

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

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In a world of increasing globalization, environmental concerns must contend with a variety of geopolitical borders for policy solutions. More than ever, environmental practitioners and students work in a global community, where the challenges of one nation impact worldwide issues that interconnect to other issues like poverty, human rights, and quality of life. During my trip two years ago to China, where I was invited to speak on international environmental treaties, particularly the Kyoto Protocol, I was struck by the global impacts from local practices in our megacities across the planet. The phrase by the United States (US) Environmental Protection Agency of “act locally and think globally” does not capture the magnitude of impacts from our large, dense megacities that collectively as urban dwellings are changing the quality of life of places on the globe much farther away. This poses new challenges for environmental professionals implementing projects and for academics teaching environmental public policy and sciences. The challenge is to expand both the professionals’ and the students’ understanding of not just of the environmental impacts to a region or state, or even nation, but also the sociocultural and economic ramifications of environmental impacts globally. In that spirit, *Environmental Practice* has focused our issues of 2013 on international environmental issues, beginning with our March issue on the European Union (EU). Continuing in the international theme, this issue of *Environmental Practice* is devoted entirely to the environmental challenges faced by China—with regard to the US, as well—for environmental issues today.

For this issue, we are pleased to welcome guest editor Dr. Phillip Stalley, who has taught courses on Chinese politics and on global environmental and international relations as assistant professor at DePaul University, and served as visiting research fellow

at Princeton University in the Princeton-Harvard China and the World Program (cf. Jackson-DeVoe, 2009), as well as visiting scholar at Fudan University in Shanghai. Dr. Stalley is a member of the Public Intellectuals Program of the National Committee on US-China Relations and is the author of *Foreign Firms, Investment, and Environmental Regulation in the People’s Republic of China* (2012) from Stanford University Press, a book that examines the how the influx of foreign investors into China has both strengthened environmental regulation and created new challenges for pollution control. He has also written articles for *China Quarterly* and the *Journal of Contemporary China*.

The issue begins with an article by Belis and Schunz, who analyze the environmental relationship between China and the European Union throughout the years. The article spans over two decades, beginning with the United Nations Climate Regime in 1992, carrying through to the present day, and identifying uncertainties in the relationship’s future. Ultimately, the authors argue, a balance will need to be struck between Chinese sovereignty and the EU’s ambitions for mitigation targets. Next, Chan, Adekola, Ng, Mitchell, and McDonald take a more local focus, discussing storm-surge events in Tai O Town, Hong Kong, and the perceptions of flood risk management among stakeholders in the affected areas, emphasizing the need for more civic engagement.

Compagnon and Alejandro show the readers how Chinese environmental policies affect other nations, by discussing China’s environmental impact in Africa and how changes to Chinese policy affect that impact. DuPraw, Brennan, and Placht consider how well collaborative governance in natural resource management will work in China, and draw parallels to policy in the US. The article focuses on the Natural Resource Defense Council’s Conference on

Collaborative Governance for Natural Resource Management and suggests possible steps to improve research, practice, and education. Schwerin and Prier identify obstacles to sustainable green programs in China, such as rent seeking and corruption; the problem is placed in the context of the individual actor’s behavior within an opportunistic structure. Sherwood argues for a policy change to Chinese water resource management, using virtual water trade and food imports to bring issues of water scarcity and food scarcity in line with China’s economic growth.

Buckingham, David, and Jepson tackle the subject of soft power in Chinese diplomacy—more specifically, panda diplomacy and the intersection between conservation and international relations. A practice that began under Mao and continues through the present day, the authors predict a new phase in panda diplomacy is on the horizon. Houfu and Xiaopu analyze the challenges faced by Chinese environmental criminal courts and the reluctance of environmental enforcement agencies to transfer cases to criminal jurisdiction, while Hsu calls the reader’s attention to how the centralized nature of Chinese government creates poor implementation of local policy, and the gaps created in environmental data collection in Provincial Environmental Protection Bureaus.

Next, Ma analyzes the extent to which China’s national parks program is capable of solving the problems of China’s conservation scheme, including a more effective balance between conservation and utilization, institutional capacity, and community development. The article also addresses bureaucratic problems, such as low funding, redundant authorities, and problems with implementation. Mani takes a broader, international view of policy, with a focus on World Trade Organization carbon policies and the effect on Chinese imports and exports.

Shen tackles the problem of China's "Urban Billion"; the author creates a historical context for Chinese urbanization and discusses the modern challenges of urbanization faced by both China and the European Union. The EU-China Partnership on Sustainable Urbanization, according to the author, offers opportunities to make Chinese cities greener and more sustainable while also opening new avenues for trade and economic relations. Shou-qi and Lizhao, meanwhile, take a broad focus on the new environmental policies of Chinese five-type society, from conservation to emission reduction, as well as recent litigation and educational research.

Finally, the Returning Farmland to Forest program has raised China's forest cover from 8% to 21% over the last 50-odd years. However, in the hopes of determining whether the results are as positive as they seem, Trac, Schmidt, Harrell, and Hinckley discuss three case studies. While the program has had its successes, the authors

determine that the nature of Chinese bureaucratic management creates a top-down approach, which in turn creates a panacea instead of a real solution, preventing the program from fully achieving its goals of environmental conservation and poverty alleviation.

Due to the overwhelming author response to this issue, two articles had to be moved to our December issue for space considerations. Hsieh's article will look at the rapidly increasing stakes when China's environmental degradation comes up against economic development, and the role played by China's burgeoning green movement. The authors believe that while the central government is plagued by corruption and self-interest, the environmental movement is poised to deliver calls for green regulation and transparency. Knudsen will examine the role played by Chinese environmental courts in filling the gaps in China's legislation, by acting as environmental enforcement agencies. By working

as a bureaucratic actor, Knudsen contends that environmental courts increase collaboration and competition between enforcement agencies.

This issue represents the growing need to learn and educate more about the socio-economic and cultural aspects of nation growth and their impacts on the global environment. The next issue will bring us back to North America to focus on our what I call our water gems: the US and Canadian Great Lakes.

Reference

Jackson-DeVoe, J. 2009. Princeton-Harvard China and the World Program: Two Universities, a Common Focus. *WWS News Magazine* 32(2). Available at <http://www.princeton.edu/wws-news-magazine/archive/spring-2009/princeton-harvard-china/>.

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