ENGOS and Environmental Protection
Education in China

* A Case Study of Green Zhejiang *

Jannike Ødegaard

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Education in China: a Case Study of Green Zhejiang

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Jannike Ødegaard

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IV
Abstract

This master’s thesis will explore and discuss Chinese environmental organizations’ role as environmental educators. By conducting a case study of the Hangzhou based environmental organization Green Zhejiang (绿色浙江) the thesis explores environmental education activities in China’s non-governmental organizations (ENGOs).

To analyse Green Zhejiang’s educational activities three different aspects where identified. The three aspects cover GZ’s own conceptualization of educational activities, their relationship with the government, and their communication with the public. Drawing upon the theory of environmental authoritarianism when analysing the findings, it sheds some light on why this type of activity is so prominent in the work of Chinese ENGOs. This thesis is based on not only academic literature, but also fieldwork and qualitative data gathering including interviews. These qualitative methods, together with an extensive period of participant observation, provide the valuable data to achieve the goals of this thesis.

The three themes discussed in this thesis are interconnected. One cannot discuss ENGOs role as environmental educators without also analysing their relationship with both the public and the government. Thus situating the discussions of these themes within the framework of authoritarian environmentalisms provided the political context necessary in such an undertaking. By exploring the members’ own values and views it was discovered that the belief that educational activities is valuable and able to produce positive results is strong within Green Zhejiang. It was also discovered that there exists communication based on personal bonds between local government officials and Green Zhejiang’s leaders. This bond has contributed in creating a feeling of trust in Green Zhejiang on the side of the government, resulting in allowing the ENGO a certain amount of freedom in their activities. The interviews also revealed how both members and participants agree that Green Zhejiang’s tactic of employing mass- and social media when appealing to the public is effective. Additionally the thesis finds that participants largely agree with the messages and ideas the organization promotes. These messages includes the view that each individual can contribute to a healthier environment, and that the collective strength of all those who subscribe to this way of life can have a great and positive effect on the environmental situation.

Key Words: ENGOs, Environmental Education, Authoritarian Environmentalism
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1 Introduction

The role environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs hereafter) fill in society is partly determined by the society in which they operate. In countries with strongly developed civil societies there are fewer restrictions on their operations however, where there are few traces of civil society, such as China, an ENGO’s activities are circumscribed. Nevertheless this does not translate as Chinese ENGOs being docile or inactive. The ENGOs are in reality the most active type of NGOs in the country. In the academic discussion on China’s potential in global environmental mitigation, optimism and scepticism coexist, as China is portrayed as both a reckless polluter and an emerging leader. Still, on the domestic arena the state maintains its’ influence over the ENGOs, who remain a recent phenomenon, with the first being the Beijing based Friends of Nature founded in 1994. The Chinese ENGOs who strive to thrive under the political circumstances, in which they find themselves, devote their resources to acceptable forms of activism. This is to better ensure their ability for substantial accomplishments, assure their own longevity, and continued growth. These ENGOs have thus designed their methods of activism, and modus operandi to focus on non-confrontational means of approach to get their messages across and contribute to change the country’s environmental situation. One such approach is to focus their efforts on environmental education.

This thesis will explore and discuss Chinese ENGOs’ role as environmental educators, and how the members of ENGOs themselves reflect on this role. It examines the circumstances surrounding how Chinese ENGOs conduct their work of providing environmental education opportunities to individual citizens. Drawing upon the theory of environmental authoritarianism, it sheds light on why this type of activity is so prominent in the work of Chinese ENGOs. To facilitate a thorough discussion three relevant aspects of an ENGO’s circumstances have been identified and researched. These three aspects involve the specifics

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1 Judith Shapiro, China’s Environmental Challenges, 2nd ed. (Polity Press, 2016): 76.


4 Barr and Zhang, Green Politics in China, 10-11.
of how ENGOs conduct and define environmental activities, how ENGOs are able to conduct this work in an authoritarian country, and how ENGOs communicate with the public. The term “public” is used throughout this thesis, it is a broad and loose concept; here it refers specifically to individual citizens. By basing the research and fieldwork on these three elements the thesis aspires to create a picture of how Chinese ENGOs perform as environmental educators to the public. This case study of the Hangzhou-based ENGO Green Zhejiang provides an in-depth look into this facet of a Chinese ENGO.

This topic is of significance to the continued study of NGOs in China because these ENGOs have a tendency to focus heavily on the environmental education and promotion aspect of their work. Thus further exploration into the topic of their role as environmental educators is warranted. Even foreign NGOs such as Greenpeace have used this tactic when operating in China, however Greenpeace discontinued their public education programs in 2010, due to finding them ineffective. While Greenpeace discontinued their educational activities, the home-grown ENGOs like Green Zhejiang have several educational projects and events organized each month.

The literature I have worked with during my research on Chinese ENGOs supports the assumption that Chinese ENGOs tend to focus a relative amount of effort and resources on this aspect of their work, see especially Green Politics in China. However I have yet to find any publications that wholly focus on the ENGOs role as educator, which is why I wish to fill this perceived gap in the literature and enrich this continuously growing field. Another incentive to conduct this type of research is best illustrated by the quote below from Mark Beeson’s “Authoritarian Environmentalism and China”.

China’s achievement of developed-world consumption standards will approximately double the world’s human resource use and environmental impact. But it is doubtful whether even the current human resource use and impact on the world can be sustained. Something has to give. That is why China’s environmental problems are the world’s.6

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Judith Shapiro presents the same sentiment when expressing how it is paramount for the world to understand China’s environmental challenges: “the choices the Chinese Communist Party, national government, and Chinese people are making influence not only the health and well-being of China but the very future of the planet.” China’s problems bleed over the boarders of neighbouring countries, and across the seas. Particulate air pollution from China is regularly measured in both Canada and the U.S for instance. One method of grasping the environmental issues facing China is to recognize the work being done by the Chinese themselves, to face these concerns. With this work I hope to produce an informative account of how Chinese ENGOs act as environmental educators and promote their ideals and messages to the public, and how they manoeuvre themselves in the particular political environment of their country.

1.1 Statement of Research Questions
My hypothesis for this work can be formulated as such: Chinese ENGOs have a strong tendency to focus on promoting environmental protection information to the Chinese public. This is not only due to the political environment these organizations find themselves operating in, which has steered their focus to activities in acceptable areas, but also due to the members’ personal values.

To explore the role of Chinese ENGOs as environmental educators, three research questions were formulated.

1. How do Chinese ENGOs define “educational activities”? How do organization members value educational activities? What are the educational activities they offer?
2. Do ENGOs consciously take into consideration what a possible government response could be, when planning activities and formulating strategies?
3. How do they communicate with the general public, and promote when organizing educational activities? What are the major ideas being promoted? How do the participants attending Green Zhejiang activities perceive these ideas?

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7 Shapiro, China’s Environmental Challenges, 28.
8 Shapiro, China’s Environmental Challenges, 29.
These three questions embody the three main themes of the thesis, Chinese ENGOs’ own definition of educational activities, their relation to the government, and how they communicate with the general public. These themes allow us to explore ENGOs’ role as environmental educators in greater detail.
2 Methodology

For this thesis to be a valuable addition to the existing body of writing on the subject of Chinese ENGOs, relying on written sources alone is inadequate. Although a number of well-written books, articles and other text sources were identified, and drawn on in this paper, the data gathering process for this study also required elements of a practical approach.

One of the principle requirements for anthropological fieldwork consists of taking part in local life as much as possible. In this case “local life” translates to “life as a member of Green Zhejiang.” Thus I chose to apply for an internship so as to conduct my fieldwork in the capacity of a participant-observer. This informal field method allowed me to deeply enter into the social and cultural aspect of the organization I chose to research. Applying this method to my fieldwork allowed access to people, activities, meetings, and text-material that would not have been made easily available otherwise.

The chosen interview structure for this work is one-on-one semi-structured interviews, both with members of Green Zhejiang and the participants who attend their activities. By employing this method of interviewing it was possible to gain an insight into the inner workings of Green Zhejiang and Chinese ENGOs, which would have been improbable from exclusively using participant-observation. The combination of interviews and participant-observation allowed me to observe if the claims and information from the interviews were rooted in reality. Additionally it provided the opportunity to observe facets of their work that they might not think worth mentioning. Below follows an introduction to the case in this study, the ENGO Green Zhejiang, a literary review as well as a detailed description of the methodology including the interview techniques employed during the course of data gathering.

2.1 The Case of Green Zhejiang

To research this topic I chose to conduct a case study, the subject of this case study is Green Zhejiang (‘GZ’ henceforth), there were several circumstances involved in this choice,

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accessibility was one. As obvious in the name, they are based in Zhejiang province, in the provincial capitol of Hangzhou, where I have spent the last year-and-a-half as a student. Another was how prominent the organization is in the field of ENGOs in Zhejiang. Green Zhejiang is the result of the combined efforts of Mr Jun Huaruan, a teacher at the University of Zhejiang, and one of his former students Mr Xin Hao. Together they founded the organization in June 2000.

According to themselves they are not only one of the largest organizations in the Province, but also Zhejiang’s first official ENGO. They’re also the first environmental organization in China to receive a 5A rating from the government in accordance with the China social organization evaluation grade system (中国社会组织评估等级). China’s A-class rating system is broken up into 5 categories with 5A as the highest level. Authorities use this rating system to determine the quality of the organizations; it is also used in other areas, such as tourism destinations. It’s the ministry of civil affairs’ responsibility to conduct the evaluations with a committee consisting of members from government departments, research institutions, and experts from relevant fields. The organizations are evaluated in areas such as basic conditions, job performance, internal governance, and social evaluation. Those who achieve level 3 and above are given priority to receive government incentives, access to government services, and tax deduction. Level 4 and above receive the added bonus of simplifying the annual inspection procedures. The organizations themselves apply to be assessed and the result of the assessment is valid for a five-year period. This stamp of approval from the government is quite interesting to keep in mind when attempting to understand what type of NGO GZ is.

NGOs in China cover a wide spectrum, from more or less independent NGOs to the government-organized non-governmental organizations (GONGOs). Maureen Taylor and Aimei Yang categorize Chinese NGOs into three types based on the type of organizers or founders. The official-organized NGOs/Top-down or GONGOs receive government subsidies

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and the government generally appoints the leadership positions.\textsuperscript{12} The popular NGOs/Bottom-up, NGOs are initiated by private citizens, the third includes student NGOs. According to Na Huang ENGOs founded by private citizens, such as GZ, only account for 7.2 per cent.\textsuperscript{13} Despite GZ being a Bottom-up NGO, in many ways they appear to be closer to GONGOs on the spectrum. Generally ENGOs in China suffer from restricted access to information such as detailed pollution data, legal challenges and financial constraints.\textsuperscript{14} However they are the most active type of NGOs in China as their activities are viewed as less politically relevant, thus they face fewer regulation barriers then other types of NGOs.\textsuperscript{15}

According to Green Zhejiang’s own official information they are engaged in three main areas: Environmental Supervision (环境观察), Community Development (社区营造), and Nature Education (自然学校). An example of educational activities in the Environmental Supervision department is the training classes where one can learn how to measure pollution in rivers. For Community Development department it is the activities connected to a recycling project aptly named Reclothe. Lastly, as inherit in the name the Nature Education department has several educational activities and frequently cooperates with Hangzhou schools. They are also a part of the international non-profit Waterkeeper Alliance made up of over 280 organizations dedicated to clean water. The ENGO has cooperated several times with international organizations, and have received support from the United Nations Environment Program.

Green Zhejiang has accomplished much in their 16 years as an organization. They pride themselves on being the creators of the “Environmental Watch” application or 环境观察 as it is known in Chinese, it is a part of their environmental monitoring initiative. Through this mobile device app the user is able to report, in real time, if they witness pollution-creating activities or instances of what can be construed as illegal pollution. The fact that this app was

\textsuperscript{12} Taylor and Yang, “Relationship-building by Chinese ENGOs’ websites,” 343.

\textsuperscript{13} Na Huang, 黄娜, “Wo Guo Huanbao Feizhengfuzuzhi canyu Huanjing Sifa de Xianzhu Yanjiu”( 我国环保非政府组织参与环境司法的现状研究, Current Situation of ENGO’s Participating in Environmental Justice in China), \textit{Higher Education of Sanjiang University 三江高教} 10, no. 4 (December 2014): 51.

\textsuperscript{14} Zhu, “Social Media and Public Diplomacy,” 71.

\textsuperscript{15} Taylor and Yang, “Relationship-building by Chinese ENGOs’ websites,” 344.
developed in cooperation with the government will be explored further in chapter 6. In 2013 they joined Hangzhou’s Environmental Protection Bureau’s effort to promote clean water by arranging the Qiantang River event, in which participants would swim across the river that runs through the city before flowing into the East China Sea. In connection to the event they cooperated with Zhejiang TV in arranging a televised meeting between members of various ENGOs and local politicians. During the meeting the politicians were asked questions about the state of Zhejiang’s water. It was in connection to this event that Green Zhejiang became a bigger part of the public consciousness when they, lead by Mr Xin, made an appearance on the TV program “China’s Dream Show” where they presented their dream of a clean Qiantang River to the audience.

2.2 Fieldwork

To provide a more detailed context to my findings, some concrete examples of GZ activities need to be addressed. As an intern for GZ the conditions were perfect for conducting field-research and gathering data. My fieldwork enabled me to establish contact with members and participants alike, conducting informal interviews in the shape of the casual conversations we had during lunch or while attending an activity created connections and provided insights improbable to attain by exclusively conducting semi-structured interviews. As an intern I spent two days a week during a four-month period working for GZ. I was allowed to be involved in several aspects of their work. Some of it was desk-related as I conducted translation work, however there was also practical work to be found as I accompanied members on locations to assist in various activities.

The chosen activities, all of which I participated in, provided valuable and relevant data for the focus of this thesis. Below I will give an account of my experiences with Reclothe (绿工多), Huanghu Nature School (黄湖自然体验园), and GZ’s annual ceremony with this year’s title: 2016 Green Zhejiang public ceremony “Welcome G20” (2016 绿色浙江抱团取暖公益盛典暨 ”迎 G20”).

The first activity I participated in was an educational workshop activity focused on recycling in connection to GZ’s Reclothe project. GZ has placed large panda containers; where one can discard of unwanted clothing, in several local communities in Hangzhou. These large containers designed to look like a waving panda with instructions on what items to put in. The cloth is then sorted into what can be given to charity and what can be recycled into items such as washcloths. This project is endorsed by the mayor of Hangzhou Mr Zhang Hongming (张鸿铭) and is the result of GZ collaborating with the local government. I was part of an activity where we went into a local neighbourhood and taught the residents in attendance how to make in-door slippers out of old clothing. I learned that GZ often held classes on recycling items into household objects at this specific neighbourhood community centre, and that the participants were almost exclusively older women. At one point a participant showed me a decorative item she had made last time out of a used light bulb. The day I joined we had a total of six women attending, spending three hours of their day working on their slippers with us. It was a fascinating look at how small and quiet these activities could be, while there was a steady flow of conversation, some about the values of reusing household material, it was abundantly clear that part of the attraction to this GZ activity was the social aspect. However the main lesson I took from my experience was that this seemed an effective venue to use for encouraging this demographic to become enthusiastic about environmental protection.

I was also fortunate enough to go on a two-day trip to GZ’s Huanghu nature school. Located approximately an hour outside the inner city, Huanghu is designed as something akin to a small produce farm located in the Yuhang district (余杭区). The entire area is 15 square kilometres and consists of various areas including a reservoir (龙坞水库) and the nature school farm with sleeping accommodations. The farm area is a large field with a few animal pens with smaller animals such as rabbits and chickens on one end. However most of the space is taken up by agriculture. There are a large number of different plants growing in organized sectors, these is mainly various herbs. Additionally there are two greenhouses with a large variety of fruits and vegetables, and three small one-story buildings, one office, one classroom, and one food storage room. Next to each plant is a small white sign; the idea behind these blank signs is that those attending the nature school will be asked what the different plants are called. I initially found this peculiar, but the purpose behind the decision was explained to me, the hope is that this method will encourage the participants to pay
attention and remember the different plants better. I was brought there to help with a Halloween activity GZ was hosting for the human resources department at Zhejiang University’s school of management and their families. We had several activities planned for the children, such as short lessons and a Halloween painting activity. However when the participants arrived it was revealed that most of them were unsuitable, as the majority of the children were much to young. Thus the day was spent slowly touring the area, including a stroll into “wild nature”, just beyond the boarders of the field, and a longer trip to the reservoir. This gave me the opportunity to not only get a clear understanding of the layout and different functions of all the areas, but also the chance to converse with the participants. These conversations gave me a nuanced view of what participants thought of the activity, which is further explored in the findings section.

The final activity I took part in that I wish to highlight here is the annual ceremony. The event is a mix of award ceremony and auction with talks from GZ members and guest-speakers. The purpose, as my interviewees would later inform me, is a dual one; on the one hand it is to inform its members and beneficiaries of their work this past year, and their ambitions for the next year. On the other it is to auction off items to raise money for the organization. They covered several topics such as updates on the status of Qiantang River and the haze (雾霾) situation, and their ambitions for their work on these issues in 2016. Time was also devoted to their own activities and projects included speeches on Nature School, Community Developer and Environmental Monitor. The event also included signings of pledges and agreements, on of which was between representatives of primary schools, promising a focus on environmental issues in their curriculum. Attending this event inspired me to inquire in more detail about GZ’s relationship with the government, particularly as one of the guest speakers was a representative from the American general consulate in Shanghai. These three instances and other experiences from my fieldwork coalesced into becoming the basis of my thesis. Together with the interviews this was a major data resource.

2.3 In-Depth Interviews

To find the answers to my research questions, conducting in-depth interviews was an essential part of the data gathering process. I conducted a total of 10 interviews wherein three were conducted by e-mail due to the subjects’ convenience. These three were with participants I had met at GZ activities. I wished to hear the opinions of willing participants, who possibly
have a lower level of interest in the issues by virtue of them not working at similar organizations or companies. The remaining seven interviews were conducted in person with members of GZ. I chose the GZ member interviewees based on both their position in GZ and their availability. This lead to interviews with members in varying positions, belonging to different departments within GZ. Coalescing in a nuanced picture of values and opinions.

To achieve something akin to insight as to the effect participating in a GZ activity can have on a member of the common public, three interviews with such participants were conducted. Unfortunately due to convenience these had to be done per e-mail. Two were with participants I met at GZ’s Huanghu Nature School Ms K and Ms M, while the third interview subject, Ms L, was a colleague of Ms M. In addition I also had informal interviews with participants and members during the course of fieldwork. I characterize them as informal interviews because of the manner in which they occurred. They were simply conversations with participants and members, occurring throughout my days in the field.17 These took place at various venues, GZ’s offices, the lunchroom in addition to Huanghu and during other activities and events I was able to partake in. The total number lies roughly between 15-20 for the informal interviews.

My talks and interviews with these participants helped me discern my conversation partner’s thoughts on GZ activities. I could also in some ways verify information I had learned from GZ members. The three interview subjects were all women, with different ages and careers, though all had achieved a college degree. Two worked at Zhejiang University, while the third had come all the way from Beijing and was participating with a friend from another Hangzhou based ENGO.

2.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

I designed my interview guide in orders to assist my semi-structured interviews with members and participants. My aim was to construct the questions in such a way as to get answers that would shed light on how my interview subjects themselves understand and view their work at Green Zhejiang. More specifically I included the themes of my thesis, environmental education, communication with the public and relationship with the government. I decided to

conduct my interviews as semi-structured, because this method of approach allows the conversation to flow naturally.\textsuperscript{18} As GZ is a very active organization, with a busy staff, I was aware of the possibility that I would in all likelihood only be able to interview each subject once. Therefore this method of interviewing was the most suitable for my situation; it allowed my subjects to express themselves in their own terms but also allowed me to ensure that all relevant topics were covered during the allotted interview time. To stimulate my subjects to produce more information I incorporated probing into my interviewing technique. I employed several different probing techniques, the three most frequently used were the silent, the echo and the uh-huh probes. The silent probe of nodding along while the subject was talking to prompted them to add more information, the echo probe, where I would repeat the last thing they said, as a way of prompting them to delve into more detail, and lastly by making affirmative noises, such as “uh-huh” has been proven to be an effective way stimulating interview subjects into prolonging their answers.\textsuperscript{19}

I encouraged my interview subjects to use Mandarin Chinese during the interviews, but did make allowances for English. The result was nine interviews in Chinese and one with a mix of Chinese and English. As my main interest for this study was to look at GZ’s methods of promoting environmental protection knowledge to the general public, one of my most prominent goals was to achieve an understanding of the various activities GZ offers, and in what manner they could or could not be classified as ‘educational’. As for how to define what activity is or is not educational, I first and foremost wanted my interview subjects to independently identify the educational activities.

\textbf{2.3.2 Interview Guide}

I composed the guide as follows: Part 1 consists of a few personal questions about the participant’s background. Part 2 has questions about the participant’s general opinion about environmental protection and ENGOs. Part 3 consists of questions about the participant’s life at Green Zhejiang. In part 4 the participant is questioned about educational activities arranged by GZ. Part 5 has questions about three specific GZ activities and/or events that I myself participated in, Reclothe, Huanghu and the annual ceremony. I was fortunate enough to be granted an interview with one of the founders, as well as the current leader of Green Zhejiang.

\textsuperscript{18} Bernard, \textit{Research Methods in Anthropology. Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches}, 209.

\textsuperscript{19} Bernard, \textit{Research Methods in Anthropology. Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches}, 215-216.
However, as most of my questions where designed with the general staff in mind I saw the need to develop a separate guide for my interview with this person. Furthermore I combined this with most of the questions from the original guide. I also saw it necessary to develop a third guide, aimed at participants who had attended one or more of GZ’s activities. Specifically, my participation as an intern, enabled me able to acquire contacts from some of the activities I attended.

2.3.3 Ethical Reflections

In ethnographic work there are certain ethical principles that need to be upheld. One such principle concerns the safeguarding of informants, in this case my interview subjects. As James Spradley writes: “Where research involves the acquisition of material and information transferred on the assumption of trust between persons, it is axiomatic that the rights, interests, and sensitivities of those studied must be safeguarded.” Thus it is paramount to consider the implications of the possible consequences my research may have on informants, as they have a right to remain anonymous. Therefore, in order to preserve the anonymity of my subjects I refer to them as alphabetic letters. Starting with Ms A, and so on following the alphabet chronologically, A to C are members of GZ, K to L are participants and members of the general public (See Appendix B: Tables). I decided to allow gender indications (Ms/Mr) as well as gendered pronouns as this provides an insight into the internal colouring of GZ.

2.4 Explanation of Limitations

There are some weaknesses to my method of approach. Glaringly, as this study was conducted as a qualitative study on one particular ENGO, it is not possible to provide a definite answer to whether or not my findings do in fact actually reflect and represent a general trait in all Chinese ENGOs, or if my findings are merely singularly applicable to my chosen organization. Additionally at the outset of my fieldwork it was not immediately clear that chosen ENGO had any particular focus on education, nor if they had a focus on environmental protection promotion amongst the Chinese public. The number of different approaches one can take to environmental protection are staggering, nevertheless as a result of

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my work I discovered that GZ was suitable for my initial goals, thus few adjustments had to be made to my original thesis idea.

I am intimately aware that the people I interviewed could be holding back information, because of the fact that I was interviewing them on the basis that they are members of a specific ENGO. Meaning that they could be viewing themselves as representatives of their organization, thus might not be feeling completely free during an interview setting. Additionally in my efforts of securing interviews with participants of various Green Zhejiang activities, it was impossible to secure face-to-face interviews. Conducting the interviews per e-mail solved this obstacle. Although preferable to no interview, e-mail interviews do not encourage impulsive responses, thus the interviewee can be prone to holding back without intending to. The gender balance in my interview subject pool is also uneven, with only one being a man. While this is a disadvantage and there are several men in GZ, few of them spend time at the office, neither where there many involved in the type of activities discussed in this work. Thus the gender balance is an honest reflection of the composition of the GZ members involved in educational activities.

Conducting my fieldwork using almost exclusively mandarin Chinese to communicate and do research was an educational process wrought with trial-and-error moments. I have been studying the language for several years, but still have a-ways to go and continue to consider myself as a student of the language, and most certainly will do so indefinitely. Though I felt confident enough to do my interviews without an interpreter present, there where times where my oral language skills where not sufficiently advanced. While I did not feel this had a large impact on the conversations as a whole, it is possible that there were moments I could have probed for deeper answers had I been at a higher language proficiency level. As I used the language mostly as a practical tool it is possible that I overlooked what Stig Thogersen would call the “original flavour”, especially as Chinese is an ambiguous language with language codes I might not be able to identify.22

3 ENGOs in China: The Literature

In this chapter I will present the literature utilized during the research and writing process of this thesis. The sources drawn on are primarily concerned with the subject of ENGOs and civil organizations in China and in other countries with a similar political climate and China’s environment and environmental politics.

3.1 The Scholarly Debate on China’s ENGOs

Throughout their book *Green Politics in China*, Joy Zhang and Michael Barr touch on the subject of ENGOs several times. They discuss how Chinese ENGOs are more effective than commonly assumed when one employs a typical “Western” outlook, mostly due to Chinese ENGOs attempts to engage the public in ways not perceived as “real” activism, by their critics. They devote considerable space to assessing China’s green activism, and create and understanding of the political context to China’s ENGOs: “[...] We need to understand, first, how Chinese activists interpret their relationships and integrate those with their expectations for environmental action, and second, how they act upon their values to affect change through viable channels of participation.”

Guobin Yang also discusses how ENGOs’ function in the context of Chinese civil society. Yang uses a field-perspective to discuss how ENGOs have developed within and are interacting with civil society, providing insight into the rapid increase of organizations and to the nature of the Chinese ENGOs.

Susan Marten’s work on public participation in China provides a contextual analysis of public participation. By employing a three-step model, 1: a review of China’s environmental debates, 2: an analysis of the framing of these environmental issues, 3: an assessment of the prospects these frames provide for concrete citizen consumer roles. This approach allows her to identify both enabling and restraining factors for the environmentally motivated citizen consumer. Her findings include identifying an increase in public knowledge about environmental issues, but accompanied by a low awareness of the potential for strong

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consumer citizen roles and the positive environmental impact they can bring in both the general public and bureaucratic circles.\textsuperscript{26}

The publication of literature on my chosen theory has been more frequent in later years; one of the leading proponents of the theory of authoritarian environmentalism is Bruce Gilley.\textsuperscript{27} He provides an overview in “Authoritarian environmentalism and China’s response to climate change”. He explores the theory by using China’s response to climate change as a backdrop, elevating the works’ relevance for this thesis. The aforementioned book \textit{Green Politics in China} also uses the theory aiming to show how ENGOs seek to navigate in this type of political landscape, as even authoritarian states require some level of mobilization of social actors.\textsuperscript{28}

Mark Beeson tackles, what he himself refers to as “Eurocentric views” on the most efficient forms of environmental governing politics.\textsuperscript{29} By looking at the political history of South East Asia and China Beeson argues that the trend of authoritarian approaches to environmental politics may be on the rise rather than a call for democratic approach. Beeson thus presents us with bleak predictions on the state of democratization in China and South East Asia stating: “the central question that emerges from this discussion is whether democracy can be sustained in the region – or anywhere else for that matter – given the unprecedented and unforgiving nature of the challenges we collectively face.”\textsuperscript{30} The question of which type of political rule will be able or perceived as capable to handle the environmental issues of our present time is central here.

Doyle and Simpson penned another relevant addition to the literature on authoritarian environmentalism.\textsuperscript{31} Here Doyle and Simpson are not only examining the challenges faced by green movements operating in authoritarian regimes, but also looking into how some

\textsuperscript{26} Martens, “Public participation with Chinese characteristics,” 225.

\textsuperscript{27} Bruce Gilley, “Authoritarian environmentalism and China’s response to climate change,” 288.

\textsuperscript{28} Barr and Zhang, \textit{Green Politics in China}, 45.


\textsuperscript{30} Beeson, “The Coming of Environmental Authoritarianism,” 289.

authoritarian regimes are using environmentalism to consolidate the already existing power structures. The above-mentioned sources provide a generally positive view on authoritarian environmentalism, for a different take, I look to Sarah Eaton and Genia Kostka. They argue that the political system in China is too fragmented to efficiently produce and enforce environmental policies. Authoritarian environmentalism is not effective because there is too little incentive for local leaders to carry out the policies handed down to them from the Party leadership in Beijing.  

3.2 Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen how scholars debate and analyse China’s ENGOs with the arguments and assessments of some of the foremost experts on the subject of China’s environment being presented. The sources tell us that ENGOs in China are active organizations that focus on non-confrontational methods to achieve their goals. The findings presented here include the apparent rise of public participation and awareness of environmental issues. These findings are coupled with a low awareness of the individual’s environmental rights. The sources focused on the theory of authoritarian environmentalism were also briefly presented, and will be discussed more thoroughly in the following chapter.

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4 The Theory of Authoritarian Environmentalism

For the goal of this thesis I found the theory of authoritarian environmentalism, developed mainly by Mark Beeson and Bruce Gilley, the most suitable. This section will outline the reasoning behind employing this theoretical framework to explain how ENGOs, and Green Zhejiang specifically, operate as an NGO in China, who employs this theory in its public policymaking. Further the theory aids us in understanding how Green Zhejiang conceptualizes themselves and their operations in this context. The theory of environmental authoritarianism is relevant when discussing NGOs’ role in an authoritarian state because it presents us with a framework to explain the political landscape Chinese NGO’s must navigate.

4.1 Examining Authoritarian Environmentalism

The theory promotes the idea that authoritarian states have unique circumstances and tools to use when articulating and implementing policies designed to improve and/or protect the environment. Gilley defines the theory as such: “Thus authoritarian environmentalism can be provisionally defined as a public policy model that concentrates authority in a few executive agencies manned by capable and incorrupt elites seeking to improve environmental outcomes.”

Beeson and Gilley are among those theorists, along with Kurt M. Campbell who believe that the authoritarian states’ own brand of environmentalism could possibly be more successful and efficient than other forms of state rule. In 2007 Kurt M. Campbell stated: “Among political systems, authoritarian ideologies would certainly be the ‘winners’. One way or the other, severe climate change will weaken the capacity of liberal democratic systems to maintain public confidence.” An authoritarian regime may in actuality possess advantages over the democratic states as ecological pressures become increasingly severe. Others, such

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as Sarah Eaton and Genia Kostka have argued that China’s authoritarian advantage should rather be regarded as a weakness in their environmental policy process.\textsuperscript{36}

There are two widely recognized types of authoritarian regimes – military dictatorships and one-party authoritarian states, China falls under the latter.\textsuperscript{37} The ENGOs operating in the theocracy of Iran are using similar methods to what was found while researching for this thesis, and include such strategies as seeking to get inside the government, activism through the development of environmental laws, and striving to become a registered NGO.\textsuperscript{38} According to Doyle and Simpson China is in this category because the country is indeed run by one party, the CCP, and though there are other parties on the country’s political horizon, the CCP is the de facto ruler. As Beeson explains it, China’s system is unaccountable (to the public), electorally unresponsive and organized in a top-down fashion, three common characteristics to be found in authoritarian political systems.\textsuperscript{39} As Doyle as Simpson quotes Diamond, Linz and Lipset’s 1988 work “Democracy in developing countries: facilitating and obstructing factors”, China lacks:

A level of civil and political liberties – freedom of thought and expression, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and demonstration, freedom to form and join organizations, freedom from terror and unjustified imprisonment – secured through political equality under a rule of law, sufficient to ensure that citizens can develop and advocate their views and interests and contest policies and offices vigorously and autonomously.\textsuperscript{40}

Doyle and Simpson look at authoritarian environmentalism and NGOs in Burma and Iran, from which parallels can be drawn to the China case. In Burma a limited number of NGOs are permitted to exist on the precondition that they devote themselves to non-threatening and community-development activities.\textsuperscript{41} In China similarly, only a few NGOs are allowed and able to register and become officially recognized by the state’s Civil Affair’s Bureau, which employs differentiated strategies towards them in relation to their perceived political

\textsuperscript{36} Eaton and Kostka,” Authoritarian Environmentalism Undermined?” 360.
\textsuperscript{37} Dolye and Simpson, “Traversing more than speed bumps,” 751.
\textsuperscript{38} Dolye and Simpson, “Traversing more than speed bumps,” 759-760.
\textsuperscript{39} Beeson, “Authoritarian Environmentalism and China,” 521.
\textsuperscript{40} Dolye and Simpson, “Traversing more than speed bumps,” 751.
\textsuperscript{41} Dolye and Simpson, “Traversing more than speed bumps,” 754.
antagonism.\textsuperscript{42} China also shares similarities with Iran, in the sense that both actively stimulate the growth of the ENGOs as long as their ends align with the state.

Unn Målfrid Rolandsen does not discuss nor implement the theory of authoritarian environmentalism in her book on Chinese leisure.\textsuperscript{43} Her inclusion is largely due to the role GZ plays as a provider of leisure activities to the Chinese public. However, it is also noteworthy because several statements and observations from her book on how the PRC approaches the Chinese public’s leisure life are consistent with what proponents of the theory claim to be the case in a country whose environmental policy is influenced by it. Green Zhejiang is certainly not at its’ core an organization developed to only provide leisure activities to the public, but some of their educational activities are part of the participant’s leisure life. These educational leisure activities fit with what the PRC now encourages and views as a healthy form of leisure: “Leisure activities are described as healthy as long as they serve to bolster the legitimacy of the party-state.”\textsuperscript{44} Part of the reason why Green Zhejiang can exist and thrive is that they cooperate with state bodies on various projects, and thus are a part of broadcasting the idea that the state is active in promoting a healthy environment. Even if the actual contribution from a state body is relatively small (i.e.: allowing a gathering in a public area), their contribution is acknowledged. As long as the organization and its members behave in an acceptable way, they are welcome to offer activities to the public.

However other scholars, such as Eaton and Kostka, have a more negative view of the effectiveness of authoritarian environmentalism. Proponents of authoritarian environmentalism view authoritarian regimes as more nimble and capable, their leaders are able to compel citizens and businesses alike to comply with the state’s environmental policies.\textsuperscript{45} Eaton and Kostka’s primary argument for disagreeing with this view is the advantages authoritarian leaders have of not needing to answer to powerful interest groups, are being undermined by the implementation process of policies and the Party’s management of local officials. They are not alone with this perception, Elizabeth C, Economy made the same argument in 2007 stating: ”The central government sets the country’s agenda, but it

\textsuperscript{42} Barr and Zhang, \textit{Green Politics in China}, 11.


\textsuperscript{44} Rolandsen, \textit{Leisure and Power in Urban China}, 4.

\textsuperscript{45} Eaton and Kostka, “Authoritarian Environmentalism Undermined?” 360.
does not control all aspects of its implementation”. Another argument for the more pessimistic view is the short time horizon of local leaders. Data on municipal Party secretaries gathered between 1993 and 2011 showed that the average time in office was 3.8 years. Only 25 per cent stayed in office for five years or more. \[48\] This rapid rotation of leadership stems from the time of Deng Xiaoping, when it was used as a measure to prevent cadres from engaging in localism. Local officials only out to maximize their own “plunder” before being moved to another location is partly a dangerous bi-product of this policy.

Accompanying this is the perception that Beijing isn’t sufficiently incentivizing local leaders: “[…] to take on the difficult business of changing lanes from a growth-at-any-cost model to a resource-efficient and sustainable path.” \[49\] Though the central leadership in Beijing formulates many environmental policies, they are subject to broad articulation. Thus the local cadres have the opportunity to interpret and implement these policies in a way that is beneficial to their further career ambitions. In order to produce “political achievements” during their short time in office, many choose to find quick and oft low-quality approaches to implementing the policies. The result of their efforts is then simply putting off making real change and creating sustainable growth. \[50\] The problem of lack of incentives was identified in 2007 by Economy, it is worrying that this is still an issue, and provides grim future prospects for Beijing’s ability to have their policies implemented in all corners of China. \[51\] A more recent source by Anna L. Ahlers and Mette H. Hansen agrees that there was a lack of adequate political prioritization and effective coordination for implementation of environmental laws and regulations up until 2010. \[52\] However, in recent years efforts have been made to ensure a more effective and coordinated response to environmental issues with

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\[51\] Economy, “The Great Leap Backward?,” 51.

positive results.\textsuperscript{53} Other, who disagree with Eaton and Kostka’s assessment of the situation, take issue with the argument prescribing the situation in China as macro level policymaking by Beijing being at odds with micro level sabotage in the localities.\textsuperscript{54} Ahlers and Shen argue that China’s authoritarian environmentalism must be assessed in a microscopic approach as the policy implementation happens at the local levels.\textsuperscript{55}

\textbf{4.2 Conclusion}

Despite scholars disagreeing on the merit of authoritarian environmentalism as an effective base from which to articulate and implement environmental politics, it is gaining traction in the community with both proponents and opponents conducting research and publishing works on the theory. Many sources indicate that authoritarianism, though a controversial option especially for those accustomed to life in a traditionally democratic state, in theory could have better chances of implementing effective solutions. As my study of Green Zhejiang is centred on how they exist and perform their work in Chinese society, authoritarian environmentalism provides the necessary context for the findings. By using this theory in the process of analysing the interplay between Green Zhejiang and the Chinese public, and Green Zhejiang and the Chinese state, it assists in creating an understanding of how an ENGO is able to operate under China’s authoritarian regime.

\textsuperscript{53} Ahlers and Hansen, “Air Pollution: How Will China Win it Self-Declared War Against it?” 8-11.

\textsuperscript{54} Ahlers, Anna L., and Yongdong Shen, “Breathe Easy? Local Nuances of Authoritarian Environmentalism in China’s Battle against Air Pollution,” Forthcoming. 21

5 Contextualizing Environmental Activities

A main objective of this thesis is to understand how Chinese NGOs themselves value environmental education as part of their overall mission of protecting the environment. In this section the aim is to identify what type of activities GZ’s members classify as educational, their importance in GZ’s overall mission, and their target groups. This ambition is expressed in the first research question, “How do Chinese ENGOs define “educational activities”? How do organization members value educational activities? What are the educational activities they offer?” These questions will be explored and analyzed by drawing from my fieldwork experiences and interviews.

5.1 Varying Methods of Education

Identifying which of GZ’s activities are meant to be educational was paramount to enable an analysis. Thus interviewing the members on their definitions became the main source. Ms A had previous experience working with children on environmental issues prior to her involvement with GZ. As a first year college student she joined a club who organized lessons on environmental protection for primary school students, the project was called “Green Angels in Action” (“绿色天使在行动”). At GZ she is the secretary of the Secretary General, but also in charge of the Huanghu nature education project, which she viewed as a continuation of the work she did while at university. On the topic of educational activities she had this to say:

> Simply speaking, environmental protection is a relatively broad concept. It can be very abstract; we just want to make the abstract things concrete. Starting from one point, for example, swimming across the Qiantang River, their [the participants] original intention may simply be: “I’m just going for a swim,” but they will feel the water quality in the process, [the intention with the activity is] to stimulate their feelings of responsibility for the protection of water resources.

Ms A

For an activity to be educational in her eyes, a classroom or formal curriculum is not a necessity. As long as the participant has a moment of realization of the current state of China’s nature and environment the activity may be deemed as successful and educational. One of GZ’s aspirations is for people to grasp the current environmental situation and achieve

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56 简单地来说环保是一个比较宽泛的东西，可能还有些抽象，我们就是要让抽象东西具象化。从一个点切入，比如说横渡钱塘江，可能他们的初衷只是：我只是去游泳，感受一下，但是他们在这个过程中感受到水质的不同，从而激发他们对于水资源保护的一个责任心.
an appreciation of nature that will compel them into changing detrimental habits. GZ’s view echoes what other scholars have reported on the subject, such as Zhang and Barr’s discussion of natural photography classes as a key strategy for Chinese ENGOs to incentivize participant’s own examinations of human-nature relations.57

Mr G informed me of another, more traditional, form of educational activity, in which they also train individuals to act as environmental inspectors. "[On which activities are educational] this should be the environmental monitoring activities, we train some environmental inspectors, this [way of educating] is very direct."58 GZ’s environmental monitoring is one of the three main projects discussed in chapter 2. Environmental monitoring has three main objectives: to mobilize communities’ strength in taking environmental action, to remedy the government’s lack of resources, and to improve the urban and rural environments. Some of the activities connected to these goals are the televised roundtable discussions, which will be revisited in chapter 6, promotion through media, and large-scale events such as the annual swimming across Qiantang River. However the activities Mr G is referring to here officially began in 2015 and are mainly centred around cleaning the city’s polluted rivers, teaching locals how to measure the pollution and organizing clean-up activities and promotion events.

While GZ does not offer the natural photography classes mentioned by Barr and Zhang, their Huanghu nature school project, described in the section on fieldwork, is one of their most hands-on ways of incentivizing their participants. According to their own material they have events for businesses, university student organizations and CCP and Youth League groups. When discussing Huanghu with the members however, they only talked about their work with primary and middle school students. This could be an indication of their personal views regarding the most important function of the nature school: to teach children about the value of nature. Though it may also be a reflection of the most frequent events they organize at Huanghu, it is logical for the most frequent type of activities to also be at the forefront of the members mind during an interview. In reality, as of yet they have few opportunities for individuals wishing to participate in an activity, to visit the nature school. In the methodology chapter’s section on fieldwork, I described how the layout of Huanghu is designed as

57 Barr and Zhang, “Green Politics in China,” 38.

58 应该是环境监察活动，我们训练一些环境监察员，这些是很直接的.
outdoors classrooms were a guided tour takes the form of an educational experience. This, in combination with GZ’s carefully crafted lesson plans for teaching primary and elementary student groups, leads to the conclusion that Huanghu’s main purpose and function is a nature school for children.

Ms D was one of those who expressed her favourite activity to be the Reclothe project, because it simultaneously is both educational and charity work. Reclothe is a part of GZ’s community development program, which also includes other neighbourhood-centred activities such as urban gardening, and collecting and utilizing rainwater. The Reclothe project was a favourite among several of the interviewees and participants. In the interview with participant Ms L, she revealed her feelings on the Reclothe project. “Cherish life, strengthen environmental protection awareness, and help people in poor areas.”\(^{59}\) She felt her participation helped her become more aware of the value of life, a healthy environment and social work. Her participation in GZ’s activities is fuelled not only by a wish to support a worthy cause, but also simply for her own benefit and enjoyment, as a part of her leisure life. This supports Rolandsens statement on how increasing cultural competence through healthy leisure activities has turned from a collective issue to an individual responsibility.\(^{60}\) The Reclothe project while logistically large in its’ entirety, is small in the sense that participants do not need to sacrifice any considerable amount of time nor resources to contribute. Nonetheless measuring the effectiveness on an educational level is difficult when considering that there is no way of knowing if those who donate to the GZ Panda have participated in any of the activities connected to Reclothe.

5.2 Educational Activities’ Target Groups
To analyse GZ’s concept of educational activities, understanding the target groups for these activities is of great value. Though most of the members state in their interviews that GZ does not have a specific group in mind for the majority of their activities, there appeared to be a focus on students or specific neighbourhood communities in the regular bi-weekly activities. While there exist ENGOs that offer free weekend natural photography classes for individual citizens to partake in, GZ do not offer this type of educational activity, nor are there many

\(^{59}\) 珍惜现在的生活，加强环保意识，帮助贫困地区的人们.

\(^{60}\) Rolandsen, Leisure and Power in Urban China, 107.
aimed at independent individuals. In fact one restrictive aspect of Huanghu is how inaccessible it is for individuals outside of specific group outings (such as a team-building outing for a business), as the main target group consists of children and their families. Huanghu as it is designed almost like a summer camp for children, were many of the activities are organized either with the cooperation of a school or to target families, such as the Halloween activity described in the fieldwork section.

Nonetheless none of my interviewees expressed any particular preference to which part of the public their educational activities are aimed at, there were several indications that middle- and upper class families constituted their main body of participants. GZ’s method of appealing to the upper-middle and upper class is evident in their organized excursions to exotic locations such as Hawaii and Australia. Parents, many of whom are government officials, pay to send their children on these trips to learn about environmental issues. This activity thus has a dual purpose of being educational, while also raising funds for GZ.

5.3 Valuing Educational Activities
To properly assess the importance of educational activities in GZ’s modus operandi it is vital to find how such activities are valued. In order to reach an understanding of how the members prescribe value to the different activities GZ organizes, I inquired as to which part of their work was most enjoyable to them personally. To this Ms D said the following:

Community projects. Doing projects in the community, when interacting with the residents during the activity you will find that the residents will gradually improve their awareness of environmental protection, and are willing to join our “environmental protection ranks”.

Many of their bi-weekly educational activities, such as Reclothe, are centered around neighbourhood communities. A concern for GZ’s members is the urban population’s general lack of environmental understanding and experience with “real” nature (自然). In this context “real” nature refers to wild nature seen mainly outside cities or in “green lungs”. China’s rapid urbanization has created “mega-cities” with few “wild” areas, were the greenery is mainly for decoration, positioned by the road. The rapid urbanization has created whole

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62 还是社区里的项目，社区里做一些项目，和居民的互动中，你会发现，居民会在这个活动中逐步的提升他的环保意识，并且愿意加入我们的环保队伍.
generations with little “hands-on” experience with nature. While it is impossible to claim that this is unique to China it was a very important incentive for some of the interviewees to involve themselves in educating, especially children, on the value of “real” nature. To Echo Barr and Zhang: “you can’t protect nature unless you know what nature is”, a common rationale underlying many ENGO’s activities, including GZ’s. Several of my interviewees and some of the participants voiced similar worries, with one member of GZ saying:

Now for the most part children haven’t experienced our childhood in the countryside, with mountains, water, fields, flowers and grass. They go directly into the [urban] community buildings [after birth]. They have no contact with nature; one could call it a nature deficit disorder, [they have] a lack of opportunity to experience nature […] – Ms C

Though her reasoning is sound, it is noteworthy that many in positions of authority in the fields of policymaking and in leadership positions at polluting factories, belong to a generation who grew up in a less urban China. One possible argument for their perceived lack of concern for the environment is the zeitgeist of the time. Perhaps their childhood took place at the time when the country dedicated itself to the utter environmental transformation in the name of socialist revolution, all the while denying the possibility of negative consequences.

Even as several interviewees share how valuable the educational activities are to them personally, can they be regarded as effective in the overall goal of improving China’s environment? Mr G’s answer to what he personally regards as the most effective ways to protect the environment sheds some light:

In some activities, together with participants we merely call for environmental protection; however this does not have a very direct impact. I think sometimes a direct change of environmental problems will be [more] able to have a direct effect on policy.

The indication here is that inviting participants to join an activity, for example to clean a local area plagued with littering, is not of significant effect in the grand scheme of environmental protection. Larger problems should be tackled in a successful way to create policy change.

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64 主要现在的孩子还是没有经历过我们小时候在农村，有山有水有田有花有草这种生活，他们就直接进入社区、楼房，他们没有和自然接触，可以叫做自然缺失症，缺少机会体会自然[…].
66 在一些活动中，我们只是向一些会员参与者呼吁环保，这并不是一个很直接的影响。我觉得有时候改变环境问题更直接，会直接改变政策.
The perception that the main solutions lie with institutions and policy is thus seemingly strong with some members of GZ. Unsurprising, as they are part of a culture that favours top-down solutions to public problems. Though there is value in changing people’s perceptions and habits, grander and more dramatic changes to the environment itself is valued higher by some members.

There was thus not a clear consensus between the members when it comes to how they value the effectiveness of their educational activities. Ms A uses the nature school to illustrate her personal views on this slow-paced method of incurring positive environmental change:

The effect, actually either if it is big or small, it is still effective. In fact, a lot of matters you have to slowly observe the change. You may feel like it is not significant, because the change [in the other person] happens little by little. When you finally look back, you will find that in fact, in the end they changed a lot. For example summer camp, at our summer camp children will be there for a week or ten days, rooming and boarding there, so we will give them courses in nature education [during this time]. We are with them every day, [and therefore] may not see any particularly obvious change in them. But during this process we will have shot a video and cut a film, and so on in the end [when seeing this film], we discover that in fact they had a lot of growth. – Ms A

The views of the individual is often coloured by what they spend their time and resources working on. The members experienced in organizing smaller educational activities were more optimistic to the notion of slowly changing the minds of the masses, and its long-term effectiveness. When I inquired one such member as to the desired effect of these educational activities and projects, she told me: “I hope that environmental education is like a seed. When they learn from us, there is a seed in the heart. No matter when you grow up, where you go, you will have the idea of environmental protection.” – Ms F

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68 这个效果，怎么说，其实大或小都是有效果的。其实很多事情你都要慢慢地去观察这个改变。可能你身在其中觉得它不明显，因为它是一点一点去改变。等到你最后回过头去看的时候，会发现其实他最后的改变很大。比如说暑期营，暑期营孩子会在那边一周，或者十天，吃住都在那边，所以我们会给他们做一些自然教育的系列课程。那我们每天陪伴在他们身边，可能不会发现一个特别明显的变化，在他们身上。但是这个过程中我们会有录像，都会剪一个片子，等最后回过头来，发现其实他们都有一个很大的成长。

69 我希望环境教育就像一颗种子，他们在我们这里学习之后，心里面就有一颗种子。不管你们以后长大了，走到哪里，都会有环保的理念.
5.4 Conclusion

Above I have drawn on my interviews to discuss how GZ’s own members feel about their educational activities. The interviews revealed that there are a great variety of activities the members view as educational. Taking a swim across a polluted river has the same potential to be educational as attending training classes to becoming environmental monitors. Their focus on children is perhaps an indicator of a perception that the young are more susceptible to environmental lessons. The process of assisting the public in realizing the value and necessity of environmental protection is seen by some as long and slow one, but with definite rewards in the end. However other GZ members believe more strongly in the effectiveness of policy changes. What we can discern is that though not unanimous the majority of interviewed GZ members themselves believe that their smaller everyday projects, such as Reclothe, are effective and valuable tools for promoting environmental values.
6 Navigating the Political Landscape

China’s unprecedented economic rise following their pragmatic approach to development has pulled many Chinese out of poverty and legitimized the Party’s authoritarian rule. Though the consequences of disregarding environmental degradation in the name of development has created new worries for the governing powers. On a positive note environmental issues are now higher up on the domestic agenda than ever before among the leading officials in Beijing.\(^{70}\) Regardless the focus of local leaders is largely still concentrated on economic growth while the forces supporting environmental protection are: “[..] comparatively weak and unable to overcome powerful vested interests intent on the continuing exploitation of natural resources.”\(^{71}\) How do these weaker forces, in this case GZ, seek to achieve their environmental protection goals? In this chapter I shift the focus onto GZ’s relationship with the state keeping the themes of the second research question in mind: “Do ENGOs consciously take into consideration what a possible government response could be, when planning activities and formulating strategies?” The discussion turns to the nature of the relationship between GZ and the government through the eyes of the GZ members. The government in this section refers mainly to both provincial government of Zhejiang and Hangzhou’s city government, as these are the institutions GZ has active contact with.

6.1 Garnering the Government’s Trust

Before Chinese New Years GZ holds an annual ceremony and auction, I was fortunate to partake in their January 2016 event. As mentioned in the fieldwork section one of the guest speakers was the Outreach Unit Chief Molly Koscina from the U.S general consulate in Shanghai. An intriguing addition to the roster considering how she by virtue of her position represents her government especially when giving speeches at functions. Thus questions about how GZ handles relationships with other governments than their own naturally arose.

As it turns out GZ has contacts with representatives of several governments, including Japan, and intentions of embarking on joint projects in the future. When I questioned Mr G on how the Chinese state responds to GZ’s international connections he had the following statement:

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\(^{70}\) Shapiro, *China’s Environmental Challenges*, 76.

\(^{71}\) Beeson, “The coming of environmental authoritarianism,” 283.
Look at the situation [in China], it depends on whether the government has confidence in you, if the government trusts you, how you cooperate [with other organizations or governments] or who gives you the funds does not matter, if the government does not trust you, there will be a lot of people questioning you.\(^2\)

In essence, as long as you have the trust of the (relevant) politicians and governmental bodies, you have a certain amount of freedom to choose whom you work with, and receive funds from. This is in line with what Shapiro says about NGO’s ties with the government, “Almost all citizens’ groups cultivate ties with top leaders and agencies as a form of protection and assurance of a green light for their activities”.\(^3\) One method in which GZ cultivates these bonds is the overseas excursion’s they organize for children, many of who are the daughters and sons of politicians. This cultivation of bonds has made it possible for GZ to work with “outsiders”, like other governments or NGOs abroad.

### 6.2 The Issue of GZ’s Funding

A main concern for Chinese ENGOs is the procurement of funding.\(^4\) To understand how GZ functions under the umbrella of authoritarian environmentalism it is crucial to form an understanding of the extent in which their activities are being influenced by the state. A key question therefore became; who decides what GZ spends their funding on? Mr G told me that it is primarily the donors who decide what GZ does with the funds they are giving. While not explicitly stated in any of my interviews, the logical conclusion to be made here is that the governmental body supplying GZ with funds, also has a great deal of influence on how these funds are utilized by the organization.

According to Huang domestic NGOs in China mainly receive their funds in three forms: donations from both the private and corporate spheres, the government, and through collecting contributions.\(^5\) Unfortunately, though not surprisingly, it was impossible for me to gain complete knowledge and understanding of the reality of GZ’s economic situation.

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\(^2\) 看情况吧，取决于政府是否相信你，如果政府相信你，你怎么合作，谁给你资金都没关系，如果政府不相信你，就会有很多人质疑你.

\(^3\) Shapiro, *China's Environmental Challenges*, 212.


\(^5\) Huang, “Wo Guo Huanbao Feizhengfuzuzhi canyu Huanjing Sifa de Xianzhuang Yanjiu,” 50.
However some interviewees were able to provide some insight when asked about the organizations funding. According to GZ’s Ms D, they are not a rich organization, which is why they depend on donations, auctions and governmental funds. They also participate in state organized contests where they present a current or future project in hopes of winning funds. To my knowledge they have not cooperated with other ENGOs in these particular competitions, however there have been other instances of joint projects. Meaning that they neither have a purely competitive relationship with other ENGOs, nor a purely cooperative one.

It would be erroneous to assume that all economic transactions between the two are earmarked donations from the government. GZ also sell their services as environmental observers for example by measuring pollution levels in some of the city’s rivers and reporting these back to the government, or assisting in community development. The government contacts GZ, provides funds and assigns them to use their expertise to “green” a neighbourhood. One way is to offer the residents environmental educational activities available at their community centre. In other cases GZ approaches the government with an idea that may or may not be approved and allocated funding.

It is important to note that the government is decidedly not responsible for the entirety of GZ’s funding. Fund raising events and activities and cooperation with international organizations are also a part of how GZ acquire their funds. They are not alone in acquiring funds from international NGOs, Friends of Nature claims over 50 per cent of its revenue comes through international channels.

### 6.3 Dealing with Political Fragmentation

As previously discussed in chapter 4 the fragmentation of the Chinese government and the rapid turnover rate of local politicians can be a challenge for the NGOs. As the last two decades has seen a drop in average tenure time from 4,2 in 1990 to 3,3 years in 2011. The challenges brought by this also extends to civil organizations as it can make their position with their local officials uncertain and unstable, as Mr G tells it:

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It is difficult to say that I have a good relationship with the government, because everyone's ideas are not the same, because of different places, different levels [in the governing bodies], the ideas of the new leaders are not the same as those of the old. [...] But we are closely related to the government, there is a lot of interaction and cooperation, but it is difficult to say it is a good or a bad relationship. We keep in touch with letters, we have contact on WeChat, and now when you publish news [on WeChat], everyone can see, sometimes they [officials] will praise you.  

Having personal contact with local leaders via a messaging app like WeChat serves as a reinforcement of the idea that GZ can be considered as having a close and in some instances a personal relationship with the government. While Mr G hesitates to describe it as a good or bad relationship, they have a history of cooperating with several different governmental departments, the provincial Party committee, the Science and Technology Museum and the Education Bureau, to mention a few. Yet this does not automatically translate to a good relationship with the state in his eyes. In the quote above he mentions how old leaders and new leaders may have conflicting views. This highlights how unstable the relationship can be as officials whose relevance (in regards to GZ’s activities) can hold their post for many years or merely a few months. Thus the nature of their relations is subject to the turnover rate of officials. 

During the fieldwork process there were few opportunities to first hand experience GZ’s relationship with the government, however I did find that GZ have in the past arranged for groups of officials to visit the Huanghu Nature School. Additionally when asked about what they hoped to do in the coming year (2016), several members mentioned the wish to arrange an activity in relation to the G20 meeting in Hangzhou. They wish to set up an activity with school children together with the first lady Peng Liyuan (彭丽媛), though they themselves seemed to believe it might be too ambitious of an undertaking. 

6.4 The Pressure Releasing Valve
One of the goals of my project was to understand how GZ cooperates with the government and if they are ever particularly encouraged to promote one environmental message or piece of information over another. One interviewee highlighted GZ’s ability to take on the role of the mediator.

Because in China and in Zhejiang, there is a mutual understanding between the people and the government. In China, the communication and openness between the government and the people is unlike the western countries where it is very open, there is a lot of communication [between state and public]. Therefore, we as a social organization need to act as a buffer, a pressure-reducing valve. – Ms A

This quote is taken from my interview with Ms A while talking about her views on GZ’s relationship with the government. She further explained that because the general public at times harbour some levels of distrusts in the government and might not trust them when they announce environmental projects. She told me of a concrete example:

For example, earlier, during the construction of the Hangzhou garbage incineration plant and the like, the public had very strong opinions [on the matter], the social organization at this time came out to make a statement. The people misunderstand and distrust the government, after some of the government's [previous] behaviour where they also did not give the public a comprehensive understanding of the situation, times like these require social organizations to stand up and do a decompression.

According to Ms A, NGOs like GZ play a role in the communication between the governing authority and the governed population in China. GZ’s function as a bridge in this context seemingly is one of the main services they can provide for the government. This function provides us with another dimension to the relationship between the two and serves as further evidence the trust they are given by local authorities. Ms E is also talking about how NGOs and the government can work in tandem:

The NGO is equivalent to the representatives of the people, although there are many government institutions, [with] relatively large [amounts of] power, they have too much to do and need an NGO to help them. Between the government and the NGO there should be

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79 因为在中国，浙江，民众和政府之间有一个不是很相互理解的。在中国，政府和民众之间的交流和公开度不像西方国家非常公开，有很多的交流。那么就需要我们社会组织来做一个缓冲带这样的角色，就是减压阀。

80 就比如说，像之前，杭州建造垃圾焚烧厂之类的事情，群众反对的声音是非常强的，那社会组织这个时候就出来做一个声明，民众蛀牙是对政府的不理解和不信任。政府的一些行为也没有让群众很全面地了解到事情的经过，所以这个时候就需要社会组织站出来做一个减压。
a relationship of mutual help, the government provides the NGO [with] some political and economic help [and] the NGO will conduct some work beneficial [to the government].\textsuperscript{81}

In this mutual relationship described by Ms E, both parties get something valuable out of cooperating and helping each other. The government is not interested in environmental issues leading to any large-scale protest or social upheaval. Courting Chinese NGOs is one of the measures taken to show the public that the government is on their side, while still monitoring their activities.\textsuperscript{82} A 2011 study on Internet activism found that the manner in which an ENGO frames and presents its mission is decisive to the organizations relationship with authorities.\textsuperscript{83} When the goal of the ENGO aligns with that of the government, collaboration is entirely possible. In GZ’s case, the fact that they have such a big and active organization implies that they are likely to have a positive relationship with the government. Most of the members I talked to also shared the belief that working together with the government was beneficiary for both parties. The government trusts GZ to make wise decisions not in opposition to their own plans and ideology.

Even so for GZ communicating with the government is not always an easy and efficient process. Sometimes matters need to escalate for there to be progress, Ms E said:

[...] [There are] many government departments, for example [if] a person knows of an environmental problem, and she tells a department, the department [can] say “this problem is irrelevant to us, contact another department [with this problem],” the complaint might not go anywhere and no solution can be found. Here Green Zhejiang has a relatively large platform, there are reporters, government officials (including environmental protection departments in Hangzhou City, Zhejiang Province), and some NGOs, all of them active in environmental protection, also [GZ has contacts with] businesses and individuals in this platform. If a person finds a problem, if the Hangzhou city government can’t find a way to solve it, then provincial leaders may see a journalist [from GZ’s connections] reporting [on the problem,] and this will prompt the government to solve the problem. With this

\textsuperscript{81} NGO 相当于市民的代表, 政府虽然有很多机构, 力量比较大, 但是他做的事情太多了, 需要一个 NGO 来帮助他。政府和 NGO 之间, 应该是相互帮助的关系, 政府给 NGO 一些政治、经济上的帮助, NGO 做一些细小的事情。

\textsuperscript{82} Elizabeth C. Economy, “The Great Leap Backward?,” 51.

platform, we can solve the problem quickly. We can also set up round table meetings to
discuss and solve the issue. NGOs can gather everyone together to solve the problem.84

Coinciding with this non-confrontational approach are some surprising tactics to achieve
desirable results. A specific example is the roundtables previously discussed above. A
member revealed to me that not all local officials are interested in participating in these
discussions. One way to force their hand and ensure their attendance, which has been used at
least on one occasion, is blackmail. While a tad coarse the term ‘blackmail’ is the most
suitable to describe what happened. GZ found that one particular official had supported a
factory with a history of irresponsible pollution. They proceeded to let the official know that
they were planning on alerting the media of his connection to the factory; the end result was
that the official participated in the roundtable discussion. That GZ is able to take such steps in
their interaction with a government official with no discernable consequence is striking.
Mostly it is surprising because of the authoritarian political landscape they operate in, this
serves as a reminder to Mr. G’s words on how their relationship with the government is less
based on organization-to-institution and more person-to-person.

6.5 Conclusion

Throughout my interviews, when the subject of the government arose, none of my subjects
showed a will to clearly state whether or not they take the possible governmental response
into account when planning activities. However from my fieldwork experience and analysing
some of the more informal conversations it appears as an unspoken rule. Perhaps it is more
aptly described as an unconscious consideration. GZ has to my knowledge had no clashes
with a governing body or an official, certainly none that made any headlines or lead to the
organization being punished or subjected to sanctions in any way. This implies that GZ has
little desire to use confrontational methods. To quote Martens: “Also, from an environmental
perspective, civil involvement does not have to be political in order to be significant.”85 For
GZ this means that they likely have little incentive to involve themselves too deeply with the
politics of the state beyond delivering reports to support new environmental policies. GZ

84 举个例子，你知道政府有很多部门，比如说一个人知道这里有环境的问题，她和这个部门说，这个部门
说我不管这个问题，你告诉另一个部门，那他可能一圈走下来投诉无门，没法解决。那么我们绿色浙江就有一个比
较大的平台，那里有记者，政府官员（包括杭州市和浙江省的环保部门的），还有一些 NGO，还有热心于环保的企业
和个人，大家都在这个交流平台里，有人发现了问题，如果杭州市政府不解决他，那么省里的领导看到了，记者播
报，就会促进政府解决这样的问题。有这样的平台，解决问题就很快。我们还有圆桌会议，可以讨论解决问题，
NGO 是把大家聚集在一起解决问题的。

85 Martens, “Public participation with Chinese characteristics”, 213.
assisting the state by filling some of the social gaps created by China’s rapid transformation, when the government struggles to solve conflicting demands of continued economic progress and a healthy and clean nation, ENGOs are able to offer assistance. The “Environmental Watch” app introduced in chapter 2 is the result of a joint effort between GZ and one of the local state owned enterprises, serving as proof of their cooperative relationship.

While none of my interview subjects told of any specific guidelines from the government on what areas to focus on, it is evident that the messages important to GZ are in line with the government’s policies. As an NGO in a country where the state works hard to control and monitor citizens’ groups, it could be concluded that they would be perceived as a tool for the government to send out approved ideals. However as an officially registered NGO this would be obsolete, as organizations must fulfil rather high standards in order to be recognized as registered NGOs, promoting ideas approved by the government is inevitable. As an ENGO who has their focus on the more politically acceptable issues such as nature conservation and environmental education, GZ is able to conduct much of their work free of governmental interruption.

86 Taylor and Yang, “Relationship-building by Chinese ENGOs’ websites,” 243.


88 Shapiro, China’s Environmental Challenges, 44.

89 Barr and Zhang, Green Politics in China, 11.

7 Communicating with the Public

In this chapter I will focus on the themes of the third research question: “How do they communicate with the general public, and promote when organizing educational activities? What are the major ideas being promoted? How do the participants attending Green Zhejiang activities perceive these ideas?” I will discuss how GZ promotes itself and how the public responds to GZ and their activities. As an ENGO GZ are dependent on public support for its continued existence. One of the main challenges for GZ to successfully convince the public that their own habits can be a force for positive environmental change, is the perception that the solutions lies with institutions. As previously discussed in chapter 5 this idea is also present within GZ itself. It is no simple undertaking to attempt convincing the majority that their personal habits, such as cycling to work or refraining from littering can become important steps towards a cleaner environment. With this context in mind, this chapter is dedicated to the process of analyzing what messages GZ, as an organization, wish to promote to the public and how receptive the public is to what is being conveyed.

7.1 The Concept of “Green More”

By first focusing on the ideas or messages promoted by GZ, we start by acquiring some ideological context to explore the organization’s relationship with the public. As GZ is made up of it’s members, their own views colour what they perceive the organization’s overall message to be. Ms A told me of her personal definition of the phrase “Green Consciousness” (绿色意识), among the things she explained to me was the notion that the environment is not one person’s problem and responsibility alone. There lies importance in realizing that everyone needs to participate in living a greener life in order to create positive change in the environment.

Through our activities, more people will become aware of this problem [environmental pollution], then we can use the power of the masses to solve the issues. Because single handily it’s difficult to solve these problems alone. It is not only this place; maybe the problems exist in the whole of Zhejiang Province, the whole of China and even the whole world. [Therefore] it requires everyone's collaboration, as we work more it is possible to cultivate a sense of environmental awareness in the

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91 Martens, “Public participation with Chinese characteristics,” 220.
The idea presented in this quote of collectively taking action to reach a common goal is certainly not a new one to the many members of the Chinese public. Earlier Chinese ways of thinking about nature have been revised throughout the modernization process and by the time of the Cultural Revolution nature was believed to be separated from human life, but available for human use. Though the state has shown signs of revising this stance, the challenge of convincing the people of the intrinsic value of nature is still prominent.

Throughout the interviewing process, there was a consensus around what the members believed GZ’s main goal and message to be. This consensus was that GZ’s main mission is to influence more and more people into becoming environmentally friendly by promoting environmental awareness and make the public participate in environmental action. This goal is transformed into their message of both the individual’s power and the power of collaboration as the best ways to protect the environment. One way of promoting this is through their English slogan “Green More”, found in their promotional pamphlets, PDFs and other merchandise. Together with the explanatory tagline “let everybody become environmentally engaged” (让更多人环保起来), the slogan’s purpose is to catch people’s attention and increase GZ’s visibility amongst the public.

Our wish, in the beginning no one knew about environmental protection, if I mention environmental protection, everyone says: oh, is it [just about] picking up trash? This concept [Green More], is to step by step influence more people, to pay attention to the environment. [Starting by improving] their behaviour [will also] start to improve environmental protection. — Ms D.

7.2 Appealing to the Public

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93 Weller, Discovering Nature: Globalization and Environmental Culture in China and Taiwan, position 791.

94 我们是希望，从一开始没有人知道环保，提起环保，都是说: 哦，是不是捡垃圾的，这种观念，一步步影响更多的人，重视这个环境，并且从自身行为开始改善，环保起来.
How does GZ’s members endeavour to achieve these goals outlined above? What methods do they use to create a presence for themselves and their ideals in the minds of the public? As an ENGO they play a part in China’s environmental discourse or “greenspeak”, which refers to the whole catalogue of linguistic and symbolic means used for raising awareness of environmental issues. GZ is directly engaged in both the production and consumption of greenspeak, focusing on their role as producers the manner in which they circulate their greenspeak, becomes a pivotal question. Several members, including Mr G told me of how using mass media is way for them to communicate and engage with the public.

Chinese ENGOs are no strangers to cultivating bonds between their own organizations and media outlets and journalists to increase their own influence. The favourable position they have with the mass media is in part because of the political climate and in part due to many environmentalists, NGO leaders and founders themselves being media professionals. While GZ’s founders where not media professionals, Green Camp, Green Plateau and Tianjing Friends of Green are among those who were founded by such individuals. Mr G pointed out that when GZ appears in the media, for example by exposing pollution incidents on TV, they are increasing their own visibility.

Getting exposure by appearing on TV in different capacities is one of GZ’s main strategies. They have several times been featured on a variety of programs from ones specifically concerned with environmental issues to televised competitions. However their main source of exposure in the medium is the news shows. TV is used as an instrument to promote GZ, by presenting their ideas in a competition, giving expert opinions in televised discussions or alerting a News crew of a particular case of pollution. Another way of distinguishing themselves from other NGOs is to have celebrities as part of campaigns. In April 2015 they launched a new campaign “Messenger of the future” (未来使者), centred on promoting environmental education to young people and students with the help of Choi Minho a famous South Korean actor.

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95 Calhoun and Yang, “Media, Civil Society, and the Rise of a Green Public Sphere in China,” 214.
97 Calhoun and Yang, “Media, Civil Society, and the Rise of a Green Public Sphere in China,” 221.
98 Calhoun and Yang, “Media, Civil Society, and the Rise of a Green Public Sphere in China,” 221.
As the biggest ENGO (and only one with a five A rating) in Zhejiang they have enough clout and media connections to organize televised roundtable discussions. As a member of the Waterkeeper Alliance they worked with a TV station to produce a show broadcasting the severity of pollution in Zhejiang’s rivers. Still the extensive coverage GZ enjoys in the media is not exclusive to them, the “greening” of the country’s media outlets has made them strong supporters of ENGOs all across the nation.100

7.3 The Participant’s Perceptions

In order to increase GZ’s presence and promote their more large-scale activities, such as the yearly “Swim across the Qiantai River”, TV is both useful and effective. However, for promoting regular, small-scale activities and their general environmental agenda other tools must be applied. For these purposes the social media platforms WeChat and Weibo are the organization’s preferred communication tools.101 GZ also has a homepage, however this is not as frequently updated and well maintained as the other two. WeChat is a Chinese communication app that has many similar features to Facebook. This has allowed GZ to create a group in which they share original articles and event promotions with their 30,000+ subscribers. On the group it is possible to read their general feed, explore sub-categories including general information on GZ, their activities, and instructions on how to join in on activities and support GZ. In the section for activities they also have a monthly plan of what activities they offer.

For example those who follow our WeChat, they are interested in environmental protection, so they will listen to our WeChat. [When ]We have activities, we promote them through WeChat, they [GZ’s WeChat followers] will be the first to respond. In other cases, we also mentioned the cooperation with the community, we will promote through the community committees and community residents, those who are interested will respond.102

– Ms D

100 Yang, “Environmental NGOs and Institutional Dynamics in China,” 56.
102 比如说关注我们的微信, 他们对环保感兴趣, 就会收听我们的微信。我们有活动, 通过微信发出去,他们也会第一时间来响应。其他的话, 我们也提到了和社区的合作, 我们会通过社区居委会, 向社区居民发起,他们有兴趣的会来相应
Utilizing social media tools to distribute environmental-related knowledge is cost-effective as they reach a large number of audiences while expending few resources.\textsuperscript{103} Studies have also shown that ENGOs with a strong online presence garner more participation in their events than those with a weak online presence.\textsuperscript{104} The interviews with participants verified the effectiveness of these tools. When asked how she found out about the Huanghu event Ms M told me it was through Wechat. Ms L also heard about GZ’s work in this fashion. “[…] I know some department heads in Green Zhejiang, looking at their WeChat they often post about activities”\textsuperscript{105} Proving that the resources spent on managing the GZ open Wechat group and generally using the app to promote themselves, extending to their personal posts on activities, is having the desired effect.

While WeChat is very popular, and the preferred method of communication for many Chinese, the older generation not proficient in technology are not as easily reached by this communication tool. As mentioned in the chapter 2 on methodology I participated in an activity where the aim was to teach residents about alternative use of household waste. The first thing that struck me as I entered the community centre was that all the participants were women aged 70+, a group not normally associated with being tech-savvy. Thus, to reach these groups, when organizing events in specific communities GZ cooperates with the neighbourhood’s committee not only to organize an event but also to spread the word and ensure participation from the residents.

To the participants of GZ’s various events, joining in in these activities is part of their leisure life, not connected to their work or school. Because they are not actively working on environmental issues daily their perspectives can differ from that of GZ’s members. Ms K was earnest in expressing how meaningful it was for her to partake in GZ events. Though her enthusiasm likely stems from her future ambitions to work for an ENGO, her account shows that GZ’s activities also can appeal to those with prior environmental knowledge. She

\textsuperscript{103} Zhu, “Social Media and Public Diplomacy,” 71.
\textsuperscript{104} Ren, Bingqiang and Bo She, “Ziyuan dui Beijing ENGOs Canyu Huanjingbaohu de Yingxiang Yanjiu – yi Lüse Beijing, Wuran Shouhaihe Fali Bangzhu Zhongxin Weili” (资源对北京 ENGOs 参与环境保护的 影响研究 —— 以绿色北京、污染受害者法律援助 中心为例), Impact of Resources on the Environmental Protection of Beijing based ENGOs: A Comparative Study of Greener Beijing and Beijing Centre for Legal Assistant to Pollution Victims), \textit{Journal of Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics (Social Sciences Edition) 北京航空航天大学学报 (社会科学版) 24}, no. 7 (2011):14.
\textsuperscript{105} […]认识绿色浙江的部分负责人，看他们的微信经常有相关的活动介绍.
emphasized that she personally gained a lot of knowledge about how to manage NGO projects.

Ms M was also very happy with the day spent at Huanghu, noting the practical lessons to be learned: “The activities were very meaningful, both the parents and the children were able to acquire a lot of environmental knowledge, which can also be applied to real life.”¹⁰⁶ One of her main hopes for her son is that he will grow up understanding the value of protecting the environment and leading a “low-carbon lifestyle” (低碳生活). The term “low-carbon lifestyle” has been promoted by both the state and NGOs for some time and is part of China’s greenspeak. Living “low-carbon” is supposed to help reduce CO₂. In 2009 Xinhua characterized a low-carbon life as “promoting that everyone begins from their own habits, controlling or paying attention to their personal volume of carbon dioxide emission in order to reduce the emissions of carbon dioxide worldwide.”¹⁰⁷ Taking public transportation, using a bicycle, saving electricity and even going into low-carbon professions are all actions that are advocated as actions associated with a low-carbon life.¹⁰⁸ Ms M’s wish for her son to grow up valuing nature is an echo of what GZ member Ms F expressed on her ambitions for how GZ can influence environmental change by focusing on the young in chapter 5.

When asked about their opinions on the necessities of ENGOs, they all expressed the absolute need our society has for such organizations. The role ENGOs play in creating public awareness was emphasized in all three interviews, with Ms K stating:

I think ENGOs represent new values, in addition to material needs, social values have become more diversified; people have begun to realize that there are other ways [to live your] life apart from production and consumption, with other values. Environmental organizations need to assume more of the responsibility for environmental protection, they, are representatives of the environment, and speak for natural and environment, in order to appeal to the sustainable development of mankind and advocate a reduction of damage to the natural way of life, or to prevent damage to some serious intervention production

¹⁰⁶ 非常有意义的活动，让家长和孩子们都学到很多环保知识，而且可以应用到实际生活中。


¹⁰⁸ Eberhardt, “Discourse on climate change in China: A public sphere without the public”, 40.
event. To a certain extent, I think this is the public’s awareness of environmental protection, the awakening of their awareness of their own rights.\textsuperscript{109}

The interviews revealed how some Chinese believe that the general population has begun to recognize alternative ways of lifestyles apart from the mainstream materialistic value system and are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of environmental protection. It’s evident that the three participants I interviewed were all interested in GZ’s work and enthusiastic about their activities. However, while I was at the Huanghu activity, I had several smaller conversations with both men and women, some of whom expressed positive sentiments to what they where seeing and hearing, whilst others were more sceptical. One woman participating in the event with her husband and toddler daughter was especially direct when she expressed her belief that such activities are useless. When asked why she had decided to partake, she told me it was a work outing. This was a sobering reminder of the challenges ENGOs face in their efforts to convince the public of their own personal responsibilities towards the environment.

The participant interviews revealed more positive views. As a last remark Ms M expressed her positive predictions for the future: “The non-profit Green Zhejiang is playing an increasingly important role in society, I believe there will be more and more people involved [in the future].”\textsuperscript{110}

### 7.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have identified the main messages GZ members wish to convey to the public, mainly that each person can contribute for the betterment of everyone’s environment. The findings show that GZ emphasizes participation and volunteerism in their form of greenspeak, it is in line with how scholars such as Guobin Yang and Craig Calhoun claim: “While recognizing that environmental problem-solving depends on the joint efforts of government, citizens, and NGOs, the greenspeak emphasizes the role of citizens and the importance of

\textsuperscript{109} 我认为环保组织代表了一种新兴的价值观,在物质需求之外,社会的价值观变得多元化,人们开始意识到除了生产和消费,还会有其他的生活方式,不一样的价值观。环保组织承担了更多环境保护的责任,他们作为环境的代表,为自然和环境发言,为了人类的可持续发展而呼吁倡导一种减少对自然的损害的生活方式,或者阻止干预某些破坏严重的生产事件。在某种程度上,我认为这是民众对于环境保护意识,对于自身权利意识的觉醒。

\textsuperscript{110} 绿色浙江这个公益组织在社会上发挥着越来越大的作用,相信会有越来越多的人参与。
developing an NGO culture.” The interviews revealed a general positive sentiment towards the effect both of GZ’s work of making themselves visible in the public eye, and ability to create awareness for environmental protection issues through their activities. However it was also revealed that not everyone is as susceptible to GZ’s messages, and “winning” the public over to their way of thinking is a continuous challenge. Additionally the main channels they make use of to broadcast messages, such as their social media platforms and TV have been discussed.

The majority of participants believed GZ’s methods have a positive effect on both public perceptions on environmental protection and on the environmental situation itself. The members and I interviewed generally expressed the opinion that the amount of impact on the participants during an activity depended heavily on the type of activity they were engaged in. Nevertheless, as Ms D stated: “Some are big and some are small, it is difficult to find a standard measure. However, the accumulation of these activities through more than ten years of experience, looking back the cumulative impact is good.” There appeared to be a shared belief that the accumulation of their’ past 10 years of work should be viewed as an overall success.

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112 有的大有的小，很难用一个标准去衡量。但是，累积嘛，这些活动通过十几年的经验完成，累积影响还是不错的。
8 Conclusion

The three aspects of GZ’s modus operandi discussed in this thesis are essential in understanding the subject of ENGO provided environmental education. One cannot discuss ENGOs role as environmental educators without also analysing their relationship with both the public and the government, and understanding what their own definition of an educational activity is. Situating the discussions within the framework of authoritarian environmentalisms provided the necessary political context.

In the introduction Greenpeace was mentioned to have shut down their education programs due to their perceived inefficacy. This thesis finds that the majority of GZ members do not share the perception that it is ineffectual to squander resources on educational activities. By exploring the members’ own values and views it was discovered that the belief that educational activities is valuable and able to produce positive results is a strong part of many member’s value systems. This belief is partly why GZ has such a focus on environmental activities. It is also noteworthy that their perception of what constitutes an educational activity is quite broad. As long as there is a moment of realization of the current deteriorated state of their local environment, the activity is viewed an educational one. This shows that a main concern of GZ is not only to educate on environmental issues, but also to aid the public into realizing that the state of China’s environment must be acknowledged, only then can people be taught how to contribute to a positive change. The findings show that the core of GZ’s educational activities is a step-by-step approach aimed to transform the public’s misconceptions about their individual ability to contribute.

Regarding their relationship with the local government the members gave no indication that the bonds between the two bothers them. None of them expressed that this “tainted”, or compromised their “NGOiness” in any way. According to the interviews GZ is comfortable performing the role of a mediator between state and public. There is communication based on personal bonds between officials and GZ leaders, contributing to creating a feeling of trust in GZ. This trust is the reason for GZ’s freedom in conducting activities and working with international environmental organizations and representatives of other governments, such as their cooperation with the U.S general consulate in Shanghai. GZ’s organizing events for CCP and the Youth League at Huanghu is another clear proof of the government’s approval and the trust they have in GZ. All these factor and more coalesce into the conclusion that on the NGO
spectrum, GZ is situated closer to GONGO's than independent NGOs. Despite this GZ does not shy away from confronting individual officials to achieve their goals.

To create more awareness and attract new participants GZ uses both mass- and social media platforms. They appear generally successful in these ventures. The participant interviews included in this thesis revealed that the public is divided in their view on GZ’s brand of environmental activism as an effective force for change. Though the participant interviews showed them to have a positive perception, as they were shown to believe in the effectiveness of GZ’s methods. Nevertheless, when taking into account the informal conversations I had with other participants while at activities, some expressed distrust in the merit of these forms of activism. One of GZ’s most prominent challenges is to convince these elements of the public that there is value in partaking in environmental protection, and refute the traditional thinking of nature as exclusively a tool for human development. Measuring the level of effect or indeed success GZ is having with instilling their ideals on to the public is hardly possible, but it is nevertheless interesting to learn that the members of GZ themselves perceive their organization’s efforts as overall very successful.

China’s brand of authoritarian environmentalism has in recent years allowed for a space where ENGOs may operate. GZ is able to be such an active organization because they follow and seemingly agree with the playing-rules. While the traditional definition of authoritarian environmentalism leaves all decision making to the state, China is allowing and in some cases encouraging input from non-state actors. Whilst this does not guarantee that their voices will be taken into account, these new avenues of communication opens up for collaboration beneficial for both parties. The state can outsource some of their burdens to GZ while GZ receives resources and status. When the goal of the ENGO aligns with that of the government, collaboration is entirely possible, as proven by the “Environmental Watch” app. If GZ’s modus operandi had been incompatible with the state, their situation would surely be quite different. The findings show that the relationship is very dependant on personal bonds, this becomes an issue when the weakness of authoritarian environmentalism, as prescribed by opponents, comes into play. As Mr G states in chapter 6 the turnover of officials can be disruptive, as the new leaders may have views conflicting with those of previous ones.
The critics denouncing the activism methods employed by ENGOs such as GZ (and other social organizations operating in similar veins), take issue with their’ focus on the public and unwillingness to confront the government. Whether it is by conscious design or not, GZ’s own brand of environmental protection, promoting education and focusing on appealing to the public for collective action, is one the state approves of. Meaning that confrontational methods are unnecessary most of the time. The organization is interested in making a change in peoples attitudes, and the most effective way is not to tarnish their image in the public’s eyes by acting antagonistic and disrupting society. They need to present as a trustworthy organization that avoids creating difficulties for the people who choose to involve themselves with GZ.

There are many ways in which to better the environment, confrontational methods may do more harm than good in authoritarian states, thus GZ’s focus on providing educational activities is their modus operandi for advocating the strengthening of environmental protection in China. By combining GZ’s slogan of “Green More” with their strong focus on environmental education, we see that educating the public on environmental protection is viewed by the organization as the foremost method to aid the to public act environmentally Conscious ways.


http://oversea.cnki.net/resources.asiaportal.info/kcms/detail/detail.aspx?QueryID=1&CurRec=10&DbCode=CJFD&dbname=CJFDTEMN&filename=SJXU201404012&uid=WEEvREcwSJHStSdnQ1ZmNvZ1NaMUFlMWN6clViYzQzaGVaWDVQQUhxYVpWQ09OQW1Va0FFM1FaU1d2MWUwdkJ3PT0=s9A4hF_YAuvQ5obgVAqNKPCYeJkEnsW4IQMovwHtwkF4VYPoHbKxJw!!.


http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09644010600562427.


Appendix

Appendix A: Interview Guides

Interview guide: Green Zhejiang Members

1. Personal questions

1.1 你今年几岁?

1.2 你是哪里人?

1.3 你在大学读书吗? 什么专业?

1.4 你记得在学校里教过自然教育吗?

1.5 你现有什么工作?

2. Personal environmental questions:

2.1 在你看法，中国目前的环境状况是怎么样?

2.2 那么中国目前的环境状况让你感觉怎么样?

2.4 “绿色意识”这个词 对你意味着什么? / 对你来说有什么意义?

2.5 你为什么参与环保和绿色浙江?

2.6 你觉得我们需要 ENGO 吗? 为什么?

2.7 你有任何以前的 ENGO 的经验吗?

3. Professional questions

3.1 你怎么听过绿色浙江?

3.2 你为什么选择在绿色工作? 为什么不再别的环保组织?

3.3 在绿色现在做什么工作? 你的任务是什么?

3.4 请介绍一下在一个平常的劳动日你做什么?
3.5 在你的工作里，你觉得什么是最有兴趣？

3.6 在你看来，绿色浙江的最重要的任务是什么？

4. **GZ's educational activities and promotions**

   4.1 绿色浙江有很多项目和活动，你可以给我介绍一下这个吗？

   4.2 在那个项目和活动里，什么是为了教老百姓关于环保？

   4.3 为什么这个项目和活动？

   4.5 这些活动怎么组织比方说谁是主人？

   4.6 绿色浙江平常安排这个项目吗？

   4.7 在哪里安排这个项目？

   4.8 你们绿色浙江希望谁参与这样的项目？谁是你们的目标？

   4.9 大部分的活动一般的谁参与？比如年轻人，老人还是？

   4.10 这些活动的效果大还是小？就是后来你有没有成功的感觉，参加的人你觉得她们有影响吗？

   4.11 在绿色谁主管这些的活动？

   4.12 你觉得这种环保教育的项目和活动怎么样？

   4.13 你个人以前参加过这样的活动有没有？

   4.14 你觉得为什么 GZ 组织这些活动是为了公众吗？

   4.15 其实我也想问你，绿色的钱是从哪里来的？

   4.16 这一些钱，谁决定怎么用？为什么？

   4.17 为了你们的活动，绿色常常与政府合作吗？

5. **Regarding specific activities:**

   **Opening statement:**

   我现在在这里实习几个月，所以我想问一些问题关于你们的项目好不好？
5.1 绿工多
5.1.1 你参加过了绿工多吗？
5.1.2 你常常参加这个活动吗？
5.1.3 参加的时候，你做什么？
5.1.4 你觉得这个活动怎么样？
5.1.5 在很多地方我看过你们的大猫熊，可以介绍一下这个吗？

5.2 黄湖自然体验园
5.2.1 你去过了绿色的黄湖自然体验园？你知道绿色在这个地方有什么活动？请介绍一下。
5.2.2 参加的时候，你做什么？
5.2.3 你觉得这个活动怎么样？
5.2.4 黄湖自然体验园的地址？这个活动为什么再那边开？有什么原因？

5.4 Green Zhejiang award ceremony:
5.4.1 绿色浙江有一个公益盛典 去过了有没有？请介绍一下。
5.4.2 你做什么？
5.4.3 绿色浙江为什么安排这个典礼？
5.4.4 演说的人是谁？
5.4.5 你的任务是什么？
5.4.6 谁参加？为什么这个人？
5.4.7 你们收到了多少钱？
5.4.8 你们怎么决定怎么化这个钱？

Last: is there anything you would like to add? 最后：还有什么想说吗？

Interview guide: Mr. G
1. Personal questions

1.1 你今年几岁？
1.2 你是哪里人？
1.3 你在大学读书吗？什么专业？
1.4 你记得在学校里教过自然教育吗？
1.5 你现有什么工作？

2. Personal environmental questions:
2.1 在你看法，中国当前的环境状况是怎么样？

2.2 那么你对当前的环境状况有什么感受？

2.4 “绿色意识”这个词对你意味着什么？/对你来说有什么意义？

2.5 你为什么参与环保和绿色浙江？

2.6 你觉得我们需要 ENGO 吗？为什么？

2.7 你有任何以前的 ENGO 的经验吗？

3. Professional questions

3.1 你什么时候决定你要做环保工作？

3.2 你如何建立绿色浙江？

3.3 建立的时候有什么麻烦？

3.4 在一开始你们与政府的关系怎么样？现在呢？

3.5 绿色与国际环保组织合作吗？什么样的合作？

3.6 现在绿色有多少员工？

3.7 在绿色做什么工作？你的任务是什么？

3.8 请介绍一下在一个平常的劳动日你做什么？

3.9 在你的工作里，你觉得什么是最有兴趣？

3.10 在你看来，绿色浙江的最重要的任务是什么？

4. GZ’s educational activities and promotions

4.1 在那个项目和活动里，什么是为了教老百姓关于环保？

4.2 为什么这个项目和活动？
4.3 这些活动怎么组织比方说谁是主人？

4.4 绿色浙江平常安排这个项目吗？

4.5 在哪里安排这个项目？

4.6 你们绿色浙江希望谁参与这样的项目 / 谁是你们的目标？

4.7 大部分的活动一般的谁参与？比如年轻人，老人还是？

4.8 这些活动的效果大还是小？就是后来你有没有成功的感觉，参加的人你觉得她们有影响吗？

4.9 在绿色谁主管这些的动？

4.10 你觉得这种环保教育的项目和活动怎么样？

4.11 你个人以前参加过这样的活动有没有？

4.12 你觉得为什么 GZ 组织这些活动？是为了公众吗？

4.13 其实我也想问你，绿色的钱是从哪里来的？

4.14 这一些钱，谁决定怎么用？为什么？

4.15 为了你们的活动，绿色常常与政府合作吗？

5. Regarding specific activities:
Opening statement:
我现在在这里实习几个月，所以我想问一些问题关于你们的项目好不好？

5.1 绿工多
5.1.1 你参加过了绿工多吗？
5.1.2 参加的时候，你做什么？
5.1.3 你觉得这个活动怎么样？
5.1.4 在很多地方我看过你们的大猫熊，可以介绍一下这个吗？

5.2 黄湖自然体验园
5.2.1 你去过了绿色的黄湖自然体验园？你知道绿色在这个地方有什么活动？请介绍一下
5.2.2 参加的时候，你做什么？
5.2.3 你觉得这个活动怎么样？
5.2.4 黄湖自然体验园的地址？这个活动为什么再那边开？有什么原因？

5.4 Green Zhejiang award ceremony:
5.4.1 绿色浙江有一个公益盛典 去过了有没有？请介绍一下
5.4.2 你做什么？
5.4.3 绿色浙江为什么安排这个典礼？
5.4.4 演说的人是谁？
5.5.3 你的任务是什么？
5.5.4 谁参加？为什么这个人？
5.5.5 成功了吗？你们收到了多少钱？
5.5.6 你们怎么决定怎么化这个钱？

6. Last: is there anything you would like to add? 最后：还有什么想说吗？

Interview guide: Participants
Opening statement
现我要说非常感谢，你帮我做这个采访！我是硕士，为了我的论文做这个采访是很重要。我的论文题目是关于中国环保组织的活动和项目，所以这一些问题也就是关于这个题目

1. Personal questions
1.1 你今年多大？
1.2 你的老家是在哪里？
1.3 你在大学读书吗？什么专业？
1.4 你记得你是学生的时候教过环境教育吗？老师教你什么？什么时候？（比如说小学，中学等等）
1.5 你现有什么工作？

2. Personal environmental questions:
2.1 在你看来，中国目前的环境情况是怎么样？为什么？这个让你觉得怎么样？
2.4 “绿色意识”这个词对你意味着什么？
2.6 你觉得我们需要环保组织/ENGO 吗？为什么（/为什么不）？

3. Questions for participants of the GZ environmental education farm activity
要是你参与了绿色浙江的黄湖自然体验园活动，请回答这一些问题。（要是你没参加过了黄湖，但参加了别的绿色浙江的活动请也回答这一些问题）

3.1 你怎么听过了绿色浙江的活动？

3.2 你为什么参加了那个活动？

3.3 你跟家人在一起去了，或者自己去了吗？（你的孩子几岁？）

3.4 活动怎么样，介绍一下 — 比如说：你做什么，绿色浙江员工对你们说什么（关于环保等等）

3.5 这样的活动让你感觉怎么样？

3.6 在你看来这个活动对你有什么影响？（对你的孩子呢？）

3.7 这个活动以前你去过了别的绿色浙江的活动吗？什么活动，介绍一下。

3.8 参加绿色浙江的活动以后，你也参加别的环保活动吗？

3.9 参加过了这个黄湖活动（或者别的绿色浙江活动）你还要不要再去参加绿色浙江的活动？

8. 最后：你还有什么要补充的吗？
## Appendix B: Tables

### Table 1: Overview of interview subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member/Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Secretary-General and Assistant director (Nature school department)</td>
<td>Biotechnology (University)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. B</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Full-time at the Propaganda department</td>
<td>Foreign Languages (University)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. C</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Full-time at the Environmental monitoring center</td>
<td>Taxation and English Language (University)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. D</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Project manager</td>
<td>Law (University)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. E</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Full-time at the Nature school department</td>
<td>English Language (University)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Deputy secretary general</td>
<td>Statistics (University)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. G</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Vice-President and co-founder</td>
<td>Environmental Science (University)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. K</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Administrative Management (University)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. L</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Human resources (Zhejiang University)</td>
<td>Agricultural Economics and Management (University)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Human resources (Zhejiang University)</td>
<td>Human Resources (University)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>