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Public Participation in Low-carbon Policies: Climate Change and Sustainable Lifestyle Movements

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This chapter presents an overview of the two related issues of climate change and sustainable consumption and production (SCP), and how Chinese civil society organizations (CSOs) including both grassroots CSOs and think tanks are addressing these two issues. A particular focus of the chapter is on CSO participation in processes aiming to influence and contribute to policy making on national and local levels. As China's climate change policies are a moving target and are still undergoing constant development, the chapter focuses more on trends and significant ongoing developments than on presenting an analysis of completed processes of policy innovation and public participation. The chapter first introduces the current state of the climate change problem, the interconnectedness between China and the EU on this issue through the perspective of SCP. That is followed by a general description of the background of public participation and civil society movements in the climate change issue. Then CSO initiatives on sustainable consumption, particularly lifestyle movements, are presented to ascertain the link between new social movement theories and various approaches of international movements on climate change, sustainable consumption and lifestyles. Furthermore, a comparison between China's environmental CSOs and think tanks and ways of engagement in China's climate change policy processes is presented, focusing in particular on the China Civil Climate Action Network (CCAN). The chapter also contains three case studies, including practitioner notes from the field, to provide a detailed picture of current CSO efforts. Finally, due to my personal involvement in CSO participation in climate change policy processes, the case studies

A. Fulda (ed.), *Civil Society Contributions to Policy Innovation in the PR China*

presented in this chapter provide a subjective participant perspective of current developments, rather than the perspective of an objective observer.

Climate change and EU-China relations

Climate change has emerged as an important topic for dialogue and cooperation between the EU and China. The fifth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), published in 2013, confirms earlier findings by the scientific community that climate change is real and taking place at a fast rate. The report by Working Group I states that:

> Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, and since the 1950s, many of the observed changes are unprecedented over decades to millennia. … The atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane, and nitrous oxide have increased to levels unprecedented in at least the last 800,000 years. CO_2 concentrations have increased by 40 per cent since pre-industrial times.[1]

Furthermore, the IPCC has identified further proof of human influence in warming of the atmosphere and the ocean, in changes in the global water cycle, in reductions in snow and ice and in global mean sea level rise. 'It is extremely likely (indicating a certainty of 95–100 per cent) that human influence has been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-twentieth century.'[2]

Human influence in the form of CO_2 from energy production and consumption are the major contributions of human activity impacting on the global climate. According to data by the Global Carbon Budget (2013),[3] global CO_2 emissions in 2012 from coal, oil, gas and cement were dominated by emissions from China (27 per cent), the USA (14 per cent), 28 member states of the EU (10 per cent) and India (6 per cent). The emission growth rates of these countries from 2011 to 2012 were 5.9 per cent for China, 3.7 per cent for the USA, 1.3 per cent for the 28 EU states, and 7.7 per cent for India. The global average annual per-capita CO_2 emissions in 2012 were 5.5 tonnes, or 16 (USA), 7 (EU), 7 (China) and 1.8 (India) respectively.

With the data showing that the EU and China now have the same per capita emissions, it is tempting to compare them, or even to place the two regions on the same level. However, if we take into account the historical cumulative emissions going back to 1880 and earlier, the EU has made a significantly higher contribution to current greenhouse gas concentrations