

The Good Earth In Search of the Chinese Commons

In June, the government of the United States announced its intention to withdraw from the Paris Accords, severely undermining the global effort to contain climate change. Since then, China has entered the fray, attempting to portray itself as a world leader on environmental issues. Considering that China is currently the largest emitter of greenhouse gases, this development might appear paradoxical. Nevertheless, in recent years the Chinese authorities have become increasingly concerned with the toll that environmental catastrophes are taking on the health of the country's citizens, as this has the potential to spark unrest that could negatively affect governmental legitimacy. The 'airpocalypses' that have hit major Chinese cities and the 'cancer villages', where disease has spread due to soil and water pollution caused by industries, are just two instances of major environmental scandals that have made the headlines in China over the years. It is in light of this crisis—and also in an attempt to capitalise on environmental protection economically—that the Chinese leadership has been pushing forward ambitious plans for 'environmental rejuvenation', which include new policies and massive investments in renewable energies.

While global attention has focussed on China's top-down environmental efforts, in this issue of *Made in China* we consider the engagement of Chinese citizens with state policies on the environment, and look into their potential for articulating workable grassroots alternatives. In particular, we examine the management of public resources—the so-called 'commons'. In **A Chinese Water Commons?**, Andrea Pia argues that there are places in rural China where water is already being managed as a commons. In **Amateurism and Our Common Concern for Biodiversity**, Timothy McLellan outlines his

experience with a project aimed at introducing biologically diverse agroforestry in a county in southwest China, and puts forward a critique of professionalisation in the realm of international environmental cooperation. In **Commons and the Right to the City in Contemporary China**, Carlo Inverardi-Ferri tells the story of an urban village on the outskirts of Beijing, providing insights into the process of land commodification in today's China. In **Burning Coal in Tangshan**, Edwin Schmitt traces the history of coal mining in China, highlighting the nexus between the physical characteristics of energy resources and the development of the rules that govern them. Finally, in **Protecting Sacred Commons**, Brendan Galipeau explores how some Tibetan communities engaging in viticulture in northwest Yunnan province pursue an ecologically friendly agenda meant to protect 'common' Buddhist sacred landscapes.

This issue also includes essays related to labour and civil society. In **What Future Is There for Human Rights Lawyering in China?**, Fu Hualing analyses the practices of Chinese human rights lawyers and examines the prospects for their survival in Xi Jinping's era. In **Slaving Away**, Ivan Franceschini looks back at the 'black brick kilns scandal' that took place in China ten years ago and attempts to draw some lessons from those horrific stories of forced labour. In **China's Industrial Heritage without History**, Maris Boyd Gillette examines the public memory of China's socialist industrial heritage. In our cultural section, Chen Shuxia retraces the life of the late photographer Ren Hang, who committed suicide earlier this year. We conclude by interviewing Christian Sorace about his new book on the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake, *Shaken Authority*.

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