

Ecological Compensations in the People's Republic of China: Towards an Ecological Civilization in Chongqing?

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The rise of the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a global power will be one of the most important events that will shape international politics in the 21st century (MINZER, 2007). Therefore the study of phenomena like its rapid economic growth, urbanization, and related environmental issues will have global impacts and it is important to understand them within the context of emerging countries such as the BRICS (DWYER, 2011). Urbanization processes are central to this research, as “megacities will change addresses” this century (FERREIRA, 2000). One such megacity is the municipality of Chongqing with nearly 33 million inhabitants in Southwestern China. It is the largest and most populous of the four municipalities of the PRC with provincial status, and the only one located in the interior of the country and it could indicate trends of a new model of Chinese urbanization, as its very recent urbanization under the Eco-Civilization doctrine differs significantly from established coastal cities like Shanghai.

Adaptation to climate change brings many challenges to urban management in terms of waste management, water supply, and pollution control, demanding integrated solutions beyond administrative boundaries. Among the new ways to internalize environmental issues, eco-compensations are part of a possible solution to rethink rural-urban relations (GUTMAN, 2007). They are part of many global adaptation strategies as climate change affects societies differently, and it demands locally differentiated solutions. In the spirit of Beck's Methodological Cosmopolitanism, perspectives from the Global South enable new possibilities for cooperation and bring opportunities for different countries to learn from each other's experiences.

The recently proclaimed "Construction of an Ecological Civilization" in the PRC is a guideline in the country's political-institutional framework, promising a rhetorical and practical innovation "with Chinese characteristics". Resorting to Confucianist and Daoist rhetoric and thought, the dominant human-nature dichotomy (originating in Western intellectual thought) is deconstructed and reconciled with the CCP's party-state apparatus.

A first bibliographical review was conducted on the Eco-Civilization (shengtai wenming 生态文明) and eco-compensations (shengtai buchang 生态补偿) in Portuguese, English, and Chinese, in different scientific databases. Public and political documents mentioning and/or relating the two phenomena will be consulted to better understand institutional changes caused by the Eco-Civilization through eco-compensation mechanisms. Schmitt's (2016) work on the local impact of the national policy on the housing market in Chengdu supports this approach. Here, public documents on the policy have shown impacts on “structuring dialogues, arguments, and narratives about the 'appropriate' way how citizens of China should perceive and interact with the environment.”

The central part of this research consists of an analysis of the actors involved in local adaptations and aims to contextualize the governance modalities and influencing factors collected in semi-structured interviews with actors involved in nature conservation. The theoretical framework is based on East Asian adaptations of the sociologist Ulrich Beck's theory of *Global Risk Society* and *Methodological Cosmopolitanism* that help to frame

environmental problems as a global problem that demands collective multi-actor and multi-level responses to phenomena like Global Climate Change (BECK, 1986; BECK; GRANDE, 2010; YAN, 2010; BARBI, FERREIRA, GUO, 2016).

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