

University of Minnesota
Consortium on Law and Values in Health, Environment & the Life Sciences
2011-2012 Graduate Research Grants

Project Report

**Chinese Green Capitalism and Urban Sustainability:
The Cases of Shanghai's Dongtan Eco-City and Tianjin Eco-City**

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Introduction

This project examines a) how urban sustainability policies become one of the arena where green capitalism exercise its influences, and b) how urban sustainability policies have become variegated across places and social contexts beyond post-industrial economies. By studying two internationally collaborated eco-city projects in China – the Sino-British Shanghai Dongtan Eco-city and the Sino-Singaporean Binhai Eco-city, this research investigates the green development rationales behind the two projects. This research also builds the foundation for tracing the circulation of eco-city ideas among international and local Chinese actors in order to further study the emergence of a new Chinese eco-city paradigm in urban development.

Results

The research funding was used to conduct archival research and preliminary field research on the Tianjin Binhai Eco-city, and to support a follow-up research trip to the Shanghai Dongtan Eco-city. Funding from the consortium is acknowledged in the following papers (both in progress and submitted for publication) and presentations:

Publications:

Chang, I-Chun Catherine. 2012. "The Sino-Singaporean Tianjin Binhai Eco-city: Contested Green Urban Landscapes." (in progress)

Chang, I-Chun Catherine and Eric Sheppard. 2011. "China's Eco-cities as Variegated Urban Sustainability: Dongtan Eco-city and Chongming Eco-island," *Journal of Urban Technology*. (under peer-review)

Presentations:

Chang, I-Chun Catherine, Eric Sheppard and Helga Leitner, "China's Eco-cities as Variegated Urban Sustainability: Dongtan Eco-city and Chongming Eco-island," New Directions in Environmental and Energy Law, Policy, and Geography, Consortium on Law and Values in Health, Environment & the Life Sciences and the Institute on the Environment, University of Minnesota, May 3-5, 2012.

Chang, I-Chun Catherine, "China's Eco-cities as Variegated Urban Sustainability: Dongtan Eco-city and Chongming Eco-island," Interdisciplinary and Global

Studies Division Lunch Talk, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Apr 18, 2012.
(Invited Lecture)

Chang, I-Chun Catherine and Eric Sheppard, "China's Eco-cities as Variegated Urban Sustainability: Dongtan Eco-city and Chongming Eco-island," Association of American Geographers' Annual Meetings, New York City, Feb 24-28, 2012.

Chang, I-Chun Catherine, " 'Chinese' Models of Ecological Urbanization: Variegated Sustainability, Green Capitalism, and Knowledge Production," Institute for Advanced Study Fellow Talk, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Nov 23, 2011.

Research findings from this project also form the basis for two further grant proposals:

1. Global Spotlight International Research Grant (Doctoral Fellowships), Global Programs and Strategy Alliances, University of Minnesota. "Chinese" Models of Ecological Urbanization: The Shanghai Dongtan and Tianjin Binhai Eco-cities Projects. (Awarded)

2. Geography and Spatial Sciences Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants, National Science Foundation. "Variegated Geographies of Ecological Urbanization: China's Eco-cities in Global Context" (with Eric Sheppard and Helga Leitner; Pending)

Future project plans

The research supported by the Consortium funding has formed an integral part of the awardee's doctoral dissertation, the completion of which is expected at the end of 2013. The Consortium funding also allows the awardee to expand the scope of her dissertation research. Building on research findings from studying the local contexts of the two Chinese eco-cities, the awardee is now pursuing the next step of focusing on tracing the genealogical connections of ecological urbanization experiments between the UK, Singapore and China. The research funded by this grant also opens a productive avenue for future inquiry regarding how sustainable urban experiments practiced in a manufacture-centered authoritarian country (China) may in turn affect the future sustainable urban experiments elsewhere through circulation/mobility of policy initiatives. In the longer term, the funded research also contributes to a detailed and grounded understanding of the complicated contemporary urban policy connections and its mutations in different geographical regions. The awardee sincerely appreciates the funding support from the Consortium on Law and Values in Health, Environment & the Life Sciences. Because of the support from the Consortium, the awardee can therefore pursue a more ambitious line of research she felt most potentially valuable.