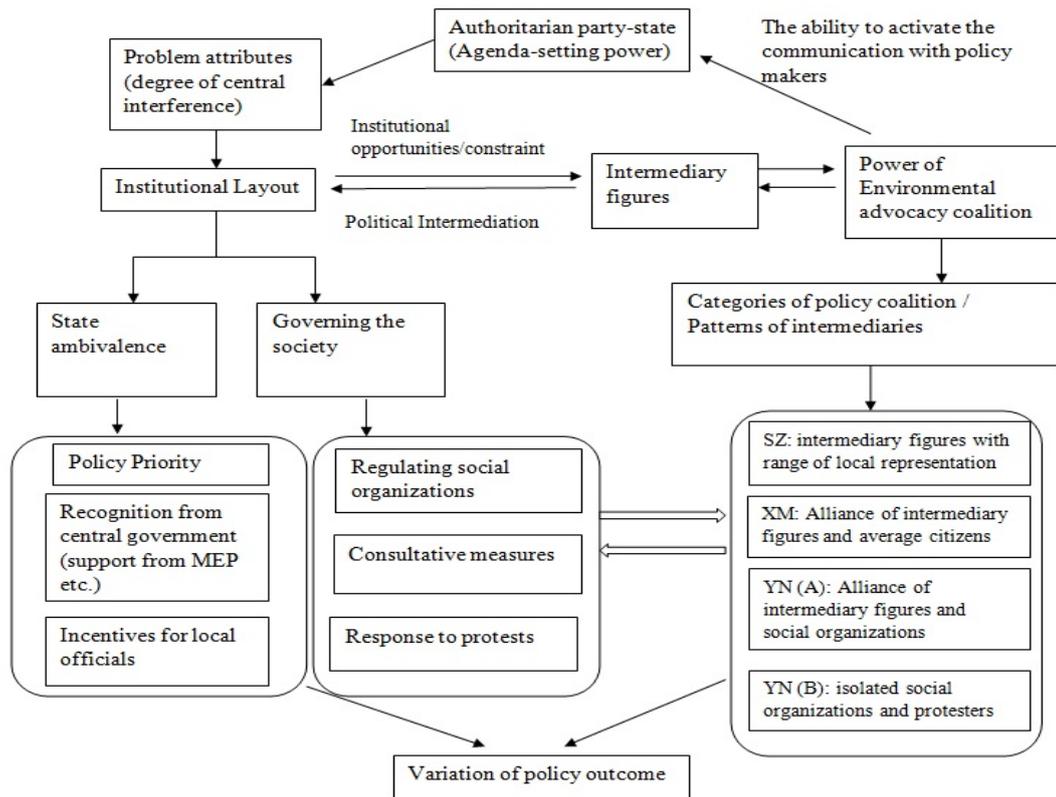


Figure 3.2. Political intermediation and environmental policy change in China

Generally speaking, the more central interference and larger powerful SOEs involved, the more top-down decision-making and the less interests for local officials to pursue. Thus, it is less likely representative claims made by intermediaries will be accepted or viewed, and even less likely that intermediary figures within the locality will exist. I make three new arguments in the China context.

First, the basic attributes of the problem, for example, the degree to which the central government is invested in the project, will affect the outcomes of environmental advocacy. In China, the environmental advocacy of intermediary figures can work if it is a local project without central intervention, or if it is a project where conflicts can be transformed up to superior decision-makers through political intermediations. The Chinese party-state sometimes tolerates public discussion within the local domain, although the public display of intra-elite dissent will challenge the CCP's 'performance legitimacy'. In Shenzhen's coal-fired power conflict, consensus was reached within the localities and the disputes did not generate larger social unrests. The direct representation of political intermediation was effective in revealing social demands that can be met without appearing as acts of resistance. Local business interests could be sacrificed to alleviate the social contention, especially when local

officials have alterations in choosing development models. In Xiamen, when the experts did not succeed in bargaining with local officials initially, they chose to put this issue up to national salience under the central political power structure—CPPCC. This action provided another change to frame their opposition issues and social mobilization, and asserted pressures to the local officials. The local government sacrificed economic benefits but the central government did not have any loss because the project was relocated to another place.

Second, environmental protests and public opinions strengthen the environmental coalition's bargaining power, but will not necessarily lead to policy change. In democracies, social movements or protests exercise influence on the government and force the latter to adjust policies, mainly through electoral pressure. That is to say, citizens' access to democratic electoral institutions forces politicians to pay attention to citizens' grievances and reactions (Bustein, 1999). In the Chinese context, O'Brien and Li (2005) suggest that collective action is typically but one factor in a long chain of events—a factor that at times can play a crucial role. More recently, economic growth creates the emergence of a middle class that pursues a better quality of life and the rise of post-materialism and environmentalism changes public opinion on environmental issue in the society. Public opinion that supports the environmental coalition's position can be a significant resource to environmentalists. The authoritarian state also pays attention to its public opinion to protect its legitimacy and to have a better chance of surviving crisis. Strong contentious pressure can move a group's issue onto the government's agenda or render this as an ad hoc priority requiring urgent action (Cai, 2014).

However, social actors differ in their ability to generate pressure on the party-state due to the forcefulness of their resistance and the cost incurred by the government in adjusting the policies are different (Cai, 2010). Local states can alter public opinion by using its dominant official propaganda. Moreover, local states can still use coercive or non-coercive methods to de-escalate mass movements when local actors cannot build effective conversations with officials by the support of intermediary figures, especially when local officials have no interest in allowing such opposition.

Third, political ambivalence means that local state cadres are exposed to both strict policy demands from their superiors (including SOEs) and the social pressure. The choice of the local state itself is also important. In the Yunnan anti-petroleum protest,

the provincial government faces competing incentives, including accommodating bureaucratic interest, managing the social contentions and keeping the moral establishment from the public. The central government insisted on and pushed this project for its development logic, so the local government had to insist on the central policy willingness. Therefore, when interacting with environmental social contention, the flexibility of the local state varies based on the forcefulness of state decision policies and the local social circumstances. The local state is forced to consider and needs to reconcile diverging interests and opinions, and these efforts will constrain the local state's ability to keep its autonomy.

Institutional opportunities or constraints contribute to the resources mobilization of environmental coalitions and their access to policy process. Opposing official preferences in authoritarian China are significant in providing and restricting possibilities of policy engagement. Environmental problems are typically compartmentalized and conflicted as different bureaucracies in various levels attempt to respond to issues in their jurisdiction. Institutions of public participation provide channels to increase the environmental coalition resources including laws and scientific information. Many institutional innovations are provided with the feature of deliberation, such as public hearings, participation in EIA procedures and systems of complaints, and many consultative associations and forums are set up to deliberate opinions. Local environmental advocates hope to make use of these legal frameworks to get better access to the political agenda while local states sometimes have their different thinking. At the national level, the attitude of the MEP is supportive to social engagement, but often not able to win over the powerful NDRC and the interests' connections between business and local states.

The state ambivalence over policy priority also has a significant effect on actors' pursuit of their interests. In terms of certain issue policy, the party-state continuously changes its priority, and thus the incentives of local states also change. When the demands of disadvantaged groups are positively connected to the new policy agenda, their interests are likely to be accommodated. Environmental actors are usually politically weak because they often lack strong supporters or allies in the decision-making circles compared with developmental actors. In Shenzhen's coal-fired power plant project, debates appeared when the national clean energy plan and coal pollutions emission standard were revised. The plant contradicted the central target of

‘establishing the large, and cancelling the small’ (*shangdaxiaoxiao* 上大下小). Therefore, opportunities arise for opposition and their interests are likely to be accommodated. In the Yunnan oil refinery project, this is part of national energy security, which closely concerns the CCP’s military defence, so interests of developmental coalitions are not likely to be challenged.

3.4 Summary

This chapter demonstrates that social actors have entered China’s environmental policy-making process, and it challenges a framework that sees China’s policy-making as a top-down procedure managed by the authoritarian state. Collaborations and resource mobilization among Chinese environmentalists in the environmental policy disputes show the Chinese state can sometimes tolerate an opposing voice against state policy. However, unlike democratic countries where weak actors can achieve their policy preference through institutional channels such as elections to voice their group interests, Chinese environmental actors are politically weak because they often lack strong allies or supporters in the decision-making circle. This chapter argues the very structure of environmental coalition and the intermediaries between local activists and decision makers matter for the local flexibility.

I argue that in a single party-state, local states are more likely to respond to local concerns when intermediary figures establish the communication or organization channels between local officials and environmental activists. These intermediary figures share moral standings or political weight within the communist party but do not necessarily share formal standings. Local states’ responses vary in China because they have different interests and incentives. At the same time, the uncertainty within bureaucratic structure can be interpreted as inspired opportunities. The successful advocacy over policy change hinges on the role of intermediaries who are able to activate the channels of communication and do not threaten the authority of local states. These intermediaries have capabilities in resources mobilization, and they make alliances with external actors, such as public opinion and neutral officials. They have ability to strategically interact with central state actors and to some extent can make representative claims for their constituencies. In the next three chapters, I will present the empirical cases in detail to see how different types of environmental policy coalitions interact with local officials who manage the environmental activism in various ways.

Chapter 4 Intermediaries, Representation and Responsiveness: Environmental Advocacy in Shenzhen

This chapter argues that local authority does not always stand in an opposite position towards environmental contention although its primary targets are economic development and political stability. In this region, no social unrests take place or environmental disputes resolve before the conflict overflows to ‘*naoda*’ (make it bigger 闹大). Meanwhile, the local state adopts an attitude of tolerance and negotiation with environmental coalitions. However, as far as we know about China's bureaucratic politics, local authoritarian officials prefer to choose economic growth and suppress protests to maintain stability. In the context of Shenzhen, the question arises: why does Shenzhen have a higher degree of accommodation?

By looking at the combination of advocacy coalition, *de facto* representation and state responsiveness, this chapter tries to explain the ways in which intermediary figures in the coalition make their representative claims and establish communications with local authority that would like to listen to them. The distinctive ranges of representation and articulation of social communities make the Shenzhen case salient. Four empirical investigations that consider the relationship between environmental advocacy and state responsiveness include descriptions of functions of intermediary highlighted here: Nanshan Yueliangwan Waste Incineration Plant Conflict, Hong Kong & Shenzhen Refuse Landfill Conflict, Baguang Coal-fired Power Plant Dispute and Dapeng LNG Reclamation Dispute.

The four investigations show that local legislative and consultative delegates have much influence on the policy process by exercising moderate supervision and communicating with formal authority. Individual cases may vary, but we can figure out the distinctive ways in which intermediation processes are demonstrated by different kinds. Chronologically among cases, we can find the evolution of representation from the Local People's Congress (LPC) delegates who follow the path from authoritarian parochialism to policy representation, which means delegates fulfill their responsiveness from providing public goods accountable to their own constituency to gradually engage in general policy debates. Close linkage between intermediary figures and the masses facilitates the shifting of government's issue agenda. Bureaucratic experience and responsive government also make local officials

narrow policy choices and determine what is the acceptable strategy for problem solving.

This chapter shows there is no uniform form of intermediary between social activists and local state in Shenzhen. Instead we can see the mixture of different types of intermediaries through which local state listens to social interests: reconstructing the pre-existing organizations embedded in local communities, concerning the outside threat as a unity, and adapting to the political intermediation from LPC delegates. The Shenzhen case shows that local states in China can, to some extent, accommodate civil society through intermediary organizations and intermediary figures.

In order to identify how social activists challenge state authority through political intermediation without threatening the government, this chapter is divided into four sections. First, I will briefly describe how China's local political system is organized and operated, and then I will indicate the main political and social reforms in Shenzhen with its social robustness. Second, I will introduce emerging forms of articulation in local communities. Third, I will analyze the different patterns of adaptation and accommodation, but in a consistent manner, and how they are gradually institutionalized through political intermediation by case studies. Finally, I will draw conclusions. These cases imply that local authority in China now has more options for innovation and for more being responsive, especially when there is the existence of active intermediary figures and intermediary organizations within advocacy coalitions.

4.1 Political Institutions and Governance Innovations in Shenzhen

4.1.1 How is local China ruled?

This chapter is a study of local governance and state accommodation to social activism. It focuses on institutional innovation, local representation, intermediary organizations and citizens' participation at local levels. 'Local government' in this chapter refers to government at the municipal level. Municipal officials deserve more attention for at least two reasons. First, decentralization and economic reform have brought about significant changes to local government in the process of rapid urbanization, which may provide potential political responses for China's future political development. Second, politics at the municipal level has its own dynamics somewhat different from politics at the central or provincial level. Local officials,

especially at the municipal level, are both the policy implementers and policy-makers between the provincial levels and county /township level, which made its function more complex.

To answer the previous question of under what circumstances are local authorities likely to accommodate social demand, we should pay special attention to the dominant role of the local Communist Party Committee, local government structure, the legislative structure, and the relationships between these three organizations. Among these local authorities, the Party Committee is no doubt the most influential decision-making body even though the People's Congress is constitutionally the power centre and the government is constitutionally the executive body. Consequently, the municipal Party secretary, instead of the mayor, is the most influential decision maker of at the municipal level (see Figure 4.1).

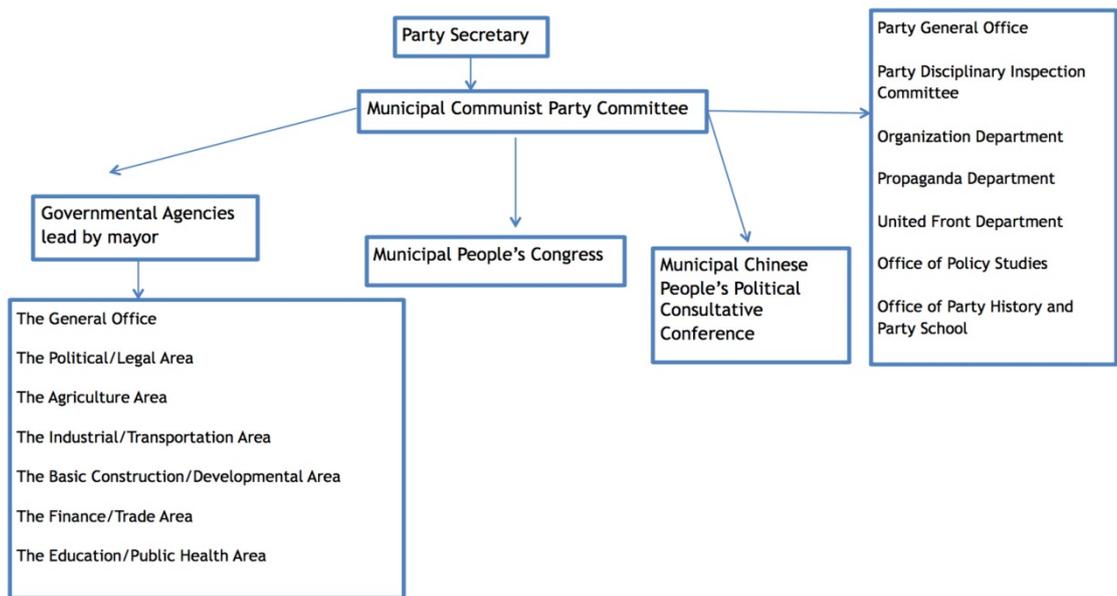


Figure 4.1 China's municipal bureaucratic structure

The Communist Party Committee is the power centre of municipal governance in the PRC. The Party is a vast organization that theoretically operates parallel to government, but in reality is intimately intertwined with government. The municipal Party Congress officially elects the Committee every five years. The Party apparatus at the municipal level usually consists of the following key organizations: Municipal Communist Party Standing Committee, Party General Office, Party Disciplinary Inspection Committee, Organization Department, Propaganda Department, United

Front Department, Office of Policy Studies, Office of Party History and Party School. One Party Secretary heads the Party Standing Committee.

The complex municipal government bureaucracy often comprises seven areas based on function: general, political/legal, agricultural/irrigation, industrial/transportation, basic construction/development, finance/trade and education/public health. However, as the result of bureaucratic organization expansion, local governments are burdened with staff overflow and drastic governmental budget increases. In China's local political system, decisions are formalized at meetings attended by relevant Party and government representatives. The decisions of the peak decision-making body, the Standing Committee of local Party, are headed down to the deputy Party secretaries, who are responsible for their implementation by party agencies and government departments. Broad policy pronouncements and guidelines are communicated to Party members. Recently, the Party has become much more actively engaged in governing, particularly in economic matters, which should be the responsibility of the local government departments.

4.1.2 Political system and administrative reform in Shenzhen

Shenzhen used to be a city of special design (*jihuadanlie* 计划单列); now it is a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and deputy-provincial city. In November 1988, the State Council approved Shenzhen as having a provincial level of economic management power with a specially designed financial plan. This reform facilitates Shenzhen's process of obtaining approval directly from the central government whilst making its policy-making and implementation more efficient. In July 1992, the NPC empowered the Shenzhen PC and the Shenzhen government with the right to make laws and regulations. The special right of making law means Shenzhen can make its rules more autonomously than other cities in terms of economy, social culture and municipal management.

After eight administrative reforms since 1982, Shenzhen has explored its own characteristics of bureaucratic system. The main guidelines of these administrative reforms is to streamline governmental organs, separate the Party and administration according to their functions, separate government and business, and the municipal agencies is not complied to the provincial responding agencies. The number of government agencies has reduced from 46 to 31 until the year 2009.

Shenzhen was the pilot of the super ministerial reform (*dabuzhigaige* 大部制改革) in 1986. This reform intended to combine the original individual agencies into different management systems and to improve administrative efficiency. In 2002, the 16th NPC chose Shenzhen as the pilot city to launch the model of ‘Three Separations of Executive Functions’ to explore the paths of separating the functions of decision-making, policy implementation and supervision. The trial was not practically implemented because of conflicting interests among different agencies. As a result, the ‘Project of Shenzhen Deeply Administrative Reform Trial’ was published in 2004. This reform intended to delegate administration power and explore the structure of ‘level-one government, level-two management, and level-three public service’ (Shenzhen municipal government, 2004). Municipal government was set with three layers: municipal government, district government and public service agencies at the community level. Meanwhile, the reform also divided some key government agencies between decision-making and implementation (see Figure 4.2). The reform aimed to transform the municipal authority from ‘government’ to ‘governance’ and include more social actors in local participatory governance.

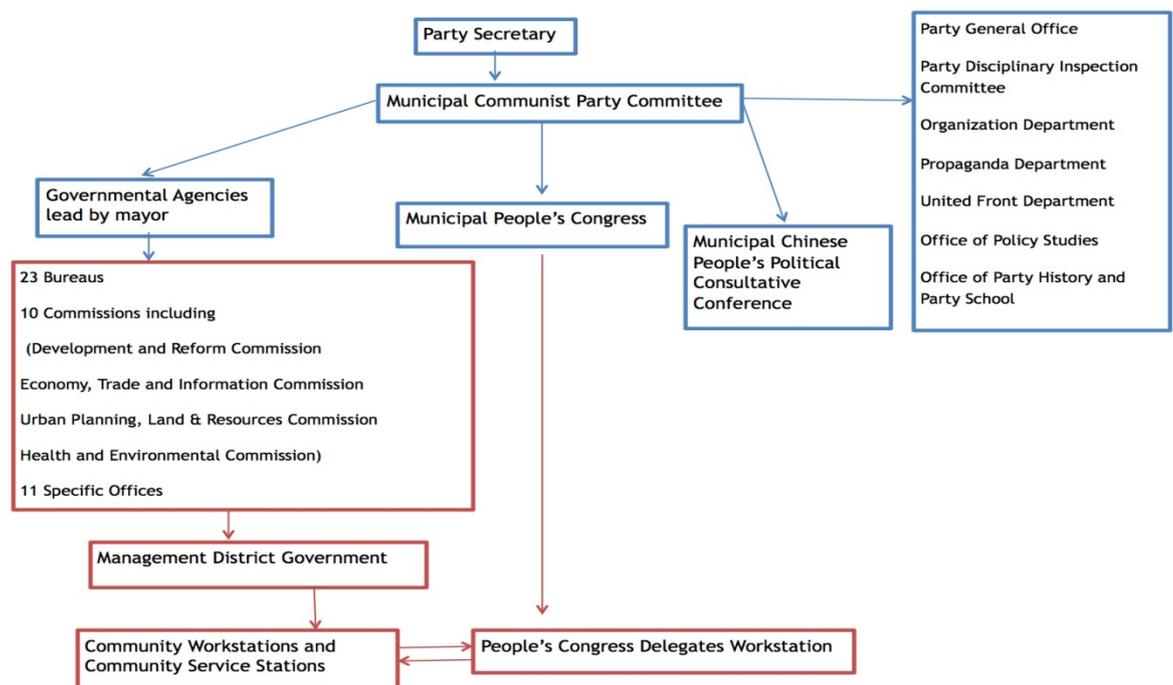


Figure 4.2 Shenzhen municipal bureaucracies and local representation of communities

4.1.3 Social robustness of Shenzhen

Shenzhen has been a pioneer of local civic engagement in public policies. It is more

advanced than other cities in China for its innovations and openness. Citizenship in Shenzhen was spurred within the last 30 years after the ‘reform and opening up’ policy.

From a demographic perspective, Shenzhen is an immigrant city with almost all its citizens coming from other part of the country. The existing social structure has been reshaped and reorganized. The percentage of citizens who received higher education is relatively high and many among them are intellectuals and social elites. Therefore, they have more requirements to the local government and hope the government to be more accountable to their interests.

Meanwhile, Shenzhen is a pilot city with a mature market economy in China. Capitalism creates public awareness and facilitates the spurring of social organizations. Social actors in Shenzhen connect with each other through enterprise organizations rather than traditional ways of relatives or *danwei*. More than 60% of the population associate themselves with enterprises. The reorganized population also means citizens in Shenzhen are more willing to construct a new social community because they need a social identity.

The unit for citizens' public activities is not only based on neighbourhood communities (*Shequ* 社区), but also on the Internet. Owing to the high level of Internet usage, online users account for more than 90% of the total population in Shenzhen (Shenzhen Special Economically Zone News, 2 January 2016). The local authority loosened its restriction over media and provides a more open environment for them. As the earliest reform pilot in China, Shenzhen has been less affected by the plan economy, and the market economy has much more influence on the development of civil society. In other words, the local state does not have too much of an historical and administrative burden with authoritarian governance pattern.

The then-governmental leadership also supported the development of civil society, especially during 2005–2010. People in Shenzhen are relatively rational because they have experience in directly negotiating with the government, in particular issues through online consultative means. The ‘three musketeers of internet’ and the ‘online inquiring politics’ were very popular during that time. The then-municipal mayor Xu Zongheng even mentioned the phrase ‘civil society’ in public circumstances several

times, as it was still the taboo in China's official discourse.¹

Along with the development of the Internet, opinions and comments online had begun to affect people's everyday life. In 2006, *Lianghui* (local PC and CPPCC), Southern Metropolis Daily co-operated with a local website to launch an 'inquire to the mayor' programme, and they received positive feedback from Shenzhen citizens. Shenzhen's mayor and seven deputy mayors paid great attention to the project and answered the questions online. Until 2008, the participation forms of 'inquire to Mayor' and 'inquire to provincial governor' have spread from Shenzhen to the whole Guangdong province. According to Zhong Haifan, director of Shenzhen Internet Information Office, Shenzhen people have a tradition of discussing public affairs and like to provide suggestions to the policy-making bodies online. The online public voices were directly sent to the leadership of Shenzhen. In 2014, Shenzhen municipal leadership dealt with citizens' complaints online for more than 200 cases, among which the municipal Party secretary and mayor handled over 100 cases.

4.1.4 Community reform in Shenzhen

4.1.4.1 Community participation

A community is a social unit of any size that shares common values or has certain connections and characteristics. In contemporary cities, the community is the basic unit for urban construction and social governance. In authoritarian regimes, the command-and-control of the authority to the society indicates the residential tie of local areas. In this system, society totally depends on the state because citizens can only obtain the right of habitation through state distribution. In China, a residential community (*shequ* 社区) is expected to function as the self-governance of residents, although local governments still play the dominant role.

Since the period of marketization, Shenzhen advanced from other inner cities with its commercialization of residences. In transition to urbanization, local government obtained the revenue by transferring the land to real estate developers. Those developers constructed the land into the commodity houses so people can choose to

¹ The term was mentioned in the conference of Guangdong People's Congress Standing Committee in early 2009, see http://www.sz.gov.cn/cn/xxgk/zfxxgj/zwdt/200902/t20090216_5289936.htm, or <http://hk.crntt.com/doc/1008/8/7/5/100887596.html?coluid=7&kindid=0&docid=100887596>, accessed on 22 May 2016.

purchase their own houses in the market. The social relationships changed when the citizens became the property-right owners from the belongings of certain work units.

The original social organization structure—the residential committee—could not adapt to the new social-organizational changes. In Yantian District, the pilot in Shenzhen, the local authority established a model of ‘One Committee, Two stations’ (Shenzhen Party Committee, 2005). This model tried to promote the self-governance of neighbourhood committee and reorganized the social governance, changing the community structure from government-dominated to society-dominated. During 2002–2004, each committee in Shenzhen established two stations--community workstation and community service station, undertaking the task of self-governance, administration and services. In 2005, the community workstation was deprived of the residential committee, which made itself the governmental grassroots administrative body. The staff in the workstation belongs to the governmental employees, responsible for the governmental functions extending to the communities. The community service station mainly undertakes the social services and is registered as non-governmental organization. Meanwhile, the new residential committee transferred itself into the residence self-governance organization, where members were directly elected from the community residents (including residents who do not possess the Shenzhen *Hukou*).

The reform clarified the relations between the community workstations and the residential committees in Shenzhen, and promoted the enthusiasm for the residents’ participation and community cohesion. According to ‘the Trial Methods of Shenzhen Community Construction Work’, the workstations are platforms set by the government, and acting as organizers and providers for the government to implement as administrative service (Shenzhen Party Committee, 2005). Residential committees mainly take up the responsibilities of self-governance, including self-education, self-supervision and self-service work. In the previous community governance system in China, the role of residential committees was quite ambiguous. Committees had to both undertake residential affairs and governmental affairs within the community. It actually acted as the grassroots administrative organization busy tackling with governmental affairs whilst ignoring the residential affairs.

After the reform, citizens could use the pre-existing channels of organization to participate. The residential committees are empowered with the right of deliberating

government's work. This enables the committee to some extent get rid of the function of the government, and return to the status of self-governance and act as the *de-facto* spokesperson of local residents. The establishment of self-governance of residential committee protects the right for residents, and promotes grassroots democracy. Whether residents who have *Hukou* or not, they could both express their opinions and demands in the community activities from the direct election in residential committee.

4.1.4.2 Adaptation of Party control in the communities

The local party-state still hopes to develop grassroots governing resources within neighbourhood communities. In Nanshan district, local authority absorbed different categories of Party members. It incorporated the original Party members who were arranged by the work units (*danwei*) into the communities' Party organizational system, especially for those Party members who have left previous organizational relations, such as members from non-residential population and retired people. In 2003, Nanshan had only one community Party branch and 3,400 Party members. Until 2013, the number has reached to 66 and 8383, respectively (Hu, 2015, p. 65).

Meanwhile, the district also incorporated all categories of Party organizations into community governance. Party groups have penetrated into streets and houses, and over 20 thousand members were registered in the community Party systems. Local government mobilized the Party members and governmental officials to be elected as members of homeowners' committee, to 'make the Party members stand out to represent resident interests'. As a result, political and organizational resources within the authority have been embedded into the society, linking the social communities with the governmental governance, and achieving the citizens' participation in order with the authority's set of rules. The penetration of the 'grassroots organs of state power' in the local community is meaningful either in their representation and roles.

4.1.4.3 Historical legacies of dialogue and compromise

On the one hand, political resources of the state penetrated into the society by enlarging its Party membership in community level. On the other hand, through the institutional mechanisms of the LPC/CPPCC, the Chinese party-state hopes to incorporate resources outside the formal authority as the convergence for representation. The LPC delegates' workstation is one example.

Shenzhen citizens demonstrate a strong capability of political participation, and the

local government can interact positively with the citizens through intermediary forms. For example, in the Yueliangwan community, 12 members of a homeowners' committee volunteered to become the liaison persons responsible to the municipal and district level of PC delegates. Residents could come to the workstation to register their problems at any time, and could also use methods of telephone, fax, mails and emails to contact the liaison persons. The responsibility of the station includes tasks such as organizing PC delegates to communicate with residents each month, handing in some public issues of the community to the relative bureau authorized by the LPC delegates, organizing homeowners and communicating certain governmental bureau, academics, and media to negotiate with the problems.

Since the establishment of first PC delegates' workstation in Nanshan district, format of stationary point of local delegates was promoted and generalized in Shenzhen. After pilot experiments in all districts, Shenzhen has established near 100 PC delegates' community workstations. The interest expression of residents in Shenzhen has transferred from the irrational methods, such as attacking the officials, street protests, to much more institutional ways, such as through the LPC delegates, Party members, or community workstations. The LPC delegates could get to the public, and enhance the trust and reputation of themselves, and improve the connections to their constituencies. Meanwhile, these delegates become the policy explainers and promoters within this community, and undertake the role of sending information and opinions to local policy makers.

4.2 Case Study: Unraveling Intermediation Patterns

4.2.1 Community embeddedness: Nanshan waste incineration plant conflict

This case was in the initial stage of an environmental advocacy coalition launched by Shenzhen citizens, and it established the participation legacies that LPC delegates were responsive to their representative regions. The establishment of LPC delegates' workstations takes the form that is pioneering to local residential committees as the mirror of the state. Environmental activists established the stations parallel to the local community, and they gradually began to be recognized and permitted by the local government. Meanwhile, local government is responsive to the social needs through these workstations and citizens are able to express their complaints through the liaison mechanism, which is locally embedded in the neighbourhood communities.

4.2.1.1 Background

Yuliangwan was a large living community in Nanshan district, with more than 50,000 residents and 12 residential communities. In 2001, the Nanshan waste incineration power plant was selected in Yueliangwan community, and the decision caused strong opposition from property owners. Shenzhen government planned to build a waste incineration plant in Yueliangwan area, which was the second waste incineration plant in Shenzhen after the Qingshui River waste incineration plant. Meanwhile, the government planned to establish a Recycling Economic Industrial Park in this area, including refuse disposal, sludge disposal, heat energy utilization, and etc. However, the Yueliangwan area was one of the earliest developed places where some heavily polluted companies assembled here. There were five power plants in Yueliangwan, collaborated with other factories such as printing and dyeing mill, chemical plants. Therefore, for a very long time, pollution in the community was very serious and had badly contamination to local residents.

4.2.1.2 Owners' protests and the establishment of local PC delegates' workstation

Residents in Yueliangwan were very unsatisfied with the site selection because this area was already assembled with many heavily polluting factories. They organized an alliance to protest, a sit-in at the project location for 24 hours, and went to the government to make complaints. Faced with the growing anger, the then Nanshan Street Office Party secretary asked LPC delegates to acquire the information and report to the Shenzhen government. The Street Office was the lowest grassroots governmental body that directly manages the residential community affairs in China. After the intermediation of these delegates, Nanshan government could be able to dialogue with the homeowners and potential protests were prevented. In order to ensure that homeowners had better understanding of the waste incineration plant, Nanshan District government invited the homeowners' representatives and the LPC delegates to inspect the construction situation of other plants in Korea, Japan and Macau. After this trip, the representatives raised some suggestions to the local government and the officials accepted.

Some homeowners realized that LPC delegates were a good medium for them to communicate with local officials instead of using violence, and the government also was concerned to establish the liaison mechanism in the grassroots LPC delegation to

prevent contention. China's LPC delegates are not the full-time employed job in delegation, because they do not have enough time to investigate the situation, fixed offices to listen to residents' complaints, and most importantly, they do not earn salary from the delegation work, which result to the lack of initiative. All delegates still have other social positions and jobs, either in public or private sectors. Therefore, Nanshan Street Office proposed to set up a position of LPC delegates' co-ordinator, which would facilitate public opinions to be heard by the local authorities. The homeowners who were enthusiastic in the communities' public affairs could voluntarily become the co-ordinators.

Ao Jiannan, who was invited to inspect the overseas waste incineration plant, set up the Yueliangwan PC delegates' workstation under the 'instruction' of the Nanshan Street Office Party Committee. He also was the director of the Yueliangwan homeowners' committee and undertook the role of PC delegates' co-ordinator. Twelve co-ordinators in Yueliangwan residential committee were responsible to collect the opinions from the residents living here. Owners could come to the station to narrate their problems at any time, and they could also use the methods of telephone, fax, mails and emails. Co-ordinators categorized the issues, made investigations authorized by local PC delegates, summarized into suggestions and reported to the LPC delegates. In April 2005, Yueliangwan LPC delegates' workstation was officially established, and this symbolized the initial institutionalization of intermediaries between the government and the local communities.

4.2.1.3 Liaison mechanism of grassroots People's Congress

Residents in Yueliangwan demonstrated a high degree of participation in making environmental complaints, and any future industrial projects had to receive supervision from the local residents. The responsibilities of the co-ordinators included tasks such as organizing LPC delegates to communicate with residents each months, handing in some public issues of the community to the relevant bureaus authorized by the LPC delegates, organizing owners and liaising certain governmental bureaus, academics and media in negotiation. Since 2004, residents in Yueliangwan community had more than 300 cases of complaints on the emissions of power plants and chemical factories. Based on their complaints, LPC delegates raised proposals to the government.

The local state also paid much attention to the positive interaction with the communities and regarded it as the innovation of social governance. Since the establishment of the first LPC delegates' workstation, the format of stationary point of local delegates was promoted in Shenzhen. The promotion of delegates' workstation was written into the Annual Working Plan in the Municipal PC Standing Committee. The Working Plan on Trial Promoting LPC Delegates Workstations indicated that delegates' workstations should be adjunct by the residential committees or homeowners' committee in each community.

National and Provincial PC delegates could also engage in the community workstations. The Working Plan required the delegates to receive visitors at least once every two months. Residents could also irregularly reflect the problems to the co-ordinators and the co-ordinators should give feedback to the delegates. In other words, these co-ordinators acted as the 'assistant' for the LPC delegates in their corresponding communities. Delegates should transfer these issues to the LPC Standing Committees as specialized documents according to their belonging ranges. After this, the Standing Committee will organize the 'inquiring meeting' regularly or 'make appointment with the governmental officials collectively' by the delegates, to urge the problem to be solved by the local bureaus. Overall, the co-ordinator's role is to provide the ideal place for citizens to express their complaints. They can deliver information to decision makers even though they do not have the right to solve the problem directly.

4.2.1.4 Citizens' negotiation organization

In the Yueliangwan community, a loosed organization was set up, called 'Nantou Peninsular Environmental Contact Group (NPECG)'. The founder of this group was also Ao Jiannan, who was the co-ordinator of the Yueliangwan LPC delegates' workstation. He was the vice director of NPECG, and the director was held by a leading official from Environmental Protection and Water Bureau (EPWB) in Nanshan district. This group was a civic public interests (*gongyi*) organization recorded in the Nanshan EPWB, but this organization has not been registered in the Civil Affairs Bureau. According to Ao, this group is not a NGO, but acts as platform for solving environmental disputes among different parties. This group has more than 30 core members and over 200 participants. Half of the members are retired persons, and only seven people keep up the daily affairs, who the residents' representatives

from the communities. Since established in 2002, NPECG helps to resolve a large amount of environmental issues for over 10 years, ranging from the air pollution governance, community garbage classification, to the pavement preservation. This platform constructed triangle relations among complaining residents, the government and the companies. Ao thought this model was an effective channel in dealing with all kinds of environmental mass incidents.²

NPECG also integrated various resources to raise environmental issues. Many environmentalists and NGOs hope to learn from the NPECG. Ao is willing to pass on his operational experiences to them. He also co-operated with the lawyers and asked them to provide professional function in issues like the Shenzhen Bay water protection and SZ–HK refuse landfill conflict. It is not a typical environmental NGO in China, and it is more likely to become a negotiated vector between community residents, companies and the government.

4.2.2 Consensus against outsiders: Hong Kong & Shenzhen refuse landfill conflict

Shenzhen enjoys its extraordinary geographic status with its proximity to Hong Kong. The convenience of the geography makes Shenzhen officials more easy to learn from Hong Kong, not only economy and technology, but also political structure and reforms. There already exists Shenzhen–Hong Kong’s official linkage mechanism to solve correlative issues because of their common interests. Specifically, this case indicates that the Party in Shenzhen is willing to take up its local social interests and be responsible to the residents under the function of intermediaries. Local social groups, such as NPECG that have been influential in Shenzhen after 10 years’ development, also took up the role in co-operation with Hong Kong civic organizations. It is argued that under the intermediation of local PC/CPPCC delegates, the local authority in Shenzhen is positively willing to stand in the same alliance with the local groups and cope with the environmental issue with the outside threat. It is possible that under the authoritarian regime, local representative organs can reconcile the interests of the local authority and social needs to reach consensus when facing the outside threat.

4.2.2.1 Background

²Interview SZ04, 26 January 2015

The Hong Kong Refuse Landfill has influenced Shenzhen citizens for over 10 years. On 8 November 2013, there was a fire in Fengling and Daguling in Hong Kong, which was just opposite the Shenzhen territory with an ocean apart. Half of Shenzhen domain could smell the fire, which badly polluted the air quality in Futian, Luohu, Nanshan and Bao'an Districts. The concern of the HK Refuse Landfill suddenly intensified after this fire incident. The news from Hong Kong also disturbed Shenzhen citizens in 2013: the Hong Kong government planned to enlarge its existing refuse landfill area by three times to 200 hectares. The enlarged places were located in Tunmen Longgutan village, which was just separated by the Shenzhen Bay, and the distance to the Shenzhen Shekou Peninsular was less than 10 km.

Shenzhen citizens disagreed with the site selection and they hoped the Hong Kong government could change the policy. This environmental coalition included citizens, environmental organizations and LPC delegates, and they obtained support from the Shenzhen government. Shenzhen citizens realized that Shenzhen–Hong Kong (SZ–HK) has linked themselves into the interests' stakeholders in terms of environmental issues. Meanwhile, the local government was willing to listen to citizens' environmental claims by challenging the outside threat.

Shenzhen and Hong Kong has already established the initial connections on environmental issue on governmental level. The SZ–HK linkage mechanism of environmental emergent incidents was established in early 2007, including environmental protection issues. These two sides are expected to not only notify each other of general information, but also discuss the gains and losses of each other and some explicit problems of certain plants. However, since the social movement and anti-mainlanders movement emerged in Hong Kong, the central government hopes to ensure Hong Kong's benefits as the priority and sacrifice the interest of Shenzhen. So when Hong Kong started their EIA of the Tunmen refuse landfill, the central government did not take Shenzhen citizens' opinion into account. The fire showed this mechanism still had much blindness in handling environmental protection issue and information asymmetry between Hong Kong and Shenzhen.

4.2.2.2 Civic voice from Shenzhen

The early opposition came from the civic groups. Nantou Peninsula Environmental Contact Group (NPECG) played an active role in the campaign as a strong civic

opinion. The group has more than 10 years of environmental issues experiences since the Yueliangwan conflict, so they were sensitive to any possible environmental pollution to Shenzhen.

On 1 July 2013, the Hong Kong legislative council passed the application to allocate 3,000 thousand HKD to the Tunmen dumping area extension, which drew the attention of the NPECG members. If Hong Kong blows a south-easterly wind, Shenzhen Nanshan is exactly down wind of the Tunmen waste-yard. The NPECG members began to go across the border to take actions. Ao and other environmentalists investigated Tunmen village and talked to the Tunmen District Parliament legislators to express their complaints. The NPECG members told the legislators that Shekou citizens were very unsatisfied about this expansion project and suggested incineration rather than the landfill to deal with the waste. During their trip, they found that Tunmen citizens of Hong Kong also had complaints on the project and hoped the Hong Kong government would rethink the expansion plan. This means citizens in these two regions have common interests in this issue.

4.2.2.3 Engagement of LPC delegates and policy outcome

Some LPC delegates worried about this fire and its potential danger to Shenzhen. Yang Qin, a business entrepreneur and LPC delegate, wrote a proposal on 10 November 2013 to the local government to express his opposition. On 11 November 2013, just three days after the fire, he held a meeting with some other delegates and they decided to make suggestions to the government. Twenty Shenzhen LPC delegates proposed the ‘Suggestion of Urgent Appeal to SZ–HK Governments by Preventing Hong Kong Waste Pollution’ to the municipal PC, which sent this suggestion to the then Shenzhen mayor, Xu Qin.

On 25 November 2013, Xu Qin went to Hong Kong to attend the SZ–HK Cooperation Meeting. During this meeting, he talked to the Hong Kong Chief Secretary of Administration, Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor, and gave her the suggestions drafted by the Shenzhen delegates. Lam declared ‘sorry’ to this incident and did not want to make any more decisions. Delegate Yang Qin questioned this ‘sorry’ and many Shenzhen media wrote reports on ‘What do you mean by “sorry” (*buhaoyisi shi*

shenmeyisi 不好意思是什么意思) ?'³

These delegates became the key actors in environmental advocacies. Coming back from Hong Kong, they decided to mobilize citizens and use public opinion to urge the Shenzhen government to pressure to negotiate with Hong Kong. On 16 December 2013, some Shenzhen LPC and CPPCC delegates got together and discussed this issue in the Futian library. Some environmental scientists also joined this discussion. Before this meeting, some delegates started to collect public opinion and went to Hong Kong to investigate.

Twenty delegates launched a petition on the LPC website on this proposal and very quickly 254 LPC delegates signed the petition of 'Appeal to jointly resolve Hong Kong's Waster in Shenzhen'. Assembling the social contention in Shenzhen, local officials once again showed the disagreement of refuse landfill to the Hong Kong government. However, the central government appeared as an intervener, asking the Shenzhen government to 'concern the international image' and 'take care of the overall situation'. As a result, during the process, local officials accommodated the complaints made by delegates and civic groups and took actions for them, but the advocacy coalition faced pressure from the central government.

As protests against the refuse landfill also occurred among Hong Kong residents, the Hong Kong Legislative Council agreed to suspend the project. Overall, it is hard to say how significant a role the Shenzhen delegates and civic organizations had played in pressuring the Hong Kong government. Meanwhile, there is less space for the Shenzhen government and citizens to intervene in Hong Kong's decision. To some extent, however, the voice expressed from the Shenzhen citizens and delegates made the Hong Kong government know that Shenzhen also cared about their project and SZ–HK could not be considered separately in environmental issues.

4.2.3 Local representation: Baguang coal-fired power plant dispute

The Baguang case was an example of how intermediary figures, such as LPC and CPPCC delegates, influence the decision-making process under the decentralized bureaucratic politics. The environmental network was not built from the state or the

³Interview SZ07, 13 February 2015

civic communities, but from congressional and consultative delegates. Meanwhile, local cadres listen to their environmental demands. On the one hand, the LPC is close to the local society through various methods in collecting public opinion. On the other hand, they speak in the name of the local cadres and decision makers with standing—and the standing is verified by the party-state. The Baguang case is not alone, because these delegates also are active in the Nanshan waste incineration conflict, SZ–HK refuse landfill case and other environmental cases in recent years.

4.2.3.1 Background

The Shenzhen Energy Group (SEG) launched the Baguang coal-fired power plant project. SEG was established in 1991 as the municipal SOE and the first Shenzhen listed company of the national electric power industry. It planned to establish a coal-fired power plant with a capacity of 2 million mw. On 18 March 2013, this project received approval from the National Energy Administration (NEA) and started to initiate the early preparation work.

Baguang village is located in the Dapeng Peninsula, the largest and best integrated preserving ecological land in south-eastern Shenzhen. Dapeng Peninsula is also named the ‘back garden’ by Shenzhen residents. In 2006, the Shenzhen municipal government formulated the ‘Shenzhen 2030 City Developing Plan’, from which the Dapeng Peninsula was already positioned as the future international coastal tourist destination. The project stepped into the government planning stage and was reported to the NDRC in early 2013. The local government cancelled it within 20 days before disputes flowed into street protests. It is also interesting that the then president of NDRC, Liu Tienan, who approved this project was removed his position owing to the corruption at that month.

4.2.3.2 Coalition formation and the direct communication

On 16 May 2013, the municipal CPPCC held the ‘Briefing of Shenzhen Ecological Civilization Work’. This briefing was one part of the regular meetings and relevant bureaus should give working reports to the CPPCC delegates. In this meeting, Liu Zhongpu, the director of Shenzhen Human Resettlement and Environment Commission (HREC), and Meng Jinghan, the director of Urban Management Bureau (UMB), reported on Shenzhen’s environmental protection issues. Afterwards, there was a session of interactive dialogue between delegates and officials. This was

supposed to be an ordinary working briefing, but the Guangdong provincial CPPCC delegate Peng Yina (the founder of *Southern Weekly*) suddenly inquired (*zhixun* 质询) in the briefing:

Is the truth that Shenzhen government is preparing for a coal-fired plant in Baguang? Has the project conducted the EIA? Are there any administrative procedures for approval before reporting to the National Energy Administration? Why does the government build the coal-fired plant which is violated to the Pearl River Delta environmental protection plan?⁴

Like a tossed stone creating a thousand ripples, these questions induced shock among attenders and the topic of discussion had been totally shifted. After Peng's talk, many other delegates made inquiries. Jin Xinyi, Zhang Xuehu and Yao Xiaoming also indicated that the EIA report should be fully opened. Liu Zhongpu responded that the HREC was not responsible for the EIA process; it was the MEP who co-operated with the local government to make an assessment. The HREC was not familiar with this project. HREC also displayed that delegates should support the government's work because the procedures for approving and initiating a project were complex⁵.

The inquiries during the briefing conference were not accidental. It was a small group of delegates who engineered this action within the formal authority. Peng acknowledged the information by chance through a friend who was working in the provincial government in Guangzhou. She did not believe the news at that time because Baguang village has been paid much attention during the past decade and two projects had been cancelled due to environmental concerns. The first was a chemical industry base and the second was a biochemical island. There had been consensus among the officials that the village was positioned as the environmental diversification and tourist destination. Among Peng's personal connections within and outside the government systems, no one had information about this project. The official documents she received were very convincing because these documents included governmental approval and environmental assessment files. She decided to find an opportunity to verify this project.

The advocacy network was gradually built within the LPC and CPPCC delegates. A

⁴ Interview SZ 13, 03 April 2015

⁵ Interview SZ 16, 03 February 2015

LPC delegate, Lin Yeli, also acknowledged the news from SEG's official website. As SEG is a listed company on the Shenzhen stock market, it must disclose its ongoing projects. He informed the other familiar delegates of this information and these CPPCC/LPC delegates, who cared about Shenzhen's environmental protection, decided to oppose the project together.

Several delegates kept track of the Dapeng Peninsula after the new district was established in 2011. To avoid the overdevelopment of Dapeng Peninsula, they proposed organizing an informal environmental network called 'Concerning Dapeng Peninsula'. These delegates would meet regularly in Shenzhen Central Mall and discuss how to deal with the environmental issues. For this project, they reached consensus quickly and chose to oppose the project using institutional channels and mobilizing the public by media. They did not hope to destabilize the authority and cause street protests because they still thought themselves as the beneficiaries of the CCP and some had close linkages within the official system (*tizhinei* 体制内).⁶

There exists an environmental consensus that had been an open secret between some municipal officials and these delegates from their previous communications and personal connections. These delegates prepared to make an inquiry to the HREC officials during the briefing conference. According to the Shenzhen CPPCC conference tradition, questions raised during the conference should be sent to the organizer in advance. Delegates, including Jin Xinyi and Peng Yina, communicated to the director and deputy director of Shenzhen CPPCC Committee of Population, Resources and Environment before the conference began. The two officials acquiesced them to raise questions on this project. The assistant director (*chuzhang*) was young and energetic, and he also disagreed with this project. He agreed to provide practical assistance during the Q&A session.⁷

An inquiry meeting, as an innovative institution, is developed by the central government to ensure the accountability of local officials. The regularity of inquiry enhances the function of supervision by the delegates. The procedural dialogue makes the authority of the LPC and CPPCC routinized, and results in the 'catfish effect' to

⁶Interview SZ07, 13 February 2015; Interview SZ10, 12 January 2015; Interview SZ12, 27 January 2015; Interview SZ14, 04 April 2015; Interview SZ15, 06 April 2015

⁷Interview SZ18, 03 April 2015

regime accommodation. The catfish effect originally means that a strong competitor joining a group will cause the weak to better themselves. Here we could see when the rules are implemented through inquiries and delegates fulfill their roles, local officials are more likely to take the delegates' views into consideration and they can achieve positive effect in accountability.

In China's political context, the main function for CPPCC delegates is to provide consultative suggestions whilst possesses less political leverage on local government. However, the LPC is more likely to restrict governmental power because it was expected to be a legislative organ. In this case, the local government felt societal pressure, but it still hesitated to make the choice to shift the original decision. The authority was judging the situation and there were different voices within different decision makers. After the CPPCC briefing conference, more LPC delegates joint to express their opposition. On 5 June 2013, these delegates made a field investigation to Baguang village and they took along local journalists. Baguang villagers had removed to other places because of the house demolition.

The LPC delegates played a significant role in shifting the local government's attitude. They made some efforts through institutional channels. After the field investigation, they proposed a suggestion case (*jianyi an* 建议案) to the Shenzhen Fifth PC adjournment. The leading delegates mobilized other delegates of each district and persuaded more delegates to co-operate with them. Finally, 110 LPC co-signature delegates sent their proposal and requested cancellation of the coal-fired power plant. Zheng Xueding and Xiao Youmei were the lead proposers. They presented the following reasons for their proposal.

First, the project violated the Dapeng Peninsula future planning, which was the largest and best integrated preserving ecological land in south-eastern Shenzhen. Dapeng is also named the 'backyard garden' by Shenzhen residents. In 2006, Shenzhen had formulated the 'Shenzhen 2030 Municipal Developing Plan', from which the Dapeng Peninsula was already positioned as the future international coastal tourist's destination. Second, the comparative advantage of cost was low because Shenzhen lacked coal, and it needed to purchase coal from the north, which cost a lot. Third, the coal-fired plant would badly pollute the air quality in Shenzhen, which had been proved with the Nanshan coal-fired plant. The Shenzhen government has spent large amount of money on the pollution reduction in Nanshan. During Shenzhen's Third

PC, delegates from Nanshan District used to claim that if the government did not take measures to deal with the pollution, they will collectively vote against the Government Annual Report. Therefore, it is not worthy if Dapeng builds another polluted plant. Fourth, Shenzhen has the alternative plan to solve the status of power shortage. Daya Bay Nuclear Power Station has reserved two units that have not generated power yet. If Shenzhen government seeks for the policy support from the central government, it is applicable to give priority to Shenzhen.⁸

Local cadres also stood with these delegates and questioned the decision-making. Some grassroots cadres in Dapeng's New District were skeptical towards the project. The Economic Service Bureau of Dapeng New District said it would raise opposition through an institutional approach if the project would cause large pollution to Dapeng. It also showed its complaint to the decision makers. They thought the municipal government should make practical investigations before construction and should embrace fact-based decision-making. The local demolition office and Kuiyong village committee did not receive the notice of the construction when the project had been approved by the National Energy Bureau (NEB), and the local villagers also had no ideas of it.⁹

4.2.3.3 Resource mobilization and mass-elites linkage

Even though policy disputes did not cause civic protests, the public opinion still affects the final decision-making. When these delegates exposed the project in the Internet, the news spread across the whole city quickly because Shenzhen is a cyber city. Citizens expressed their complaint and the opposition mounted in the Internet. Local government faced large pressure of public resistance on line. The proliferation of media agencies and the availability of new information technologies have created unprecedented opportunities for Chinese citizens to receive information and exchange views.

These delegates were not satisfied with the feedback from local officials, so they employed the social media to inform citizens and led to public discussion. Peng, Jin and Zhang had the personal Weibo (Chinese twitter) account, which were used to receive the public voice as part of their tools of representative work. They published

⁸Interview SZ12, 27 January 2015

⁹ Interview SZ01, 19 January 2015

the news of the project in Weibo and received comments and forwards for thousands of times. The information spread all through the city over one night. Peng concluded that most of the citizens were against the project.¹⁰

Unexpectedly, Shenzhen government did not block the internet on this information and passively allowed the news to be spread. Meanwhile, these delegates also used their own media resources to make their voices to be heard. They asked the 21st Century Economic News to make report on developing Dapeng Peninsula called ‘Who moves the Dapeng Peninsula?’ and mentioned the Baguang coal-fired plant in this article. Three Guangzhou media reported this project including *Southern Times*, *Southern Metropolis Daily* and *Commercial Daily*. Shenzhen local media did not join their group because they still faced some pressure from the Shenzhen government. These delegates received interviews and pointed out the environmental hazards of this project. They also mentioned that the corruptive official, Liu Tienan, who was the then director of NEB, approved this project. As long as the project was approved, Liu became the main target of anti-corruption campaigns by the central government and collapsed immediately. This ‘inside story’ triggered more anger from the public and the online discussion become fiercer.

4.2.3.4 Responses of the local authority and de-escalation of the conflict

Many local governmental officials actually opposed this project. Several departments directly opposed the project, while the local environmental agency’s attitude was ambiguous. Local officials retreated quickly not only because of the pressure from social violence but also they faced less political incentives. The project did not add them too much political merit in their promotion paths and the breakdown of Liu Tienan provides the decision makers an excuse to cancel this project.

These delegates made the appointment (*yuejian* 约见) with the governmental officials responsible for this project. According to the Chinese political system, LPC delegates have the right to visit the relevant officials if they have any issues collected from citizens. Ten representatives of the delegates met with officials from the municipal Party committee and other bureaus. After individual talks, officials held a symposium with these delegates, which did not conform to routine political practices in China.

¹⁰ Interview SZ13, 05 January 2015

During the symposium, officials explained the project to the delegates. Some official leaders said they ‘understood the work of LPC delegates’ and even praised that delegates had ‘done a good job’¹¹. However, among the feedback of the officials, one vice mayor criticized their behaviour because he was the main responsible person for this project¹².

The Shenzhen government was responsive and paid attention to the suggestion case sent from the delegates. After the appointments and individual talks, relevant bureaus began to give feedbacks to delegates. According to the regulations of governmental obligation of the PC, local officials must respond to every inquiry from the delegates. In the beginning, these agencies kept silent for a few days. The Planning, Lang & Resource Commission of Shenzhen Municipal (PLRC) came out with a dissenting opinion. This was the first Shenzhen governmental bureau to explicitly express its opinion since civic opposition opinion arose.

In its feedback document, PLRC explicitly showed disagreement with the coal-fired power plant and stated in detail why they opposed it, including the project’s nonconformity with the ‘energy conservation and emission reduction’ requirement from the central government, and with the local regulations for the Dapeng development¹³. PLRC thought the project had passed the red line of the original planning. Then, Economy, Trade and Information Commission of Shenzhen Municipal (ETIC) and Technology and Innovation Commission of Shenzhen Municipal (TIC) also responded in opposition for the reason that the emission allowance of the plant was four times than the pollutant emissions in Bao'an District.

However, the ambiguous attitude of competent bureau, such as Shenzhen HREC, made the situation very subtle. HREC was reluctant to show its stand and displayed its weakness against this decision made by the economic bureaucracies. The delegates were very unsatisfied with the HREC, and Zheng even criticized the HREC in two governmental internal conferences—‘the environmental agency should clearly defined their stand in its own work, and must be blamed of its vague attitude at the

¹¹ Interview SZ12, 20 January 2015

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Interview SZ 04, 04 April 2015

moment of the intensive public opposition'.¹⁴

Shenzhen Development and Reform Commission (DRC) was the last bureau to give feedback. To alleviate the anger of the online public opinion and the delegates' pressure, on May 21, 2013, Shenzhen DRC made an official statement in its official Weibo account that the preparation work from the National Energy Group was just in the early stage of research work, but not the final location and construction, and required that the SEG could only initiate after the final approval by the central government. However, the SEG chose to continue the project. During a stakeholders' meeting in June 2013, SEG director showed the ambition of speeding up construction, and SEG will make communication to let the society to know the fired coal is also the clean energy.

The situation was locked in a stalemate for several days. LPC delegates decided to address a special inquiry to the HREC. The internal meeting was held as a dialogue, and the fierce questions put great pressure on the government and DRC. Meanwhile, public opinion of opposition had entered the highest point. The Internet and the widely used virtual community provided convenience for Shenzhen E-citizens to discuss the project. Then Guangdong CPPCC delegate Peng Yina published the central governments' document on her Weibo account, including the central spirits of ecological modernization and the critics of the crackdown of Liu Tienan, to give more pressure to the local government by mobilizing the public.¹⁵

The Shenzhen government was cautious with any online voice. They did not block the Internet channel for citizens to express disagreement. On the contrary, the government demonstrated its willingness to observe the public opinion through the Internet. By collecting enough critics and suggestions, the local government decided to cancel the project. The convenience of open and sufficient channels for Shenzhen netizens to express their policy opinions made the Shenzhen government, to some extent, dredge the social complaints, obtain more legitimacy and trust, and avoid the street protests like other cities. The open media and public opinion could also be regarded as the supervision power regulating officials by local authorities.

4.2.4 Local brokerage: Dapeng LNG project dispute

¹⁴ Interview SZ12, 27 January 2015

¹⁵ Interview SZ13, 03 January 2015

Dapeng LNG (liquefied natural gas) project dispute is a case where local officials were less likely to pursue their own interests with powerful SOEs involved. Civil contention was not able to establish effective communication with decision makers in the early stage of the campaigns. After the engagement of LPC/ CPPCC delegates, the same group as in the Baguang case, the decision makers altered their plans. These intermediary figures were able to deliver the contention information from local civil society to local officials and manage the peaceful negotiation between the state and society, thus preventing future social unrests.

4.2.4.1 Background

In recent years, natural gas became the new source of energy consumption in China, including the LNG, which was convenient for transportation and regarded as clean energy. China hopes to change the situation of high reliance on petroleum import to ensure energy security. In the 'Eleventh Five-Year Plan' in 2006, the central government raised to start LNG project construction in coastal areas. China expects to increase its reliance on natural gas and looks to raise natural gas importation via building LNG plants. China has already constructed 13 LNG plants in coastal regions, including Guangdong, Fujian, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Hebei, Jiangsu, Shandong and Liaoning.

The Petro China Shenzhen LNG plant was intended to ensure the natural resource provision for Shenzhen and Hong Kong. On 28 August 2008, the NEA and the government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region signed an agreement on gas supply issues and decided to establish a LNG receiving station in Shenzhen. Petro China, Shenzhen Gas Corporation and Hong Kong CLP (Chinese Light & Power Company Syndicate) invested in this project together. Then, the site was chosen as Dachan Island, located in west Shenzhen of the Pearl River estuary. China Merchants Group (CMG, a large SOE with headquarter in Hong Kong) opposed this choice. CMG has many industries, such as shipyards in Dachan Island, and the Petro China LNG would affect its layouts. CMG's strong opposition gained support from the State Oceanic Administration (SOA) and the Department of Transportation and Communication. The two central departments sent official letters to NDRC on the negative influence of the LNG plant on area transportation and asked to relocate the site selection.

After two years' confirmation and assessment, Petro China chose to locate LNG plant in Easter bay of Shenzhen Diefubei in Dapeng district. Petro China hoped to expand its market in Guangdong and to compete with China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) as the latter already set up two LNG projects in Dapeng district. Dapeng Peninsula has more than 120 km coastlines and is known as one of China's most beautiful coasts. The coastline has precious marine life and gorgeous coral community. If the LNG plant started, then Petro China would need to reclaim lands from the sea of about 39.73 hectares, and the reclamation would dramatically cause ecological loss in Dapeng Peninsula (Southern Metropolis News, 09 July 2014).

4.2.4.2 The rising opposition and coalition formation

Public concerns over the reclamation of the Dapeng coastline emerged once the project received approval from the SOA. The first opposition voice came from a publisher, Nan Zhaoxu, who had been active in recording natural ecosystems in Shenzhen. He was surprised when informed of this project and then he wrote an article of 'Why I Oppose Reclamation in Dapeng Peninsula to Petro China'. He complained that during 30 years since the establishment of Shenzhen SEZ, the government had reclaimed more than 69 km² areas. Now, Shenzhen only had 40 km undeveloped among overall 254 km coastlines. Along the Dapeng bay there had already constructed eight industrial plants that greatly burdened the ecosystem in this region. He did not expect this article would be published in the newspaper or other social media because of the restriction of formal agencies. So he published it on his own Weibo account. Unexpectedly, several local media forwarded his article and *Jingbao*¹⁶ even published a comment on 'local government should understand citizens' anger' in the front page.¹⁷

This news spread across the city and people in Shenzhen worried about this issue. They expressed their anger through Internet forums. Citizens opposed this project because Dapeng Peninsula was seen as their 'backyard garden'. Petro China reacted quickly and contacted Nan Zhaoxu the day when his article was reported in the newspaper. Nan told Petro China that he wrote this article to deliver such information: enterprises should obtain opinions from the citizens before they develop the

¹⁶A local daily newspaper in Shenzhen launched by Shenzhen Newspaper Group in August 2001.

¹⁷ Interview SZ17, 07 April 2015

environment. The Shenzhen government did not find him any trouble nor was he providing feedback. Nan felt that some officials in Shenzhen government also did not want to launch the project and thus gave public opinions some space¹⁸. In fact, local officials were less able to pursue their own interests because this was a central project with powerful SOEs involved.

Local environmental NGOs, including Cross-border Environment Concern Association (CECA) and Association of Ocean Protection (AOP), collectively took action. Petro China published the EIA report (see Picture 4.1) in March 2014, which was seen as more transparent than CNOOC because the latter did not publish the EIA report of its LNG projects at all. Li Manling, the director of CECA and an undergraduate student at Hong Kong University, researched this EIA report. She sent petition letters to the SOA, claiming that rare species in the ocean would be hampered and the project did not meet the ‘Marine Function of Guangdong Province 2011–2020’.

As opposition mounted, in March 2014 the Shenzhen government announced to hold a public hearing on the Petro China LNG project in April 2014. However, this announcement was only published on the official website of Shenzhen Planning and Land Bureau instead of the media and newspapers. More than 90 citizens applied for the hearing but only five people were chosen to participate, which NGOs criticized as underrepresentation. Among the five selected participants, only one representative, Li Manling, came from civil society. The identity of other four participants was not made public.

¹⁸ Ibid.

中石油深圳 LNG 应急调峰站项目

海洋环境影响报告书

(报批稿)

交通运输部天津水运工程科学研究所

天津滨海新区

2014 年 1 月

1. 总论

1.1. 评价的由来与评价目的

1.1.1. 评价任务由来

西气东输二线管道西起新疆霍尔果斯口岸，东至浙江、上海，南至广东、广西、香港，总体走向为山西南东、山北向南，途经新疆、甘肃、宁夏、陕西、河南、湖北、江西、广东、广西、香港、浙江、上海、湖南、江苏、山东 15 个省、市、自治区，线路总长超过 8650km，设计年任务输量 $300 \times 10^8 \text{Nm}^3/\text{a}$ ，是连接中亚进口气源和沿华中西部地区、华东、华南、长三角、珠三角用气市场的重要能源通道。

2020 年深圳市总用气量达 $60 \times 10^8 \text{Nm}^3/\text{a}$ ，其中电厂年用气量约为 $40 \times 10^8 \text{Nm}^3/\text{a}$ ，香港电厂年用气量按 $15 \times 10^8 \text{Nm}^3/\text{a}$ 考虑，由于西二线上游来气压力不能保证深圳、香港的用气压力需求，广州分输压气站需投用压缩机。由于广州站与下游电厂用户距离较近，经核算，此工况条件下，广州分输压气站的流量波动量太大，已超出压缩机承受能力范围，压缩机将无法运行。因此，若不考虑其他调峰措施，无法保证管道为下游电厂用户调节小时峰。西二线气源主要为中亚地区来气，气源单一，而西二线南方市场的主要用户为电厂以及居民用户，一旦气源出现影响将非常巨大，为了保证西气东输二线能够安全稳定地向深圳以及香港供气，实现陆上管道气和进口 LNG 的资源互补，以及作为管输天然气的应急保障用气，按计划完成国家下达的建设任务，中石油决定在深圳市东部建设 LNG 应急调峰站。

中石油深圳 LNG 应急调峰站项目位于深圳大鹏湾东北岸透碧片区，属龙岗区葵涌街道和大鹏街道管辖。北面距葵涌街道官湖社区约 1.2km，东面距大鹏镇约 5km，西北方向距深圳市区约 33km，南距香港陆地平湖岛约 5km，距香港岛约 40km。项目由接收站、码头两部分构成。其中，码头工程将建设一个可靠泊船容量介于 $8 \text{万 m}^3 \sim 26.7 \text{万 m}^3$ 的 LNG 船的专用卸船泊位；接收站工程场地面积约 35 公顷，建设规模为 300 万吨/年。项目用海单元包括 LNG 接收站、厂区护岸、LNG 码头与港池、工作船码头与港池、取、排水口和冷却水混合区。

中国石油天然气股份有限公司、中电控股有限公司和深圳市燃气集团股份有限公司共同成立合资公司负责建设、运营管理本项目，三方同意成立深圳 LNG 项目经理部，负责本项目在获得国家核准前的各项前期工作。

根据《中华人民共和国环境影响评价法》和《中华人民共和国海洋环境保护法》等有关规定，受中石油深圳 LNG 项目经理部的委托，交通运输部天津水运工程科学研究所承担中

1

Figure 4.3 EIA report of Petro China LNG project in Shenzhen

Dapeng residents also protested against the project but their voice was dispersed and very limited. The Dapeng Guanhu community was only 1.5 km to the construction site and this village was labelled as ‘travelling resort’. The developer used various methods to de-mobilize the local protesters. Petro China did extensive work in Guanhu community and explained door to door on the LNG project, and invited villagers to make field investigation outside Shenzhen. Petro China also promised local villagers that the project would provide more employment opportunities for local people and promote their income.

There also were various debates among grassroots cadres. Some cadres within the Dapeng District opposed the LNG plants and reclamation, but they were not evolved in the project planning. This means the decision process was made outside the realm of local politics and there was little inclusion of local officials. At least one cadre in Kuiyong branch (an agency of Dapeng New District Administrative Committee) opposed this project in private. Some were born in Dapeng and the place was crowded with local villagers. They complained that even though the LNG would not cause environmental pollution, they did not want the reclamation of the ocean because it would cause damage to the oceanic ecology. These local cadres were also doubtful whether decision-makers of provincial and municipal officials had made enough

investigations and assessments of this region. They hoped the officials in charge of this project would be prudent before starting any projects.¹⁹

4.2.4.3 Political intermediation and policy-oriented learning

The Shenzhen government and Petro China did not expect this project to result in large civic contention. The EIA was completed quickly as a procedural session. Environmental NGOs and other activists criticized the public hearing as non-transparent in the participants' selection and refusal to the media. Under the pressure of civic opposition, the Shenzhen government put off the public hearing. The situation was forced into a stalemate. As a result, civil society did not play a substantive role in pushing forward the policy process, and they could not establish effective communication with decision makers in the early stage of campaigns.

Intermediary figures, such as local PC delegates, engaged in this case and brokered the deadlock. Li Manling requested Zhang Xuehu, a local CPPCC delegate, to speak for the NGOs in the institutional arenas because they previously kept contacts for environmental issues. As a key person engaged in solving the Baguang coal-fired power plant one year before, Zhang contacted other delegates who also concerned about environmental protection in Dapeng district. In April 2014, some Shenzhen PC/ CPPCC delegates made site investigations in Dapeng and they planned to send opinions to the local officials²⁰. They kept on making inquiries to the local agencies and making individual appointments to talk with specific officials.

At the end of April, the LPC Standing Committee organized relevant stakeholders, including Petro China, Shenzhen DRC, Shenzhen PLRC, and Shenzhen HREC to respond to LPC delegates. Biological experts were invited to this internal meeting as well. Delegates showed strong opposition to the reclamation and questioned the EIA²¹. From the meeting notes below we may find that officials in Shenzhen did not have full decision-making power on this project because they had to face pressures from petrochemical bureaucracies. They admitted that the decision-making process was not transparent:

¹⁹ Interview SZ19, 19 January 2015

²⁰ Interview SZ11, 16 December 2014

²¹ Interview SZ 12, 27 January 2015

Delegate (a): Is the EIA agency independent? Petro China should not be both athletes and judges.

Petro China: We are always the athletes. The EIA was completed by the third party and we paid for them.

Delegate (b): As far as we know, the LNG project EIA was done by subsidiary of Petro China. This is illegal.

Petro China: Yes, we made the overall EIA. MEP also joined with us. But the agencies that are qualified of assessing natural gas programme are limited to our three 'oil SOEs'. So the MEP cannot refute us. In terms of the reclamation EIA, it was done by a Tianjin agency, which has no relevance to Petro China.

Delegate (c): Does the LNG plant violate to the regional planning?

PLRC: We know this planning. But,...

Delegate (d): We are fine with LNG project, which is different from the Baguang coal-fired power plant in Dapeng last year. But we don't agree with the reclamation.

Delegate (e): You estimated the natural gas consumption in 2020 will be 6 billion cubic meters. If we again have the scarcity of natural gas in the next few years, will you reclaim the sea again?

DRC: The estimation is correct. The natural gas is enough to use if we launch this LNG project. This is the last reclamation area.

Delegate (e): Can you promise not to reclaim from the sea in the future? Who can write the guarantee letter?

DRC: No more, this is the last reclamation area of Shenzhen.

Delegate (f): Shenzhen People's Congress Standing Committee has the decision power on major issues. Reclamation from the sea is such a big thing and have prepared for several year, but we know it just until now.

DRC: We will review our work and reconsider the public hearing.

Meanwhile, local media played the role in holding policy-oriented learning forums among different parties. *Jingbao*, the local media, invited NGOs activists, Shenzhen PC/CPPCC delegates, biological experts, engineer who conducted the EIA and representatives of Petro China to have a discussion open to the public. This information sharing and public discussion were held among the environmental coalition led by intermediary figures and actors outside the coalition (*Jingbao*, 17 June 2014). NGO leaders expressed their worries on the reclamation to the marine ecosystems and ecologists suggested to relocate to other cities. Petro China responded that the reclamation was the only choice in Dapeng and endorsed by the EIA engineers. They did not achieve consensus in this open discussion, however, and this forum provided opportunities for policy disputes based on information exchange and scientific learning.

4.2.4.4 The broader network and policy adjustment

Under the pressure of intermediary figures and civil society, the local government responded by launching a public hearing in early July 2014. Members of a local NGO, Association of Ocean Protection, protested outside the meeting venue. They pulled up the banner, ‘Absolutely oppose the reclamation project and protect the blue ocean home’. Inside the meeting, Li Manling, another NGO activist, questioned the content of EIA to the government. She argued the EIA report did not obtain approval because it had totally ignored the discussion about rare species of stone coral. The representative of local villagers, however, refuted that they did not find any stone coral near the coastline. Local villagers, who previously protested against the project, changed their mind and supported Petro China in the hearing. Li Jichao, a local PC delegate, said that many concerned delegates asked him to bring their opposition to the meeting. He questioned the procedure of the EIA and the neglecting of environment by the Shenzhen government²². In responding to the opposition from society, Shenzhen Bureau of Oceanic Administration opposed Petro China openly. The content of the public hearing and the EIA report would be sent to the SOA, which had the power to decide the project policy.

After the public hearing, delegates also hoped to put this issue into higher attention. Yang Qin asked other delegates to send petitions to the central government. After mobilization, 111 PC delegates in Shenzhen, including NPC delegates, signed joint letters to the SOA and asked for a new EIA. Facing pressures from delegates, the Shenzhen government finally decided to tackle the strong opposition. A week after the public hearing, municipal leaders invited 10 delegates for a communication meeting. Officials told delegates that they had negotiated with Petro China and the latter agreed to reduce the reclamation area from 39.73 hectares to 26 hectares, reduce the number of storage tanks from six to four, and put the storage tanks underground to preserve the natural landscape (Southern Metropolis News, 9 July 2014). Petro China had to add more than 100 million RMB in this project for the adjustment outcome. Officials promised to the delegates that they will inform the LPC before any large industrial projects initiated²³.

²² Interview SZ02, 29 January 2015

²³ Ibid.

Indeed, the Shenzhen municipal government maintained a relatively tolerant attitude towards the protesters owing to the intermediation made by delegates. Citizens have many channels to deliver their complaints to the delegates, such as letters, phones and community workstations. However, unlike the Baguang coal-fired power plant, which the officials cancelled soon after delegates' engagement, this LNG project proceeded with only policy adjustments and the dispute lasted longer. Delegates were not able to completely change the policy largely because the developer was a powerful SOE and there was no alternative plan for this project, but delegates were able to deliver the contention from local civil society to officials and manage the peaceful negotiation between the state and society, and most importantly, their opinions can be viewed by local officials.

During the intermediaries, local officials were initially reluctant to respond to the delegates, and delegates needed to repeatedly communicate with local officials through various channels to urge them to respond²⁴. Shenzhen PC Standing Committee was part of the local government that manages the delegates' work. It provides institutional channels for delegates to communicate with the government. Before 2013, Shenzhen shared relatively democratic political atmosphere and delegates can make work appraisals (*pingyi* 评议) directly for local officials. The PC Standing Committee voted individually which resulted in a grade on scale from 'excellent', 'competent', 'basic competent' to 'not competent' levels. This work appraisal was a powerful instrument in the legislative supervision work for PC.

However, since 2013 the Communist Party gradually controlled the pluralism and civil society; delegates enjoyed less jurisdiction in supervision work and work appraisals were cancelled in Shenzhen. Officials of the PC Standing Committee tried to find a way out so the delegates could fulfil their duties by delivering opinions to officials directly and timely. For example, the director of the PC Standing Committee in this tenure, 'creating conditions', made appointment and arrangement meetings to relevant officials as long as delegates requested²⁵. Therefore, local officials could not ignore delegates' claims, at least from the legitimate manner.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Interview SZ12, 27 January 2015

4.3 Analysis and Summary

The four cases demonstrate that the Shenzhen government is responsive to social interests following several patterns: reconstructing the pre-existing organizations embedded in the local communities, concerning the outside threat for local social interests, and listening to LPC/PPCC delegates as intermediaries. In these cases, there is no unified form of intermediaries, but different intermediary organizations and communications that fulfill the core role of representing social views of environmental concerns to local cadres. Under this realm, the local authority appears willing to listen to quite a different range of representation of different opinions through such intermediaries that can establish effective communications with local officials without threatening them. These figures can pressure the local government directly and influence public opinion. Therefore, it takes the creativity on the part of the civil society actors, and what they are doing is permitted by the state under the innovate approach.

What can we learn from the Shenzhen case that is relevant for a more general understanding of policy change? To what extent these intermediary figures as the representation of the civil society can function in the decision making process? China is often regarded as a model example of authoritarian durability that can exhibit both control and responsiveness to its citizens. China's large, ambivalent single-party structure also allows us to investigate local authoritarian responsiveness with sufficient empirical power. Responsiveness refers to the extent to which officials in the regime adhere to the demand of social actors. It can be motivated by the concerns of collective action from below or the threats of tattling to upper levels of governments (Chen et al., 2015, p. 2).

Shenzhen's patterns show that the local state has a flexible accommodation with the social demands through the intermediation processes functioned by intermediary figures. The local state also increases its capability towards outside challenges by connecting to the local communities through representative agents. In Shenzhen, there are robust civil communities and strong private entrepreneurs. The better economy and governmental revenues thus decrease the incentives of the local Party power that intervening into the economic activities. The contract-based social structure creates political spaces for political participation by focusing on the ways in which social groups pursue interests in China.

The local state better communicates with social communities here. Through LPC delegates and their workstations, the channel between local citizens and the local state is flexible and responsive. Thus, there is more possibility to have open discussion of policy choices between state and local citizens. The delegates play their role of ‘median voice’ that makes the public voice heard by the local state. When delegates have positive linkage with the social communities and masses, they may mitigate the state pressure of strikes, non-cooperation and social protests. This mass–elites linkage will contribute to policy adjustment and policy implementation.

Meanwhile, as the four cases indicated, we could notice an evolution from congressional delegates advocating on behalf of a geographic constituency in early 2000s to policy representation during late 2000s to 2010s. The mainstream view of the local congressional representation in China is a reflection of geographic parochialism (Manion, 2014). In other words, Congress delegates view representation as parochial everyday responsiveness to constituents and the biggest component of this responsiveness is to deliver public goods pursued as advocacy to local governments. The Nanshan Waste Incineration case in early 2000 is one of the evidences. These delegates represented the interests of the constituency of their electoral district. Manion (2014) thinks that the government conditions delegates’ responsiveness on the value of the local knowledge that delegates provide in their advocacy efforts because local unrest counts heavily against local officials. They focus on reflecting practical problems and circumstances.

However, the latter three cases in this chapter reveal the new political scenario, when parochialism is the common face of Chinese congressional representation. In the first case, delegates can engage in constituency service to individuals and can supply geographically targeted public goods through the embedded social communities and individuals. The LPC workstations serve as the liaison mechanism to connect citizens with the local authority. These delegates could represent the interests of the constituency of their electoral districts, and raise different policy preference to the local Party. However, after 2010, we could find cases in which the local authority does permit congressional delegates to engage in general policy context, whether during daily work or at congress meetings. The issues they raise are not just limited to the constituency they represent, but the general topic may be largely relevant to the general citizens in Shenzhen. LPC/CPPCC delegates engaged in the last three cases

are almost the same group and people, and they still follow their previous tenures' tradition of keeping closed ties to the local communities.

Shenzhen's local delegates have the impulse to establish environmental advocacy coalition with their policy preference, although the nature of authoritarian regime—the local congress—was not popularly elected, and these delegates can engage in decision-making directly. We could see some delegates organized professional groups, for example, where one was called the 'key issues negotiation group'. These groups do not replace the constituency-based groups, but complement them. Some delegates initiated these groups voluntarily and they paid attention to the common issues such as food safety, public transportation and environmental protection. There is coordination across localities: if a proposal is raised by more delegates and spans of delegations, then it is more powerful—the government knows it must take this issue into account. It is a general problem, not just particular to someone's own district.

From the perspective of interest articulation, the professional group is quite interesting. An institutionalized and active organization of specialist small groups could be an important step to form structurally based interest groups within the LPC. For them, investing efforts in a certain interest area or personal reputation through not only the constituency service, but also an interest group with some bargaining power with the local authority is not at odds with Communist Party discipline. The small policy groups may involve a degree of collective action and work in a limited way as a form of interest group articulation.

In China's local politics, delegates themselves can contact government leaders or officials in functionally specialized government departments to engage in direct advocacy. In those cases, the leverage with the authority also receives support from some local officials. Some governmental bodies were sympathetic with the demands of the environmental activists and intermediary figures, and there can be an alliance between the grassroots cadres and the group. Even though the local authority did not create conditions directly for the delegates, it supports the LPC delegates by ways such as quick responses and active appointments. These delegates could be able to make inquiries to the relevant officials at any time.

However, the conditions are not always fixed because of the change of the PC Standing Committee leadership. In the third (2000–2005) and fifth (2010–2015) PCs,

the chairman of Shenzhen PC Standing Committee were quite supportive to the work of the delegates and bring in more democratic atmosphere in PC. Generally speaking, a strong leader of the PC Standing Committee towards the local Party will make the PC more powerful. It also implies that some decision-making can move from the government to the LPC indirectly. However, as the chairman changed, the LPC may face possibility to have less substantial powers.²⁶ In my interview, delegates complained that the leadership of fourth PC Standing Committee did not allow them to work and even ‘drag legs of delegates’.

The Shenzhen cases also demonstrate these delegates as intermediary figures can influence public opinion, establish mass–elite linkage and mobilize public opinion to give pressure to the decision-makers. Strong support from the public strengthens intermediary figures’ bargaining power. Strong non-institutional pressure can move a group’s issue onto the government’s agenda or render this as an ad hoc priority requiring urgent action. Most of the LPC and CPPCC delegates in Shenzhen are political, economic and culture elites. Among the opposition, there are local monopolized media directors, president of private companies, medical doctors, etc. These delegates are passionate with the local civic issues and organized into the professional groups.

For the latter three cases, where the delegates exposed the projects on Weibo, the news spread across society quickly because Shenzhen is a cyber city. Citizens expressed their complaints on the Internet and the local government faced large pressure of public violence. The proliferation of media agencies and the availability of new information technologies have created unprecedented opportunities for Chinese E-citizens to receive information and exchange views. Therefore, delegates in the advocacy coalition can mobilize public opinion and keep close connections with the civil groups. Their mobilization power can be managed in a subtle way: on the one hand, exerting social pressure to local officials, and on the other hand, not causing disruption of social and political order.

Moreover, when policy priorities are challenged or when new priorities arise, changes in the government’s issue agenda will occur. Thus, opportunities may arise for groups

²⁶The tenure for the Shenzhen Municipal PC Standing Committee is five years.

that have been disadvantages for formal policies. For example, in the Baguang coal-fired plant case, delegates framed the opposition's opinion on 'corruptive official who approves this project' and the 'coal-fired plant not consistent with the central clean energy policy' to mobilize the public. According to the 'Guangdong Delta River Developing Plan 2010–2020', the coal-fired power plants are no longer promoted by the central government. The authority raised 'establishment the large, and cancellation the small' (*shangdaxiaoxiao*) to initiate the clean energy plants. Therefore, when the demands of disadvantaged groups are positively connected to the new agenda or to new policy priorities, their interests are likely to be accommodated.

However, by comparing the two projects in Dapeng district--Baguang coal-fired power plant and Petro China LNG project, this chapter implies that although municipal officials do participate in the decision making process, the more central intervention and more powerful SOEs involved, the less interests for local officials, and thus leave less spaces of functioning for political intermediation. In the case of LNG project, it is actually the central government and Petro China that made decisions, which left less space for local officials to have their own interests and respond to local environmental interests. However, the existence of local intermediary figures may help to broker the dead lock situation and establish communication channels between decision makers and protesters, and the policy-learning process will give the pressure to the powerful SOEs.

China's local congress still follows with the nature of 'Mandate of Representation'. The Party and its executive, not the Congress, formulate the policy. So even though Chinese leaders have adopted rhetoric and design features to promote congressional responsiveness to constituents, most of the delegates do not have the legitimacy to representation. The decision-making power is still firmly in the hands of the Party, and other actors are not allowed to say. The Party will take these opinions into consideration through representative organs as intermediaries from the civil society. Shenzhen follows the same principle, but the difference is that delegates there are more willing to fulfill their responsibilities to make up for the lack of accountability. They act as a channel of public opinion and service responsiveness, and the previous experiences of close ties to the constituency and the mass–elites linkage made the delegates unsatisfied with their own district work. When they have some experiences in negotiating with bureaucratic and administrations, they will be more likely to exert

power directly to the government, and thus the parochial matter comes up to the general, which will influence the final policy outcome.

Chapter 5 Making Sense of Science in Policy Change: Xiamen PX Project

Chinese society is changing, and so are its political institutions. With the rise of the middle class and the growing impact of media, urban citizens are gradually becoming concerned about the environmental degradation in their regions. Meanwhile, local governments compete for economic growth and they bring in investments in petrochemical projects, nuclear projects and other industrial projects that are harmful to the environment. Owing to underlying institutional and social reasons, in recent years, the challenges are larger for Chinese local states to come to grips with the increasing need for internal coordination and outside social pressure, as well as the balance between environmental and developmental values.

Unlike Shenzhen, the environmental activism in Xiamen is more contentious. The Xiamen PX (Paraxylene) policy dispute is a significant event given the seriousness of PX protests that have recently taken place in many Chinese cities. Public concern in China over PX first started with the mass protests in the city of Xiamen in Fujian Province. This protest occurred in 2007 during the Hu-Wen era, and many other anti-PX movements followed including Dalian (2011), Ningbo (2012), Kunming (2013), Chengdu (2013) and Shanghai (2015). Regarding PX events, various stakeholders, especially local governments and the public, hold different views on environmental issues, such as the identification of toxicity, environmental risks caused by the PX project and the distance between petrochemical enterprises and residential areas. How is science used, manipulated or ignored in Xiamen, and to what extent the engagement of intermediary expertise can influence the policy process through policy-oriented learning?

During the interactive process, environmental activists in Xiamen witnessed a change of attitude from local officials and there was a power struggle within the bureaucratic bodies for half a year. Local scientists, who shared professional knowledge and prestigious standings with the formal authority, made science matter in altering the perceptions of decision makers through policy-oriented learning. They drew on their network and built up a coalition with average citizens, managing to put this issue into a higher political salience and within the larger population constituency. As part of this case, local government allowed citizens to express their policy opinions through

formal participation channels, and de-politicized this issue by requesting an independent EIA agency. The negotiation was achieved by the intermediation of scientists who both influenced the decision makers on the one hand, and possessed ‘social power’ on the other.

5.1 Background

5.1.1 Accelerated PX project construction

Paraxylene (PX) is a chemical essential to the process of manufacturing plastic bottles and polyester clothing. It is a colourless, toxic, sweet-smelling, and highly flammable chemical at room temperature. It is naturally found in petroleum. The production process of paraxylene is one of the most complicated among all the chemicals. PX is dangerous if inhaled or absorbed it through the skin, causing different degrees of damage to abdominal organs and the nervous system.

China has been the world’s largest PX producer and consumer since 2010 (*The Economist*, 2014). Pulled by fast growth in downstream industries such as PTA (terephthalic acid), China’s PX demand has increased rapidly in recent years. In 2015, the total PX capacity in China has reached to 13.66 million t/a. In China, most production units are located in Liaoning, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, Shanghai and some other coastal and inland regions (see Figure 5.1). Safety risks and management problems regarding PX factories have prompted nation-wide environmental concerns in China.

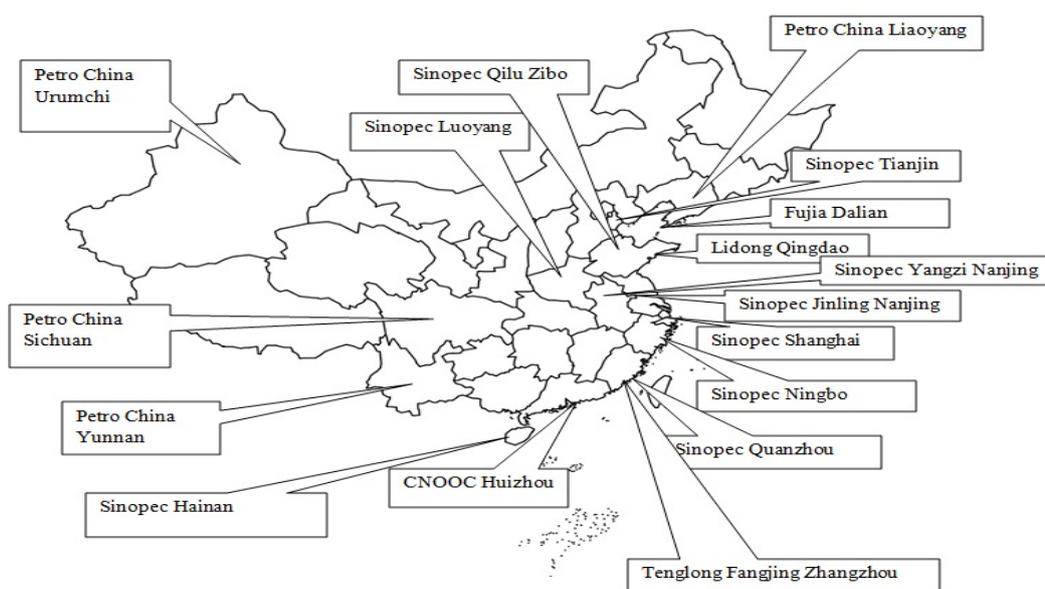


Figure 5.1 PX plants in China (including plants under construction)

Currently, China has a strong demand for PX imports. Zhejiang, Liaoning and Jiangsu are three major importing provinces of PX, and account for 83.8% of total imports to China. Imports primarily come from Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Thailand. By 2020, demand for PX will be 26.4 million tons, yet PX output will only be about 17 million tons. Currently, petroleum is still the major route for PX production in China. The Chinese government has encouraged diversified investors to build projects and has supported multiple forms of cooperation between powerful chemical fibre producers and upstream oil refineries, including private companies to participate in new routes in PX production. By 2020, China expects to add 11 million tons of new PX capacity. It plans to build 6 million tons of PX capacity to support new refining & petrochemical projects, and existing refineries will increase to 4 million tons of PX capacity through upgrading and transformation (China National Chemical Information Centre, 2014).

A PX project has to obtain approval from the NDRC, the macro-economic management agency under the State Council. In addition, before the formal construction of the PX plant, the project also needs be approved by China's central organ of environmental protection. However, SEPA (MEP since 2007) has long been considered a weak body among authoritarian organs. Between 2006 and 2015, as part of the 11th and 12th five-year plans, plans for pollution reduction and energy efficiency have been set up alongside economic targets. Despite the Chinese environmental legislation having become gradually comprehensive since the 2000s, it did not solve one of the key problems of environmental governance: conflicts between the progressive but less powerful environmental department and economic counterparts.

Meanwhile, the approval power for PX projects has gradually decentralized since 2013. According to the Decision of the State Council on Cancelling and Delegating the Right to Assess and Approve Items in May 2013, NDRC cancelled the examination and approval procedures for the current PX projects which hoped to expand their construction. In November 2013, the announcement by MEP on Delegating the Right to Assess and Approve Environmental Impact Assessment Documents of Some Construction Projects rendered the right of examining and approving EIA of PX projects to provincial EPBs. In November 2014, the State Council announced a new catalogue of governmental approval for investment projects, delegating the right to assess and approve new PX projects to provincial

governments. On September 23, 2015, MIIT and MEP announced the Industry Standards for Constructing PX projects, stipulating the rules on project location selection, process, technology, production unit, energy consumption, product quality, environmental protection, clean production, safety, supervision and management. These policies signalled the liberalization of the PX industry, and were quite favourable towards the development of PX projects.

After 2000, China stepped into the golden age of developing PX plants. There were many proposed projects in China but multiple protests against PX projects at Fujian Xiamen, Zhejiang Ningbo, Yunnan Kunming, Guangdong Maoming, Shanghai and some other regions significantly affected construction and progress of PX projects. Starting with a pioneering local campaign against a paraxylene petrochemical plant in Xiamen in 2007, the country has witnessed a series of large-scale protests against PX plants and other large-scale industrial and infrastructure projects.

5.1.2 Project Background

Haicang district is located opposite to Xiamen Island as the suburban of Xiamen municipality, with the Haicang Bridge connected to them. In January 1990 the Xiamen Economic Special Zone (EPZ) was established, with Haicang positioned to become the 'Chemical Industrial District'. The purpose of the local government was to bring in investments from Taiwanese enterprises. With the investment of Wang Yongqing (a Taiwanese businessman) failing in the 1990s, the development of a Chemical Industry Park was stagnated for a decade. After 2000, Haicang became the new hot spot of exploitation in real estate. The 'Golden Coast' property brought new residents to Haicang.

In July 2006, the NDRC formally endorsed a plan to build a PX plant near the new residential area in Haicang. Around 10.8 billion RMB were invested into the project by Xianglu Group (Xianglu), a Taiwanese company. It was deemed the 'largest industrial program in the history of Xiamen'. The EIA report was approved by SEPA, and the project planned to begin construction in November 2006 and to be put into production in 2008. All the assessments showed that this was a legal plant.

The local government kept this plan under the ground until construction on 11 November 2006. Some local scientists knew this news and did not agree with the site selection and construction decision. Since failing to persuade the Xiamen government

through personal connections, these scientists organized the drafting of a motion at the national CPPCC in Beijing in March 2007. They called for relocating the plant because the project was too close to residential areas and posed a high risk for accidents for the wider range of Xiamen citizens. The experts had managed to obtain support from 105 fellow delegates, and among them was a deputy governor of Fujian Province. This provided the necessary legitimacy for coverage in the national news media and spurred other local advocates to engage. Substantial media coverage and online agitation over health threats began to emerge. In the beginning, the local government tried to conceal it rather than actively responding to the increasing public concern. However, in May, the news caused street protests circulated on mobile phones and online discussion forums. After a negotiation lasting for half a year, the local state chose to accommodate environmental activists. In response, local officials invited an independent agency for another EIA procedure, and held consultative public hearings. By December 2007, the project was shelved and relocated.

5.1.3 Institutional Setting and Local Stimulus

With such economic concerns at the core of the petrochemical industry, how and why did the local government change its attitude during this period? To answer this question, we should start by understanding how the functioning of institutions facilitates policy making and policy alternation. This section aims to explain exactly what kinds of institutional interests are involved in the Xiamen PX project.

The role of the local government is mainly as a policy implementer, while some governments may have the power to make decisions. In terms of PX plant construction in China, there is power devolution from central to local areas. The role of a locality is to supplement the central government's mandate, on condition that it is not contrary to the general "signals" sent by the central state. A senior Fujian PDRC official said 'the central government is the one who made the general decision, whose mandates are to be obeyed in anyway. Therefore even though the protests and social

instability are severe here, we could not make the decision on whether or not to stop this plant (Southern Weekly, 7 April 2015)'.¹

The reason why the central state is able to do this is obvious: the central government has the bureaucratic hierarchy and has the power to choose the final construction site of a particular large-scale project. The central department, namely the NDRC, has more power to manipulate policy instruments than local governments. In central-local relations of China, there is a particular mechanism called 'hook responsibility' (*guagouzeren* 挂钩责任) for those large industrial projects--in which the liability and responsibility for the cadres are hierarchically linked level-by-level from the central to the provincial and the municipal governments, and down to the township government. It is through this mechanism that the central government is able to ensure local officials effectively go through the process of a project, such as planning, the EIA process, assessment and approval.

Locally, on the other hand, officials who defeat other localities and finally bring the PX project to their territory will benefit a lot if they successfully operate the project, because they will obtain large amounts of GDP rewards. This is also of significance to their political careers in regards to promotion. Local officials tried to persuade central decision-makers to set up these large projects in their region. Officials who launched the PX projects were very sensitive to the waves of China's heavy industry development. Most of them were ambitious because they saw the opportunities that China's petrochemical industry would bring to them, so they prepared and carried on the projects quite well. Unlike other infrastructure projects such as high-speed rails, PX is not limited by geographic linkage and leaves more space for local officials to create economic and political achievements. These projects largely rely on the local capability of mobilization and resource integration. For those local officials, they not only need to mobilize and coordinate different agencies to get the project approved from central departments in the short run, but they also have to prevent social contention.

¹ Southern Weekly is a Guangzhou based newspaper publication, known for its relatively liberal voice in the Chinese media sphere compared with other official media. It is 'one of the country's most respected newspapers, known for its hard-hitting investigations and for testing the limits of freedom of speech' (BBC News, 8 January 2013).

Li and Zhou (2005) use the provincial data to demonstrate that the promotion of local officials is significantly relevant to the local economic development. They find that the probability of provincial officials' promotions is positively correlated to the provincial GDP growth rate. We could not say that PX projects help officials' promotions because many construction cities possess highly political profiles so that officials have more natural advantages in promotion. However, according to the data collected, I find that PX projects may have positive correlations with officials' promotion (see Table 5.1) (promotion here refers to position rather than official level, for example from mayor to Party secretary). Among 28 local leaders, there were 15 officials promoted after they launched PX projects, so the number has surpassed half of the whole. Local officials hope to rely on these large petrochemical projects to mark their record of economic and political achievements.

Under such top-down management, the key central pro-developmental departments like NDRC and MIIT are the dominant agencies that draw on national PX strategies. Meanwhile, powerful SOEs, such as Petro China and Sinopec also have monopolized the power in penetrating their interests into the local areas. The MEP is relatively weak in terms of its environmental impact assessment and supervision. Most of the PX projects get approval very easily before oppositional contention appears. Normally, in the policy making process, scientists who have engaged in the initial EIA are under the institutional arrangement and make judgements according to the policy priority. Holders of experimental, local or tacit knowledge are generally not granted a seat at the formal decision-making table.

Under the ambivalence of state hierarchy, limited incentives for the local authority to protect the environment, seem to be the fundamental reason for the weak enforcement of the EIA of Xiamen government. The incentive mechanism for officials has been overly tied towards economic growth in the promotion system. Apart from the economy element, local officials also face pressure to deal with the social instability. An official from Xiamen government said

the local government cannot show any tendencies in this incident. It is not just a choice between development and environment for the local government. If Xiamen government did not handle this incident well, this would lead to chain effect on anti-PX movements in other cities, and the national PX strategies would be dramatically affected (Southern Weekly, 7 April 2015).

Project	Officials in Charge	Construction Time	Next Position
Luoyang PX	Party Secretary	2002	Member of Henan CCP standing committee
	Mayor		Secretary of Luoyang LPC standing committee
Tianjin PX	Party Secretary	2000	Tianjin Party Secretary
	Mayor		Vice director of NDRC
Chengdu PX	Party Secretary	2005 (protest in 2013)	Member of Sichuan CCP standing committee
	Mayor		Chengdu Party Secretary (charge in corruption in 2015)
Ningbo PX	Party Secretary	2003 (protest in 2012)	Vice Party secretary of Tianjin
	Mayor		Vice governor of Zhejiang Province
Liaoyang PX	Party Secretary	2004	Liaoning CPPCC Party member
	Mayor		Liaoyang Party Secretary
Dalian PX	Party Secretary	2009 (protest in 2011)	Vice Party Secretary of Shandong Province
	Mayor		Dalian Party Secretary
Kunming PX	Party Secretary	2007 (protest in 2013)	Member of Hebei CCP standing committee
	Mayor		Yuxi Party Secretary
Qingdao PX	Party Secretary	2006	Charge in corruption
	Mayor		Vice governor of Shandong Province
Urumqi PX	Party Secretary	2008	Vice chairman of standing committee of Xinjiang People's Congress
	Mayor		Vice chairman of standing committee of Xinjiang People's Congress
Nanjing PX	Party Secretary	2008	Jiangsu Province Governor
	Mayor		Suzhou Party Secretary
Quanzhou PX	Party Secretary	2009	Vice director of standing committee of Fujian People's Congress
	Mayor		resigned
Huizhou PX	Party Secretary	2009	Director of Huizhou People's Congress
	Mayor		Hong Kong Liaison Office of the Central People's Government
Zhangzhou PX	Party Secretary	2013	Governor of Xiamen
	Mayor		Fujian People's Congress
Shanghai PX	Party Secretary	2009 (protest in 2015)	Politburo standing committee of CCP
	Mayor		Shanghai Party Secretary

Table 5.1 Change of positions of officials in charge of China's major PX projects cities (data collected by the author)

Another concern is that Xiamen is in the frontier of cross-strait strategies between mainland China and Taiwan. If there were any changes to this plant, it would influence the central 'united front' (*tongzhan* 统战) plan, which was originally

designed to attract Taiwanese investment in order to achieve the re-unification of China. The project was legally approved, so that if the Chinese government made a new EIA report to alter this project, the Taiwanese enterprises would lose their confidence in investing in mainland China and Chinese government's authority would be influenced. These complex political and economic concerns embedded in the authoritarian institutions made local authorities uneasy about making decisions to alter their PX policies.

5. 2 Intermediary Figures in the Environmental Coalition and the Function of Science

The existence of an environmental advocacy coalition was obvious in the anti-PX project in Xiamen. In the early stage, local scientists drew on their network and built up a coalition, then managed to put this issue into higher political salience. Thereafter, alongside these scientists, some local elites used social media to connect with the general people, and very fast, the Xiamen citizens, especially the well-educated middle class citizens, were mobilized. Policy learning was achieved within the environmental coalition, as well as between the environmental coalition and the local officials by the efforts of scientists. As an external factor, the intervention of independent science was also critical in explaining the accommodation of local states.

5.2.1 Coalition formation, resource mobilization and collective actions

This is the first time that Chinese local government has to respond to citizens' protests in regards to their environmental rights with respect to their whole city. This shows the willingness to respond to local concerns but the lack of anticipation from the local government, resulting in the increase in citizens' concerns beyond government control. The opponents of the project were composed of local scientists, as well as the property owners in the Haicang District, and this concern then spread to the general public. The formation was built up under the common knowledge that 'a PX plant needs to be constructed no more than 20km away from the city centre', as raised by the concerned scientists. This section discusses how to explain the formation process of the environmental coalition and the collective actions in this particular case.

5.2.1.1 Engagement of local scientists

The anti-PX contention in Xiamen originated from a property owner, Huang Qizhong, who posted an article on an online property forum and asked for assistance to protect his property. He posted his mobile number in the forum and the residents of Haicang district began to assemble. The first step of their collective action was to send complaint letters to the government of Haicang district, but they received no replies. Then on 7 July 2006, the property owners sent letters to the SEPA and NDRC. However on the following day, they got the news that the project had received approval from the NDRC. This led to a deadlock.

The local EPB had attempted to oppose the project before the project had obtained approval, but their power was weak. Actually, the PX project was under debate for many years within the institutional realm before local experts told to the public. Earlier in October 2004, an official journal affiliated to the Xiamen Environmental Protection Bureau (EPB) published an article, indicating that the deteriorating air quality of Haicang district was caused by the petrochemical industrial land of Haicang which was contradictory to the original planned direction of the residential town, The article also stated that, 'the future PX project would make this controversy fiercer' (Zhang, 2011). The EPB held different attitudes towards this project and suggested the government pay attention to the potential hazards. However, the Xiamen government leaders did not listen to the EPB's suggestions and continued to push forward the PX project. Meanwhile, several Xiamen local CPPCC delegates who also knew the petrochemical industry raised concerned about this project when it gain approval around 2006, but they did not raise any practical opposition at the local CPPCC conference.

A favourable turn appeared when the local scientists engaged. In this case, local experts showed their tremendous willingness to engage with this project by forming the advocacy coalition, despite not being the official EIA members of this project. Members of this coalition collaborated with each other. Zhao Yufen, a Xiamen university professor and an academician of the Chinese Academy of Science (CAS) originated from Taiwan, noticed the news in the local newspaper, and realized that the project was to be built so close to the central city. This would directly endanger the environment of Xiamen. She told this news to her colleague, Yuan Dongxing, who was also an environmental professor at Xiamen University. They found this issue to be serious and decided to take action directly aimed at the local government.

The experts firstly attempted to communicate directly through personal connections. At the end of November 2006, Zhao and five academicians of CAS wrote letters to the leaders of Xiamen government, but received no reply. In early December, Zhao again wrote letters directly to the then Party secretary and governor of Fujian Province respectively, stating the hazards of the PX plant from the scientific perspective, and she suggested relocating it out of Xiamen territory. On 6 January 2007, some leaders of the Xiamen Party committee held a dialogue with these experts from Xiamen University in the Xiamen Hotel. However, they failed to reach a consensus. It seems that the identity of authoritative knowledge provided the academicians with advocacy opportunities to talk with local officials directly and this is the first time that a local authority was confronted with opposition.

Failing to reach a consensus with local officials, these experts were able to raise this issue up to higher national salience, gaining support from more social elites nationwide and directly lobbying the central decision-makers. Zhao had another social identity other than a scientist: she was also a CPPCC delegate. Alongside other local experts, she cooperated with many other national CPPCC delegates and tried to set this agenda in the conference. In March 2007, during the CPPCC, Zhao initiated the drafting of the ‘No.1 Motion’—suggesting the relocation of the Xiamen petrochemical plant, with 105 national delegate co-signatures, among them the deputy governor of Fujian Province. Most co-signers were managers of Chinese universities and there were over ten academicians from the Chinese Academy of Science. They called for the relocation of the plant on the grounds that the project was too close to the residential areas and posed a high accidental risk for millions of Xiamen citizens. Zhu Xingxiang, the director of the Environmental Impact Assessment Department of SEPA met with these delegates, and the NDRC also sent the investigation team to Xiamen. Zhu showed ‘understanding and sympathy’ to these experts, stating that ‘we can’t do anything because we don’t have power to change NDRC’s decision’ (Sina News, 16 March 2007). An official of NDRC met with Zhao in Beijing, and told her the NDRC did not intend to suspend or relocate the plant.

5.2.1.2 NIMBY protests, fast mobilization and its broad constituency

The term NIMBY is often used to describe selfish, irrational opposition by individuals or communities regarding to the location of facilities necessary for the public good such as waste incinerators in their ‘backyards’. This case involved urban,

predominantly middle-class communities and could be considered as the first real NIMBY movement in China. It is evident that when the PX project was relocated to Zhangzhou, Xiamen citizens did not take similar actions.

The mobilization for civic contention was very fast. The public acknowledged information after the media reported the 'No.1 motion' and felt angry about the non-transparency of information. Before and after the large civic demonstrations in June 2007, local elites carried out extensive media mobilization. A local blogger, LianYue, who was the Southern Weekly columnist published serious reports including one entitled 'what to do with Xiamen people' (*Xiamen renminzenmeban* 厦门人民怎么办), urging local people to discuss the PX project and fostering a shared grievance and identity (Southern Weekly, 28 December 2007). On 28 May, a netizen called 'Xiamen Lang', who used to work for Xinhua Agency, also posted 'anti-PX' articles in local online forums to declare the potential risks of the plants to the local residential communities. These articles were reposted thousands of times by netizens within several days². Members of the Xiamen diaspora elsewhere around China displayed support online before and after the protests (Southern Metropolis News, 14 January 2008).

Since the potential risk of PX was initially revealed by scientists and local elites, the local government initially tried to conceal, rather than actively responding to the increasing concern. In late May 2007, a text message about the risk of PX was transmitted among millions of mobile phone users in Xiamen. The person who originally sent this message remains anonymous. This message ended with: 'for the safety of our generation and thenext generations, please forward this message to all of your friends and family members in Xiamen' (Xinhua Oriental Outlook, 28 May 2007). This 'messaging of millions of people' was soon featured in popular websites such as Neteas and Tencent as well as local online communities such as *Small Fish Forum* and the electronic bulletin board of Xiamen University. Each sub-issue pertaining to the PX project had thousands of hits (Wu & Steinhardt, 2016).

Apart from the pioneering role played by scientists and social elites in the policy coalition formation, another factor also led to the fast mobilization of citizens. This

² Interview with 'Xiamen Lang' in Guangzhou (XM02, 06 June 2015). Since the Xiamen PX project relocated, 'Xiamen Lang' was monitored on his public opinion by the authority and he moved to Guangzhou afterwards.

was the use of new media. The Xiamen PX contention did not rely on several persons in organizations and among the leadership, but took place during the daily talks and communication among residents. The more communication, the more possible it was for Xiamen residents to have public participation. Each Xiamen resident was not only the participant, but also the organizer. Even though mobilization was completed by individual residents, they displayed uniformity in coordinating their approach, targets and strategies. During this process, they established a mutually recognized 'mass discourse' such as '*Xiamen ren*' and '*jitisanbu*'. In this sense, '*Xiamen ren*' represents a mild, rational and a relatively high-level educated character. '*Jitisanbu*' (collective stroll) is a term which appeared for first time within the context of Xiamen PX³.

In this campaign, Xiamen citizens largely leveraged the Internet and mobile communication to build up public opinion pressure and take collective actions. The interactions of residents using new technologies and the speed of diffusion were beyond the authorities' expectations. The role of new social media in this process provided an important explanation for the emergent framing of PX as a dangerous pollutant, leading to the mobilization of residents. Connections could be formed and activists and residents could freely express their opinions, thus influencing each other.

What most distinguished this protest from the majority of others at that time was its broad constituency. This was the first time that the scale of citizens participating in protests expanded from a work unit, to the neighbourhood community, spanning the whole city. Protesters claimed to speak not for a narrow subset of citizens, but for the majority of citizens. Aside from the grievance regarding the potential impact on air pollution and industrial accidents on the city, the much more exclusive type of grievance was the fear of Haicang residents that the value of their residential properties would decrease. A discursively reinforced identity of 'Xiamen people' (*Xiamen ren*) emerged, inhabiting an intangible and collectively owned 'beautiful Xiamen' (*meili de Xiamen*) that was under threat and required citizens to "defend their beautiful homes". These reports generate sympathy from other parts of China, evidencing the seed of environmental citizenry and influence over other Chinese cities.

³Interview XM02, 6 June 2015

5.2.2 Stagnation and Negotiation: the role of science

From June 2007 (the announcement of suspension) to December 2007 (the government published the EIA report), the local authority showed a willingness to respond to local concerns but struggled for half a year. Since the ‘stroll’ ended, the local government did not think of stopping the project, and both the anti-PX and pro-PX coalitions held back to see what would happen in the next stage. At this time, Zhao and other scientists once again played a significant role by using their resources and strategies to influence the local and national governments. Meanwhile, an independent scientific EIA acted as brokerage to achieve policy alternation.

5.2.2.1 Local government in ambiguity

Xiamen municipal and Fujian provincial governments felt pressure to respond to the public when the social contention exploded. On 30 May 2007, Ding Guoyan, the vice mayor of Xiamen announced in a press conference that the government would reconsider the project. The Fujian provincial government also requested the Xiamen government to set up a new regional EIA to replace the original one. However, Ding did not inform the time schedule of the new EIA process and the specific assessment agency. Actually the attitude of Xiamen officials had been ambiguous since two days before the announcement. The official media the *Xiamen Evening News* published an article on ‘introducing the Haicang PX project’, expressing the safety of the PX plant in environmental protection. At this time, the local government was responsive to the public concerns, but they did not accept public opinion and took no practical actions. Scientist Zhao did not accept the response and stated that ‘the suspension does not meet our demand of relocation’ (Southern Weekly, 7 April 2015).

The stalling strategies were also not able to smooth the anxiety of local citizens. An even more dramatic contention was the anti-PX ‘stroll’ which broke out on the 1st and 2nd June. Failing to get permission from the government, this demonstration attracted thousands of people to join. This protest was formed mainly of well-educated middle-class in Xiamen, and organized through Internet and mobile phones. From 8 am on 1 June 2007, thousands of citizens assembled around the construction site and Hubin North Road. Most protesters were between 18 to 35 years old, an age group that consisted of the majority of active netizens. Two Internet users carried out a live report of the ‘stroll’ on a blog site called Bullog. This live report was the only

information source about the demonstration since traditional media and popular commercial websites collectively chose to ignore it. When traditional information sources were blocked by the government, these forms of new media played a crucial role in getting the message across to a wide range of people while successfully transforming personal connections to the public agenda.

The initial response of the local government towards social unrest was antagonistic. On 3 June, the municipal Public Security Bureau (PSB) announced that the organizers of demonstrations should surrender to the public security organs, or they would be severely punished or even face criminal persecution. On the same day, the local official newspaper *Xiamen Daily* published an article on ‘not shooting yourself in the foot’ and positioned the protests as being ‘totally instigated by a very few people’ (Xiamen Daily, 3 June 2007). As the public opinions turned stronger, the local government started to use new media to influence public opinion. It first sent text messages to citizens, informing them about the suspension of the project. Later, the head of Xiamen EPB visited *xmnn.cn*, the largest local website, explaining the project in detail while having a real-time interaction with the online citizens.

The local government decided to initiate the interaction with the local citizens since they found that contention was spurring. On the 7th and 8th June, 250,000 PX handbooks were sent to citizens. During the whole of June, the local authority opened many channels such as messages, telephones, faxes and emails to listen to public opinions. Some of local officials planned to restart the EIA process. The team of the Xiamen regional EIA was directly led by the Mayor, and included many directors of bureaus. However, they failed to find any EIA agencies willing to take this assessment work. Finally, the local officials tried hard and successfully persuaded the Chinese Environmental and Scientific Academy (CESA) and promised ‘the Xiamen government will be justice and will not have any tendencies’ (Southern Weekly, 7 April 2015). The SPEA did not join the work of CESA.

However, in early July, the situation became much more complex. On 3 July, 2007, a local official revealed that Xiamen planned to implement ‘the Regulation of Xiamen Harmful Information Arrangement and Punishment’ (Caijing, 27 June 2017). This regulation intended to set up the real-name system for more than 100 thousand websites registered in Xiamen, and established a series of website arrangement policies such as monitoring the posts of the local forums, punishing responsible

persons and quickly deleting information that was not good for the government. This action received a violent response from the citizens and was positioned as limiting the freedom of speech. This regulation was subsequently suspended and the official responsible for it was dismissed.

As the core member of pro-PX, the Xianglu Group hoped to recover the enterprise image from Xiamen citizens. The company would not be able to take the economic loss of suspension if the Xiamen government froze its capital. They opened a company blog and published some of its achievements in regards to environmental protection. They also filed a lawsuit against Zhao Yufen and Yuan Dongxing for reputation damage. On 13 December, the company wrote a public letter to Xiamen citizens in the *Southern Weekly*, saying that they would respect the EIA agencies, the citizens and the government. Meanwhile, it is also a tough process for the local government. If the plant relocated, the government would also get claims for compensation from Xianglu because all the administrative processes were legal.

5.2.2.2 Policy learning after the contention: scientists as intermediary figures

The mutual reinforcement of policy advocacy and citizens' protests is notable in Xiamen. Local scientists conducted extensive policy advocacy before and after large protests as well as during the process of public participation in EIA. In China, scientists are not necessarily 'neutral' by making judgments according to the state's policy priorities although sometimes they are 'policy indifferent'. In Xiamen, however, a group of prestigious scientists were clear members of the environmental coalition. An alliance of scientists and average citizens emerged in this city as part of a proactive campaign in the name of the public against a major state-initiated project. Local civil society in Xiamen was able to communicate effectively with authoritarian officials before environmental protests reached uncontrollable points through the intermediation of local scientists who the local state preferred to listen to.

An expert, or anyone who is seen as knowledgeable, is someone who has reliable and credible indicators of such epistemic authority. Therefore, the appearance of knowledge can be seen as a 'social power'. Local experts like Zhao, can be seen as representatives of local environmental citizens when they make environmental claims based on their authoritative knowledge arising from specialist expertise. They can also influence public opinion. Citizens in Xiamen trusted their scientific conclusions and

took action based on their judgments. During the half year of stagnation, local experts and social elites did not give up pushing forward their campaigns. Zhao attended several public forums and she wrote public letters on the potential risks of PX to Xiamen residents. In November and December, Green Cross Associations (GCA, the largest environment NGO in Xiamen) organized several forums, with a large number of citizens joining. Zhao and her colleagues were invited as consultants to these events for the GCA, and were trusted by the local communities and Xiamen residents by giving lectures. In framing their opposition, residents often quoted Zhao's judgment on environmental risks and used this to challenge the local government.

During the process, local residents learnt to be more rational. Lian Yue was considered as the main initiator of the citizen 'stroll'. His blogs suggested that the citizens take rational approaches when protecting their own rights. In October, local traditional media published an article reminding the citizens to not be manipulated by owners of property in Haicang. It seems that the local authority's attitude was not consistent. Lian posted in his blog that 'Xiamen people should have patience and wait for the decisions of the Xiamen government. We should have more confidence in the government (Southern Weekly, 7 April 2015)'.

Zhao and her colleagues were not the members of the Xiamen PX official assessment agency, but they were still able to gain access to the local officials through informal meetings. Local officials felt trapped in a dilemma between choosing economic growth, environmental protection and social stability. They thought that the local scientists were trustful. On the day when the local government decided to temporarily shelve the project because of the fierce social unrests, Zhao strongly requested that local officials chose an independent EIA agency and that the assessment process should be supervised by the public. She discussed with the local officials who were responsible for this project from the scientific angle, pointing out the concrete direction that the EIA should go in, and urging the government to conduct a new regional EIA. Some leaders of the Xiamen government were open-minded and thought that the project should be assessed more scientifically before being putting into construction. Finally, the Xiamen government listened to these scientists and chose CESA (Chinese Environment and Scientific Academy) as the third-party agency and a new EIA was conducted. The effective interaction between scientists and the

local government led the whole situation to a better direction, and prevented worse social unrest.

However, we can also witness the separation of protest and policy advocacy within the environmental coalition in this case. The scientists and NGO activists were particularly cautious not to get involved with grassroots mobilization, and protests were almost universally characterized by an absence of effective policy advocacy. These scientists held that they were not engaged in any social unrest and that they were just standing for policy judgement. It seems that, these experts avoided confronting the government, and tried to maintain their scientific neutrality.

The characteristic of a functional absence of local NGOs is also obvious in this protest. In the policy advocacy process, the majority of local environmental NGOs did not participate. In 2007, there were 1,780 NGOs registered in Xiamen and their function was quite limited during this campaign. The absence of NGOs in Xiamen constrained citizens from participating in the social movement through social organizations and building social trust among them, especially before December 2007. Some local advocates who participated in the demonstrations were cautious and tried not to call for protests directly. The main environmental NGO in the city, GCA, publicly declared its neutrality when protests occurred. It became involved only after institutionalized public participation had become possible as the SEPA renewed EIA law. The GCA posted some articles on the dangers of the PX chemical plant in its website. However as the incident escalated, the local propaganda agency asked them to remove these articles. The protesters hoped that GCA would take up a leadership role in organizing the activities. However, the director of GCA, Ma Tiannan, declared his attitude of 'no support, no opposition, and no organization'. His attitude received criticism from citizens. He said 'the power of GCA is so weak and without any academic judgment. The only thing we can do is to establish a bridge to help the public to participate. Why is no one complaining about the silence of Greenpeace?'⁴

⁴ Interview XM 03, 05 March 2014. Greenpeace is an independent global campaigning organization that acts to protect and conserve the environment and to promote peace. Greenpeace East Asia office is located in Beijing, the capital city of China, It is one of the earliest international ENGOs in China, and is known for its effective strategies in negotiating with the Chinese government and conducting campaigns under the grey zone. The campaign of Greenpeace does not target any industrial projects along with environmental movements since 2007 that threaten political stability.

5.2.2.3 The third party: independent assessment

The Xiamen government stated that it would restart the EIA process toward the PX plant, and authorized some experts of CESA from Beijing to take on the role of assessment. The result of the new EIA report showed that the space of southern Haicang was too narrow, so Xiamen government needed to choose its position between a petrochemical area and a sub-central city. Also, the results showed that pollution emissions of the Xianglu Group did not reach the standard level. This independent agency merely had a strategic interest-based behaviour or increased its own power to pursue material self-interest. Meanwhile, all the procedures and information were published for the Xiamen residents. The third-party scientific agency brokered the deadlocked situation when disagreements between different policy holders tended to escalate to intense political conflicts.

The Xiamen government initiated online polling in its official website. By 20 December 2007, the final results showed that there were 55,000 people opposed the project, and only 3,000 people who supported it. The most important section of public participation, public hearings, were held on 13 and 14 December 2007. The highlight of the public hearing was the delegates' selection and the speakers' allocation. Citizens could apply to attend the hearings. On 10 December, 2007, the *Xiamen Daily* published the list of 624 applicants. The local TV broadcast the whole process of the lottery for determining the delegates online. Three days before the hearing, the GCA organized three consultative meetings, calling these civic delegates together to guide them with key issues, for example the allocation of content in their speeches. The local government also invited 50 local CPPCC and PC delegates to join the hearings. Scientists such as Zhao were also invited, so that the knowledge elites could express their academic suggestions. Yuan Dongxing, a professor from Xiamen University, gave a presentation in the public hearing. The national media were also invited to audit the hearing. These included the *Xinhua Agency*, *People's Daily*, and *Guangming Daily*. A local PC delegate, who was an entrepreneur from a Xiamen chemical company, also spoke to oppose the project and requested other local PC delegates to co-sign with him. Among 49 citizen delegates, over 40 opposed the PX plant. In the second public hearing, 97 people attended and more than 60 citizens and local CPPCC/PC delegates gave speeches. Finally only 10 of them supported the project. The following statement quoted by an official in the public hearing revealed the

stance of the local authority, 'I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it' (Southern Weekly, 20 May 2016).

After the public hearing, local scientists also actively provided advice to the officials, and their opinions were adopted by the authority. Zhao and other scientists suggested two options: the first option was Meizhou Bay, which was a mature petrochemical base; the second was the Zhangzhou Gulei peninsula, an island with a limited population. On 15 December 2007, the Fujian government held a special conference and decided to relocate the Xiamen PX plan, and their anticipatory location would be Zhangzhou Gulei. On 19 December, the *China Daily* published an article entitled 'The Xiamen PX project: continue, stop or relocate?' (China Daily, 19 December 2007). It was claimed that the best choice was to choose another position in the coastal Fujian province to continue the project. The article in *China Daily* implied that the central government also intended to reconsider the plant under the pressure of civic contention. On 9 January 2009, the director of MEP held the general conference to approve the Zhangzhou PX project. On 13 April 2009, the Zhangzhou PX project was approved by NDRC.

What makes the Xiamen PX case distinguished is that there was an intensive six month negotiation and discussion between the decision makers and the environmental protesters, and the interactive communication was bridged by the intermediary figures of local scientists. In viewing the early stages of the conflict, the local government adopted aversive measures that attempted to ensure its policy was implemented. This could be seen as the 'politicization' of social contention. After a back and forth, the local government experienced a learning process by interacting with the scientists who repackaged local environmental claims. At certain points, local discourses in agenda setting changed when there were several standpoints within the local government. Thereafter, a more rational and technical point of view took predominately during this period. The local government diffused the issue by depoliticizing it and professionalizing it through requesting another independent EIA agency, which reduced the political risk and gave social contention less political emphasis.

5.2.3 Public participation as a trial for policy change

The encouragement of public participation in the Xiamen PX case is significant in the Chinese context, when the local government effectively institutionalizes public participation in policy making. Actually before Zhao and her colleagues proposed the 'No.1 motion' in CPPCC in March 2007, we couldn't find any traces of public participation throughout all PX project process in terms of EIA, approval and construction. On 30 May, Xiamen government started to suspend the project and initiated the 'procedures of public participation'. In the beginning, the absence of public participation in the first EIA procedure caused social unrests. Later on, the local government combined information transparency and effective responses together, initiating a new regional strategic EIA in June through the use of an independent scientific agency. Overall, Xiamen government showed positive exploration in institutional innovation in terms of civic participation and the deliberation of elites.

5.2.3.1 EIA in China

Democratic countries regard scientific knowledge as a significant factor in forming environmental policies. As policy issues needs science, science becomes politicized and drawn into policy formulation. Technical authority enters the moral and socio-political realms, so that scientific results are used by different agencies to argue for particular policy positions. The procedures of public participation allow ordinary citizens to access expert knowledge and make informed judgements on complex policy issues. These judgements, together with the expert knowledge, can then support decision-makers in policy formation. In authoritarian regimes, however, the role played by scientists is not usually independent. Normally, in the policy-making process, scientists are under institutional arrangement and make judgement according to the policy tendency. Irrelevant experts are generally not granted a seat at the decision-making table due to the regime causes. In China, scientists who participate in the EIA process are usually under the system of MEP (SEPA before 2007) or even come from the agencies of investing SOEs.

Over the last 20 years, EIA has been implemented and has become an important instrument for decision-making in development projects in China. China has a complex institutional framework for environment issues, especially for EIA. The concept of EIA was introduced in 1973 during the First Conference for National Environmental Protection, which was designed specifically to tackle serious industrial

pollution issues. As the Environmental Protection Office (EPO) was established in 1974, an Environmental Protection Law (EPL) was drafted. As decentralization and China's economy grew rapidly after the 1980s, local governments gained considerable discretion in approving developing projects. At the same time, national concern with economic development hampered the implementation of impact assessment procedures. When an EIA was carried out, assessments were generally poor and mitigation measures often missing.

The Environmental Impact Assessment Law of China was promulgated on 28 October 2002 and put into effect on 1 September of 2003. The new EIA law encourages public participation and government support to EIA practices through research and information sharing. These are the formal channels for soliciting public comment in planning decisions.

The EPB is responsible for implementing national environmental protection regulations, but they are also under the control of local authorities and funded from the local rather than the national level. This dual leadership system leads to a conflict between the environmental protection responsibility of the EPB and the development aims of the local authority. EPBs are assisted by research institutes and environmental monitoring agencies to conduct EIAs. While project decisions are made by the local economic bureaux who often regard the EIA as part of approval materials used in the preparation process.

Statistics of the MEP shows that more than 95% of projects have undertaken EIA over the past decade (Ren, 2013). However, the majority of EIA were served for the aim of economic development. According to the MEP (2013), by 2007, about 70% of EIAs were implemented for project approval at the provincial level, only about 40% down to prefecture level and 20% at county level. Local governments often decide or tacitly allow construction to begin before any assessment or approval procedures (*weipixianjian* 未批先建). Normally the institutional arrangement for EIA approval and enforcement follows the principle of the 'same administrative level' (Ren, 2013). For example, provincial EPB approved projects are under provincial jurisdiction. However, in reality, some EPBs go beyond their capacity to approve EIA they are not authorized to approve. In some cases, the local government randomly chooses experts to review EIA for certain projects since they do not need the real function of EIA in practice.

In the current Chinese EIA system, the time of soliciting public opinion is not very clearly stated and is often too late. The Provisional Regulation for Public Participation in EIA (the Provisional Regulation) was released by the SEPA in 2006. The Provisional Regulation requires that public participation is only carried out during the compilation of an EIA report, so public participation is not likely to be achieved after the EIA report.

The Xiamen PX project conducted a program EIA (*xiangmuhuanping* 项目环评) by SEPA in 2006. The original EIA agency was a unit under the administration of SEPA. Until 2007, as the program EIA report was approved by SEPA, the public did not have a chance to look at the report and it was acknowledged explicitly which agency made this report. This project did not take the overall regional EIA (*zongtiqiyuhuanping* 总体区域环评). However, the overall regional EIA in the year of 2007 was not the necessity in initiating a new industrial project. For the decision-makers, the regional EIA report could be used just for reference purposes.

5.2.3.2 Good governance and policy making in ‘Hu-Wen’ period

The concept of good governance has been embodied in many central policies during the Hu-Wen leadership. The concepts of ‘Harmonious Society’ and ‘Scientific Outlook on Development’ are prominently promoted. Between 2005 and 2007, SEPA launched three environmental storms, in which it implemented high-profile crackdowns on large-scale construction projects that had violated the EIA Law. The three storms targeted the illegal procedures of projects which had been constructed without EIA procedures, or did not fulfil the overall strategic EIA. SEPA's environmental storm also tried to target the Xiamen project, and officials in SEPA supported the scientists and public opinion in Xiamen. Since protests occurred, on 7 June the vice director of SPEA, Pan Yue, asked experts to organize make a new regional EIA for this project. However, the pressure from SEPA to the local officials did not seem effective immediately. Some of the large industrial projects had the ‘reject-then-pass’ situation. Since the environmental department vetoed their EIAs, they made complaints directly to ministries (like NDRC) or up to the State Council, and they often had an upper hand.

Although the final policy outcome for Xiamen PX was the accommodation of local states, it turned out that relying on the ‘top-down’ environmental regulation was not a

permanent solution. This is because when the SEPA was upgraded to MEP after 2007 and the relevant officials in charge were changed, the ‘storm’ policy gradually died down. It is evident that when the Xiamen project was relocated to Zhangzhou, the project went smoothly even though the MEP had attempted to stop this project.

The Xiamen PX protests exposed the weakness of environmental concerns at the early stage of the decision-making process in China. These include economic policy, regional and urban master plans and sectoral plans at the national, provincial and municipal levels. In China’s decision-making system, national strategy is often positioned ahead of planning (*guihua* 规划). However, the environmental problems caused by planning are often linked to their corresponding strategies. In China’s planning system, ‘National Economic and Social Development Plan’ occupies a superior status, acting as the reference for other plans such as the city development plan, land use plan, etc. They do not give the detailed requirements for plans of land use, exploration, utilization and development in the areas, river basins and sea areas. In other words, according to the 2003 EIA law, this EIA report didn’t contain the items on national economy and social development that may influence the environment. Therefore the EIA was just pointing to the specific project rather than the overall plans in its areas. The limited coverage of the current EIA system explains why China has always had so many environmental conflicts towards particular industrial projects. An official from SEPA noted

the main problem of EIA in this project resides in the functioning division of planning. The previous plan for Haicang is the chemical industry, but then the local government brings in a large amount of the population and estate properties. This is what leads to problems. We could do nothing but change the function of this district (Southern Weekly, 7 April 2015).

Some scholars have expressed EIA’s role in optimizing decision making (Phylip-Jones & Fischer, 2013). This provides a legitimate opportunity for the MEP and EPBs at the preview and review of EIA to ask for policy alternative consideration. In China, EIA is generally considered as a virtual decision verifying tool. In the Xiamen case, the local government was willing to request a third party for reassessment when local protests occurred. However whilst many EIA practitioners and reviewers in fact have sufficient technical capacity, they are afraid of proposing different opinion for fear of

losing business in the future or being kicked out of the EIA review process since the developmental bureaucracies are more or less behind most major projects.

At the end of 2007, Xiamen government finally showed their willingness for strategic alternation. They got support from SEPA and promised not to interfere with the reassessment result. Local environmental activists made use of EIA reassessment to create the public discussion. During the six months, local government and the environmental coalition maintained positive interaction through the intermediation of local scientists, although some officials attempted to keep this project. Compared with the original EIA in the Xiamen PX project, the regional EIA was engaged with the public participation and a third-party scientific agency (see Figure 5.2 and 5.3). The regional EIA's entry point in the decision-making process was set after the explosion of local protests. The local government showed its accommodation to environmental activism in this case.

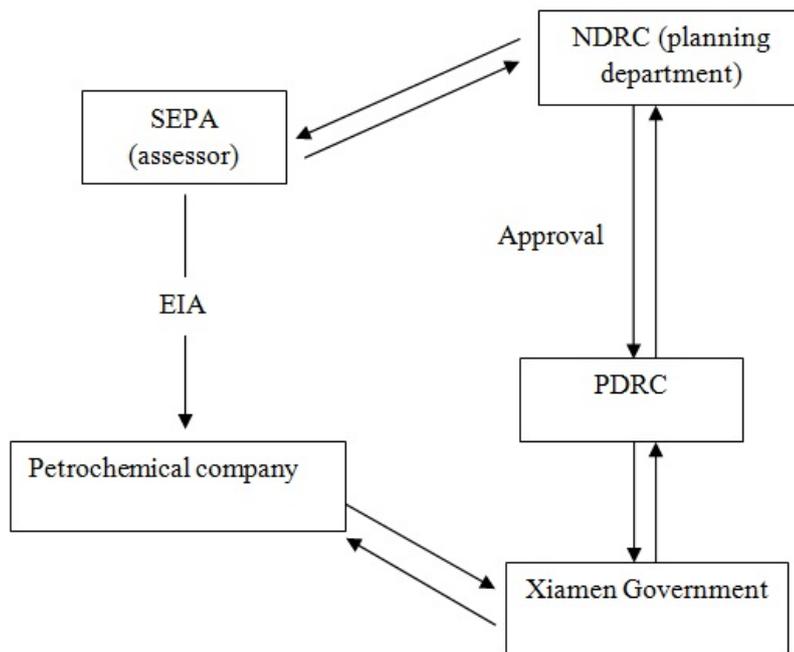


Figure 5.2 Institutional setting and program EIA in 2006

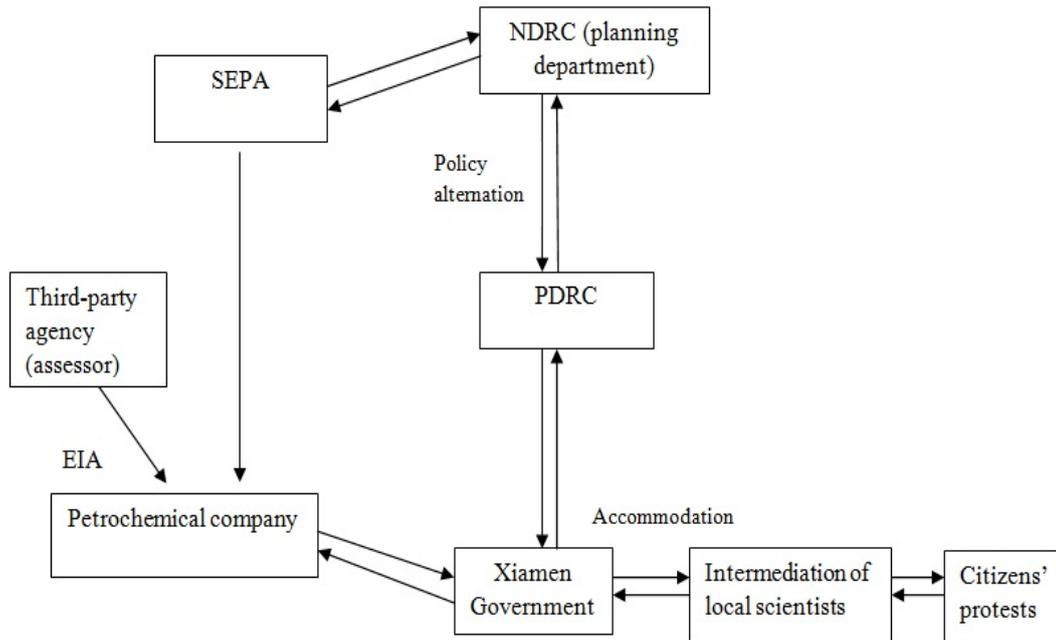


Figure 5.3 Institutional setting and regional EIA in 2007

Although the 2003 EIA law does state that the objectivity of EIA is to ensure that decision-making is environmentally sound, China is currently still falling short in operating it. The Xiamen government distinguished itself by bringing in an objective (independent) EIA agency and taking a new regional assessment to ensure its scientific stand. In the later stage of communication, local officials emphasized the formal channels of participation and communication especially the EIA process and public hearing. The local government opened up the institutional channels for the public to enter the policy process, and it also hoped to firmly keep its grip over civil society expression. The existence of a third party professionalized this issue and de-politicized the risk, thus achieving the purpose of de-mobilization by officials.

5.3 Analysis and Summary

This chapter demonstrates the formation of environmental coalitions, interactions between intermediary figures with decision makers, the kinds of resources and strategies mobilized by coalitions and the social-economic changes that can lead to a policy outcome. The case shows that intermediaries in Xiamen can repackage local environmental claims into certain kinds of standings that local officials would like to listen. Local scientists in Xiamen were not environmental activists, but they were recognized as representatives of local civil society who can influence the decision-makers.

Local scientists' groups, who are recognized as knowledge authorities by the local authority, built up networks and had better communications with formal authorities than other social actors in the environmental coalition. Compared with other policy advocates, such as local NGOs and media elites, scientists in Xiamen possessed academic knowledge, had formal or informal channels to access both local and national officials, and were not regarded as threats to the state. They were able to change their campaign targets from the local government to the central government, because they found that the central government would be more responsive than the local one. Since there were no large SOEs involved in this project and the developer was a foreign investor, decision makers in the government felt less pressure from economic bureaucracies. Scientists were not only professional experts supporting the pro-environmental decision-making, but also representatives of public opinions in supervising the decision-makers. The multi-identities facilitated their positions not just to provide technical knowledge to both sides, but also to improve the public participation process.

In western democratic countries, expertise can not only be seen as a significant factor in forming policies, but also as a discursive strategy of legitimation since it explains why a certain action is required or desirable. In the environmental policy arena, science can reveal the probability of an environmental threat. However, science is not able to set political priorities since it cannot tell us how to allocate sources to meet these threats (Miller, 2008, p. 133). Therefore, science is enlisted in policy making by other major players in the political arenas, such as lawmakers and regulators, the courts, the media and social groups. In authoritarian China, it is also meaningful that experts were not merely viewed as conveyors of relevant policy information. Decision-making incorporating expert judgments in China has involved mechanisms for public participation and structured consultation with a potential for contestation and contention. Local experts can be seen as intermediary figures if they make a claim based on their authoritative knowledge arising from expertise, which may allow them to respond to neglected groups of interests. Meanwhile, these claims will more likely be accepted or viewed on the presence of these intermediaries who are respected by their institutionalized bodies and local authorities.

In the environmental coalition of Xiamen, the key actors were local scientists. They not only populated the environmental movement (indirectly) but also acted as

professionals in the municipality consultation. In other words, there was a group of environmental scientists, who played the crucial role in the negotiation process between protested civil society and the repressive local authority. They filled the role of a particularly important type of actor in this coalition, that of the 'intermediary figures'. The intermediary figures were key actors who could influence peripheral and individual activists. They possessed the following traits for their activities: a strong, value-based commitment in the coalition; a limited number of actors with personal relations with one another; a relatively extensive and formal network, such as collaboration with CPPCC delegates; a web of an intelligence network; not threatening and respected by authoritarian decision makers.

Local scientists' advocacy started from the 2006, before the civic protests, and lasted until the end of the public hearing in 2007. It provided consultative suggestions to both citizens and the government. These experts called for the transparency and independence of the EIA procedures and continuously pressured to the authorities. They also made these consultative measures make sense in Xiamen. During the process, they gradually obtained the sympathy of local officials. Meanwhile, they played a significant role in indirectly mobilizing and educating citizens in the whole period of social contention, although they had denied their political function. The social power of technical experts is derived from a combination of professional status. Residents listened to their scientific judgement because they shared prestige in society. They acted as the counter-experts to the pro-developmental ones and their opinions obtained supports very quickly from Xiamen citizens. The dissemination of knowledge can be useful for opening up debate over technical and scientific problems. It can be an effective strategy for building up trust between the scientific community and the general public.

The policy-oriented learning across environmental issues is achieved in this case when there is a conflict between environmental activists and decision makers, and there are intermediary professionals that help the accumulation of scientific knowledge among local officials and the general public. According to Hecló (1974, p. 306), policy-oriented learning refers to relatively enduring alternations of thought or behavioural intentions which result from experience and/or new information and which are concerned with the attainment or revision of policy objectives. In this case, even though when the accumulation of scientific knowledge did not change the views

of the decision makers in the early stages, it still had important impact on the policy, for example by altering public opinion and the views of superior officials.

In this case, we may find a substantial participation of residents. The environmental contention looks neither like the ‘professional mobilization’ commonly seen in western countries, nor the traditional Chinese protests such as ‘rightful resistance’. Xiamen PX contention did not have a group leadership and organizers, and it was organized by thousands of well-educated middle class citizens through new media. This kind of ‘mass mobilization’ does not have leadership so that the government was not able to charge responsibilities of organizers, which significantly lowered the political risks of participants and made it mobilization possible. This pattern of mobilization could be tolerated by the local authority and leave space for rational interaction between participants and the local government.

Moreover, the people of Xiamen showed the rudimentary citizenship, which means that the public substantially participated into the policy-making process. Most of the participants in this case were residents who moved to Xiamen for more than 20 years. Generally, they had a higher education background and relatively good jobs, which included entrepreneurs, university students, freelancers and some intellectuals. They possessed advantaged social resources and had many channels of participation. The spontaneous learning of scientific knowledge and public policy took place throughout the whole process. PX is an academic term relating to chemistry and is unfamiliar by common people. Since the protests occurred, citizens quickly collected the introduction of PX and published scientific materials online. Several social elites also suggested strategies for civic actions according to the PX project.⁵

Local officials faced great pressure to accommodate the substantial participation. When the heated debates pointed to the government's policy making, the main appeals of citizens turned to the ‘right to know’. Lian Yue in his blog suggested that ‘Xiamen citizens should make full use of the right to express your opinions, because this is the first step that comes with the substantial change, especially when the government has showed its great faith...’ ‘We should submit sufficient and qualified opposition

⁵ For example, Lian Yue had written, ‘Xiamen people do like this 1 (*xiamenrenminzheme ban1*)’ on 29 March 2007, and ‘Xiamen People do like this 2 (*xiamenrenminzheme ban2*)’ on 7 December 2007, and he raised 12 and 10 action notes respectively. See from *Southern People's Weekly*, 28 December 2007.

opinions, so that the EIA quality should be improved and it is possible to reduce the possibility of making fake report.’⁶

Nevertheless, this does not mean that changes in social conditions, such as popular resistance and change in public opinion are the necessary causes of policy change. There could have been another scenario in Xiamen if there had not been intermediary figures to brokerage the deadlock. Meanwhile, the choice of local officials also mattered. The Chinese government encouraged private investment by increasing PX products after 2004. Unlike other high-profile projects where the developers are powerful SOEs and corporate groups formerly affiliated to minister in charge of that sector, the developer of the Xiamen PX project was a Taiwanese private company. Since a power struggle among government agencies at all levels also played a role in encouraging and discouraging policy change, local officials in Xiamen did not face the pressure from powerful SOEs so much large enough, so they still remain certain power of choice in this case. Chances for environmentalists emerged when local officials needed to respond to governance challenges that impacted their chances for promotion. In order to maintain social stability, local officials were willing to take the risks of policy alteration with the cost of economic loss. The Xiamen case is more obvious because of the relative weakness of private business, as the central government has alternative options which will not affect its national PX strategy. Therefore economic factors became secondary for local officials in their policy preference.

Environmental actors in Xiamen successfully stopped the PX construction in their city and local officials not only adapted to the environmental activism, but also brought in an independent agency to evaluate their project and initiated the public deliberation process. In this case, policy alteration appears to have been driven by some scientists who share moral standing in both the local government and the civil society through policy-oriented learning, supported by the mobilized civic contention.

⁶ Ibid.

Chapter 6 One Region and Different Responses: Yunnan

Hydropower and Petrochemical Projects

The Xiamen and Shenzhen cases provide the possibility of pluralisation in policy-making in China today. It shows that policy changes when intermediary figures, such as experts and congressional delegates, form a coalition and employ their resources and strategies to communicate with the local state in representation of fast-mobilized citizens in a non-threatening way. Local officials also have incentives to accommodate the emerging social demand and listen to the environmental claims. However, most cities in China still struggle for the targets of economic development, especially those less developed localities. The political ambivalence of the Chinese state implies that local officials have a strong intention to prevent social contention. Therefore, they are sometimes reluctant to employ consultative measures raised by the central government and bring in civic participation, such as public hearings or opening EIA. China has huge investments in petrochemical industries, in coastal and inland areas, but these projects are heavy polluters. Therefore, the issues of site selection and potential pollution touch the environmental interests of local residents.

The Yunnan Petroleum Refinery Project (YPRP) is quite typical and has caused intense anti-PX protests in Kunming in 2013 as in other anti-PX cities.¹ However, what distinguishes this petrochemical project from others is that it is a national project with heavily central imposition in decision-making and policy implementation. The powerful bureaucracy—national petroleum group—is also of great importance in political salience, and this project has touched on issues of energy security and military defence in China. It is part of a national strategy that YPRP will undertake the role of refining crude oil through the Myanmar–China pipeline. If China could open up this new oil transportation line, crude oil from the Middle East could be sent through Myanmar to inland China, by-passing the Malacca Strait.

¹ This thesis refers to this project as ‘Yunnan Petroleum Refinery Project’ instead of ‘Yunnan PX Project’. As the unrest occurred, the Yunnan government officially stated that they would not initiate the PX programme but they would continue the petroleum refinery program. However, the petroleum refinery programme also will harm the environment and receive opposition from environmentalists. This project might still conduct PX production underground because the state has concealed all information about this project.

This particular project shows the repressiveness of the Yunnan government in terms of their lack of flexibility and adaptation in YPRP. However, when we look back to the Nu River Hydropower Project (NRHP) disputes a decade before, we may find that the Yunnan government has to some extent shown its accommodation to environmental advocacy and social contention. Therefore, it implies that political intermediation can also function in Yunnan. Green Watershed (GW) and Green Kunming were two local ENGOs that engaged in the environmental campaigns in these two projects, but they received different advocacy results and faced large gaps in political spaces for advocacy. They are both national projects but they experienced different policy results—why is that?

This chapter analyses the two environmental advocacy coalitions in Yunnan and argues that the coalitions and their interactions with local authority are different. What makes the NRHP campaign more successful can be attributed to its extensive network and good communication with decision makers, as established by intermediary figures in the environmental coalition. However, in the YPRP campaign, the peripheral actors in the environmental coalitions were not able to obtain support from intermediary figures and establish good communications with national and local authorities, thus failing to make effective advocacies in that campaign.

6.1 Managing Opposition in Provincial Level

The local government is not a monolithic one; it comprises multilevel and diverse actors. Compared to municipal, county and township governments, provincial governments are left with more decision-making power. In Yunnan, the YPRP and NRHP projects are high profile and have central interference. In both cases, provincial government promised project developers, the powerfully central SOEs, an advantageous policy environment in return for their investments; in the meantime, the provincial governments became shareholders of these projects. They played an active role in screening counties and municipals on their behaviours of policy implementation and management of society to prevent any reversal of their projects. It would be quite beneficial for their promotion because the officials in Yunnan are eager for development. Lower level cadres are less driven to pursue the local gross domestic product (GDP) because they need to sign an agreement with the provincial government to implement complementary plans, such as the migrant resettlement

(Habich, 2015), and meanwhile prevent any threats that would obstruct the project construction.

Not surprisingly, protests of the two projects were directed against local governments at the municipal and lower levels. Local cadres are assigned with the responsibility to maintain social stability, and they have strong incentives to prevent protests. For the provincial government, it is also not easy to make concessions. Addressing certain grievances requires the provincial government to change its policies or practices. Environmentalists always protest alongside to cancel developmental projects that have been the agreement between the local government and companies. Most of the projects are intended to stimulate the local economy. Meanwhile, the occurrence of large-scale disturbance and riot is an indicator of poor governance. Local leaders would be disciplined if the protests accelerated into mass riot. It is costly for the provincial government because accommodation to citizens sometimes necessitates dismissing local officials responsible for citizens' resistance and grievance.

What sets Yunnan province apart from other cases is the role played by Yunnan's ENGOs, which oppose developmental plans. Yunnan is a province with vast undeveloped areas and rich biological diversity. It has a vibrant grassroots NGO community, with many organizations focusing on environmental issues and poverty alleviation. Financial support and expertise provided by international environmental NGOs could best explain Yunnan's robustness of local environmental activism. These organizations have actively opposed certain developmental projects within the Yunnan region and have led the policy advocacy campaigns. Many stakeholders have joined the battle, for example, ENGOs, media, experts, local officials, SOEs and even officials of the central government.

6.2 Yunnan Petroleum Refinery Project

The policy-making process of the YPRP is highly centralized. According to the data published by the An'ning government, the project was in the incubation stage in 2004 and the China National Petroleum Corporation (Petro China) set up the feasibility research in 2008. In July 2012, the MEP approved this project, and in January 2013 the NDRC officially approved the project feasibility report. At the local level, the project has been strictly implemented and mobilized under instructions from the central government. On the one hand, the CCP controlled the dominant power of

bureaucratic behaviour using a top-down manner. On the other hand, social actors were repressed and felt less likely to access state actors and effectively advocate.

6.2.1 Project background

6.2.1.1 Oil shortage and economic stimulus

Petro China signed an agreement with the Myanmar government to build a new petroleum pipeline to ensure safe transportation when importing crude oil from the Middle East and Africa. This pipeline starts in Kyaukpyu of western Myanmar, goes through Yunnan Province of China, and then heads to Chongqing city. The YPRP is a part of the Sino–Myanmar pipeline project, which is designed to process 10 million tons of crude oil annually. 90% of refined oil will be transported to the rest of South-western China areas, and 10% will be exported to Myanmar. According to the Yunnan Petrochemical Industry Development Plan (2009–2015) published in September 2009, the project will become the ‘largest integrated base of oil refinery and chemical industry’ in south-western China. In other words, Petro China is responsible for oil refinery, and the subsidiary corporation Yuntianhua Group is responsible for producing the supporting petrochemical programme, paraxylene (PX) and purified terephthalic acid (PTA). PX and PTA are the main material for chemicals, such as chemical fibres and packing materials, extracted from the petroleum.

Since NDRC and Petro China decided to construct the Myanmar–China oil pipeline, several south-west provinces, such as the governments of Yunnan, Chongqing and Guizhou, competed for this project. Chongqing always had the plan to utilize this pipeline to establish a large basis for oil refinery and initiated detailed preparation. However, Petro China chose to put this project in Yunnan. This project could meet 53% of the total 14 million tons of oil demanded and then relieve the oil shortage in Yunnan Province (Yunnan DRC, 2013).

As the oil refinery and petrochemical industry, this project can improve the level of industrial transformation concerning the current traditional industries in Yunnan province. According to the ‘Yunnan Petrochemical Industry Development and Plan (2009–2015)’ (2009), the development of Yunnan’s petrochemical industry should depend on Petro China’s project and establish the core industrial group here. This project should greatly increase the total GDP of this relatively poor province.

Yunnan's government also expects large employment opportunities and tax revenues from the project.

The project is located in Caopu township of An'ning city in the industrial park, which hosts 350,000 people 7 km from An'ning city centre. It is 40 km from Kunming city centre (An'ning is a county-level city jurisdiction of Kunming city). The project covers an area of 6 km² and plans to employ 750 staff. Petro China, the country's largest state-owned oil company, is the developer and owner, and it is investing 26.57 billion RMB (\$4.32 billion USD) into this project.

6.2.1.2 National strategy

Energy security is another concern for China's decision makers. The official justification for supporting this project construction is that it is important to the 'security of national energy' and is part of China's 'one belt one road' strategy. China is the second largest oil consumer in the world. Although China possesses large oil reserves in eight oil production basins throughout the country, every year it still needs to import crude oil to meet its economic growth and target of modernization. In 2012, China imported 284 million tons of crude oil, accounting for 56.4% of its total use, while in 1997 that figure was only 10%. The NDRC predict that China's oil use in 2020 will reach around 500 million tons and imported crude oil will exceed 60% of total use (NDRC, 2013).

In recent years, the Malacca Strait has been in the centre of geopolitics among the big powers. China's crude oil import may face a serious threat if the strait channel is blocked. Chinese central decision makers think the country needs to avoid depending totally on the Malacca Strait oil transportation line. The conflicts in the South China Sea between Japan, South-eastern Asian countries and China may constrain the latter's energy. If China can open a new oil transportation line, it could be much less reliance on the Malacca Strait channel in importing oil. More importantly, China can obtain more diplomatic initiative if the Sino-Myanmar oil project is completed.

If the project is successful, the distance of oil transportation will shorten almost 2,000 sea miles, which means an increased safety benefit. The traditional oil channel is imported through the Malacca Strait, refined by China's coastal factories and then transported to the south-eastern regions of China by train. If the YPRP is completed, crude oil from the Middle East could be imported through Myanmar and transported

directly to inner China. The strategic oil pipeline will serve China's two major growth centres: Kunming and Chongqing, the industrial hub along the Yangtze River delta. Both cities are pivotal in the development of China's Silk Road Economic Belt. The project also is strategically important for Myanmar and China, allowing the latter to boost and diversify imports of cleaner burning fuel while increasing revenues for Myanmar and helping it address its own acute domestic energy shortages. China already signed a preliminary agreement to construct a 1,215 km railway and parallel highway linking Kunming with Kyaukpyu (in western Myanmar), which is considered crucial to the project's success.

For Petro China, the placement of the Kunming project is also the ace in the hole of its expansion strategy within China. Petro China and Sinopec are two giants of China's central petroleum enterprises. The traditional domain for Petro China is in north China, while Sinopec controls the power sphere in south China. Since the central government started the property right reform of SOEs, Sinopec began to seek oil northward while Petro China became involved in the southern oil market. In order to improve the sales quota in south-western China, this project could save the transportation costs and import oil from the Sino-Myanmar pipeline for Petro China. In addition, the Yuntianhua Group could also achieve its target of transformation from traditional industry to the large petrochemical industry.

6.2.2 Opposition and Social Contention

As stated above, Yunnan has a vibrant grassroots NGO community, with many organizations focused on environmental issues.² Even though a large number of local and international ENGOs are located in and remained active in Yunnan, only two joined the environmental advocacy coalition on this project along with organizations in Beijing: GW and Green Kunming (which exited very soon). The director of GW, Yu Xiaogang, said the 'water' of PX was so deep that many grassroots organizations did not want to get involved.³ In the NRHP, the Yunnan government accommodated the demand of social groups and some officials were even sympathetic to the environmental coalition. However, in this case, we could find that the local

²Yunnan has the largest number of ENGOs at the provincial level nationwide. Scholars have widely studied NGOs and social activism in Yunnan province (e.g. Litzinger, 2004; Spires, Tao & Chan, 2014).

³ Interview YN01, 25 August 2014

government chose to stand the oppositional part of the ENGOs and there are no figures engaging in the intermediary conditions, as the situation in the Nu River case.

6.2.2.1 Civic Protests

YPRP disclosed very limited information at the early stage of planning. In March 2013, Kunming citizens gradually learnt the possible environmental and health dangers of this project through the Internet, web chat and message. On 4 May 2013, Chinese Youth Day, around 2,500 people gathered in Kunming city centre to oppose the petroleum refinery project and PX programme. Apart from opposing the project, these people also claimed their right to access information and public participation. They claimed not to have been informed about this project, and they did not involve any public participation and consultation process in the preparation period of the project.

Like citizens in the Xiamen PX project, the people in Kunming wore respirators written starting 'no PX' in the city centre, and then the police came to surround the crowd in the square. Some people posted the photo of the protesting scene to Weibo, but the local authority deleted the pictures rapidly. On that day, the Kunming municipal Party committee published an announcement that all students and teachers in Kunming's universities could not participate in any assembly and demonstrations activities related to this project; all the students and teachers could not speak and diffuse related information through the Internet. On 16 May 2013, the conflicts turned fiercer. Citizens reassembled near the provincial government and marched again. They broke through the human wall of police four times and shouted loudly, 'Police is also Kunming people', forcing the PX programme to cancel immediately.

On 6 May 2013, two days after the protest in Kunming, the *People's Daily*, the top daily newspaper of the CCP, pointed out that the absence of information access and participation for people caused the protests:

If the local government can pro-actively create the effective approach for dialogue among government, company and people before starting project construction, it may achieve the situation that the government can realize people's will, the company can respect people's opinion and people can also understand the government's plan.....For those governmental projects related to public interests, if government only informs people the decision without

consultation ahead, how could it get people's support in this information era?
(People's Daily, 2013)

Participants in riots used violence because they lacked regular and effective channels to exercise influence on government decisions. The government's project decisions thus ignored citizens' environmental rights. In dealing with this incident, the Kunming government did not face serious moral pressure when they used suppression because they needed to maintain social order. According to one female protestor who worked for a publishing company, 'Kunming is a beautiful city, and we should secure our motherland. I went to the street on 4 May 2013, and I was arrested by the Police. It is unlikely for you to image what kind of punishment they used to me in the detention house. This is a selective law enforcement they took for me.'⁴ Some citizens chose to defend the government and showed understanding of the policy. They indicated that Yunnan had the second largest poor population of the nation, and it was impossible to develop the economy without sacrificing the environment. Most Yunnan people still strive for the survival. They need working opportunities⁵.

6.2.2.2 Coalition formation and resource mobilization

Resources and strategies

Instead of joining the street protests, several local ENGOs formed environmental coalitions and attempted to engage in the policy process. In response to the protests, on 29 March 2013, the Kunming government held a press conference and announced the project had gone through rigorous environmental assessment in accordance with the national standard. The announcement failed to persuade environmental activists in Kunming, however, who doubted it. On 18 April 2013, two local ENGOs—GW and Green Kunming—went to the An'ning industrial park and made the first site investigation. Local cadres and the director of the park held a 'dialogue' (*duihua* 对话) with ENGO leaders. They replied that this project belonged to the national strategy and it could only be disclosed to the public after the confidential data peeled off. The government had planned to close more than 70 small chemical factories to control the

⁴ Interview YN03, 27 August 2014

⁵ Interview YN05, 03 September, 2014

total pollution emission. They promised to initiate the public consultation process after confirmation of the PX project.

The environmentalists were sceptical about the science and feasibility of the location planning. Since May 2013, some ENGOs have used administrative and legal approaches in an attempt to influence policy-making by requesting to withdraw EIA reports and relocate the oil refinery project. Ma Jun, the founder of IPE (Institute of Public & Environmental Affairs, a national ENGO), thought there was no proof of public participation in the EIA report or its appendix and the conclusion section of the report lacked a summary of public attitudes towards the project.' Four environmental NGOs, including GW, FoN (Friend of Nature), Nature University and IPE, jointly went to the MEP and jointly submitted a request to the MEP for the EIA report's release. One day before the public hearing of 13 May 2013, after the first protest, the local government had invited five people of local ENGOs (Green Kunming and GW) to have a talk. All of the participants opposed the projects. Under public pressure from two demonstrations and continuous requests from ENGOs, on June 25, Petro China finally published the EIA.

This is the first time the Yunnan government published the EIA report after the public requests, although they did so reluctantly. The EIA was made under the system of Petro China and the experts who assessed this project endorsed the developers. According to the report, the project containing a thousand tons of refinery oil has almost no harm to the local environment.

The ENGOs found four problems with the EIA report. For the most concerning issue on the PX programme for Kunming citizens, however, the report did not mention it at all. The report just mentioned the oil refinery project. More importantly, the information of 'public participation' was not listed in the report. Environmentalists also doubted the environmental capability of 10 million refinery oil a year and the possibility of the wind pollution to Kunming. Therefore, they tried to gain support from the MEP and requested revision of the EIA report.

The MEP's response to the environmentalists was ambiguous before June 2015. On 6 July 2013, four ENGOs co-organized lectures of public participation in Kunming and Beijing, inviting retired officials from the MEP and even some officials from the Kunming government. On 11 July 2013, former FoN director Li Bo called the office

of the MEP and requested the response of an administrative review (*xingzhengfuyi* 行政复议). The MEP officials responded that they had ‘a general consensus’ and would give feedback soon. The four ENGOs and some environmentalists have continued applying for administrative re-review from July 2013, requesting revision of the current EIA, especially for the items of public participation. The MEP responded that the project EIA report's release needed to be discussed with Petro China. In June 2015, their administrative re-review requests were rejected.

Vulnerability of ENGOs

Yunnan is a province where civil society is under strict control and dependently developed. In the spring 2005, Chinese officials in Beijing were alerted to the ‘Colour Revolutions’ that had been spreading through former Soviet states. Georgia's Rose Revolution in 2003 set the pattern, followed by the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004 and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan in 2005. The Ministry of Civil Affairs organized a thorough survey for all Chinese NGOs. All registered Chinese NGOs were required to present their supervisory agencies with a report indicating all ongoing projects and funding resources. Yet the result suggested there was little warrant for political disturbance and their main activity range were just for environmental protection, the central government commanded to strengthen the management of those grassroots organizations.

In 2005, State Secretary officials visited all ENGOs in Yunnan to inquire about their funding sources, as well as the nature and objectives of their work. All organizations that previously failed to register under the Ministry of Civil Affairs, and therefore had no legal status, were asked to re-register. The instruction that Yunnan Political and Law Committee gave to the Yunnan Department of Civil Affairs was to ‘manage the current approved NGOs and strictly approve new organizations’⁶. Therefore, after 2006, little space remains for newly established grassroots organizations. The possibility of receiving official approval appears fainter than before, and that is why there are fewer newly established NGOs in Yunnan province after 2005. In 2006, the majority of the funding went to government-controlled organizations, such as GONGOs, academic institutions and government agencies themselves. As a result, the

⁶ Interview YN 01, 25 August 2014

grassroots organizations were inferior to GONGOs in competition for resources and activity spaces.

The peer organization network of local ENGOs was also fragile during the campaign. Inter-organizational connection was crucial for resource mobilization and collective action under the authoritarian system. Two local ENGOs were the major players in an effort to oppose the projects since the protests were repressed. They obtained the project news from the informal channel and traced the project throughout the opposition process. They made the first site inspection so long as the project was approved and sought to have the 'dialogue' with the authority. They also were not found among the protestors on the street, as the local government rigorously supervised the ENGOs.

Green Kunming is a local NGO and it has been involved in some campaign activities on this project since April 2013, including writing to the government to request the EIA report disclosure, visiting the local authority for project information and publishing project information on its website. A Green Kunming staff member said that besides submitting the request from NGOs, they also mobilized citizens to request the EIA disclosure⁷. However, they did not insist in May 2013 and quitted the advocacy coalition very soon after. A Green Kunming activist mentioned that 'in May, we received the warning notice from Kunming local authority. They asked us to stop all activities relevant to oil factory project. If we broke this rule, we would be punished'⁸. In August 2013, the local EPB and Civil Affairs Bureau visited its office to make sure whether the organization kept the rule or not. 'We already cancelled almost all the work plans about oil factory campaign. Now what we can do is to use social media to share opinions in the name of individual activists'.⁹

GW, the only ENGO remaining in the local anti-PX environmental network, still attempted to use institutional and legal means to advocate environmental claims, but their work yielded limited results. GW was established in August 2002 to promote good watershed governance in Yunnan Province. They were famous for engaging in lobbying to suspend NRHP in 2004. Yu Xiaogang has been very careful about staying within the boundaries of the law, and he used the method of litigation as a way to

⁷Interview YN02, 02 September 2014

⁸ Interview YN06, 02 September 2014

⁹ Ibid.

leverage his agenda. In the campaign against the YPRP, GW's measures were moderate. They did not engage in any actions of *xinfang* and protests. They administratively litigated the MEP, but the Intermediate People's Court of Beijing responded that the evidence was not valid. Then they sued the NDRC and hoped to relocate the project. After the collegiate bench of the Intermediate People's Court of Beijing, it decided that this project had been involved with too many departments, and asked the GW to stop litigating and needed to be supported with more evidence¹⁰.

Dating back to 2004, the NRHP campaign captured great attention in society and then Premier Wen Jiabao suspended the dam project. In the 2005 national survey, GW was judged for 'breaking the rule' because 'the immigration problem did not belong to their activity range and their work lead to instability of this area'. The Civil Affairs Bureau, Social Science Coalition and Political and Legal Affairs Commission in Yunnan also investigated GW and Yu Xiaogang. They found GW had gotten out of line over the immigration issue and tried to establish personal authority. They did not find any illegal behaviour by GW. The NGO was registered under the Civil Affairs Bureau, and needed to pass the check each year. In the annual check of social organizations in Yunnan Province, they only have a two-month legitimate period. In 2014, they did not pass the annual check until September because of the opposition to the petroleum refinery project. Now their major advocacy work has focused on the Green Credit, an advocacy that banks restrict loans to projects that negatively impact the environment and boost loans to environmentally friendly schemes, and other insensible work that does not directly violate the local authority.

Limited network and lack of support

Intermediary figures, such as scientists and PC/CPPCC delegates, did not join the environmental advocacy coalition in this case. The ENGOs had thought of inviting some experts to independently investigate the project and bring suggestions to the local communities to have discussions between citizens and experts, and then providing the advocacies to the public hearings and decision-makers. However, most of the petroleum experts in China's universities did not want to stand out and speak for the ENGOs. Thus, their efforts of persuading experts failed.

¹⁰ Interview YN01, 25 August 2014.

Unlike Xiamen, where delegates of local and national PC/CPPCC function in the role of intermediary to collect public opinion and negotiate with the state, delegates within the two formal institutions in Yunnan province kept silent during the whole YPRP process; so too did the delegates on the national level. In reality, among the delegates of two institutions, most did not want to talk about this issue and they chose to stay aligned with the authority. Therefore, there were no intermediaries to broker the dead lock. Local and national ENGOs have no channels to establish alliances with the two institutions and negotiate with the state in a non-threatening manner. With regard to the NRHP, these ENGOs have connections with two institutions and some delegates even spoke for them. However, in this case, the institutional access channel was held back by the collective silence of the delegates.

Facing troubles in organizing the network, individual actors concerned about the project tried to use strategic approaches to express their opposition since 2013. Environmentalists have also tried to persuade the policymakers in personal identity rather than social organization's identity. Some environmentalists who came from Yunnan also initiated an 'ICARE Kunming' action, funded by SEE Foundation, a Foundation that supports environmental protection donated by enterprises, and calling on all concerning citizens across the country to pay attention to the YRPR and the broader issue of environmental protection in China.

However, the authority forcefully shut down the programme and the website. Thus, these people turned to the route of administrative lobby. They continued to apply for information disclosure and public interest litigation. Zhong Yu (the previous staff of Greenpeace) and Yang Yunfeng (staff of Green Watershed) jointly prosecuted the An'ning EPB and An'ning National Land and Property Bureau, but these lawsuits were not registered and investigated¹¹. Then they applied for withdrawing the EIA report from the MEP, and asking for administrative review (*xingzhengfuyi*, 行政复议). However, the administrative review insisted on the previous judgement. These environmentalists made the lawsuit as the name of Kunming resident (*kunmingshimin* 昆明市民), while actually most citizens in Kunming and An'ning did not join their

¹¹Interview YN08, 5 April 2016

actions. Therefore, these environmentalists were not able to mobilize the public and achieved substantial participation in this case.

6.2.3 Advocacy chances under political ambivalence: Incentives of local officials

In China, the party-state stands in the command-and-control position, where the state apparatus dominates almost all political and policy arenas. Do the local cadres have any incentives from the central government or other interest groups (i.e. pressure) when making decisions and taking actions? Can environmental advocates find any chances to achieve their policy goals when local officials need to make the choice from different incentives?

For the YPRP, local governmental officials needed to deal with different and contradictory incentives with diverse pressures. There were incentive structures not totally under their control, nor were they able to have any interests for their own. On the one hand, provincial officials have limited power to make decisions because this project gains more central interference, including Petro China. Therefore, they must listen to the decisions made by the central officials and the powerful petroleum bureaucracy. For municipal and lower levels of cadres, policy implementation has become their top priority, although some may have complaints. On the other hand, local officials must undertake the responsibility to maintain social stability. They need to respond to social complaints because they need to keep social unrest at a relatively small scale rather than ballooning into an unacceptable situation. Meanwhile, local officials are told to be transparent while under pressure and go through the process of EIA. Therefore, local officials were actually in an inferior situation, and the environmental actors felt less likely to gain sympathy and support from local government.

6.2.3.1 Political Incentives

Accommodating Business Bureaucratic Interests

In China and elsewhere, some interest groups have strong links to decision-making bodies because they are historically well-connected to state authorities or because they control strategically important resources, thus gaining patrons in the government. Local officials have the political interest to respond to these political lobbies. In authoritarian regimes, interest groups, such as large SOEs, will benefit from existing

policies and bestowing upon political leaders financial, coercive or ideological resources. Large SOEs have the hegemonic power to influence the political agencies in policy priorities in China. For example, Petro China and the China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation, together with the China National Offshore Oil Corporation, have monopolized the oil supply in the country. Those powerful interest groups lobby central and local government officials through incentives of economic benefit and promotion, while the government gives political support to advance the interest group's agenda through ways like low regulation and special favours.

Generally speaking, Party secretaries and mayors in the local leadership group wield significant authority and influence over all major decisions in a locality as they formulate interpretations of national directives, establish the hierarchy of policy priorities and oversee the implementation process. In China, however, some large SOEs often rank higher in the Chinese administrative hierarchy than local governments. Local officials in the places with firms of highly polluting industry face particular pressure to protect them. Yunnan officials had to challenge some central departments (say, MEP) in order to protect well-connected and high profile large firms. The political rule of the monopolized SOEs, like Petro China, cannot be ignored as they may restrict power of the local leaders in the decision-making.

Petro China is one of the largest central enterprises in China with its tentacles to the nationwide. Local officials were not able to conflict with the major managers of the firm because some people who hold powerful positions in Beijing also came along with them to Yunnan. For instance, a vice governor of Yunnan Province became vice manager of Petro China in 2007, and then the Petro China planned this project. Petro China used to be in the spheres of influence through the corrupt official, Zhou Yongkang, the former secretary of Politics and Law Committee in the central government. Thus, there may exist some 'black-box operations' in the decision-making process that we cannot discover. However, there is no doubt that the spaces where the citizens could participate in the decision-making have been largely cut down because of the interest groups.

The weakness of the rule of law facilitated the local officials to co-operate with the powerful enterprises. Petro China started to construct the plant before the approval of the Yunnan Bureau of Land and Resources and the Housing Construction Office. The local government loosened their practical management to the project, even though the

construction certificates were not complete (*weipixianjian* 未批先建). The Kunming municipal government revised the city planning in 2010 (*xiubian* 修编) to add the petrochemical industry in order to get the project approved (see Figure 6.1). The information of the city planning revision was not published and it was too late for the public to engage anyway.

Usually, the NDRC and state council initiated a national industrial project in China, but the state characterized this project as an 'industrial park of municipal level'. In reality, the An'ning project should be a national and provincial level programme in the planning and construction. From the official documents, the Yunnan Committee of Industry and Information Technology (CIIT) and An'ning municipal government can decide the project construction. CIIT plays a marginal role in the decision-making process in Yunnan Province and was not supposed to make any revision of the planning. Decision makers hoped to use institutional loopholes so the preparation stage of the project would face less opposition from other bureaucratic agencies and society.

ENGOs leaders have raised complaints to local officials. Some Yunnan NDRC officials also complained about the project. These economic officials complained they were forced to take over the project and Yunnan did not need the project at all, but local officials were not able to spend out the allocation money from the central government if there was no large petrochemical project to construct¹². GW also talked to the An'ning Bureau of National Land and Resources on 31 July 2013 and the An'ning mayor on 2 August 2013. These officials both admitted the project was still awaiting approval. The vice mayor of An'ning also complained that even though Petro China had not obtained the certificate of land, the project was under construction. They found they were unable to supervise and regulate the firm and the whole process was illegal¹³.

¹²Interview YN 01, 25 August 2014.

¹³ Interview YN 01, 25 August 2014

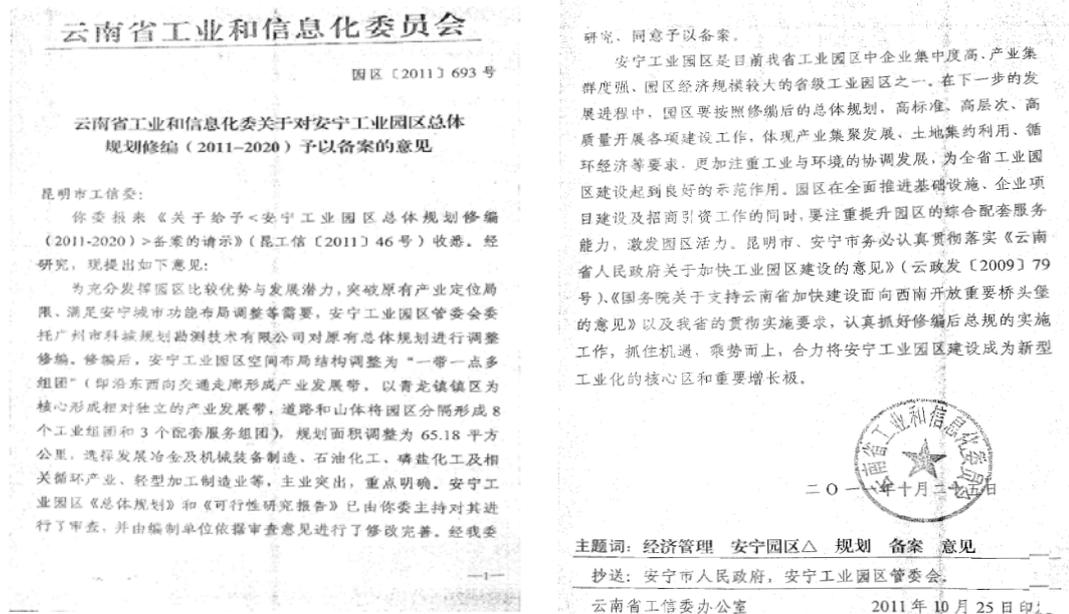


Figure 6.1 The Opinion of Yunnan Committee of Industry and Information Technology to the Planning Revision of An'ning Industrial Park (2011-2020)

Responding to Social Pressures

Local officials have faced a dilemma in dealing with social movements. On the one hand, in order to preserve the authoritarian rule of the party-state, political authorities have the impulse to completely control social insurgencies. On the other hand, however, the party-state is increasingly challenged. A repressive attitude towards the public could easily prove counter-productive.

Because of the rise of social forces, both the government and powerful groups in China increasingly face pressure when pursuing their interests at the expense of the public or other parties. The pressures generated by the non-governmental actors, media, and new information technologies and popular contention have become important forces that the local government cannot afford to ignore. Social unrests very often press and require the local government to take actions with little delay. From the Xiamen PX case, we could find legitimacy achieved if the local state becomes more responsive to social demands. Adaptation is an effective method of legitimacy building, especially when it does not involve high political costs. In Xiamen, popular contention has contributed to policy implementation and policy adjustment.

However, for the YPRP, it seems the local officials did not want to accommodate the public interest in environmental protection and responded quite reluctantly with information disclosure and public participation. In response to citizens' protests, the

Kunming cadres used a coercive approach to repress two protests, and the local officials undermined the efforts and coalitions of environmentalists.

The local authority responded to the first opposition on 6 May 2013 the first time, indicating that the PX chemical programme was to support the Yunnan petroleum refinery plant downstream. The program is in the planning process and had not decided yet. In order to respond to the crisis, on 13 May, the Kunming government organized a Public Hearing with Petro China. An official from the Yunnan Development and Reform Commission claimed in the Public Hearing that the government could not disclose the EIA report to the public because the energy project was a state secret. The manager of Petro China and the officials in Kunming pointed out that the project followed the most scientific site selecting and the pollution would be controlled within the pollutant capacity. The organizers also welcomed the citizens to express their suggestions.

The government's promise did not alleviate the worries of local citizens. Mutual trust between the local government and citizens hampered because officials were reluctant to release details of this project after the first social unrest. The second protests broke out soon after. Finally, Kunming mayor Li Wenrong responded to protestors and promised that he would open a Weibo account before the next day and restart the discussion with the citizens.

On 17 May 2013, a Weibo account was opened, but the provincial measures did not mean local officials would listen to the activists' grievances. In order to implement the spirit of national strategy for this project, the Kunming government has used casting net methods to deal with the governance credibility crisis and the quest for stability. The local government sent police and residential committee staff to visit every household of the city. Every police officer (*pianjing* 片警) was responsible for around 100 households. They visited the residents house by house regularly, sent the PX leaflet and persuaded them not to join the protests. Police officers distributed specially designed cards with their contact information during their visits and built personal connections with local residents. Their aim was to ensure these police officers could be reached at any time.

The Propaganda Department of Yunnan Province compiled a leaflet to introduce the PX programme and its benefits for Yunnan's economy. Many protesters in the city are

middle class, especially private entrepreneurs. They moved to Kunming from other places because of the good ecological environment here, but they felt angry that the planning project might threaten their retired life. They were the hard core of the contention. While the government threatened them to shutdown their factories, those private entrepreneurs had to promise not to join the activism. A protestor attended the public hearings with the local authority and fiercely criticized the government in the meeting. Petro China invited him to visit the construction scene and trained him with the safe production knowledge. Then he did not express his opposition any longer. These counter-mobilization approaches have successfully demobilized the protestors. Less public concern helped to die down the opposition voice and demobilize social actors.

Unlike the citizens' protests revealing the nature of NIMBYism, most villagers opposed the pollution project because they aimed to receive the compensation. Apparently, the tolerance of pollution in rural areas is higher than urban places, but they cannot tolerate the poor economic situation if they did not receive satisfactory compensation. The An'ning government promised they would obtain compensation for resettlement (see Figure 6.2). The government would build resettlement buildings for them in the An'ning city centre in 2016. All the removal work involved three Han ethnic villages in the basin and eight Miao ethnic villages along the hillsides, for a total of 9,165 persons, and each unit of land will get 200,000 RMB. The government started the demolition in 2014 and plans to finish the resettlement work by 2018. .

The government first planned to allocate the villagers to the far-away place near the chemical factories, but the villagers hoped to live a little closer to their original village of Caopu. Some local villagers resisted resettlement because of the low compensation and disqualification of the resettlement buildings. After negotiation, the government agreed to rebuild the buildings in the city centre of An'ning and provided higher compensation to each family.

A small-scale riot also took place in Caopu when villagers received news that the town was chosen. Because of the asymmetric information, they did not co-operate with the protestors in Kunming and the unrest ceased quickly. There was a police station near the village and every row of the houses was assigned a security person (*bao'an* 保安) nominated by the villagers. Anyone who opposed the project would be reported to the security person and, in turn, reported to the township cadres.

In China, the Village Regulation and People's Convention (VRPC) (*cunguiminyue* 村规民约) is the basic rule that regulates villagers' behaviour according to local customs and rites, which achieves grassroots governance. The VRPC in Caopu was drafted by the local township cadres and approved by the village committee. In the VPRC, it is said, 'who opposes this project, then he or she will not receive the compensation, and becomes the enemy of the whole village'. The An'ning government told villagers they should support the project because Caopu was the most appropriate location for construction, and the project was relevant to the energy security as part of a national strategy. The provincial government set the strict resettlement rules, which were implemented hierarchically by township cadres. The local villager committee served as capable institution to implement the policy.

昆明市人民政府(批复)

昆政复〔2012〕14号

昆明市人民政府 关于安宁工业园区草铺核心区居民 搬迁安置方案的批复

安宁市人民政府:

你市上报的《关于报请审批安宁工业园区草铺核心区居民搬迁安置方案的请示》(安政请〔2012〕14号)已收悉。经市政府研究,同意《安宁工业园区草铺核心区居民搬迁安置方案》,请你市按照方案认真组织实施,确保重大产业项目建设。

附件: 安宁工业园区草铺核心区居民搬迁安置方案



Figure 6.2 The Official Approval of Resettlement and Compensation for Caopu Villagers

6.2.3.2 Material Incentives

In order to present good 'political achievement' and get promoted, local officials constrained by resources and tenure must achieve in the specific policy areas. In most of China's provinces, especially the poorer regions, 'improving local economy' is

undoubtedly ranked first by local officials. During the reform era, economic development was deemed the ‘absolute principle’ and the ‘foremost achievement’ of officials at various levels. In almost all the Annual Governmental Working Reports (*zhengfugongzuobaogao* 政府工作报告) at various levels, the economic growth rate was the first achievement introduced in the last year and the first target set for the coming year. Meanwhile, local economic growth was the basis for many other political achievements. Besides its many external effects, such as creating more employment opportunities and local economic growth, GDP was also the most significant source for local revenue.

Decision-making and policy implementation require not only political incentives but also material incentives. China’s major socio-economic sectors have had material incentives to support (or at least accept) the existing political order. Mei (2009) investigated the formal rules governing local chiefs’ turnover of the prefectural chiefs in Zhejiang and Hubei provinces during the reform era. He found the nature of political incentives embedded in the top-down cadres management system ‘incorrect’ and unbalanced ‘in that promotion criterion for local chiefs slant heavily to local chiefs’ achievements in promoting local economic growth while their performance in other policy issues are neglected at large’, thereby encouraging local officials to produce distorted policy outcomes (Mei, 2009, p. 1).

According to the unwritten rule in Yunnan, each person among 23 vice-provincial level officials needs to be responsible for the development project with the investment of at least 1 billion RMB, and the provincial level officials need to be responsible for 10 billion RMB. If any incident occurred with this project, the corresponding official must take this responsibility. According to GW,

for the Yunnan local cadres especially the municipal and county level, they have gotten used to work by GDP-oriented. They don't have the awareness of environmental protection and don't hope the public engaged into the decision-making. The local cadres believe that the decision-making is the government's work to be discussed with the experts, while there is no need to tell the people.¹⁴

¹⁴Interview YN01, 25 August, 2014.

However, the Kunming and An'qing governments undertake the cost of environment pollution and social unrest with limited income for themselves. The large SOEs companies in China follow the rules that paying tax based on the registered location of the company. Under such practice, local governments tend to compete for the company's registration. However, this project pays the added-value tax to Beijing because Petro China is registered in the capital city of China. Although local government still enjoys the business profit tax, add-value occupies the largest amount of the total tax. Officials in Yunnan province are not able to resist the construction decision made by central government. As provincial officials set the tone, those cadres in Kunming and An'ning governments have to follow the suit.

6.2.3.3 Moral Incentives

From a cognitive perspective, a key dimension of the decision-making process is whether or not, and in what ways, agents come to understand their aims, potentially changing their beliefs and attitudes in the process. Therefore, the moral incentives in China's context—'sustainable development' of good governance in terms of rule of law, accountability and transparency—is significant for achieving a desirable policy outcome. Apart from the targets of economic growth and social stability, environmental protection and social welfare have increasingly larger weight in CPES. For example, in 2009 the Yunnan Municipal Cadres Performance and Evaluation System showed that the item of 'resource and environment' occupied 20% of the total marking (with 40% in economic growth).

However, the crucial situation still remains in China: how to narrow the gap between prevailing short-run rationalities of the economic and political decisions on the one hand, and the requirements of long-run environment on the other hand. Local officials and managers of state-controlled entities face unique trade-offs with respect to transparency. Material (economic) incentives interact with moral incentives for local officials. Transparency will limit the ability of officials and managers to consume their private control in making decisions. In addition, the political costs will increase for local officials if they tolerate social grievances. In China's local environmental governance, did local officials expect to improve their own sense of self-esteem and win reputation by regarding environmental protection more importantly than the economy?

YPRP shows that local government's ambition to reach the goals of good governance and the means by which they are supposed to be implemented are, to a significant degree, ambiguous. The local EPB was expected to undertake major responsibility in supervising the project, while they kept silent in this case. Local implementers generally believed that China's environmental policies and the encouragement of public participation are 'soft' laws with the character of high level ambiguity and symbolism born to remain unimplemented. Local officials use the tactics of public participation, such as the public hearing and the disclosure of the EIA report, to alleviate the anger of the public, and to some extent avoid the incident to overflow to the larger situation. Most local officials in Yunnan province still remain materialistic on the issues of nature and environment.

In this project, the initiatives of top-down oversight by Kunming's EPB have been supplemented by the bottom-up pressures. Approaches include requiring public reviews of the EIA, expanding the public reporting and complaint system, and opening up space for the participation of non-state environmental advocates, such as a public hearing. However, the effect of these efforts was limited. From the institutional perspective, I find that in Yunnan Province, where the economy lags far behind and depends largely on natural resources, the political authority plays the dominant role in the process of shaping the policy framework by reconciling conflicts and setting the ideology, and then it influences the selection of concrete policy choice both directly and indirectly. The institutional arrangement affects whether the environmental coalition can pursue its interests and policy preference by making use of these consultative channels.

Site selection under 'will of superior'

One of the purposes of the EIA report is to choose the most appropriate constructive site. However, the situation of the project turned to 'make the impossible site selection to become possible¹⁵'. When starting the EIA process in December 2009, the site selection had been confirmed to Kunming. One chapter on 'feasibility of site selection' in the EIA report (2009) assured the predetermined decision, 'in terms of regional position, transportation conditions, industrial plan and social supports, Kunming will be the most suitable place to build the project'. From the report, there

¹⁵ Ibid.

are no items of ‘environmental capacity’ at all. Among all four candidates of sites, An’ning is the most polluted places and has the least environmental capacity.

Since the break out of the social contention, some local officials feel unsatisfied with the process of the site selection because they had to undertake the costs of social unrest and poor governance to damage their reputation. One vice-province governor said

I think there should be better site for this project. The candidate sites were competing fiercer at that time because this is a huge cake. When making decisions, the ‘will of superior’ functions. We don’t listen to the public’s opinion, and the following disputes caused many waste of resources. The lesson for us is that we should listen to the public (Southern Weekly, 2015).

The disclosure of the EIA report

An’ning city, dominated by large industrial firms, lagged in implementing environmental transparency. Even though the institutional innovation designed to make a progressive environmental state from the central government, local leaders still showed less flexibility in pluralist environmental governance. The MEP and local EPB kept themselves in an embarrassing situation where they were the only implementation authority in the EIA process in this project. According to the Chinese Secrecy Law, the business company could regulate security classification by themselves if the planned project involves business security, because every public organ of China has the obligation to keep secret for the country. Therefore, early from 2010 the project was under the EIA process. Until the final publication of the planning news in 2013, the information was still underground. Under the official discourse of ‘national strategy’, the official letter that Petro China sent to the MEP is confidential, so the MEP had to reply in confidentiality. Therefore until the January 2013 when the project has been decided, the Petro China decoded the letters. Under the public pressure, the EIA report has finally been decoded in June 2013.

Yunnan’s NGOs were quite dissatisfied with the missing transparency in China’s decision-making on this major development project¹⁶. In China, the EIA has been criticized as ineffective due to the limited access to information and to judicial redress

¹⁶ Interview YN01, 25 August, 2014

and remedy. A Greenpeace staff member complained, 'China does not do well in the governmental transparency of environmental projects in many areas. The close-door decision making at the early stage is the direct reason that makes the public felt unsafe'¹⁷. The assessment agency that Petro China chose was its own subordinated organization.

Thus, the EIA process is not independent regardless of any technical frauds in the report. The careless regulations of the industrial park may result in a higher probability of incidents. ENGOs had tried to jointly persuade some experts in Petroleum University to say some words of the EIA reports. However, they failed owing to the dominant power of petroleum faction in Chinese scholars. The control of Petro China is so pervasive in the universities that the experts chose to keep silent.

Public Hearing

Local government officials in China seek at first to avoid explosions of social unrest. This has affiliated with the preference of top Party rulers, expressed in the point system by which the Party evaluate and promote officials: the local unrest counts heavily on local officials. The Kunming government and Petro China immediately held the Public Hearing to respond to local unrests on 13 May 2013. The government invited 11 engineers, environmental experts and 40 citizens. According to the mayor, the people invited constituted various social stratum, including students, congress representatives, An'ning citizens, Caopu citizens, taxi drivers, and some netizens. The mayor emphasized, 'The PX program feasibility report will be decided in July. If the most people say yes, we will start it; if most people say no, we will stop it (Yunnan Net, 2013).' The experts of environmental science defended the EIA report in the public hearings. The manager of Petro China also emphasized the low poisonousness of PX and promised to conduct the strictest regulations to keep the factories safe.

The public hearing is an emerging form of communication among the local government, entrepreneurs and the citizens in China. However, the YPRP decision-making occurred behind closed doors and the local authority under-estimated the people's reaction to their surrounding environment. After the opposition exploded (*nao da*), the local government used a stalling tactic to demobilize the contention.

¹⁷ Interview YN09, 7 January, 2015

During the public hearings, those environmental activists who advocated for this project were not invited, which means the under-representation of environmental interests in the policy battles.

Actually, the ENGOs were invited to have a talk with the Kunming government one day before the public hearing. The Kunming government tried to talk with the environmental activists and persuade them not to oppose against the decision. According to GW, the 40 citizens in the public hearing were selected purposely by the authority¹⁸. The vice mayor denied this view and indicated they were chosen at random

6.2.4 External opportunities for environmental coalition

At present, the YPRP is being constructed underground with little media report. Environmental coalitions continue to advocate but with ineffective results. Since 2013, we could only see two external factors that may become potential alliance with the environmental coalition: the MEP for its direct confrontation with the petroleum group, but its attitude is intangible, and anti-corruption campaigns for their targets of petroleum bureaucracies.

6.2.4.1 Changing attitude of the MEP

The MEP is the body that has the legitimate authority to stop the project. In July 2012, the MEP approved the project unconditionally and the NDRC approved the project feasibility report. The power of the petroleum bureaucracy has been large enough to force the project approved by the environmental agency. In the previous version of the EIA report, the Yunnan government promised to leave certain environmental capacity to YPRP by shutting down 44 companies to discharge excessive polluters. Since construction in early 2013, the project's scale has enlarged from 10 million tons per year to 13 million tons per year. The local government and Petro China did not publish the change to the public, and they did not submit any revised EIA report to the MEP.

In May 2013, the explosion of social contention pressured the MEP to reconsider this project. Environmental activists blamed irregularity issues on 'approval without

¹⁸ Interview YN01, 25 August, 2014

construction' and 'lack of environmental capacity' (FoN, 2013). At the same time, to improve the implementation of Environmental Law, China was strengthening the regulation of the EIA report and punished some EIA agencies for their violations. An expert who participated in the EIA process of this project from MEP said, 'The environmental capacity is very limited in An'ning, and this place is lack of industrial water. There have already existed amount of heavily polluting enterprises. The environmental quality will without doubt deteriorate and damage people's health (Southern Weekly, 2015)'.

Until early 2015, the project was already half completed. The change in attitude occurred when the head of the MEP changed to Jining Chen, who is a senior technical official. On 25 August 2015, MEP sent the administrative penalty to Petro China and asked the petroleum refinery project to suspend and rectify. The MEP accused Petro China of illegal procedures on construction without approval and the company needed to undertake the EIA process again.

The engagement of central institution provides opportunity for ENGOs to participate, and the petroleum group again tried to lobby the decision makers. Because it is a central-imposed project, the ENGOs did not obtain support from the local EPB and make alliances with members of formal authority during their campaigns. After the project was asked to temporarily suspend, the work of ENGOs received attention from the MEP. In November and December 2015, Petro China, Sinopec, EIA agencies, and some NGOs from Yunnan and Beijing held a meeting and made a site investigation again. The MEP organized these activities at the request of the ENGOs. Some people from Petro China also visited GW. They promised that the pollutant emission would not increase as the production promotes. Petro China attempted to get through the EIA again and make a consensus with the environmentalists. However, the attitude of the MEP was quite ambiguous and punishment was not severe. As Petro China paid the fines for its illegal procedures, the project continued.

6.2.4.2 Involvement of anti-corruption campaigns

Another national level institutional factor that may stop the project is the ongoing anti-corruption campaigns. Along with the construction of YPRP, the anti-corruption campaign lead by Xi Jinping was underway. After enunciating the overarching theme of 'rejuvenating the nation', Xi tipped the direction of the new leadership. In late

2012, Xi launched new drives to promote party work style and clean government—laying down the ‘eight-point regulations’— to combat corruption.

The Central Leading Group for Inspection Work (the Group) (*zhongyangxunshilingdaoxiaozu* 中央巡视领导小组) is a co-ordinating body under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the Department of Organization set up to manage Party discipline and anti-corruption campaigns nationwide. When inspecting the MEP and Petro China, the Group found many illegal issues during the EIA process and the situation of ‘construction without approval’ is very common among SOEs projects. Under such pressure, on 19 March 2015, the MEP published the notice of ‘on Strengthening Illegal Environmental Impact Assessment Project Accountability System’, asking for administrative punishment for illegal EIA for all levels of environmental protection bureaus.

Besides increasing government transparency and efficiency, the current anti-corruption campaigns have resulted in inflicting widespread fear among the bureaucratic elites. It swept across all spectrums of the party-state bureaucracy. Although the majority were low-level officials, one notable pattern has been a substantial increase in the number of powerful leaders—or ‘tigers’ as Xi put it—accused of power abuse. The campaign catalyses the concentration of power among Party agencies affiliated with Xi in the name of anti-corruption. The Petroleum Faction was targeted in 2013, which was linked to the ‘big tiger’ Zhou Yongkang. Apart from the previous director of NDRC, Liu Tienan, many high profile officials engaged in the policy-making process of YPRP were collapsed. The list includes Jiang Jiemin (previous director of Petro China) and Bai Peien (previous Party Secretary of Yunnan Province).

As the factional politics evolve in China, the anti-corruption campaign lead by Xi has been an increasingly interest-driven competition that plays out within the institutional structure. In order to improve their power, the CCP leadership hopes to defeat their factional enemies. The Petroleum bureaucracy is one target so that the energy sector is resettled in China. Because the YPRP is a national-level project concerned with energy security, there is no doubt the central government will influence this project. However, it seems that as Petroleum Factions has collapsed, this project, or the people running it, continued to function, and the central government even paid more attention to this project. It may still well suggest a very different way forward in environmental

activism in combination with central government engagement and political struggles since the Deng era.

6.3 The Battle over Nu River Hydropower Project

As noted in the chapter opening, the case of the petrochemical campaign does not mean these are no intermediaries functioning in Yunnan province. Figures that function as intermediaries in Xiamen and Shenzhen were also playing the same kinds of role in another central-imposed project in Yunnan. Yunnan government has experiences in accommodating the emerging social demands and some officials were flexible to them. The battle over NRHP is one example.

There is a growing complexity in the political process in the hydropower policy formation in China. During the preparation stages of the NRHP, decision was undertaken by the agreement within superior authorities--the central and provincial government, including central business bureaucracies. Since 2003, a coalition of non-state actors emerged to oppose this project for more than a decade. They are the network of local and national ENGOs, experts, media and some CCP/CPPCC delegates, with support from the national environmental protection department.

6.3.1 Coalition formation

According to the literature review and interviews, societal actors who opposed the project gradually coalesced into environmental advocacy coalition. The coalition conveyed their policy beliefs through adopting strategies to achieve their policy targets. NDRC, Huadian Power Company (Huadian) and Yunnan government were the major promoters who initiated the project. They held that the dams would generate substantial financial revenues for fiscally constrained and poor regions, as well bring social benefits (Lu, 2008). The policy process of NRHP has experienced back and forth, and it was suspended twice during the last decade (see Table 6.1).

Time	Major events	Project status
Aug. 2003	Proposal for 13 dams released and endorsed by the NDRC	Submission
Sept.1, 2003	EIA law became effective	Contention
Sept. 2003	SEPA refused to endorse proposal and environmental	

	coalition formed	
Feb. 2004	Premier Wen's first suspension	Suspension
Aug. 2005- Jan. 2006	Proposal reduced to four dams and EIA conducted and reviewed by the NDRC and the SEPA	Revision & Contention
Apr. 2009	Premier Wen's second order to suspend project, including preparatory work	Suspension
Mar. 2013	Change in Chinese leadership	Decision to resume

Table 6.1 Scaling down the Nu River Hydropower Project in policy-making

Huadian and NDRC proposed the NRHP in the summer of 2003. They signed an agreement to develop hydroelectric stations along the Nu River. Originating in the Qinghai–Tibetan Plateau, the Nu River is an international river running 1,252 miles in China before becoming the Salween River in Myanmar. Meanwhile, it flows through China's Three Parallel Rivers World Heritage Site, an area known as China's biodiversity with almost 300,000 people from 13 different ethnic groups living here (International Rivers, 2005). With the growth of its economy, China's demand for energy has increased each year. As a renewable energy source, hydroelectric has become a better choice.

The project planned to construct 13 dams, mostly along 384 miles of the Nu River in Yunnan Province. The dams built on the Nu River will produce 3.64 million kilowatts, 20% greater than that of the Three Gorges Dam (Magee, 2006). The NDRC hoped this project could industrialize the western areas and help alleviate regional disparities in China. Huadian is the chief promoter in hydropower development. It is one of the five state-owned corporations split off from the former Ministry of Electric Power. In 2003, Huadian announced the formation of the construction entity Yunnan Huadian Hydropower Development Company.

To challenge the state's decision, a group of non-state actors emerged to oppose this high profile project supported by powerful state interests for almost a decade (Mertha, 2008). The coalition actors included ecological experts, environmental NGOs leaders, media, and some national and local PC/CPPCC delegates. They believed this project would cause irreversible consequences, adversely affecting the region's ecology.

Meanwhile, NRHP would require resettlement of around 50,000 people, nearly 10% of Nu Prefecture's population. They also emphasized the river's status as a national reserve and the international recognition from UNESCO World Heritage. Meanwhile, another reason for the high public concern is that the Nu River is a trans-border river shared by China, Thailand and Myanmar. In Thailand, people are worried the dam project upstream will affect the biology. More than 80 NGOs in Thailand sent a letter to the Chinese ambassador in Bangkok concerning the project in 2003 (Mertha, 2008).

The environmental coalition began to engage in the policy process when the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) initially stalled the NRHP because the project still required an EIA. Then the developers scaled back their plans. With the modification, SEPA withdrew its opposition, letting the project move forward again. The environmental coalitions called for stricter implementation of EIA procedures to ensure the participatory decision-making (FoN, 2005). In the early stage of advocacy, the power of environmental actors was quite limited. Huadian and local governments were able to draw on potent resources to access information and power. For example, they could directly lobby the final decision makers within the central government. Senior officials in Yunnan province were able to use formal channels, such as NPC, to call for approval from the central government. However, the power of the central department that supported the anti-dam group was weak. The attitude of SEPA (and the then MEP) was always prudent in assessing the NRP in preparation and construction.

On 3 September 2003, SEPA organized the 'Nu River Valley Hydropower Development and Ecological Environmental Protection Issue Expert Forum' in Beijing. More than 70 experts and 10 journalists from Yunnan and Beijing attended. Unexpectedly in this forum, the Yunnan EPB stood inside with the Yunnan government and supported the developmental views. In the end, the experts and local government failed to achieve a consensus with SEPA.

6.3.2 Resource mobilization in environmental coalition

Although the power of the environmental coalition was relatively weak to challenge the state decision, they found ways to access the central decision makers and deliver information, as well as mobilize the public. They used formal or informal channels to

lobby central government and media to issue their framing, and they gained support from international allies.

First, social elites, such as experts and CPPCC/PC delegates, attempted to influence the decision makers directly because there were different opinions within the government. The dam issue not only received attention from public concerns, but also different levels of government discussed it. On 1 September 2003, after the implementation of new EIA law, SEPA convened an expert panel to review the plans. SEPA had a serious reservation to the plans due to general concerns about the loss of biodiversity, geological instability and cultural disruption.

Local officials failed to achieve a consensus on the plan with SEPA, but an official who disagreed with the plan broke the news to Wang Yongchen (director of a local NGO called GEV, Green Earth Volunteer). Wang introduced this official to Professor He Daming, a famous river expert in China and head of the Asian International Rivers Center at Yunnan University. Professor He has been active in research on the Nu River for decades. He was the first expert opposing developing the Nu River. Professor He presented his opposition to the dam project during the 3 September 2003 conference held by SEPA. Although he was a single, isolated voice at that time, his opinion quickly caught on and snowballed dramatically, due to his status as a famous expert researching the river system at a prestigious institute. However, as an ordinary scholar, he was unwilling to get involved in this controversial issue on political grounds. His personal life had been disturbed and, as Mertha (2008, p. 143) observes, Professor He had been perceived as a threat to authority because he had such credibility.

The battle line was drawn among scientists. An expert at the Chinese Academy of Science Finance Institute stated that although he supported environmental protection, he was forced to conclude that hydropower might be the only way to lift the local people out of poverty and modernize society. He suggested the environmentalists should question themselves: who are the beneficiaries of the NRP, the well-to-do in Beijing or the local people? In September and October 2003, local experts in Yunnan and the Yunnan EPB all signed their support to the NRHP. SEPA officials hoped to mobilize pro-environmental experts to help mount a campaign in national representative agencies.

Following Professor He, other experts who held public positions in China raised their opposing opinion. Scholars from government-affiliated research institutes submitted a petition to President Hu Jintao to raise the possibility that the Sichuan earthquake in 2008 was triggered by large dam construction near the epicentre. Shen Xiaohui, a senior researcher at the State Forestry Bureau, succeeded in submitting a petition letter to NPC and CPPCC with the help of Liang Congjie, the founder of the NGO FoN (Friend of Nature) and the delegate of CPPCC. These motions were entitled 'Protect the Natural Flowing of the Nu River, Stop Hydropower Development' and 'Proposal for Classifying Rivers and River Valley, Coordinate Ecological Protection and Economic Development'. Liang put forward Shen's motion instead of his own, which means the NGOs had also hoped to collaborate with formal consultative delegations that had better access to the decision-making bodies. A delegate of NPC, He Shaoling, a senior engineer at the China Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Research, contended the project should make an independent investigation before the government made a decision (Mertha, 2008, pp. 121–122).

The opposition was not limited simply to the political process in Beijing. Apart from delivering opposition up to central discussion, in Yunnan, several local CPPCC delegates also addressed inquiries to the dam project. On 13 February 2004, during the second Session of Ninth Yunnan Provincial Political Consultative Conference (PPCC), vice head of the Yunnan Democratic Coalition Provincial committee, Daikang, proposed to question the NRHP. This was the first opposition voice appearing within the Yunnan provincial government (Mertha, 2008, p. 121).

Second, members of environmental coalitions were able to establish extensive networks. In response to scientists' and delegates' opposition, non-state environmental organizations and media became active actors in organizing the anti-dam movement. Eight major ENGOs established the China River Network, which facilitated members' co-operation in China's watershed protection and provided the exchange platform. They also collaborated with journalists in alliance with major newspapers. The Green Journalist Salon, a regular seminar organized by two ENGOs from Beijing in 2000, provided a venue through which ENGOs, journalists, environmentalists and concerned governmental officials gathered to share information and discuss dam-related issues. More than 180 domestic media outlets covered the anti-dam campaign and raised public awareness in general.

On 25 October 2003, GEV organized a petition in which 62 people from the field of science, arts, journalism and grassroots environmental organizations signed their opposition to the NRHP at the second meeting of the China Environment and Culture Promotion Society. This activity was publicized through the media and obtained widespread public support in opposing this project. During the same time, the World Rivers and People Opposing Dam meeting was held in Thailand. Among them were Chinese NGOs such as GEV, FoN, Green Island and GW. During this meeting, NGOs from over 60 countries signed a petition to protect the Nu River and sent it to UNESCO. UNESCO replied and said that it would pay close attention to it.

Third, local ENGOs had political risks in directly opposing the national project and officials often saw them as potential threats to the local authorities. ENGOs in China often utilize personal connections or try to gain access to resources and information held by government. The local ENGO GW took a video about the immigrants of Nu River and collected the complaints of immigrants in this video. Yu Xiaogang gave the video to the Party Secretary of the Nu Prefecture. The Nu Party Secretary then gave it to the provincial government. The Party Committee of Yunnan province held a special conference with all the cadres ranked *Ting* level. Conference attendees were all very surprised on how the local social organization could mobilize the public to oppose the CCP. A week after the meeting, leaders of Yunnan province were sent to Beijing to study the central government's 'sustainable development' strategy.¹⁹

After this the Yunnan government held a close meeting to decide whether the GW should be shut down. An investigation team representing the provincial government consisting of Yunnan Academy of Social Science (YASS), The Science and Technology Bureau, The Civil Affairs Bureau and the Police Security Bureau went to the GW office to determine if it broke the law or not. They concluded that GW had done nothing illegal but exceeded its organizational mandate of protecting rivers and were extending it into investigating the problems facing the resettlement issue. The leader of GW, Yu Xiaogang, who used to be an ethnologist in YASS, was accused of establishing personal authority in the resettlement areas, competing with local

¹⁹ Interview YN01, 25 August, 2014

government and possibly causing local instability. In November, Yu Xiaogang was expelled from YASS and no longer part of public systems (*tizhinei*) in January 2005²⁰.

Fourth, the intervention of external factors that shaped the policy process was the premier's intervention. The political agenda was levelled up to the national power arena by the endeavour of experts, environmentalists and some officials since the opposition mounted. The national EIA Law came into effect on 1 December 2003. Huadian rushed to get its NRHP proposal approved by the State Council before this set time. This proposal worried SEPA. The vice director of the EIA office and director of SEPA's Supervision Department, Mou Guangfeng, sought the assistance of Wang Yongchen. As expected, Huadian was forced to undertake an EIA and submit for approval (Mertha, 2008).

However, the work of the environmental coalition has drawn attention from the current Chinese leadership, especially Premier Wen Jiabao. He was regarded as the central leadership who remained superior power than NDRC. He hopes to become a reformer in China and his attitude would count considerably in the NRHP. On 18 February 2004, Premier Wen stated that 'such large hydropower station project has got large social and international attention, and has controversies on environmental issue, should be reconsidered, and scientifically decided' (Wen, 2004). Under his involvement, the NRHP was suspended temporarily. When the conflict resumed as a result of modification of the project, Wen intervened again in 2009 before his departure in 2012. He stated that the relevant department needed to conduct further research on the dams' environmental and social impact prior to project implementation, which seems to echo the concerns of environmentalists.

6.3.3 Policy adjustment

Since 2004, there were still conflicting reports over the status of the NRHP. NDRC attempted to push experts to come up with plans to go through with the EIA, and the local government still undertook the 'actual project work' for preparation, such as infrastructure building and immigrant resettlement. Huadian thought that neither the instruction written by Wen, nor any file containing the destiny of the project has reached. In January 2005, Pan Yue, vice director of SEPA, announced a public hearing

²⁰ Ibid.

on this project. At the same time, at the NPC in March, the minister of water resource, Wang Shuncheng stated that four of the dams would move forward. In June, there was a meeting of experts (pro-dam) held in Yunnan, and they wrote a report to Premier Wen on the situation of Nu River. The State Council responded that the report needed revision without stating how. This caused different interpretations. SEPA took this decision as a signal that the project should remain frozen until the report was revised, while the Yunnan government regarded it as okay to go ahead with this project. In July 2005, after Premier Wen's inspection in Yunnan, he instructed NDRC, SEPA and Ministry of Water Resource that 'the relative departments should speed up in confirmation and give your opinions' (Wen Wei Po, 9 September, 2005).

However, the policy battle continued and the NRHP was raised again since the new leadership took in power after 2012. The NDRC published the '11th Five-Year Renewable Energy Development Plan' in 2008 and indicated directly that China needed to develop the Nu River hydropower. This plan did not obtain approval from the MEP because the project plan did not meet the environmental requirements. However in January 2013, the State Council published the '12th Five-Year Energy Development Plan', and pointed to a step-by-step initiate for the Nu River hydropower development. The 2003 original plan of 'two dams thirteen ladders' was changed to 'one dam four levels' (Chinatimes, 6 May 2016).

Things took a turn in December 2015 when the Party Secretary of Yunnan province stated in an official conference that the government would 'stop all the small hydropower plants in Nu River' (Jiemian, 6 June 2016). In May 2016, the Yunnan government approved establishing the Nu Valley National Park. Contrary to this plan, the NRHP is still enlisted in the coming national '13th Five-Year Energy Development Plan'. According to the official report, the National Energy Bureau was drafting this plan and seeking public consultation, from which the NRHP was clearly enlisted.

On 31 May 2016, some local and national ENGOs, such as FoN, GW and GEV, visited the National Energy Bureau (NEB). According to Wang, the founder of GEV, officials in the NEB thought that 'it was not contradictory in building dams and national park. If Yunnan government shows no intention to build, it is not necessary to build the dams. But we think the Nu River should be developed' (Jiemian, 6 June 2016). Now the attitude of the MEP is to report the developmental plan to the State

Council and the State Council will make the decision. However, although the NRHP is still under heated debate, all in all, under the joint endeavour made by experts, media, NGOs activists, representative delegates and some officials, the policy adjustment has successfully been achieved and the project suspended for more than a decade.

6.4 Analysis and Summary

This chapter analyses the authoritarian policy process that facilitates or constrains the power of environmental coalition between the cases of the NRHP and the YPRP within Yunnan province. The environmental activism and advocacies in Yunnan display that: (1) environmental activists and concerned persons will array themselves into the coalition based on their disagreement to certain development projects; (2) substantial resource mobilization and communication between civil society and decision makers will be achieved when there are certain kinds of intermediaries; and (3) external factors will influence the advocacy outcomes.

In the two cases, we can easily find factors that worked for the environmental advocacy of NRHP in certain ways are not working in the YPRP. The only similarity in the central level is that the MEP intervened in both cases. They both involved powerful state-owned enterprises pursuing tangible, economic and strategic interests, and Yunnan province needs to be concerned about the political and economic incentives, and social contention. Yet how can one explain why the outcomes of the two are so different—one involving the absolute failure for local environmental coalition and the other relatively negotiable? A clue to the answer is the existence of political intermediation—engagement of authoritative experts and congressional/consultative delegates—functioning in the ways in which the claims from local civil society can be achieved and understood by decision makers without threatening the authority.

Environmental activists gain alliances with intermediary figures in hydropower campaigns while they did not in petroleum campaigns. These figures can repackage local environmental claims into certain kinds of standing that decision makers would like to listen to. For the NRHP, supporters of environmental activists in the central level (including PC/CPPCC delegates, academic, engineers) had certain political leverage to combat hydropower bureaucracies and deliver information to the central

government. Decision makers would at least take into consideration their views because they are seen as authoritative actors in the public sphere. Domestic and transnational environmental activism also pressured the decision makers. Environmental activists trust these intermediary figures, and they are able to deliver their complaints and opinions to the formal authority through these intermediaries. Experts can be an important knowledge power to influence the decision makers through formal institutions, especially when they hold certain representative or consultative positions, such as delegates in PC/CPPCC.

However, these elements above were absent in the YPRP, which did not show the effective environmental network like the NRHP. The project was under the national discourse on energy security and military defence. This strategy significantly strengthens the hands of petroleum group in China. Under the command-and-control situation, the central government insisted on pushing the project for its logic. Therefore, there is lack of intermediary figures engaged in the environmental coalition who were able to activate channels of communication. Without the intermediation, GW expressed their complaints directly to Yunnan Development and Reform Commissions (YDRC) for the petroleum project. YDRC took this visit as a working achievement (*jixiao*) as a reflection of ‘mass line’. YDRC insisted that the decision-making should be done within the formal authority, and consulted by experts. These experts who engaged in the policy process endorse their project. Other experts who were outside the policy circles also kept silent for this decision.

Therefore, it was difficult for environmental activists in Yunnan to openly oppose the petroleum project without the support of authoritative figures. Furthermore, on national levels, the media and the public tend to focus more on the aspects such as military defence. In contrast to the energy security, environmental protection in Kunming region seemed not that significant.

Another institutional factor involved is the interests of local officials. The powerful petroleum bureaucracy also made the local government officials fail to pursue its own interests, and this condition made the local government vulnerable in responding to the local society. While in the hydropower project, local government enjoyed more autonomy to make decisions and implement policies. Some cadres within the bureaucratic hierarchy were also sympathetic with the environmental activists and they may agree over policy implementation with local protestors. Local officials have

more incentives to conduct those consultative measures, such as openness of the EIA report and encourage public participation in hydropower project. In the petroleum project, all of these measures were shut down or in a meaningless way used by the Yunnan government. With the repression that limited pluralism, environmental organizations were unable to nullify the project initiated by the petroleum enterprises.

The two cases examined in this chapter illustrate the function of intermediaries on environmental activism and policy change. On the one hand, Yunnan province targets to develop its economy with the patrons of powerful SOEs. Through such an alliance, business interests have much influence in policy-making. On the other hand, good governance and the consultative measures on decision-making initiated by the central government has encouraged and enabled groups and individuals representing environmental interests to battle against the developmental policies. Environmental activists are more likely to win if they can gain support from intermediary figures and deliver their grievance to the decision makers in a manner non-threatening to the state. However, the authoritarian nature of command-and-control means there will be no intermediation between the state and society if the party-state insists on pursuing its own interests, and the only way the state will do is to repress the oppositional actors.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

This thesis investigated interactions between environmental activism and state response under authoritarian systems. With new data, this study discovered the ways in which different kinds of intermediaries can repackage local environmental claims as the representation that local officials would like to hear. Moreover, it revealed the underlying mechanisms of local flexibility in managing protests in authoritarian China. The findings have contributed empirically and theoretically to our understanding of not only environmental protests in China in particular but also negotiations between civic contention and authoritarian state in general. The findings also have valuable implications for China's state–society relations and contribute normatively to our understanding of contentious politics and authoritarian resilience. This concluding chapter summarizes the empirical and theoretical contributions, followed by implications for state capacity in China and normative conclusion on protests and authoritarian flexibility.

7.1 Empirical Findings

As with other authoritarian systems in the former Soviet Union, Africa, and Latin America, where local officials are not held accountable to citizens through democratic ways, most Chinese social activists seem to have little chance of communicating with state authority on national policies that do not favour their interests. In the Chinese policy process, the decision-making power is highly centralized. State officials may not necessarily permit space for people to have a discussion in the formal administrative system and to ensure that decisions are responsive. Some citizens have turned to protest as a form of action because it can increase the chance of success or because there are no alternatives to the permitted channels.

However, one factor that distinguishes the handling of social protests in China from social movements in democratic countries is the role of the government (Cai, 2010). In China, governments are more sensitive to popular protests, whereas in democracies protests are permitted and can be used to facilitate elections. Protests in China go against the so-called ‘harmonious society’ that the central party-state seeks to create to maintain stability—and, ironically, to prevent protests. The traditional way to understand Chinese contentious politics is the ‘rightful resistance’ (O'Brien & Li, 2006), which means protestors deploy policies, laws and commitments of the central

state to local officials who have ignored those principles and they act as popular contention that operates near the boundaries of authorized channels. Some local officials have tried to shut down these institutionalized channels of participation and appeals, and they have discouraged organized social groups from participating in social contention towards state authorities.

This research is motivated by the tremendous spread of environmental protests throughout China and shows that it is not always the case to see local officials as ‘bad guys’. In recent years, growing investments on large industrial projects in China and grievous environmental degradation have led to political contestation and social conflicts. Given China's authoritarian nature of intolerance to social activism, we can still find a high degree of accommodation to environmental protests in policy changes or policy adjustments of large industrial projects, which is quite different from the traditional ‘rightful resistance’. Why do certain local states listen to social actors by sacrificing economic benefits, but other local states do not? Instead of merely reviewing environmental protests or policy entrepreneurs that appear in most of the literature on Chinese politics, this research paid specific attention to political intermediation as the method by which local civil society can communicate effectively with the authoritarian state, especially the local officials, before environmental protests reach uncontrollable points. The interaction process between protestors and local states here is not targeted as a ‘win’ or ‘lose’ game, but points to a negotiation process whereby environmental NGOs and environmental protestors can communicate with state authority in a non-threatening manner.

The bureaucratic hierarchy in China not only shows its policy ambivalence about how to balance trade-offs between environmental protection and economic growth, but also its political ambivalence—to what extent the authoritarian regime tolerates pluralist interests because the bureaucracy itself is not coherent. Local officials are actually more practical when the central government sometimes uses political rhetoric to suggest that it exists to serve the people. The central government sends different voices towards environmental activism and only parts of social contention can be accommodated in the localities because of the monitoring problems. Acts of advocacy from social actors are treated differently among local states in China: with suppression, accommodation or concession. Local officials often have different interests and are subjects to different incentives and constraints. Generally speaking,

they have strong incentives to pursue economic development and do not allow protests in their localities. The assessment system of promotion means that local officials tend to respond to the demand from the above, such as implementing state policy or preventing social unrests, rather than responding to the interests of local societies.

With new qualitative evidence, this thesis revealed how the intermediary function between state and protesters can be exercised in various patterns without threatening the formal authority, which has yet to be covered by existing studies of China's environmental politics and authoritarian politics. This research highlights the environmental advocacy coalition and how intermediaries as the key actors in the coalition interact with both formal authority and civil society. I argue that intermediary figures—figures such as experts, local PC/CPPCC delegates that share political weight but do not necessarily have formal standing within the government—can adopt strategies and interact with other coalition actors to establish effective communication with decision makers, thus achieving their policy objectives.

These intermediary figures are not environmental activists, but they are recognized as representatives of local civil society and can influence decision makers. These figures can exert political intermediation to the policy process and leverage officials by providing three critical things. First, their political status is recognized and respected by the authoritarian regime because they have knowledge, legal, capacity, institutional and resource power so that local officials must consider their views. Second, social capital and dense social networks of these figures provide opportunities for them to mobilize individuals outside their coalition to comply with their policy value. Third, the authoritarian regime also needs to use these intermediaries to establish certain contacts with local civil society in order to maintain social stability.

When figures are respected by political power without inherent contention and possess social capital as far as the civil society concerns—like scientists and LPC delegates with professional manner---local officials are more likely to accommodate the interests of environmental activists and alter their policy preference. Under such conditions, these intermediary figures can provide crude interest representation for their civic supporters through their advocacy activities and channel information delivery to the party-state. When such political intermediation is absent in the process of environmental contention and protestors fail to establish effective communication

with decision makers, local officials are more likely to be repressive without any tolerance.

Analyzing the political intermediation of scientists on state accommodation showed us the importance of knowledge power that embeds local civil society. Knowledge inherently has a social nature and cannot be completely divorced from social-economic relations. Therefore, experts have reliable and credible indicators of such authority. In authoritarian China, it is also meaningful not simply viewing experts as mere conveyors of relevant policy information. Generally in the policy process, scientists who engage in the EIA are under the institutional arrangement and make judgment according to the policy priority. However, there also is the group of experts who tend to speak for environmental claims and raise different policy choice that local officials might take view.

The case studies indicated that state policy disputes with experts engaged from the environmental coalition were more likely to accommodate social actors than policy disputes without experts. Scientists in the environmental coalition share knowledge and collect scientific data to support their arguments and grant legitimate evidence to their policy preference. The policy alteration could be achieved via policy-oriented learning from the gradual accumulation of information, such as scientific study, and decision makers may change perceptions of the previous policy effectiveness. Case study data indicated that experts with pre-existing or institutional connections to the state authority were less likely to be seen as a threat to state policy than experts without connections. Some experts may share dual identities, such as national or local PC and CPPCC delegates, with formal channels to deliver their opinions and expand their coalitions. Experts in the environmental coalitions without prestigious position in the public sector or who are not able to expand their scientific network might be regarded as potential opponents to the authoritarian system. This research illustrates the position of experts does not necessarily mean they will play intermediary roles for the environmental coalition.

Analyzing different types of political intermediation under authoritarian representative or consultative institutions also illustrates the importance of intermediary figures that local states would like to listen. These intermediaries can function in different patterns, be it representative workstations embedded in residential communities, reconciliation of civic environmental grievances and the

local state interests for outside challenges, or making environmental claims through direct communication with decision makers. Different from expertise figures, PC/CPPCC delegates in various levels may not necessarily possess specific knowledge that can explain why a certain policy is required or desirable. However, the similarity is that these figures are deeply immersed in society and trusted by the environmental protestors and groups. Close linkage between the delegates and the masses facilitates the shifting of the government's issue agenda. These delegates can push the local issue higher to the national political salience and seek intervention from superior officials. Compared with CPPCC, LPC delegates share more leverage power in the state decision-making process because they legally have supervisory power to the government. Local officials still have incentives to respond to the CPPCC delegates, but their responsiveness may not always be accountable to their consultative opinions.

The case studies also suggested numerous obstacles to constructing effective communication between environmental activists and local state authorities in China. Numerous consultative measures for public participation in environmental governance initiated by the central government did not always positively impact state adaptation. Interviews with NGO leaders suggest it is not easy for them to find support from representative delegates or environmental experts who can speak for them because of the restriction of the authoritarian state. Even though some local officials may be sympathetic to the environmental activists, they do not have too much interest or incentive to accommodate their claims. Generally speaking, the more central interference and more powerful SOEs involved, the more top-down decision-making and the less interests for local officials themselves, and thus the less likely representative claims made by intermediaries will be accepted or viewed, or even less likely the appearance of intermediary figures at all.

7.2 Theoretical Contributions: Political Intermediation and Consultative Authoritarianism

This research has made a number of theoretical contributions to our understanding of not only environmental politics in China but also other authoritarian regimes in general. The importance of political intermediation is a brand-new perspective to scholars of Chinese politics by looking at the interactive process between environmental activists and the authoritarian regime, instead of just looking at

environmental activists from existing studies. Some prior studies of China's environmental politics or contentious politics mention the responses of and costs to local officials, but there has been limited discussion of the bureaucratic rationale and underlying incentives for local officials for their choices. This research fills in this gap and explores different incentives of local officials who not only must deal with pressures from superior officials, but also must respond to the social contentions.

The empirical findings also enrich existing studies of the interactive mechanism between citizen action and policy change. Previous studies have argued that policy entrepreneurs influence policy through expanding their limited resources and using strategic methods (Mertha, 2008). My research, on the other hand, discovers a significant intermediary mechanism between civic actor and authoritarian state, and explains the underlying patterns. These intermediary figures, with political weight, can be especially important in authoritarian systems where states may be politically ambivalent and local officials have fewer incentives to respond to social grievances. These intermediaries, as the representatives of environmental activists and environmental groups, communicate with local states in non-threatening ways, so people in local states are more likely to at least take account of what is said. Therefore, this finding not only implies that the party-state has increasingly allowed external actors to engage in the policy-making process, but also helps in understanding why local states sometimes accommodate environmental activists and at other times do not.

In Western democracies, political intermediation is often associated with electoral politics. It acts as channels through which voters receive information about partisan politics during the course of election campaigns and mobilize to support one party or other (Gunther, Puhle & Montero, 2007). In authoritarian systems, political intermediation can be seen as the conflict intermediation for interest articulation that links citizens and their authoritarian institutions. This research is an examination of what we call 'political intermediation'—that is, of the varying channels and processes through which civic activists can send their grievances and can establish communication with authoritarian decision makers. With the diversification of social actors, the decision-making power is still firmly in the hands of the Communist Party, but other actors are allowed a say.

Paying more attention to political intermediation thus might help us understand why

some authoritarian systems may be responsive and adaptive. Regimes from the Middle East and North Africa to East and South-east Asia increasingly stress the significance of responsiveness and some form of accountability to citizens (Chen et al, 2016; Malesky & Schuler, 2010; Reilly, 2013). At least at the micro level, the findings presented in this thesis confirm this observation: local states can have positive responses to civic activists even without organized social groups.

As local officials can be quite receptive to forming an engagement with civil society that comes up with communications and negotiation, and accommodates consultative institutions, it is significant to review the concept of ‘consultative authoritarianism’. In authoritarian China, the consultation ends up with different patterns at local levels, but what seems to be key in the process of consultation are the intermediary figures who are willing and able to assume this kind of intermediary function.

For example, the Shenzhen government not only tolerates the existence of these intermediaries but also is willing to take their views. Sometimes local officials of Shenzhen even do not need to use consultative measures and choose to accommodate the citizens. The much more common situation in China is the existence of dead lock in the environmental contention, when both sides, environmental protestors and local officials, do not want to surrender. In Xiamen, we could find local officials tending to choose consultative measures with intermediaries and play function. In Yunnan, however, local officials are situated in an unfavourable condition because they are expected to both maintain stability and enforce the central government’s instructions. Therefore, those consultative measures in Yunnan seem to be meaningless.

As shown through data, consultative measures, such as public hearings, are not necessarily allowed or implemented by local officials; in fact, sometimes they are seen as uncomfortable policy tools because these measures contradict the interests of local officials or even of the central officials. In turn, as long as these consultative measures can be utilized in a meaningful way, it means that local officials have some autonomous interests and power to deliberately apply specific tools of policy-making. The point of consultative authoritarianism is neither immediately constrained nor immediately adaptive, but an attitude of negotiation and communication with civil society, as when central government displays competing signals that both constrain and facilitate local officials who are caught in the middle.

7.3 Implications to Regime Flexibility and State Capacity

To what extent does the flexibility of an authoritarian regime depend on the impact of the channels, actors and content of political intermediation? This question has so far not received much systematic attention in the literature on authoritarian politics—and the few existing answers are deceptively simplistic.

My research provides preliminary examination of political intermediation with qualitative study in one of very important authoritarian states. In this research, the intermediary figures can take on the interests of civic actors and establish *de facto* communication with local states on behalf of environmental coalitions, thus leading to local state accommodation. If we look at other empirical data in Chinese environmental protests, for example widespread anti-incinerator protests in the last decade, we also could find functioning intermediary figures such as experts and local PC/CPPCC delegates who repackage the environmental claims from civil society to deliver information to decision-makers. This finding is also suggestive if conducting large-N studies in Chinese contentious politics or if we examine protests in authoritarian countries more generally by looking at who are the decision makers and what are the mechanisms of communication and transmission in each case.

When states are vulnerable to regulate social relations and maintain social control, they are often seen as weak. For example, the environmental movements of Africa in the 1980s show the weakness of African states in handling resistance to state control of environmental resources and foreign extraction. As noted by Obi (2005), the Ogoni people, who fought for oil and environmental resources, were shut down by the Nigeria government, which led to repression and intimidation.

By examining political intermediation in China, this thesis hypothesizes that totally unmitigated harshness towards social protests may not be the measure of a strong state. Cracking down on protests is seen as the manifestation of a weak, reactive and defensive state. States, generally with more capacity or intent to develop more capacity, are more likely to be flexible in their negotiations with different kinds of intermediaries. These intermediaries not only buttress the states and ensure their survival, but also serve as mechanisms for state agencies to enforce the rules of law and to respond to citizens' demands. In China, the political intermediation with different patterns permitted by the authoritarian regime shows state flexibility with a

different perspective on political development. Instead of caving in or cracking down from a binary thinking, the Communist party-state is strong enough to communicate with different social views and be more adaptive in policy alteration.

What about the broader effects of political intermediation? Intermediaries can benefit the state. In democratic countries, the intermediation processes contributes to democratic transitions and consolidation by delivering information from party politics. In authoritarian regimes, political intermediation can integrate a systematic framework that includes social structures, processes, and ruling authorities through transmission and communication. In China, the central government not only hopes to incorporate different social views into policy-making and consolidate social conflicts, but also it hopes to effectively monitor and sanction all of its grassroots officials by establishing consultative and supervisory institutions at local levels. Local officials have autonomy to choose their responses according to local circumstances. It may be that political intermediation can help to increase the legitimacy and stability of the state.

Political intermediation can be very beneficial to local responsiveness in nondemocratic and authoritarian regimes. However, there may also be serious drawbacks to rely on a system of authoritarian intermediaries. First, the intermediary figures that do exist may have fewer obligations to social groups because obligations of claims delivery are costly and may challenge the state rulers. Intermediary figures who speak for social activists are based on their social commitment and personal values, so their work is voluntary. Second, the existence of political intermediation does not mean the authoritarian state has loosened control over civil society and permitted the independence of civil organizations that intend to engage in the articulation of interests. China's local flexibility to intermediaries appears to be a trade-off between accountability and complaints. While allowing people to voice their opinion through political intermediation and taking these inputs into consideration, the strong state becomes less accountable to the social forces that disconnect from the Party.

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Appendix List of Interviewees

Interviewee code	Name	Identity	Date of Interview
SZ 01	Lin Dongcai	vice director of Biology and City Construction Bureau of Dapeng New District, Shenzhen	19/01/2015
SZ 02	Li Jichao	delegates of Shenzhen CPPCC, entrepreneur	29/01/2015
SZ 03	Chen Jiayi	professor of Politics in Shenzhen University	23/01/2015
SZ 04	Ao Jiannan	director of Yueliangwan homeowners' committee	26/01/2015
SZ 05	Peng Lin	part-time lecturer of politics in Chinese University of Hong Kong	30/01/2015
SZ 06	li Manling	director of Cross-border Environment Concern Association, Shenzhen	10/04/2015
SZ 07	Yang Qin	delegates of Shenzhen People's Congress, private entrepreneur	13/02/2015
SZ 08	Lin	environmental protection book publisher	07/04/2015
SZ 09	Xiaotian	environmentalist, assistant of Nan Zhaoxu	07/04/2015
SZ 10	Jin Xinyi	delegates of Shenzhen CPPCC financier	12/01/2015, 30/03/2015, 06/06/2015
SZ 11	Zhang Xuehu	delegates of Shenzhen CPPCC, CEO of social media	16/12/2014
SZ 12	Zheng Xueding	delegates of Shenzhen People's Congress, partner of a accountant firm	27/01/2015
SZ 13	Peng Yina	delegates of Guangdong Provincial CPPCC, founder of Southern Weekly	03/04/2015, 05/06/2015
SZ 14	Lin Yeli	delegates of Shenzhen People's Congress	04/04/2015
SZ 15	Xiao Youmei	delegates of Shenzhen People's Congress	06/04/2015
SZ 16	Liu Zhongpu	director of Shenzhen Human Resettlement and Environmental Commission (HREC),	03/02/2015

SZ17	Nan Zhaoxu	author of “Seeking Shenzhen in South”, publisher	07/04/2015
SZ 18	Zhang	assistant director (<i>chuzhang</i>) of Population, Resources and Environmental Committee of Shenzhen CPPCC	03/02/2015, 10/02/2015
SZ 19	Cadre A	Kui Yong branch, Dapeng New District Administrative Committee	20/01/2015
SZ 20	Cadre B	Kui Yong branch, Dapeng New District Administrative Committee	20/01/2015
XM 01	Zhou Zhijia	Professor in Xiamen University	30/05/2015
XM 02	Xiamen Lang	Environmental activist	06/06/2015
XM 03	Ma Tiannan	Director of Green Cross Association	05/03/2015
YN 01	Yu Xiaogang	Director of Green Watershed	25/08/2014
YN 02	Mei Nianshu	Director of Green Kunming	02/09/2014
YN 03	Student	Environmental female protester	27/08/2014
YN 04	Kunming citizen	Environmental female protester	27/08/2014
YN 05	Kunming citizen	Employee in Yunnan Yuntianhua Group	03/09/2014
YN 06	NGO staff	Staff in Green Kunming	02/09/2014
YN 07	NGO staff	Staff in Green Watershed	25/08/2014
YN 08	Zhong Yu	Formal staff in Greenpeace, Kunming citizen	05/05/2016
YN 09	Tang Xiaoyun	Staff in Greenpeace, Kunming citizen	05/05/2016
YN 10	Lai Yun	A NGO founder	26/01/2015