

CHAPTER 2



NETWORK PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND THE CHALLENGE OF BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT IN CHINA

Sara R. Jordan

International and domestic observers alike critique the Chinese government for lapses in overall public management as well as lapses in environmental stewardship. Although the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) may invite strident critique on these two fronts, the veracity of such criticism may be questionable if examined from a theoretical perspective. When we examine the comparability between China's overall public management enterprise, its environmental management efforts, and the theories supporting both of these ideas, some questions arise about the validity of the criticisms. By theoretical validity, I mean the extent to which the PRC government crafts policies and engages in actions that are consonant with the practices recommended by theoreticians of general and biodiversity management.

In this chapter, I assess the consonance between the arrangement of institutions and practices in the Chinese government's efforts to manage its rich biodiversity and a theory of networked biodiversity management. Specifically, I ask whether the PRC's efforts of the past two decades are not, at least theoretically, creating infrastructure to promote the environmental outcomes so ardently hoped for in the nation and elsewhere. The chapter will proceed according to the following course: first I will briefly discuss the status of biodiversity in

China, second I will discuss the governance mechanisms currently in place for managing the rich biodiversity of China, third I will discuss the theory of network public management (NPM), fourth I will discuss the application of NPM to managing biodiversity in order to advocate a model of network biodiversity management, and finally I will argue that, theoretically speaking, China is on the right track to improve its biodiversity management efforts in the near future.

BIODIVERSITY IN CHINA

Ecological evidence marshaled by academic researchers, non-governmental environmental organizations (NGEOs), and China's state ministries all point to the status of China as a "megadiverse" nation. Megadiversity, as Mittermeier, Mittermeier, Gil and Wilson (2005) suggest, is the presence of a comparatively remarkable number of species of plants and animals (that is, genetic and aesthetic diversity) concentrated in a particular area. The 17 "megadiverse" nations (Williams et al. 2001), of which China is part, account for an estimated 60 percent to 80 percent of all life on earth.¹ According to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), China is home to 816 threatened species, many of which are plants (IUCN 2008).² Quantified according to measures of beauty or "cold hard numbers," few can deny the importance of China as an environmental treasure trove. To get a complete picture of the importance of this issue, it is necessary to describe the diverse biomes covered under the description "megadiverse." For the sake of simplicity, it is easiest to categorize the biodiversity of China into four broad kinds—marine, [wild terrestrial] mammalian, [wild terrestrial] botanical, and agricultural.

Marine and Freshwater Biodiversity

Covering the southeastern side of the Asian continent, seas lap the shores of China to the east, northeast, and southeast, while mountains and steppes dominate the horizon to the west, north, and southwest. Many of China's most biologically diverse areas lie alongside the fertile south and southeastern coastal areas. Unsurprisingly, this fertile, tropical to temperate area is also home to a significant percentage of the nation's human population.

The lengthy, 14,500 kilometer coast of China includes the East China Sea, the Yellow Sea, and the South China Sea, all of which mix into the Philippine Sea and the greater Pacific Ocean (CIA 2008). In the upper reaches of the nation, the seas and parts of deltas may