

Evaluation processes in China show that the counties not only have room to manoeuvre in terms of policy priorities but also that these processes offer incentives for policy implementation, particularly for implementing environmental policies. The incentive and communication system which has been described here with regard to the environmental field is a relevant steering factor in the specific design of Chinese decentralisation; otherwise all benefits of decentralisation would have bogged down.

Environmental Policies and Political Steering in China

A View from the Local Level

By Thomas Heberer and Anja Senz

In comparison to other developing countries China started rather early to build up institutions to safeguard the environment and even anchored environmental protection in its constitutions (1978/1982). However, while in the 1980s and 1990s only a handful of laws and guidelines ranging from correct use of different resources to noise emission or hazardous waste management were formulated, a total of 68 laws, regulations and guidelines regarding different environmen-

tal issues have been enacted in the decade since 2000 by the central government in Beijing. What is more, the State Environmental Protection Administration, which has been responsible for environmental issues since 1998, was upgraded to a Ministry in 2007. This clearly illustrates the central government's increasing interest in environmental issues. But the emphasis of the central government does not necessarily translate into successful environmental policies at lower administrative levels.

This results from the fact that the process of liberalisation in China in the context of the reforms since the 1980s has significantly widened the operative scope of administrative levels below the central government. Competencies have been shifted to provinces, municipalities and counties in order to foster economic development in accordance with the needs of each specific locality. This has enhanced the opportunity of the local levels to manoeuvre and bargain with superior administrative



Thomas Heberer. Foto: Timo Bobert



(1) Modern sewage treatment plant, Xiamen/Fujian province.

Photo: Thomas Heberer

echelons and has led to inconsistencies in policy implementation. In the academic literature, the phenomena of local leeway and divergent local policies have been treated as a result of decentralisation. However, environmental policies are successfully carried out in some areas, while this is not the case in others, with the effect that the country in general regularly scores rather low in international environmental performance indices. The 2010 Report on China's Environmental Situation reveals that in 2010, despite improvements in water and air quality, problems in fields like biodiversity, contamination by heavy metals, etc. became more serious.

Currently, the central government employs three main mechanisms for implementing its environmental policies: (a) setting agendas; (b) allowing flexibility in environmental policy implementation; (c) using cadre responsibilities and evaluation systems.

Since the Chinese party-state lacks the institutions to fully monitor local policy implementation, the Centre needs further mechanisms to influence the behaviour of local offi-

cial. In principle, the Centre formulates policies in the form of basic environmental ideas, thus putting the focus on issues considered urgent. But instead of precisely specified policies and legal norms the party-state prefers to set generalised standards which require local interpretation. Hence, such abstract standards must be clarified at the lower levels of the political system and this procedure leaves room for local modification and policy implementation according to local needs, interests and capacities. However, priorities are set by the Central government through formulating 'hard' policies such as economic development, stability, increase of local level income, and birth control. Compliance with these policies is monitored rather rigorously. But with regard to environmental policies more flexibility in policy implementation is given. In locations with high unemployment, for instance, polluting enterprises are not to be closed down hastily, as this could spawn local protests and affect stability. Concurrently, the central state also provides funds for technically restructuring outmoded industrial facilities.

The cadre evaluation system is another important instrument of policy implementation. As early as the 1980s, both a cadre 'target responsibility system' and an 'evaluation system' for cadres and enterprises at the local level were established in which contracts of higher administrative levels with local officials determine the most relevant tasks of policy implementation at the local level. Career promotion is a central concern of local officials and requires them to prove successful in terms of their political and economic performance in order to get evaluated positively. Moreover, to carry out projects successfully helps to draw the attention and to get support of superiors. Local experiments ("models") are important in this regard, since they can demonstrate the innovative character of local leadership. Being successful, adapting innovative policies, and being evaluated positively are thus crucial not only for the promotion of leading cadres but also for receiving funding from higher levels.

In our field research, we found widely differing conditions for implementing environmental policies and in the cadres' behaviour in doing so: (a) the environmental behaviour of local cadres tended to differ due to top-down pressure and the existence of incentives for promoting ecological policies; (b) in locations with green agricultural products processing industry, ecological issues were naturally more prominent than in cities with a strong legacy of heavy industry; (c) in locations where polluting industries are the major source of local revenues and employment and where financial resources for technical upgrading and re-equipment are lacking, the municipalities tended to accept the continued existence of polluting industries in order to avoid local unrest and rising unemployment; (d) collusion of local cadres in order to conceal the real environment situation and achieve a better evaluation outcome was found to be rather prevalent in locations

where policy implementation was faulty, targets too high, resources and human capital for implementation lacking, in those which were unable to effectively mobilise or use resources and in those where individual or factional interests were being pursued, etc. In particular, less successful county leaderships attempted to hide such problems vis-à-vis their superior administrative bodies. In better-off areas, on the other hand, local officials sometimes feared that corruption or misuse of funding or resources might be discovered.

Environmental performance evaluations

Each year, the prefectural cities assign specific policy targets to their counties and the respective county leaderships. Those targets are stipulated in so-called “responsibility contracts”. The performance and behaviour of local leading cadres in each policy field are evaluated at the end of a given year. By the contracts the municipality communicates the aims of its policies to the county leadership and the contracts serve as an incentive to the local officials to comply with policies that should be implemented.

In principle, two types of evaluations exist: (1) a programme evaluation, which assesses implementation of the various policy targets. Here the county offices are inspected by the municipality and the counties are finally ranked according to the evaluation outcome; (2) a performance evaluation of the leading county cadres individually.

What are key instruments to encourage successful implementation of environmental policies?

As mentioned above, one of the key interests of leading local cadres is to safeguard their current position and promote their career advancement. This requires successful, even innovative policy implementation and performance in line with current national



(2) Education poster to create new ecological villages, Nanfeng county, Jiangxi province. Photo: Thomas Heberer

onal policy trends, because only these lead to a positive evaluation. But incentives alone are not sufficient for steering the behaviour of local cadres. We therefore argue that the evaluation system has four major functions that affect the interaction between a municipality and its counties. This holds for all policy fields and not merely for environmental policies.

Evaluations function as (1) an instrument of political communication between higher and lower administrative levels by means of responsibility contracts. In those contracts, the higher level communicates its expectations in terms of environment policy implementation to the respective county leadership and its sub-agents (township and village cadres). Environmental policies set out in the contract elucidate the significance assigned to environmental policies by the municipality within the wide array of policy fields. (2) an incentive and steering system. Local officials must meet targets prescribed by higher authorities. The latter even expect that cadres conduct policy experiments, create models (e.g. in terms of environment policies) and innovative policies in order to be

positively evaluated and promoted. This is a major reason why leading local cadres attempt to design specific policies and models according to local peculiarities and to implement priority tasks assigned by higher echelons. Leading local officials must meet the targets if they wish to climb up the career ladder and increase their income (through bonus payments for target fulfilment).

(3) a control and pressure system in the form of performance ratings. As a rule, only cadres consecutively evaluated as “excellent” can – ideally – gain promotion. In a survey of 100 leading local grassroots cadres, 30.5 per cent complained that the evaluations put enormous pressure on them. Our interviews with leading local cadres and Chinese scholars confirmed this. A major reason is that the evaluations take place frequently and regularly, can entail massive negative effects to a career, and thus make leading cadres feel insecure. Moreover, the contracts include both rewards for target fulfilment and punishment in the case of non-fulfilment.

The items of the target responsibility contracts can generally be



(3) Reforestation of stark landscape, Shehezi/Xinjiang province.

Photo: Thomas Heberer

divided into “hard” issues, e.g. those related to current political priorities of the Centre such as economic growth, social stability, birth planning, etc., and “soft” issues in other fields (such as the environment, social security, education, etc.). The former are strongly linked to an official’s career advancement and rewards and are to be implemented under any and all circumstances; the latter, although mandatory, are not necessarily related to promotion and remuneration, so that pressure to implement them is much weaker. However, the following case study shows that a local environmental policy can become a “hard item” if a county gives priority to it.

Case studies: implementation and evaluation of local environmental programmes: the wuhua programme in Laixi

Evaluation of the so called “five changes” (wuhua) programme ini-

tiated by Qingdao city (Shandong province) for improving the rural infrastructure and environment in Laixi (a county under its jurisdiction) is taken here as a case study to illustrate the interaction of Laixi’s leadership with both its superordinate level (Qingdao city) and its sub-agents (townships and villages). The wuhua programme encompassed the hardening of rural roads and the beautification, greening, illumination and cleanliness of villages. We will begin by outlining why and how this programme can be regarded as a part of an environmental improvement programme.

In a Western context, the term “environment” is strongly related to clean air, water and soil, along with waste management, the protection of natural resources and wildlife and involves all issues of environmental protection. Originally, however, the term referred simply to surroundings in general, and the current Chinese term for “environment” (huanjing)

corresponds to this in that it encompasses the natural environment, the quality of life, and the preservation of natural resources (air, water, soil, etc.). Moreover, with regard to environmental policies in China we must distinguish between rural and urban development. While in urban areas a considerate use of natural resources in the sense of environmental protection is regarded as crucial, environmental issues in rural areas are connected first and foremost to modernisation and development. As our field studies showed, basic infrastructural aspects like the paving of rural roads, electrification, waste disposal, sanitary equipment, water supply etc. were covered in many counties by the programme of “constructing new villages”, which also encompasses the greening, illumination and beautification of the surrounding areas. In this sense, environmental policies in China often overlap with aspects of local development and are distinguishable

only at a later stage from the general improvement of local living conditions, when they become clear policies for preventing environmental degradation.

We argue that the wuhua programme constitutes the first step in an environmental improvement programme inasmuch as it aims to improve both the natural and social environment of villages by so-called “civilisational projects”. In a follow-up step, such a “civilisational project” might shift its focus to genuine ecological issues and environmental protection. In light of our research focus on local environmental policies, it seems relevant to keep in mind that environmental issues in China are often linked closely with efforts to improve the living conditions of the rural population. This three-year programme (2008–2010) for improving the rural infrastructure and village environment in Laixi may serve as a good example of the first step.

The wuhua programme was initiated by Qingdao to improve environmental conditions in its rural counties. To do so, county leaders have got the following discretionary powers: a) to make implementation decisions according to specific local conditions; b) to set priorities within sub-domains of the programme; c) to create distinct models; d) to select certain locations (townships, villages) for implementation; e) to tap additional resources for implementation and f) to urge offices and enterprises, including private businesses, to take over obligations for poorer villages by supporting the programme implementation financially, with resources and know-how. Although the programme was imposed top-down by Qingdao, its concrete implementation was in the hands of the Laixi leadership and the townships.

Of the county’s 871 villages, 301 were ordered to implement wuhua in 2008, another 301 in 2009, and the remaining 269 in

2010. The county leadership held the townships responsible for ensuring that Qingdao City’s evaluation of implementation by the villages and townships would reveal no major difficulties. In order to control the process, the municipality imposed the following condition: should Laixi fail to produce a positive evaluation of wuhua in the first year, only half of Qingdao’s promised 34 million yuan would be paid out. Moreover, Qingdao might reduce or even annul its funding in the following year. This would have had severe consequences for the evaluation of the entire county and its leadership, too.

The county leadership attempted to guarantee fulfilment of the targets by means of regular meetings with the township and village leaders and, when necessary, lowered the quality requirements of a measure (e.g. concerning road construction) in order to ensure at least formal implementation. Along with the evaluation system, funding provided by Qingdao ensured motivation and guided the activities of the leading local cadres. In order to fulfil the above-mentioned targets and keep expenditures low, the local government began by selecting more developed and wealthy villages close to highways for the first year. In the second year, the county requested additional funding from Qingdao city and implemented the programme in rather average developed villages. Concurrently, the county leadership instructed local enterprises and government departments to take over responsibility for specific villages and to contribute to the programme financially at the village level. The county also redirected financial means from various funds (e.g. for poverty alleviation) to the implementation of the programme.

Accordingly, implementation in the first year was rather easy and successful and was positively evaluated by Qingdao. In the second year (2009) the county leadership selected villages which could contribute a

share to the funding. In the final year (2010), the county intended to focus on villages with only marginal funding resources, believing that poor and remote townships and villages would be unable to implement the wuhua programme without external support. This latter step was not without problems. As a leading official of the county government recalls, due to the consequences of the global financial crisis Qingdao had already reduced its funding twice, in 2009 and 2010. Therefore the implementation of wuhua in the remaining villages had to be completely supported by public funding. About 20 per cent of Laixi’s villages belonged to this category, including some without even an existing village administration and/or party committees. Given the lack of adequate funding in 2010, Laixi saw itself constrained to enter into a bargaining process with Qingdao so as to ensure programme fulfilment.

The Laixi leadership had good arguments: a) it had fulfilled the targets of the first two years; b) it had problems in funding the poorer villages, particularly because income from the local export industry had declined due to the global financial crisis; c) due to that crisis, most enterprises refused to contribute to further funding; and d) peasants in the poorer areas were neither willing nor able to contribute financially to the implementation. Moreover, due to the effects of the financial crisis and the reduction of funding provided by Qingdao, the leadership of Laixi had already decided to shift the focus for 2009 from road hardening to the much cheaper target of cleanliness of villages, a change approved by the Qingdao government.

In the bargaining process with Qingdao, Laixi aimed to achieve the following: 1) an adjustment of evaluation targets so as to better reflect the financial capacities of its townships and villages, 2) an increase in subsidies, or 3) an extension of the deadline for implementing the programme. As a leading official of

Laixi's Agricultural Commission stated, Qingdao had an obligation to increase its funding of the programme because the peasants of the poorer villages were either unwilling or unable to pay for it. Thus if Qingdao wanted to have the programme

evaluation of the townships of Laixi stipulated development in 19 fields such as local revenues, large-scale industries, exports, peasant income, local GDP development, etc. Land resources and environmental protection as well as the "construction

which policy fields were important, less important or irrelevant.

On the surface, the outcome of the entire rural infrastructural programme had little effect on careers, income or boni. The percentages showed no prominent role of environmental policies in the policy evaluation process of Qingdao and its counties. Thus wuhua seemed to belong rather to the "soft" evaluation categories. In reality, however, the wuhua programme as a civilising project was politically important for local development and therefore highly rated by higher authorities who considered its implementation to be vital for developing the rural areas and for improving the living conditions of villagers. Moreover, Qingdao authorities allocated large amounts of funding to this project. Accordingly, wuhua turned into a hard category which by all means had to be realised, and its implementation was evaluated rather strictly.

To sum up, what was the major incentive for Laixi's leadership to implement the wuhua programme successfully? We argue that its evaluation was all the more crucial inasmuch as wuhua was in the focus of Qingdao's evaluation at the end of each year. The Laixi leadership was fully aware of what might happen if they were believed to be incapable of bringing about major changes in the rural areas' environment and infrastructure within a certain time frame. This might have even ended their career prospects. Therefore, the Damocles sword of evaluation played a significant role as a strong incentive for policy implementation. On the other hand, the wuhua case proves that local "soft" policies may become "hard" ones if they become related to local development.

Local policy innovations: environmental modeling

In recent years the Centre has fostered the creation of "ecological



(4) Wild garbage dump in Nanfeng county/Jiangxi province.
Photo: Thomas Heberer

fully implemented it needed to provide additional funding.

To convince Qingdao, the Laixi leadership took the evaluators not only to advanced models but also to remote villages so as to show both sides of the implementation process – achievements and constraints. This, so the intention of the local government, should also have a positive influence on evaluation outcomes.

For the year-end evaluation of wuhua Qingdao drew up evaluation guidelines for the counties and urban districts under its jurisdiction. The guidelines communicated in detail which policy fields were to be evaluated and what were the maximum points assigned to full task fulfilment in each field. Laixi adopted the Qingdao evaluation criteria for evaluating its townships. The 2008 regulations for programme

of a new countryside" constituted two separate items. The evaluation of the so-called key programmes was weighted as follows, whereby the percentages give some indication of the significance and weight of each item: economic construction: 50 %; social fields (e.g. preserving stability, developing social insurance systems, building new houses for villagers, insuring employment and public security, etc.): 15 %; constructing rural party organisations: 14 %; political construction (e.g. improving village elections, increasing the effectiveness of local people's congresses and political consultative conferences, successfully combating corruption, etc.): 8 %; cultural construction: 8 %; other items (including environmental issues and wuhua): 5 %. These guidelines made clear to local cadres

models” and other environmental experiments in order to trigger environmental improvement. Primarily counties without major heavy industry or high tech industries are eager to acquire the status of such a model, since this not only improves the outcome of performance evaluations but can also attract additional funding by higher echelons. Below we illustrate how and why cities and counties make efforts to become environmental or ecological models and how such models operate.

Since 2011 the Ministry of Environment Protection has imposed new criteria for the nomination of a city or county as an ecological model on the national level. Among them are:

- (a) economic and social criteria like the income of the urban population, investment in environmental protection, reduced energy and water consumption, and a reduction of emissions several years running;
- (b) improving the quality of air and water, noise reduction;
- (c) environmental construction: more than 35 % of new public green spaces; more than 80 % more waste water purification; increased savings in energy; waste garbage disposal; etc.;
- (d) environmental administration, i.e. drawing up an environmental protection and improvement plan; surveys attesting that more than 80 % of the population are satisfied with the local environment situation; establishment of environmental education programmes in schools; etc. Specific incentives for environmental experimenting and modelling were also initiated.

If the Ministry of Environment Protection approves a city or county’s application to become a national model, that city or county can much easier acquire funding of environmental and ecological improvement projects (e.g. for energy-saving equipment, wastewater treatment plants, waste incineration plants, etc.) from the Centre and the respective province.

The province, the prefectural city and the county must also match central funding. If a city or county becomes a provincial model, those models are financially supported by the provincial and prefectural level. Acquiring the status of a model concurrently enhances the reputation of a location and its leadership. However, when a location is accepted as a model the superior echelons impose strict conditions regarding the establishment of new enterprises, wastewater treatment facilities, waste emission limits, further savings of energy and water, the insulation of buildings, and the improvement of water and air quality. Compliance with such criteria is strictly monitored by the Ministry of Environment Protection and the Model Status is limited in time.

decision is followed by submission of an application for funds to the higher levels. Applications are then forwarded to the respective Development and Reform Commission (i.e. a commission on the prefectural city, province or national level).

Creating environmental models is not only part of the entire policy incentive system but also helps to give environmental issues more weight. The broad diversity of ecological models and their increasing prominence in policy documents and the media highlight the increasing role of ecological policies.

Further improving the county’s environment already long ago became a pivotal issue within the local cadres’ responsibility system. Suining, for example, aimed at becoming a “green city” in order to develop tourism.



(5) Cooking with biogas, Laixi county, Shandong province.
Photo: Thomas Heberer

As a rule, such an application starts out with a decision at the prefectural, provincial or national level that a given county should be acknowledged as an ecological model in order to boost the local economy (green agriculture, tourism, attraction of investments in environment-friendly industries, etc.). The

Here, energy saving and the reduction of industrial emissions were crucial and included among the “hard policies”. Similarly, Deqing, a “national ecological county” not only aimed at developing eco-tourism but also at persuading people from the nearby provincial capital of Hangzhou to purchase much cheaper condomini-



(6) During field research. Thomas Heberer in discussion with peasants.
Photo: Dieter Grunow

nium flats in that “clean” county. Laixi, a “national ecological model” since 2005, ran into problems in 2008 when higher authorities discovered that a dozen or so enterprises were major polluters. Accordingly, at the behest of Qingdao government (also a national ecological model since 2000) Laixi was criticised for neglecting environmental policies and had to make environmental protection part of “hard policies” in order to keep its model status. Shihezi has striven to become a model for recycling and to develop the corresponding industry. Finally, Xifeng county has targeted becoming a model county for “constructing an ecological culture”, something strongly related to attracting ecological enterprises, general improvement of the environment, and increased environmental awareness of local officials and the population.

The examples provided here illustrate that a broad variety of ecological models, backgrounds and

contents exists in China. Some have been chosen by national authorities to become models (Qingdao), others by provincial authorities (Deqing). In Xifeng the party secretary, a graduate of Qinghua University in Beijing who had expertise in environmental sciences, wanted to send a clear political message to the higher authorities of Guiyang city to which the county belonged. Suining (green tourism) has aimed to become an ecological model in order to gain further advantages in market competition. Laixi in turn was pressed by Qingdao city to improve its environmental standards. Additionally, it wanted to attract more investments from high-tech and environmental technology enterprises.

These examples demonstrate how economic development based on specific local conditions plays a major role in the model-building process in China. Holding one’s own against competitors and defi-

ning one’s own local direction of development, particularly if other resources (financial means, external investments, mineral deposits, etc.) are lacking, are major driving forces behind the choice of an ecological development path. Either the county leadership itself puts forward such a proposal and communicates it to higher authorities or the initiative comes from the municipality in a top-down manner. Several prerequisites are decisive for determining the path to be chosen by a county: directives from the superior echelon; incentives provided by higher echelons (funding, prestige, becoming a model); local particularities (e.g. preconditions for developing eco-tourism); and individual relations to higher echelons.

Undoubtedly, successful and efficient reduction of environmental pollution and contamination do not take place overnight, but rather develop in each case as a process. In the counties we examined, this

process was indeed progressing. However, this does not mean that even in model counties no problems exist at all.

It is also the case that deficiencies of environmental degradation are sometimes concealed, or fake data are prepared by the counties so as to acquire the status of an ecological model or achieve a better evaluation. In order to fulfil the criteria for model counties, for instance, Nanfeng county was officially reported to be 71 per cent forested. This high percentage was achieved by designating the vast number of tangerine trees, the major product of this county, as “forest area”. This violated China’s regulations on statistical reporting. Our own observations in Nanfeng showed that the preconditions for becoming an ecological model were still widely lacking. In many places in the county, wild town rubbish dumps were found for which – according to local authorities – the peasants were responsible. With the exception of a handful of model villages, garbage collection in the rural areas was non-existent. For their part, the local leaders shifted the blame for these deficits, which they discussed openly, elsewhere: in a speech on “Constructing a New Socialist Countryside” in 2008, Nanfeng’s county party secretary blamed the local population for environmental pollution. The rubbish issue, he stated, was primarily a peasant issue: the peasants were defecating and relieving themselves everywhere, so that the thinking of the peasants should be altered. According to him, environmental pollution was an issue of the “quality” of the peasants and therefore an ideological issue.

In contrast to the party secretary, the mayor of this county took a more pragmatic view. In his report to the local People’s Congress in February 2008 he specified the key environmental problem as the destruction of natural forests by uncontrolled expansion of tangerine cultivation. Cultivation on

mountain slopes had led to water-logged depressions and erosion. The overuse of chemical fertilisers and pesticides in agriculture and the enormous contamination by a chemical and a concrete factory were identified as further key problems. In Nanfeng in 2009, the evaluations still focused on GDP development, investments, social stability, revenues, etc. as ‘hard’ categories, while environmental issues played a minor role, not negatively affecting the local leadership. In awarding the title of an experimental ecological model to Nanfeng the higher echelons intended to provide incentives to this county for developing into a real model. All the more so inasmuch as this county had good preconditions for ecological development: few heavy industrial enterprises, a beautiful landscape, cultural attractions, and could easily develop into a location for ecological tourism.

To sum up, model status in China fosters the orientation of localities towards environmental and ecological issues and serves as an incentive to streamline local behaviour in the direction of environmental protection. More and more counties are focussing on such issues, particularly if other resources for development are not available. Acquiring the status of an ecological model can not only fuel economic development (e.g. ecological tourism) but can also attract additional funding by higher administrative echelons. It is also important for positive evaluations and thus for the career prospective of a county’s leading cadres.

Conclusion

Decentralisation has endowed the counties in China with greater decision-making power. Even though the localities remain embedded in a hierarchical system, they now have leeway to define their key areas of development within the focal policies of the central government. To be sure, environmental policies are playing a more and more

prominent national role. Nevertheless, the Centre gives the counties some leeway to decide whether or not environmental issues are to be regarded as “hard” policies. The natural and financial endowment of a given locality plays a salient role here.

A combination of policy communication between higher and lower echelons, incentives and pressure tools explain implementation processes in China. The evaluation systems and the mechanism of creating models foster innovative policies since they are strongly tied to the career advancement of leading local officials.

To be sure, areas lacking resources for environmental policy implementation and those with a poor policy implementation record, or those which are simply predatory, can turn to collusion in order to present mere showcases. Incentives may play a minor role where corruption is rampant.

However, our own field research revealed that the local level is not always a “malign” state without development impetus as it is frequently portrayed by Chinese and Western scholars. The Centre has established a system of incentives for county leaderships. It has institutionalised evaluation processes and provides funds for which a county may apply in order to improve its environmental and ecological situation. We may even argue that deception and showcase politics by local leading cadres have become increasingly difficult. Pressure from the higher level to make progress and to provide innovation (models) in terms of environmental protection and to implement environmental policies is increasing. On an annual basis the county leaderships have to prove developments and progress vis-à-vis the superior echelons. For evaluators it is increasingly unacceptable to be shown the same environmental “models” every year. As a former township cadre leader in a county of Qingdao noted accurately:

Evaluators from Qingdao want to see “fresh outcomes”. They will criticise you if you have nothing new to present. In the latter case they may classify your performance as ‘not fulfilled’ and you may get a negative evaluation or a point deduction which might negatively affect your further career prospects.

To summarise, evaluation processes in China show that the countries not only have room to manoeuvre in terms of policy priorities but also that these processes offer incentives for policy implementation, particularly for implementing environmental policies. The incentive and communication system which has been described here with regard to the environmental field is a relevant steering factor in the specific design of Chinese decentralisation; otherwise all benefits of decentralisation would have bogged down.

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Beitrag beschreibt, in welcher Weise China mit Hilfe von Evaluierungsverfahren Anreize schafft, um die Umsetzung von Umweltpolitik auf der lokalen Ebene sicherzustellen. Auf der einen Seite haben Dezentralisierungsprozesse der lokalen Ebene größere Entscheidungs- und Handlungsspielräume eröffnet, auf der anderen Seite haben diese Prozesse zu spürbaren institutionellen Veränderungen im Hinblick Anreiz- und Kontrollinstrumente sowie hinsichtlich der Kommunikation zwischen verschiedenen Verwaltungsebenen geführt. Das Ergebnis ist einerseits eine zunehmende Anpassung umweltpolitischer Maßnahmen an lokale Bedingungen; andererseits die Förderung von innovativen Politikexperimenten („Modelle“), um neue Formen der Umsetzung von Umweltpolitik zu erproben.

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Anja Senz. Foto: Timo Bobert

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