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Difficulties of China's Environmental Modernization: An Analysis Drawn from the Lesser Plateau Watershed Restoration Project

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Abstract

This "Connecting the LPP to the World Bank's "participatory approach" to development is another focus of this thesis. Project managers have stressed the significance of this tactic as a means to achieve success. Several reports have praised this portion of the proposal, saying it will help farmers become more invested in the venture and ultimately control it (S. Chen, Wang, and Wang 2004; Liu 2011; Liu and Hiller 2015). Concerns about China's autocratic, top-down government system may make some individuals wary of the idea of "participation" in an endeavour sponsored by the country. This is what one study found: "The LPP's 'participatory method' has its flaws (Dalton and Cai 2007:35-36). Particularly "Development of communities via participation and bolstering of institutions, both of which will come under fire, will be singled out for criticism (Hiller 2012: 72). But neither the project's achievement in terms of 'participation' nor the LPP's struggle with 'participation' will be the subject of significant investigation. There are clues to suggest that the western-led initiative's claims of engagement were at odds with what was actually happening on the ground in China. As I go more into this issue in my thesis, I hope to shed light on the reality of engagement in a Chinese local environment. Recognizing the complexity and dynamics of the concept of 'participation,' this study will not provide a definitive definition or claim about LPP 'participation,' but will instead keep an open mind to questions of problems and limitations and see if the concept can be implemented in China "because of the stringent rules enforced by the state government.

Keyword: LPP Participation, Deep Design

INTRODUCTION

Environmental "protection may be combined with economic growth under the theory of ecological modernization, which challenges the conventional wisdom that environmental protection hinders economic progress (Dryzek 2013). Since environmental conservation may lead to long-term economic gains, ecological modernization highlights this perspective

(Dryzek 2013). The growth of market-based environmental protection tools, industrial and technical innovation, and resource efficiency are all part of ecological modernization (Baker 2007). It also necessitates political commitment on the part of the state authorities to incorporate environmental principles into regulations and incentives for industry (Dryzek 2013). However, the green economy is not only driven by the market and the government. Multinational and bilateral institutions abound for promoting activity and providing incentives for business. Early eco-modernism took place in industrialized nations dealing with modern-day environmental problems such pollution and ecological degradation (such as land degradation) and climate" change (Dryzek 2013).

Since the industrial "revolution, Western-style modernization has been the dominant development narrative, focusing on economic growth as a result of intensive industrialization. Instead than treating nature as an equal partner with humans, it views "nature as a force to be harnessed" and seeks to "master nature via technical innovation" in the process (Shapiro 2012:88). There are negative consequences for the environment as a result of this practice. Since the Maoist era (1949–1966), according to Shapiro (2012), China has begun to modernize in the Western model. Rendingshengtian ("Man Must Conquer Nature"), a famous Maoist slogan, endorsed this modernizing mindset, resulting in human misery and environmental catastrophe (Shapiro 2012:89). The modernization process in China over the last three decades has resulted in fast economic expansion, but it has also sparked major ecological issues and widespread pollution. Following the worldwide trend toward environmental conservation for long-term growth, China is presently making the transition from traditional" modernization to ecological modernization. Chinese authorities are making an effort to "bring ecological rationality into modernization rhetoric, policymaking, and practise in China," according to the 'China Modernization Report 2007: Study on Ecological Modernization' (L. Zhang, Mol, & Sonnenfeld, 2007:662). China's aim for ecological "modernization was formally outlined in the report, which advocated a technocratic solution to critical environmental challenges (L. Zhang, Mol, and Sonnenfeld 2007). China's ecological modernization began in 1998, according to the research, even though the development plan and goal for ecological modernization have been formally stated and made public since that time (L. Zhang, Mol, and Sonnenfeld 2007). A state-led early experiment in ecological modernization for sustainable development is analyzed as a case study in this dissertation. As we all know, the decisions we make today may have a significant impact on the decisions we make tomorrow. So the LPP case study may help us comprehend the Chinese government's vision and strategy for sustainable development in terms of ecological modernization, as stated" above in the report.

Literature Review

In northern "China, along the upper and middle Yellow River, is China's Loess Plateau, which is 640,000 square kilometres in size. During a normal year, the Loess Plateau has a typical continental monsoon climate with cold, dry winters and heavy rainfall in the summers (June to September). The Loess Plateau is classified as semiarid due to its unique climatological features (Kimura and" Takayama 2014).

Because of the loess "soil that covers most of the plateau (thus the name), the area is vulnerable to wind and water erosion (Yan et al. 2014). This location has the most loess-soil in the world, but it's also one of the most severely degraded in the world, as well. At the confluence of the

provinces of Shanxi and Shaanxi as well as the Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia (Inner Mongolia), where climate change has been notoriously dramatic and frequent natural disasters such as flooding, torrential rain, drought and sand storms have been common, is where the most severe erosion is occurring (F. Zheng and Wang 2014). A substantial quantity of suspended silt is also transported by the Yellow River, which flows through the region's upper and middle reaches. The material dumped in the river's lower reaches has raised the riverbed significantly above the surrounding fields over the years, resulting in regular and severe flooding that has" a negative impact on the livelihoods of local populations.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Many studies have shown that the "Loess Plateau was very fruitful and simple to cultivate in ancient times, which led to the formation of a civilisation based upon agriculture. However, due to a weakened natural environment and continued human activity, environmental and agricultural conditions have deteriorated considerably (Liu 2011; Tsunekawa et al. 2014). Massive conversions of agricultural land (even inappropriate ones) occurred in the second half of the 20th century, resulting in serious land degradation and soil erosion. As a result, agricultural output fell even further, and local residents were left with a scarcity of food. For decades, residents of the area had to contend with an unforgiving" climate and abject poverty. The World Bank-led "Loess Plateau restoration project was started with the goal of controlling and lowering sediment flow in the Yellow River's upper and middle reaches, as well as disaster avoidance. In the interim, in the early 1990s, the village communities in the project regions were in a state of acute poverty. By raising local agricultural output and strengthening the local economy, the initiative sought to reduce poverty in accordance with the World Bank's human-centered development concept The LPP was launched in 1994 with a $150 million World Bank loan by China's Ministry of Water Resources (MWR). Phase 1 of the project lasted from 1994 to 2002, while phase two was launched in 2003. (1999-2005). With a total area of 15,500 km2, the project was executed in 48 counties spread across nine tributary basins in Shanxi, Shaanxi, and Gansu Provinces and the Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia (the size of Belgium). A total of 1,100 micro-watershed zones ranging in size from 1,000 ha to 3,000 ha were created as a result of the initiative (Darghouth, Ward, and Gambarelli 2008; S. Chen, Wang, and Wang 2004). Project criteria were used to choose the counties and micro-watersheds for" the project.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To "identify the LPP's most important local-level institutional" structures.

Research Questions

The questions that drive my study are as follows:

- What "factors contributed to the project's local success? How did the LPP execute the essential institutional structures" locally?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To establish a "deep description" (Geertz 1973), this "study emphasises human stories within larger social, political, and economic settings, with an emphasis on the LPP planning and implementation process, the local participants' experiences and viewpoints, and via official project documentation. Understanding local agriculture and livelihood practises, conservation regulations, and other issues is impossible without considering the larger context. As a result, during the fieldwork, the primary techniques of data collection will be participant observation" and interviews.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Both deductive "and inductive methods are used in this investigation. Research is designed with the use of a deductive technique, with particular hypotheses or questions derived from broader theoretical conceptions (Bryman 2004). This strategy relies on collecting empirical data under the most minimal assumptions or theoretical concerns feasible, and the researcher is more open-minded while questioning informants, ready to make findings that will be not planned in advance (Bryman 2004). Both during and after the fieldwork, the primary research questions will be revised. A variety of subjects such as participatory planning and local agricultural and alternative livelihood practises, notably in grazing management, will be on my research agenda before I entered the" field, and this inevitably impacted the results of my work. The "early data analysis will be also carried out in the field, which aided in formulating future data gathering steps (Bryman 2004). The process of gathering and analysing data led to the emergence of several ideas and categories of research, which will be then iterated and developed as a key component of grounded theory" (Bryman 2004).

DATA ANALYSIS

Indeed, there are "At such times, it is necessary to conduct a "empirical investigation that analyses a current phenomena in depth and within its real-world context," which is what a case study does (Yin 2014:16). Participant observation and unstructured interviews are common types of qualitative methods used in case studies because they allow researchers to perform "an extended, detailed analysis of a case" (Bryman 2004: 49). Researchers seek for cases that might serve as a foundation for answering research issues while making their selections (Bryman 2004). The findings of case studies can only be applied in specific situations. However, proponents of case study research methods often argue that this specific methodology is meant to prevent extrapolation to broader populations or settings (Bryman 2004). To generalise, however, one has to have a firm theoretical foundation "depending on the findings of a case study.

CONCLUSION

As it arrived "Three institutional interventions—"land contract," "integrated watershed planning," and "grazing management"—were discovered by the researchers to be the key factors affecting local land use patterns, agricultural systems, and farmer behaviour. These interventions will be carried out locally utilising special political, economic, and

communication strategies, all of which contributed to the project's execution success. 2) When implementing these policies in the project villages, local governments provided guidance and support for the project interventions (the deployment of incentives) and used the World Bank's requirements and rhetoric, despite the World Bank having played a significant role in policymaking during the project "their sovereign authority (e.g. in the implementation process).

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study "will be hindered by the fact that the fieldwork will be being done by a master's student with minimal resources. Large territories in four Chinese provinces will be covered by the LPP. With only two weeks to complete the inquiry, it would be difficult to make it to all of the project locations. This time frame, however, will be insufficient for gathering comprehensive data due to the lack of opportunity for interaction with local people and project personnel. When I visited farmer houses, it will be especially difficult for me to communicate and connect with the female members. Wives rarely or never talked, therefore their husbands did the most of the talking. The fact that various other national projects have been carried out in the same site since the conclusion of the LPP might further affect the statistics. Local informants may have little recollection of the project, which began nearly two decades ago and will be completed 10 years ago. This concern led me to choose informants with a more vivid recollection of the research. Additionally, I double-checked the data I got from the informants against data I got from other places, such" official project documentation.

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