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## ***Working Paper Series nr. 14***

***The position of citizens with regard to environmental protection: a contribution to a Chinese and European comparison based on reflections on the applied model by the Chinese city Jiaxing***

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***20<sup>th</sup> January 2015***

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 Amsterdam/The Hague, 3rd January 2015\*)***

**Preface**

Representatives of the international movement of 'transition towns' – which will contribute seriously to environmental protection - argue, that: *“all industrial countries appear to operate on the assumption that our high levels of energy consumption, our high carbon emission and our massive environmental impact can go on? indefinitely. And most developing countries appear to aspire to these ways of living too. However, any rational examination of our energy supplies, our economic inequality, our diminishing levels of well-being, our ecological crisis and the climate chaos that is already hitting millions of people, tell us this can't go on much longer”*.<sup>1</sup> Today, this conclusion becomes more and more modified.

\*) The adjective 'Dutch' is connected to the noun 'Netherlands'. People living in The Netherlands are called 'Dutch'.

**1 Introduction: the purpose and content of this IASQ-study**

**1.1 The purpose of this study**

The EU-China Environmental Governance Programme (called the **EGP-project**) started in 2012. Its object is to evaluate the outcomes of this EGP-project, called *“Public Participation of Environmental Governance in the Jiaxing Model and its applicability in Zhejiang Province”*, as well as to formulate policy advice concerning the implementation of this model in eight other cities/metropolises of the Zhejiang Province.<sup>2</sup> In this model mechanisms are applied to promote the so-called public participation to cope with environmental questions and to encourage citizens to participate in the supervision of strategies for preventing pollution in and around the city of Jiaxing. According to the authorities of the Zhejiang Province, this should pave the way for environmental protection. In terms of a recent EGP-document: *“democratic consultation is included in the governance mechanism. In the traditional*

<sup>1</sup> [www.transitiontown.org/www.transitionnetwork.org](http://www.transitiontown.org/www.transitionnetwork.org).

<sup>2</sup> Center of Environmental Education and Communications of Zhejiang Province (CEECZJ), 'EU-China Environmental Governance Programme (EGP); Part B.Full Application Form', Europe Aid/ 132-005//ACT/ CN

*environmental management model, management power is centred on the government, which is highly centralized and reacts slowly with higher running costs. Under the Jiaxing Model, social organisations and the public start to share management power with the government, shouldering the responsibility of management and cooperating with the government.*<sup>3</sup>

In other words, the model advocates a strong position of residents to play a role in the decision-making processes of the Jiaxing authorities to increase environmental protection. The International Association on Social Quality (IASQ) was invited to participate in its evaluation given its work recently carried out to understand how to enhance the role of residents in the urban context for contributing to the development to overall sustainability.<sup>4</sup> With this in mind, this model is highly interesting because (1) it concerns an aspect of a much broader context, and (2) it aims to be implemented in eight other Chinese cities of the Zhejiang Province. With regard to the first point we recognise an inequality between the USA, the EU, China and India concerning for example the production of greenhouse gas emissions per million inhabitants, namely: in 2013 resp. appr. 15, 7, 7,5 and 2 MTCO<sub>2</sub>.<sup>5</sup> Recently India's new environment minister explained that India will not decrease these emissions because it has to eradicate poverty; 20 per cent of the population does not have access to electricity: *"The USA should decrease these emissions as the world's largest historic greenhouse polluter"*.<sup>6</sup> A European-Chinese debate about this Jiaxing model will enhance our consciousness that the role of citizens is part of this broader context.

One of the IASQ's activities as partner of the EGP-project concerned a first tentative empirical exploration of the role of community groups and residents in the city of Jiaxing located in the Zhejiang Province in China<sup>7</sup> as well as a similar exploration of those groups and residents of the Dutch city of The Hague.<sup>8</sup> The objective is to compare both as one of the sources for formulating a policy advice on behalf of the authorities of the Zhejiang Province with the help of other European input as well.<sup>9</sup> This study recently published pays attention to related theoretical considerations to deepen this comparison for enhancing this advice. As

<sup>3</sup> EGP-project (2014), *'Policy Suggestion Report'*, (Hangzhou: CEECZJ), p.7

<sup>4</sup> L.J.G. van der Maesen (2013), 'Analyzing Societal Circumstances, Sustainability and Sustainable Urban Development: New Theoretical and Methodological Challenges for Social Quality Indicators', *International Journal of Social Quality*, Vol. 3 (1), pp. 82-105.

<sup>5</sup> [www.globalcarbonatlas.org](http://www.globalcarbonatlas.org)

<sup>6</sup> C. Davenport (2014), 'Delhi warns that carbon emissions will increase', *International New York Times*, September 26, 5.

<sup>7</sup> K. Wang (2014), *'Exploring Jiaxing Model: Report on the Empirical Research on Public Participation in Environmental Governance in Jiaxing City.'* (Amsterdam/The Hague: IASQ, working paper series).

<sup>8</sup> K. Wang (2014), *'Exploration of The Hague: Report about the Empirical Research on Public Participation in Environmental Governance in the city of The Hague'*, (Amsterdam/The Hague: IASQ, working paper series)

<sup>9</sup> K. Wang (2014), *'Jiaxing Model and the Polder Model: Comparative Study on Public Participation in environmental Governance in Jiaxing and The Hague'*, (Amsterdam/The Hague: IASQ).

tentative point of reference we will apply the conceptual framework of the social quality theory, which new presentation is published in the third main book on social quality.<sup>10</sup> In comparison to many Western examples we may recognise an interesting orchestration of politics and policies in Chinese cities and metropolises to stimulate environmental protection. According to the authorities of the Zhejiang Province, the Jiaxing model may appear as an interesting example for implementation in eight other metropolises/cities in this Province. The outcomes of the EGP-project with regard to this model may deliver empirical points of departure for its elaboration and this implementation.

## **1.2 The content of this study; public participation as a driving force**

In the *second* section the arguments, the background and the rational of this study are presented in connection to the theoretical framework of social quality work. This will be followed in the *third* section with Chinese and global arguments for the start of environmental politics and policies of the city of Jiaxing. In the *fourth* section attention is dedicated to the urban context as point of departure for these politics and policies. With both previous sections in mind the *fifth* section is dedicated to a comparison between the structure and arguments of environmental activities in the Chinese city of Jiaxing and the Dutch city of The Hague. This is based on recent explorations in both cities.<sup>11</sup> The *sixth* section will bridge the outcomes of the previous sections and the policy advice, formulated in the *seventh* section. This advice concerns the question how to further elaborate the Jiaxing model and what seems to be important for its implementation in eight other Chinese cities/metropolises. A general objective is to look at the role and position of community based organizations (CBO's), local non-governmental groups (NGO's) and individual residents for contributing to environmental protection. As argued by Sangli during one of the conferences of the EGP-project, *"public participating is the driving force and support of the ecological system. Without public participation the whole ecological system cannot operate"*.<sup>12</sup> This argument implicitly refers to the supposition, that local CBO's and NGO's function as decisive change agents.

## **2. The argument, rational and background of this study contributing to the EGP Project**

<sup>10</sup> L.J.G. van der Maesen, A.C. Walker (2012) (eds), *'Social Quality: From Theory to Indicators'* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan) With contributions by: W. Beck, P. Herrmann, D. Gordon, Y. Berman, D. Phillips, C. Walker.

<sup>11</sup> K. Wang et al, see note-9.

<sup>12</sup> EGP-project (2013), *'Newsletter no.2, serial nr.3'*, (Hangzhou: CEECZJ), p.2.

## 2.1 *The argument of the study; the position of CBO's and NGO's*

In our terms, the central objectives of the EGP-project are, **first**, to analyse the so-called 'Jiaxing model' which aims to strengthen the role of community based organizations (CBO's), local non-governmental organisations (NGO's) of Jiaying as well as residents as such in order to strengthen their role in coping with environmental challenges of this city. In a general sense CBO's are oriented on local practices connecting and operationalising a complex of issues in the community and NGO's on specific issues, collaborating with provincial and national issue oriented NGO's. According to Jiayuan, vice governor of the Zhejiang Province, the 'Jiaxing model' aims therefore to develop new tools and mechanisms of "*policy innovation for environmental governance practice to promote the work of public participation in environmental protection and construction of an ecological province.*"<sup>13</sup> **Secondly**, to formulate recommendations on the basis of the results how to develop this project and to implement the positive outcomes of this example in other eight Chinese cities of the Zhejiang Province. These outcomes concern "*to set up new institutional channels for people to influence the environmental decision-making process.*"<sup>14</sup>

For the IASQ both objectives are highly interesting. It stimulates to systematically discuss the results in order to understand what would be implemented not only in the other eight metropolises/cities of the Zhejiang Province or other metropolises in China, but also in other Asian countries, in Europe and beyond. This implies a verifiable understanding of the role of CBO's, local NGO's and residents in Jiaying and what this means for the other eight cities of Zhejiang Province. Chinese policy-makers ask themselves whether their role will support strategies leading to the development toward 'ecological oriented metropolises and an ecological oriented province'? For the IASQ this would mean - and see note-3 – a sustainable urban development of Jiaying and other metropolises in the Zhejiang Province as condition for the development toward overall sustainability. Hypothesized is that the environmental oriented investments in Zhejiang Province are important for understanding the interrelations of societal complexities, sustainable urban development and overall sustainability. Such an implicit orchestration is difficult to find elsewhere and that is the reason the exploration of the Jiaying model is highly interesting. This study will conclude, however, that these interrelations are not really paid any attention to. The Jiaying orientation is explicitly restricted to an aspect of these interrelations. Therefore the debate on the Jiaying model does not really explain its

<sup>13</sup> EGP-project (2012), 'Newsletter nr.1, serial nr.1', (Hangzhou: CEECZJ), p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> EGP-project (2012), 'Flyer: Public Participation of Environmental Governance in the Jiaying Model and its Applicability in Zhejiang Province', (Hangzhou: CEEZJ).

whole potential. The challenge of the policy advice to be described in section-7 is to enrich the interpretation of the Jiaxing model.

## **2.2 The rational of the study**

The main rational of this study is to reflect on the outcomes of the empirical explorations in Jiaxing and The Hague. These explorations respectively took place at the end of 2013 and the beginning of 2014.<sup>15</sup> In Jiaxing key residents, engaged with the Jiaxing model, were asked about (i) the supposed main characteristics of the model, (ii) who in their view are the key-persons and key-institutions playing a role in this model, (iii) what the structure is these people are acting in and the reason of this structure, (iv) and how the respondents describe the nature of the Jiaxing model. In order to really answer these questions it is important to know the view of the respondents on the environmental challenges and problems of the city. What are the supposed main causes of the problems? Which instruments or tools are necessary for citizens to play an effective role for coping with these challenges and problems? Seen in the context of the Jiaxing model, are these tools or only part of these tools accessible and what are the consequences for e.g. the significance of this model for developing 'democratic processes' to change the environmental conditions of Jiaxing (see application)?<sup>16</sup>

In the papers and discussions about the nature and significance of the Jiaxing model or approaches different concepts are used to explain what takes place, for example: public participation, environmental protection, environmental governance, and environmental democracy and social organizations. In this study we reflect on some of these concepts which may contribute to enhancing the consistency of the applied approach in Jiaxing and other cities and metropolises. For a global debate on the experience in Jiaxing a consensus about the nature of these concepts is a *conditio sine qua non*.

## **2.3 The study's background information and applied frame of reference**

### *2.3.1 Some points about the history*

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<sup>15</sup> K. Wang, see note-6, K. Wang, see note-8.

<sup>16</sup> L.J.G. van der Maesen (2013), 'Discussion-paper: Proposal for the exploration of citizen's' experiences with environmental questions of the city of Jiaxing: the Jiaxing Model', (Amsterdam/ The Hague: IASQ)

Especially some Dutch scholars connected with the IASQ were trained before in studying and contributing to urban processes. This was the argument of the Dutch Government in the beginning of the social quality work to request for an exploration of the connection of the social quality theory with issues related with urban processes in the beginning of 2000s.<sup>17</sup> Inspiration for this research was also derived from the work carried out in the 1970s and 1980s concerning the contribution to the development of the new Dutch suburb of Amsterdam (Amsterdam-South East) and the city Almere, resp. for 125.000 and 250.000 inhabitants.<sup>18</sup> At that time an adequate frame of reference was lacking for contributing to policies with regard to urban development as an aspect of modern societal challenges related with the 'development toward sustainability'. Especially new 'social quality work' in the Hague since the 2005s tried to apply the first contours of the social quality theory in order to relate urban processes with this broader perspective. For the Municipality of The Hague the outcomes delivered the argument to request for an exploration of the significance of this theory for urban processes in this city.<sup>19</sup> A start was made to contribute to the 'sustainable urban development' of the quarter of Laak of The Hague.<sup>20</sup>

### 2.3.2 Recent studies as point of departure

The outcomes of the Jiaxing exploration (see note-7) are used in the exploration of the role of residents in the Dutch city of The Hague (see note-8). They function as main background information of this recent study. Other recent explorations also function as pillars of this study. Some years ago representatives of Zhejiang University and the IASQ started to discuss how to compare urban strategies and their results in different continents. Among other things this resulted in an IASQ-study for understanding the urban strategies of the Municipality of Hangzhou of the Zhejiang Province in comparison with those of the city of The Hague, namely in its quarter Laak.<sup>21</sup> From the side of Zhejiang University and the Municipality of Hangzhou this resulted in a study about social innovation and local governance. The

<sup>17</sup> W. A. Beck (2001), *'Towards European Cities of Social Quality: a study on request by the Ministry of Welfare, Health and Sports'*, (Amsterdam: EFSQ).

<sup>18</sup> L.J.G. van der Maesen (1970), *'Amsterdam-South East: a Model for Public Participation in processes developing its physical infrastructure and education, culture, health care and cure, well-being and welfare [in Dutch]'*, (The Hague: Dutch Ministry of Culture, Well-being and Social Work). Furthermore: L.J.G. van der Maesen and R. Helsloot (1986), *'The Planning and Development of the Health Care and Cure in the largest new Dutch Town, Almere [in Dutch]'*, (Amsterdam: SISWO, in SOMSO-Folia, nr.21).

<sup>19</sup> H.G.J. Nijhuis, L.J.G. van der Maesen and J. F. Westbroek (2009), *'A Methodological Framework to identify Responsibilities and Research Questions for Sustainable Neighbourhood and Urban Development and International Comparative Research and Cooperation; a study on request by the Municipality of The Hague'*, (Amsterdam/The Hague: EFSQ).

<sup>20</sup> L.J.G. van der Maesen and P. Herrmann (2012), *'Welfare Arrangements, Sustainable Development and new forms of Governance: the recent Demonstrationproject of the Quarter Laak of the Hague'*, (Amsterdam/The Hague: EFSQ, working-paper series nr.8, [www.socialquality.org](http://www.socialquality.org)).

<sup>21</sup> L.J.G. van der Maesen (2012), *'The Orientation, Strategies and Model (or experiences) of the city of Hangzhou from a comparative Perspective'*, (Amsterdam/The Hague: EFSQ, working paper series nr. 9, [www.socialquality.org](http://www.socialquality.org)).



comparison with urban strategies applied in The Hague also was focused on.<sup>22</sup> Both activities stimulated a participation of the IASQ in the EGP-project. The objective of this participation is explained and elaborated in a discussion-paper.<sup>23</sup> The IASQ's attention on the environmental dimension is strengthened as a result of its 'think-tank of Dutch experts' which lead to a working paper on 'development toward sustainability' on behalf of participants of the Rio+20 conference on sustainability in June 2012.<sup>24</sup> Also this work may be appreciated as a pillar of the recent study. Furthermore, the IASQ recently published its third main book, adopting the issue of overall sustainability and sustainable urban development as the new focus of social quality thinking.<sup>25</sup> This book, as well the second main book on social quality<sup>26</sup> is forthcoming shortly translated into the Chinese language by the University of Shanghai. Both books and the working paper for Rio+20 delivered the arguments to comment on the report by Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi on social progress and sustainability produced on request by the French Government. These authors referred to a complex of undefined concepts and an eclectic elaboration of indicators.<sup>27</sup> These social quality studies paved the way for a new study, which is dedicated to the interrelationships of the three crucial 'fields of perspectives' of human existence (societal complexities, sustainability and sustainable urban development) and four dimensions of each field, namely the socio-political/legal, the socio-cultural/welfare, the socio-economic/financial and the socio-environmental dimension.<sup>28</sup> Finally the EGP-project itself resulted in publication of a number of studies about a manifold of issues related to the project in the *International Journal of Social Quality*.<sup>29</sup> This project stimulated the recently published environmental oriented articles in this journal, accentuating the role of citizens (residents) for contributing to the development toward overall sustainability.

### 2.3.3 An applied theoretical frame of reference

<sup>22</sup> Y. Li, Y. sun, K .Lin (2012), 'Social Innovation, Local governance and Social quality: The Case of Intersectoral Collaboration in Hangzhou City', *International Journal of Social Quality*, Vol. 2 (1)., pp. 56-74

<sup>23</sup> Van der Maesen, see note-16.

<sup>24</sup> J. van Renswoude, L.J.G. van der Maesen, P. Herrmann (2012), '*Development toward Sustainability: The need for a comprehensive conceptual and methodological Framework for new Politics and Policies: a Social Quality Perspective*', (Amsterdam/The Hague: IASQ, working paper series nr. 11, [www.socialquality.org](http://www.socialquality.org)), with contributions by H. Wijffels, D. Gasper, J. Westbroek, A. Walker, J. Kortenhorst, L. Ka, H. Opschoor, G. Whiteman, A. de Haan. T. Cadman et cetera.

<sup>25</sup> Van der Maesen et al, see note-10.

<sup>26</sup> W.A. Beck, L.J.G. van der Maesen, F. Thomése, A.C. Walker (eds) (2001), "*Social Quality: A Vision for Europe*", (The Hague, London, Boston: Kluwer Law International), with contributions by: G. Therborn, A. Ojeda-Aviles, D. Bouget, M. Calloni, K. van Kersbergen, D. Phillips, Y. Berman, J. Berting, C. Villain-Gandossi, O. de Leonardis, A. Evers, G. Standing, G. Vobruba, S. Andersen, K. Eliassen, G. Konrad.

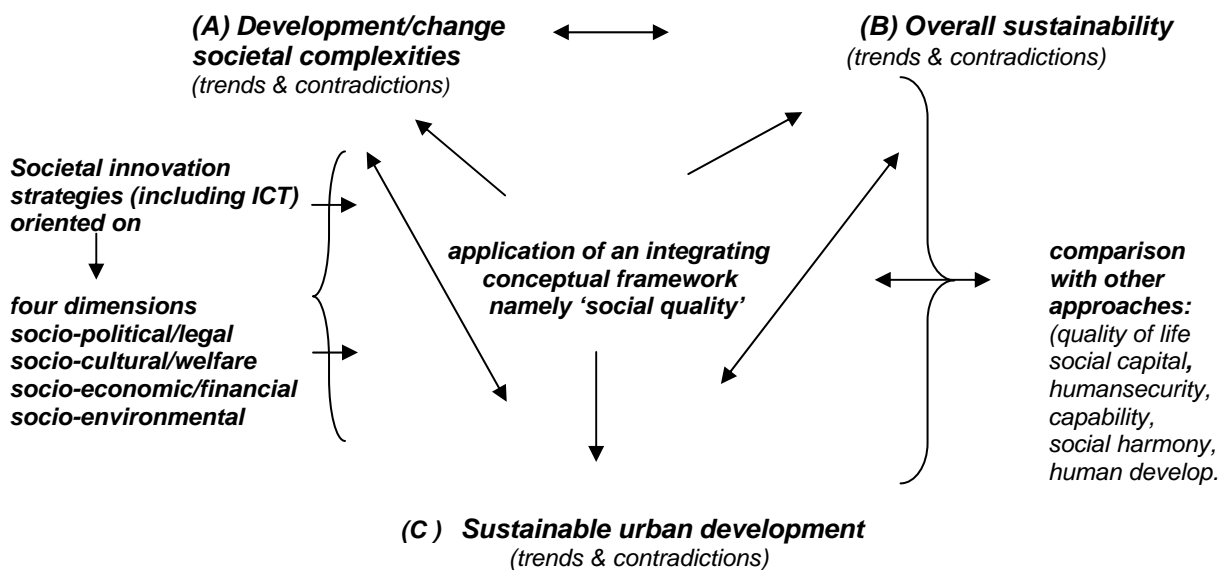
<sup>27</sup> P. Herrmann (2012), 'Economic Performance, Social Progress and Social Quality (a comment on the Stiglitz et al Report)', *International Journal of Social Quality*, Vol. 2 (1), pp. 41-56.

<sup>28</sup> Van der Maesen, see note-4.

<sup>29</sup> Editors (2014), 'Editorial (Public Participation addressing Environmental Challenges)', *International Journal of Social Quality* , 4 (1), [with contributions by: S. Corbett, H. Voss, R. Fontana, M. Ferrucci, V. Mignaqui, S. Shamsi, P. Spicker], pp. 1-6..

The studies referred to above pay attention to the relationships of three essential fields of perspectives of daily circumstances, see Figure-1. Hypothesized is that the theoretical framework of social quality is suitable (disposes of a heuristic meaning) to analyse each of the three fields as well as their interrelationships. It concerns a topic which remains underdeveloped in the current debate on the Jiaxing model. Supposed is that this framework is of interest to better understand the overall consequences of the orchestrated investments in the Zhejiang Province. Since the main topic of the EGP-project concerns 'public participation in environmental governance for contributing to environmental protection', we should understand – and see Figure-1 - the interrelationships of the socio-environmental dimension with the socio-political dimension.

**Figure-1: Interrelationships of the three major fields**



The argument is that issues as government and governance concern the heart of the matter of the latter. Therefore they should be understood in the context of the field of sustainable urban development (**ad-C**), because it is in urban circumstances that the socio-political dimension will be changed or not. However in order to fully grasp the significance of what takes place in this field we should also be focussed on the relationship with both other fields, namely development and change of societal complexities (**ad-A**) and overall sustainability (**ad-B**). For example, the adjective 'sustainable' of 'sustainable urban development' cannot be conceived without a theoretical connection to the concept 'sustainability' as noun in the context of 'development toward sustainability'.

In a new study (see note-3) it is also hypothesised that 'social quality thinking' can function as the 'integrating conceptual framework'. This should be verified by comparing this approach with other existing approaches. This way of reasoning will raise a main question whether the debate on the Jiaxing model is sufficiently connected with the debate on the sustainable urban development of Jiaxing (see section-3)? This study's point of departure is that protection of the socio-environmental dimension of cities and metropolises concerns the heart of the matter of sustainable urban development. We will use Figure-1 as an important aspect of our frame of reference. It delivers a context to understand the attention in the Jiaxing model on the socio-political and the socio-environmental dimensions. These cannot be understood isolated from each other.

### **3. Arguments for investments in Chinese cities of the Zhejiang Province**

#### **3.1 *Seen from a Chinese perspective: knowledge and communication as conditions***

The Harvard China Project draws two main conclusions which seem to be paradoxical. First, in China – seen from an historical perspective – something unbelievable took place. China lifted more than 600 million people out of poverty in only a few decades. At the same time the most populous nation (at 1.35 billion) has succeeded in an enormous reduction of air pollution and limit of carbon dioxide emission, the main driver of climate change. Without these actions 74.000 premature deaths would have occurred in 2010. Furthermore, in around 10 years it has developed the world's largest wind power capacity. Secondly, China's efforts at emission pollution control are falling short and why? According to researchers, one of them *"is China's instinctual response to such challenges: a top-down approach to try to engineer its way through them according to master plans. The result is that China may be winning battles but not the wars on emissions control, because its faith in mandates and? has met its match: an economy that is growing too fast, and atmospheric challenges that are too multifaceted for even the smartest planners to tame"*.<sup>30</sup> One of their proposals how to deal with this is, first, the application of a serious tax on carbon dioxide (see also previous top-leaders of BP and Shell<sup>31</sup>), which should lower the growth of emissions with little effect on GDP- growth and consumption, since China's severe pollution results chiefly from coal and

<sup>30</sup> C. P. Nielson and M.S. Ho (2013), 'Clearing the air in China', *International New York Times*, 26-27 October.

<sup>31</sup> J. Trommelen (2014), 'Old Oil top-barons look at oil as a danger', *De Volkskrant*, Amsterdam, Friday, 21 November, p. 4.

oil combustion. They also stress, second, a new form of engagement of the population as a *conditio sine qua non*. Price-mechanisms are important but not sufficient to deal with environmental problems and challenges.

Another point of view is published by members of the Chinese Academy of Social (including economic) Sciences and Wageningen University in The Netherlands. In their study about environmental risk management in China they demonstrate the growing awareness about environmental problems, due to a series of environmental disasters and accidents in the beginning of the twenty-first century. They mention the chemical spill in the Songhuajiang River in 2005 as being notorious. One of the innovations in environmental risk management is the 'information disclosure': *"it calls upon new actors and new steering mechanisms in managing environmental risks. Mandatory disclosure of information on environmental risks will further trigger polluters and environmental authorities to reduce risks through public pressure"*.<sup>32</sup> This study focussed on the role of the provincial Environmental Protection Bureau (EPB's). They conclude that *"often lack of (motivated) staff and resources and the absence of clear responsibilities are an important cause of information requests (sent by registered mail, e-mail, fax, telephone or even online submission) ending up nowhere. And if these requests find a responsive EPB staff, it proves that they are often not able or not willing to respond to information disclosure requests as stipulated by the decree. This was also the case in company environmental information disclosure"*.<sup>33</sup> Some main reasons for not providing the requested information are that the information is either non-existent or classified as confidential. According the researchers, this 'confidential argument' points on the one hand to conflicts between the rules and regulations and on the other hand to attitudes of the provincial EPB officers.<sup>34</sup> Their study about chemical accidents in China concludes that the existing databases in China are too fragmented and incomplete. Therefore it is impossible to adequately develop policy and decision making on chemical risk and accident management. This is also due to the lack of a coordinated and integrated chemical risk and accidents information.<sup>35</sup> In other words missing are adequate knowledge and communication about policies and business strategies and their consequences. They conclude, that *"for the sustainable development of a fast expanding chemical sector in China, it is strategically important to move from responding reactively to preventing proactively risks and accidents."*

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<sup>32</sup> A.P.J. Mol, H.E. Guizhen and L. Zhang (2011), 'Information Disclosure in Environmental Risk Management: Developments in China', *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 3., pp. 163-192, p.164.

<sup>33</sup> Mol et al, see note-32, p. 185.

<sup>34</sup> Mol et al, see note-32, p. 185.

<sup>35</sup> H. Guizhen, L. Zhang, L. Yonglong and A.P. Mol (2011), 'Managing major chemical accidents in China: Towards effective Risk information', *Journal of Hazardous Materials*, 187, pp. 171-181, p. 180.

*This calls for a more coordinated management of a comprehensive information system that gives more weight to environmental pollution information of the chemical accidents*".<sup>36</sup> The topic of this national oriented research concerns the heart of the matter of possibilities to contribute – and see the Jiaxing model – to the prevention of pollution on local level. If the policies of the major surrounding industries (and companies) are not transparent at local level (a lack of knowledge and adequate communication), it will be impossible to act effectively on local level.

In a following study they implicitly argue that not only price mechanisms are called for, but explicitly that a revision of China's Environmental Protection Law (EPL) is necessary: *"the revised EPL should shift from regulation to governance: promoting participation of nongovernmental stakeholders and balancing 'hard' instruments (e.g. command-and-power control) and 'soft' (e.g. environmental education and voluntary agreements). More transparency and public participation in policy and regulatory processes at all stages"*.<sup>37</sup> This was echoed in the Fourth Plenum of the Chinese Government in 2014. Argued is that the rule of law implies *"to break with the past and solve all the left-over problems once and for all and address emerging ones with the rule of law"*.<sup>38</sup> In other words, this will or should also have an impact on the way environmental protection is organized and guided.

With regard to Jiaxing city and its surroundings, a Jiaxing Environmental Report concludes a serious increase of water and heavy metal pollution, causing incidents of drinking-water pollution. Furthermore the report describes dangerous waste dumping. Also the air quality in this part of the Zhejiang Province is decreased especially around some industrial zones. The ratio of acid rain became too high according applied criteria. The most important reason is the fast speed of industrialisation in suburban and rural areas of Jiaxing and the lack of sufficient measures and application of technology to diminish pollution. This is also the case for the whole Zhejiang Province (see note-8). Therefore mass incidents caused by environmental problems occur many times. This province is ranked second in GDP per capita among all the provinces of China. However, its fast growing economy, according a recent document of the EGP-project, causes huge pressure on environmental protection: *"according to a public satisfaction survey on ecological quality in Zhejiang Province in 2010 over 80 percent of*

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<sup>36</sup> Guizhen et al, note-35, p. 180.

<sup>37</sup> G. He, L. Zhang, A.P.J. Mol, Y.Lu and J.Liu (2013), 'Revising China's Environmental Law', *Science*, Vol 341, 12 July, p.133.

<sup>38</sup> *China Daily* (2014) , Thursday, November 6, page.9.

*respondents deemed that local environment was polluted and 20.8 percent was not satisfied with the control of environmental pollution”.*<sup>39</sup>

### **3.2 Arguments seen from a global perspective: general tendencies**

In the light of general environmental tendencies, the policies by the Zhejiang Province are highly rational. Gro Harlem Brundtland – former member of the UN’s High Level Panel on global sustainability<sup>40</sup> – already commented seriously on governments all over the world on the eve of the Rio+20 Conference in 2012: *“governments are currently [also] refusing to make the transformative changes needed to resolve the global sustainability crisis.”*<sup>41</sup> The Report 2014 of the intergovernmental panel on climate change (IPCC) is quite clear about the current environmental state of affairs as a consequence of this ‘refusal’. The warming of the climate system continues. Each of the last three decades has successively been warmer at the Earth’s surface than any preceding decade since 1850. Ocean warming dominates the increase in energy stored in the climate system. Over the last two decades, the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets have been losing mass<sup>42</sup>, glaciers have continued to shrink almost worldwide. The rate of sea-level rise since the mid-19th century has been larger than the mean rate during the previous two millennia: *“anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions have increased since the pre-industrial era, driven largely by economic and population growth and are now higher than ever. This has led to atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide that are unprecedented in at least the last 800.000 years”.*<sup>43</sup> According this Report the collected risks of climate change are so profound they could stall or even reverse generations of progress related to eradicating poverty and hunger if greenhouse gas emissions continue at a runaway pace. The Report also claims that *“less than 400 billion dollar a year is being spent around the world to reduce emissions or otherwise cope with climate change. That sum is smaller than the revenue of a single American oil company, Exxon Mobil”*<sup>44</sup>

Recently, at the meeting of the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in November 2014, USA President Obama and China’s President Xi announced that the USA will reduce the emission of Co2 with 27% in 2025 compared to 2005; China will cap his output by 2030

<sup>39</sup> EGP-project, see note-3, p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> UN (United Nations) (1987), ‘Commission for Sustainable Development: the Brundtland Report ‘Our Common Future’, (New York; UN).

<sup>41</sup> G.H. Brundtland (2012), ‘Earth agonistes’, *International Herald Tribune*, June 19, 8.

<sup>42</sup> B. Clark Howard (2014), *National Geographical Daily News*, May 14. <http://www.google#q-geographical-Research-Letters>.

<sup>43</sup> IPCC (2014), ‘Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report’[www.ipcc.ch](http://www.ipcc.ch), 5 November.

<sup>44</sup> UN Report (2014), *International New York Times*, 3 November, p. 1.

or earlier if possible and it will increase the sun and wind energy production until 20% in 2030 compared to 6% in 2014, which implies a huge extra reduction of emissions. The EU will reduce emissions with 40% in 2030 compared to 1990.<sup>45</sup> However, experts doubt that these plans are enough to really address the dangerous effects of climate change. According to the International Friends of the Earth, the good news is that China is taking the fight against climate change. But the cuts pledged by President Obama are nowhere near what the USA needs to cut if it will prevent a runaway climate change: *“Disgracefully, today’s announcement ignores the fact that developing countries urgently need finance and technology to transform their energy system and adapt to climate change”*.<sup>46</sup> The world has to do more than this. Not only the greenhouse gas emissions are the problem. For instance, the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network demonstrates that coral reefs – the well-springs of Ocean life – are threatened also by ‘localized effects of overfishing, run off pollution from the land and the destruction of habitats from costal development.’<sup>47</sup> This also refers to human actions, responsible for the nature of such permissible socio-political and socio-cultural dimensions of societal life. Such a permissibility also concerns the increasing number of waste dumped in rivers and thus the oceans, causing the immense areas of ‘plastic soup’, poisoning ocean life. The other good news is that the city of New York collected more than 28.000 tons of expanded polystyrene in the year ending in June 2014: *More disturbing when it gets into the water, it floats forever. Plastics are a curse of the world’s oceans ( ...) New York has wisely decided not to keep adding to it”*.<sup>48</sup>

### **3.3 Attention for the urban context: the rise of the Ecological Footprint**

#### *3.3.1 The issue of sustainable urban development and the policy by the Zhejiang Province*

The past decades researchers have been studying the ‘Ecological Footprint’ per capita as a measure instrument for determining whether the world average biocapacity per capita remains under or will rise above an acceptable level.<sup>49</sup> It goes beyond the emissions of Co2 as well. This demands for an increased attention for the urban context as an important cause of the - and see the recent conclusions –inacceptable rise of CO2 emission In the EGP-project thus far this question of ‘sustainable urban development’ addressing this important

<sup>45</sup> L. Taylor and T. Branigan (2014), ‘US and China strike deal on Carbon Cuts’, *The Guardian Weekly*, 21-27 November, Vol. 191, nr. 24, p.6.

<sup>46</sup> S. Shaw (2014), Friends of the Earth International Climate Justice and energy Coordinator, [www.foei.org/news/us-climate-pledges-just-a-drop-in-the-ocean](http://www.foei.org/news/us-climate-pledges-just-a-drop-in-the-ocean).

<sup>47</sup> J. Jackson and A.E. Johnson (2014), How to save Caribbean Coral Reefs?, *International New York Times*, 18 September, p. 8

<sup>48</sup> Editorial (2015), ‘A Welcome Ban on Forever Foam’, *International New York Times*, 10 January, p.8.

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/emn/index.php/GFN/> .

empirical fact is not discussed yet. One of the central comments by the IASQ, for instance on the Rio+20 conference on sustainability in June 2012 concerned the lack of global attention for the urban context as source of the rise of the 'Ecological Footprint'. This implies neglecting the necessity of sustainable urban development and the essential role for realising such a development with support by local CBO's and NGO's and residents in order to contribute to the development toward overall sustainability.<sup>50</sup> From the side of the Zhejiang Province it is explained that policy innovation for environmental governance practice is needed to promote the work of public participation in environmental protection and the construction of an 'Ecological Province'. Implicitly this objective refers to developing strategies to stimulate sustainable urban conditions (see ad-C of Figure-1). In other words needed are conditions which contribute to overall sustainability in the Province and beyond (see ad-B of Figure-1). This development concerns urban societal and physical circumstances which should pave the way for positive environmental conditions. These positive conditions may contribute to overall sustainability.

The following conclusions will underpin this line of reasoning. As compared to 2008, when 50% of the world population lived in cities, by 2050 this number will have risen to more than 70%, with most of the growth occurring in developing regions.<sup>51</sup> Even though many new megacities (more than 10 million inhabitants) and hyper cities (more than 20 million inhabitants) will emerge over the next few decades, most of the new city inhabitants will be found in smaller, often institutionally weak, settlements of 100,000 – 250,000 people. If we also take into account that, today, about 1 billion people (one-third of the world's urban population) live in slums in inequitable and life-threatening conditions and are directly affected by increasingly frequent occurring environmental and societal crises, it becomes clear that much of the developmental work toward sustainability will have to be directed at cities - and (ultimately) be carried out by cities. The two figures below show the contribution of cities to today's unsustainable activities of humanity.

### 3.3.2 *The Ecological Footprint and different degrees of urbanization*

Figure-2 shows the relationship between the Ecological Footprint (in global hectares per capita) and the U.N Human Development Index (HDI), a composite index, comprising inter

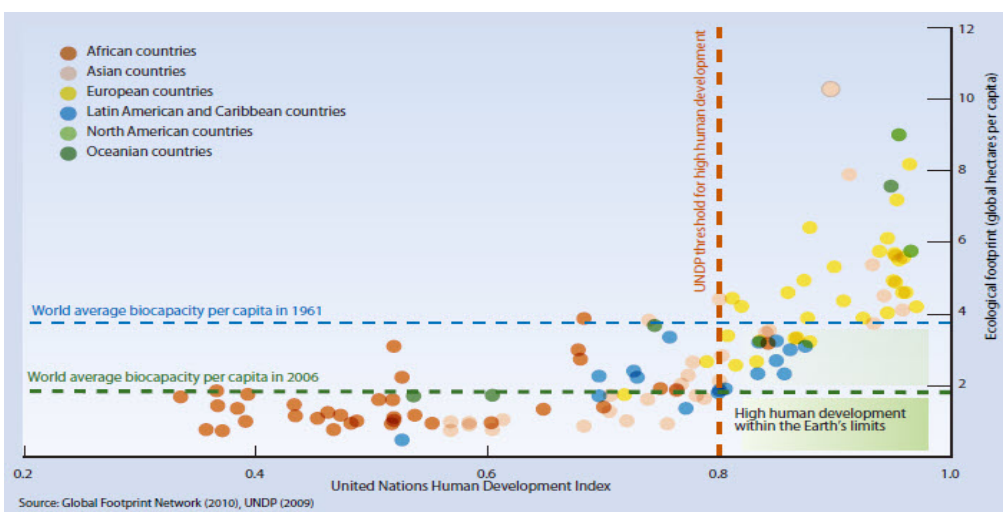
<sup>50</sup> L.J.G. van der Maesen, H. Verkleij (2012), 'Discussion paper on behalf of the expert-meeting on the outcomes of the Rio+20 conference in June 2012', (the Hague; IASQ).

<sup>51</sup> UN Habitat (2009) *Global Report on Human Settlements 2009 - Planning Sustainable Cities* (New York: UN Habitat).



alia education, life expectancy at birth, gross income per capita, health, living standards, years of schooling, etc.) for various countries grouped by continent.<sup>52</sup> It also shows the world average biocapacity for 1961 and 2006 (which is about 50% of what it was in 1961 and largely attributable to population size increased over that period of time) and the UNDP threshold for high human development.

**Figure-2: Ecological Footprint vs. Human Development Index**



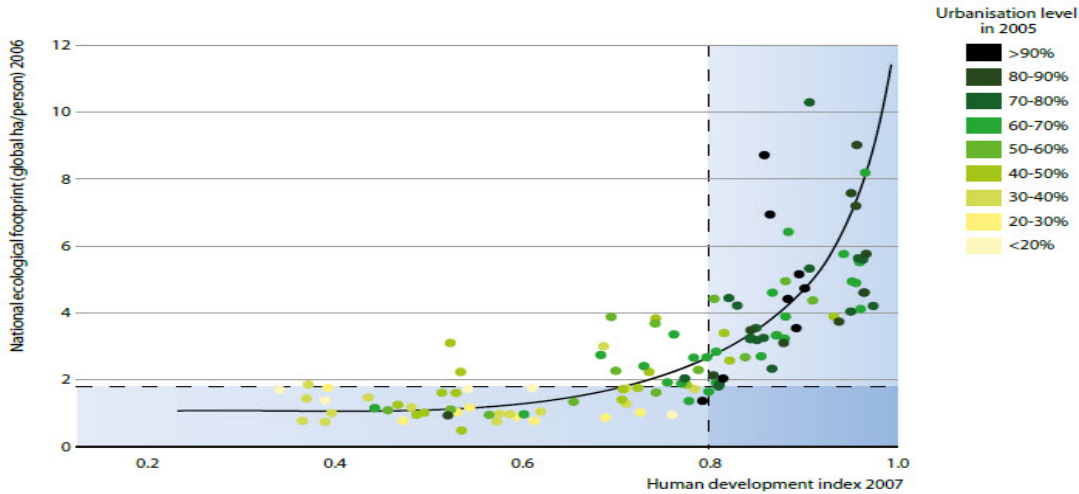
We commented earlier on the nature of the underlying conceptual framework of this index.<sup>53</sup> However, this does not address the issue of the Ecological Footprint as such. On the whole it can be concluded that this footprint tends to progressively rise above the world average biocapacity per capita when the HDI becomes larger than approx. 0.7. The area in which high a human development (HDI > 0.8) would be within the Earth's resource limits (i.e., within its biocapacity) is indicated in green in the lower right corner of the graph. One might be tempted to ask the question what would happen to a country's high HDI if it were to reduce its Ecological Footprint. In order to answer this question we need to discuss the nature of this index.

Figure-3 shows the relationship between the National Ecological Footprint and the Human Development Index for various countries with different degrees of urbanization.

<sup>52</sup> Van Renswoude et al, note-24 and: <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/>. And: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/hdi>.

<sup>53</sup> Van der Maesen, see note-4.

**Figure 3: National Ecological Footprint vs. Human Development Index**



**Figure 2: Ecological footprint, HDI and urbanisation level by country**

Source: LSE Cities based on multiple sources

Many countries with an HDI > 0.7 have a National Ecological Footprint well above the world average biocapacity per capita. These same countries also have a relatively high degree of urbanization. Figure-3 is essentially a copy of Figure-2 but with the countries color-coded according to their level of urbanization. Some caution is called for when interpreting Figure-2 and Figure-3. Both the Ecological Footprint (EF), a composite index which gives an impression of the extent to which humanity is using nature's resources faster than they can regenerate, and the Biocapacity (BC), which is a (composite) measure of the bioproductive supply, do not represent the full range of environmental problems. A critical analysis of the shortcomings (and advantages) of EF/BC accounting can be found in a Eurostat working paper by Schaefer et al.<sup>54</sup> However, for our purpose of showing that there is a direct relationship between the level of urbanization and unsustainability, the figures are supposed to be adequate.

### 3.3.3 The 'Ecological Footprint' seen in a normative perspective

Notwithstanding the comments from different sides on the adequacy of the 'Ecological Footprint', it concerns a serious global question. The current differences on global level cannot be denied anymore. In global hectares per capita, residents of the USA and the EU cause a significantly much higher footprint than for instance residents of India or China. In

<sup>54</sup> Van Renswoude et al, note-24 and: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-AU-06-001/EN/KS-AU-06-001-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-AU-06-001/EN/KS-AU-06-001-EN.PDF)

the context of the four normative factors of social quality thinking – social justice, solidarity, human dignity, human capacity – governments are not only obliged to decrease the emissions of carbon dioxide in common efforts, but **all forms of activities** which threaten human and natural systems on earth. According to researchers, two conclusions can be drawn. First, the current average is already above the acceptable average. Second, a number of particular countries or regions is responsible for this situation. These have to decrease their 'footprint per capita' and others should be allowed to increase this 'footprint' in order to reach the same circumstances, to realize the four normative factors referring to human dignity etc. Technological innovations can help out here as well. However, in the end the final sum should be under the current average. Politics and policies of the Zhejiang Province and in particular of the city of Jiaxing should be discussed with both points in mind. President Obama as well as President Xi (see note-45) in their recent appointment about the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions did not refer to any other form of pollution, neither to the tremendous footprint differences per capita between all countries. Without an overall approach of sustainability the differences between for example the USA and India concerning the Co2 emissions will function for the Indian government as an argument to dig "*deeper in a coal rush that could push the world into irreversible climate change and make India's cities, already among the world's most polluted (...) with Delhi's air almost three times more toxic by one crucial measure than Beijing's. An estimated 37 million Indians could be displaced by rising seas by 2050, more by far than in any other country. India's mega-cities are among the world's hottest, with springtime temperatures in Delhi reaching 120 degrees Fahrenheit*".<sup>55</sup>

### **3.4. Initiatives to contribute to transformative changes**

The initiative leading to the Jiaxing model may be appreciated as an endeavour to change this downward spiral. We also recognise many other endeavours in the world. For instance, Greenpeace International cs published a study how to transform this downward spiral into a positive direction. Their study also dedicates attention to climate change. Needed is a fundamental shift in generating and consuming energy, especially in the urban context. This can take place within the next ten years. According to Greenpeace a complete transformation of these processes is required. In fact they respond to Brundtland's remark that "*a transition to a safe and prosperous future is possible, but will require the full use of humanity's extraordinary capacity for innovation and creativity*" (note-41). The 'Energy (R)evolution

<sup>55</sup> D. H. Kumar (2014), 'As others try to clean air, India raises bet on coal', *International New York Times*, Tuesday, November 18, p. 1

provides a pathway of the US energy sector to reduce climate pollution and phase out dirty fuels, a pathway which comprises a very large piece of global Energy (R)evolution analysis: *“this US pathway reduces territorial CO<sub>2</sub> emissions 39% by 2025 (-27% under 1990) and 60% in 2036 (-48% under 1990). The reference scenario for this report is the 2013 Annual Energy Outlook, published by the US Energy Information Agency (EIA) which uses a 2011 base year”*.<sup>56</sup> The USA-Green Peace Report summarizes different measures for realising this target, for example: controlling power demand; reducing heating demand; electricity generation; future costs of electricity generation etc. And as Krugman remarks, the price of solar panels has fallen more than 75% just since 2008: *“‘decarbonizing’ electricity generation as a realistic goal and since coal-fired power plants are a very large part of the climate problem that’s a big part of the solution right there”*.<sup>57</sup> In fact this refers to the new pathways, also discussed by Rifkin. Internet technology and renewable energy are merging to create a powerful third industrial revolution. Thanks to the cheap solar panels hundreds of millions of people will produce their own green energy in their homes, offices and factories and they will start sharing it in an ‘energy internet’. This revolution will *“usher in a fundamental reordering of human relationships, from hierarchical to lateral power, that will impact the way we conduct commerce, govern society, educate our children and engage in civic life”*.<sup>58</sup> Of interest is to know whether this revolution will go beyond the question of energy production and will have a positive effect on the average of biocapacity per capita.

With regard to the comparison to Chinese and Dutch approaches, it is relevant to refer to the 2013 Dutch Energy Agreement for Sustainable Growth - made between the government and forty organizations as the labour unions, employers’ associations, companies, nature conservation and environmental organisations like Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace. The appointments made at EU-level strongly stimulated actors to reach this agreement; without this influence the agreement would have been rather unthinkable. This is an example of a collaboration between highly different institutions and organizations, typical for the Dutch approach, to be discussed in section-5.3; for a Chinese audience it might be of interest to explore further this. The Dutch target is to realise a fully sustainable energy supply system by 2050. This will take place by taking measures as proposed in the USA report on energy (r)evolution: *“the Energy Agreement also aims to strengthen the economic structure and to contribute to future sustainable growth. This will require us to strike the right balance between*

<sup>56</sup> Greenpeace International et al (2014), *‘Energy (r)evolution: a Sustainable USA Energy Outlook: Executive Summary: Report 3rd edition’*, (<http://www-greenpeace.org/usa/en/media-center/reports/energy-revolution-2014/>)

<sup>57</sup> P. Krugman (2014), *Environmental Salvation gets cheap*, *International New York Times*, 19/20 April.

<sup>58</sup> J. Rifkin (2011), *‘The Third Industrial Revolution’*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan) and further: <http://www.foet.org/books/html>.

*energy reliability, sustainability and affordability. To achieve the aims of the agreement, it will be vital to invest (and reinvest) in more energy-efficient products, production technologies and renewable energy".* The targets are 80 to 95% reduction in greenhouse gases for the whole economy by 2050, with renewables accounting for 16% of energy generation by 2023 and 14% energy by wind, sun and the warmth of the earth in 2020 (at the moment it is 4,5%).<sup>59</sup> Under the same circumstances (*ceteris paribus*) it is also unavoidable that people should change their way of life and consumption patterns as well, given the existing environmental dangers and challenges. And since the high footprint level of Western countries this especially applies in this part of the world. This target is lacking in the Dutch Agreement, because it has been restricted to the energy issue instead of reflecting on the context as presented in Figure-1.

#### **4. The Jiaxing model as an aspect of sustainable urban development**

##### **4.1 Attention for urban conditions as point of departure**

In order to develop environmental politics and policies we should know more about the complete urban context people live in and what should be changed in order to contribute to this development, since this context is decisive for sustainable conditions as point of orientation for environmental politics and policies.<sup>60</sup> Cities are not isolated entities; they interact with their (sometimes far-out) surroundings, which influences the four main dimensions of daily circumstances, namely the socio-politically/legal dimension (as part of a sovereign nation), and the socio-cultural/welfare, socio-economic/financial and socio-environmental dimensions (see Figure-1). Hence, sustainable urban development has to take into account the carrying capacity of the entire ecosystem supporting such a development, including the prevention and mitigation of adverse environmental impacts also occurring outside urban areas.<sup>61</sup> (Sub)urban sprawl, slums at the periphery of a city, transport of people, goods and resources in and out of a city, waste removal from a city, rural land use by a city, GHG emissions by a city, are all examples of factors that blur the socio-ecological boundary of a city with regard to its surroundings. Thus, international and national (and

<sup>59</sup> SER (2013), "Energy Agreement for Sustainable Growth" (The Hague: <http://www.energieakkoord.nl>)

<sup>60</sup> J. Zghao, D. Dai, T. Lin, and L. Tang (2010) Rapid Urbanisation, Ecological Effects and Sustainability city construction in Xiamen, *Sustainable Development and World Ecology*, 17 (4): pp. 271-73.

<sup>61</sup> Opschoor, J.B. (2011) Local sustainable Development and Carbon-neutrality in Cities in developing and emerging Countries. *International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology* 18 (3).

urban) strategies and policies for development toward 'overall' sustainability not only have to have a strong emphasis on sustainable urban development of cities themselves (internal sustainability). They should also address the general development toward sustainability of the cities' surroundings (external sustainability). On behalf of the APEC-meeting in Beijing in the first week of November 2014, the amount of highway auto cars was reduced by 50% and steel factories in its surroundings had to stop functioning to guarantee a blue sky for the high level international guests. However, in normal circumstances heavy environmental pollution in Beijing in has become a serious concern for its residents.<sup>62</sup> The 2011 UNEP Report 'Towards a Green Economy' indeed devotes a chapter to the role of cities (without making a distinction between internal and external sustainability) in a transition to a 'green economy', but gives relatively few handles on how cities can/should be enabled to make such a transition in developing and emerging countries.<sup>63</sup>

In an expert-meeting - convened by the UN-Habitat in early February 2011 to explore the linkages between the 'Green Economy' agenda and U.N. Habitat's traditional 'Urban Agenda' – it is concluded that: "*The notion of a 'low carbon economy' or 'green economy' is really the ideological manifestation of this attempt to decouple growth from a dependence on abundant cheap resources*".<sup>64</sup> How this kind of decoupling relates to urban infrastructural investments is what connects the 'low carbon' green economy' agenda to the 'sustainable urban development' agenda.' In a world where the majority is urbanized, the global economy's production and consumption systems are dependent on the urban infrastructures of cities to conduct the most important resource flows (energy, water, sanitation, solid waste, mobility, food). How these urban infrastructures are configured determines how the resources are deployed, used and re-used. However, the urban infrastructures in many (mainly developing country) cities are inadequate or (as is the case in many developed country cities) inappropriately configured from a sustainable resource use perspective. A clear demonstration of this form of reasoning is presented in a recent study about the outcomes or lack of outcomes by Pakistan policy-makers.<sup>65</sup> With this in mind the message of the expert-group is that "*to ensure that green economy initiatives achieve the goal of shared prosperity with societal resilience against future shocks and surprises, a clear and shared definition of what it means for sustainable urban development will be required before the Earth Summit*

<sup>62</sup> *Daily China* (2014), 7<sup>th</sup> November, page-4.

<sup>63</sup> UNEP (2011) *Towards a Green Economy – Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication* (New York: UNEP).

<sup>64</sup> Expert Group UN Habitat (2011), *What does the Green Economy Mean for Sustainable Urban Development?*, (New York: UN-Habitat).  
<http://www.unhabitat.org/pmss/listItemDetails.aspx?publicationID=3096>

<sup>65</sup> S. Shamsi (2014), 'National Environmental Policy development for sustainable Economic Growth in Developing countries: a Case Study of Pakistan', *International Journal of Social Quality*, 4 (1).

2012.”<sup>66</sup> With Figure-1 in mind, interesting is the use of the concept ‘societal resilience’ in this quotation.

In any drive toward sustainability of cities, all aspects of society (socio-political, socio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-environmental) have to be included. Cities are complex entities, with population densities that are often – especially in megacities and hypercities – well over 2,000 per square kilometer. Apart from the economic and environmental aspects, which in fact traditionally receive all attention, the socio-political and socio-cultural dimensions of cities will need to be drawn into the discussion explicitly. A transition to a state of sustainability should profoundly alter the way in which people live in cities. Governance, the availability of shared (public) goods or ‘commons’, existing inequalities (for example in standard of living) and inequity, participation, education, and the sustainability-awareness of city dwellers, just to name a few topics, will need to be put into the equation. For this to be achieved, an adequate **general theoretical framework** is needed (see Figure-1). In other words, the approach to development toward sustainability of cities needs to be fundamental, integral and systemic. This is also a consequence – and see the studies by Rifkin – that thanks to or due to the ICT we find ourselves living more and more in a global space. Yet our existing modes of consciousness are structured for earlier eras of history, while these are fading away. He argues, “*humanity finds itself on the cusp of its greatest experiment to date: refashioning human consciousness, so that human beings can mutually live and flourish in the new globalizing society.*”<sup>67</sup> Thus a socio-cultural transition is needed. And added should be the question how to eradicate extreme poverty in mega- and hyper cities as aspects of the so-called ‘globalizing society’? This refers to power relations, thus the socio-political argument. The transition of the socio-cultural and socio-political dimensions as a condition for new human relations and modes of production may take generations instead of a couple of decades, especially in the developing world. This also implies the need for drastic short term policy measures in order to address the unavoidable challenges.

#### **4.2 A lack of consensus about a consistent conceptual framework and the absence of relevant indicators: some European experiences**

Indeed, many cities in Europe are developing policies for sustainable urban development. This demands a consistent conceptual and methodological framework. However, many of

<sup>66</sup> Expert Group UN Habitat, see note-63.

<sup>67</sup> Rifkin, see note-57. See also: J. Rifkin, ‘*The Zero marginal Cost Society: The Internet of Things, the Collaborative Commons, and the Eclipse of Capitalism*’, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), , pp. 11-16.

these developments take place at small scale in urban regeneration projects, in particular neighbourhoods (eco-quarters or eco-towns) or in the development of new neighbourhoods and cities. In each case one particular element of sustainable urban development (e.g. housing, transport infrastructure, ecology, social cohesion) is usually dominant. According a European-wide study, consensus about a conceptual framework to steer processes in all four main dimensions, also of urban circumstances is totally lacking. The different elements of sustainable development are often ill-balanced or integrated for a whole city or an important district, suburb, quarter of a city. Concluded is that often local professionals of urban development feel a trade-off between sustainable infrastructures and achieving more sustainable societies. Tension between the two may arise when infrastructural projects are designed to meet certain environmental protection or resource efficiency criteria without, however, sufficiently taking into account societal criteria, both in terms of how these projects may affect the lives of individuals, groups and communities, and in terms of the needs and behaviour of the people using related services.<sup>68</sup> A main problem is the restriction of the 'non-defined' idea of sustainability to environmental issues only (ecocentric approach), separated from an implicit idea of sustainability as caused by complexities of human actions (anthropocentric approach).

An important European conference on sustainability concluded that urban research and policy are still highly sectoral and not adapted to handle the complexity of urban sustainability, and that we need "*more creative management of the cultural heritage of cities [and ] a better engagement of citizens in local governance*".<sup>69</sup> For the European Union it is highly important that urban processes in European metropolises and cities can be compared with processes in cities in other continents. Therefore an unequivocal scientific and policy language is needed. The EU argued that new methods are needed to analyse the complex dynamics of societal change within our societies and notably the cities.<sup>70</sup>

The lack of consensus about these topics and especially about a methodological framework to address them at urban level is clearly demonstrated in the research about 'Liveable Cities and Towns', made on request by Eurocities. It concerns a comparison of nine cities in the European Union.<sup>71</sup> According the authors, 'liveable cities' are characterised by a high

<sup>68</sup> K. van Dijken, M. Grisel and W.Hafkamp (2008), '*Lever of Public Action for the Development of sustainable Cities: A European Study on Request by the French Government*', (The Hague: NICIS).

<sup>69</sup> N. Lucas and D. Rosetti di Valdalbero (2009), '*People, the Economy and Our Planet: Sustainable Development Insights from Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities*' (Brussels: DG for Research of the European commission).

<sup>70</sup> EC (European Commission) (2007), '*Opportunities, Access and Solidarity: Towards a New Social Vision for the 21st Century Europe*', (Brussels: Commission of the European communities: COM726 final)

<sup>71</sup> A. Creedy, C. Zuideman, G. Porter and G.de Roo (2007), '*Towards Liveable Cities and Towns: Guidance for sustainable urban Management*', (Brussels: Eurocities).



standard of 'quality of life', covering all aspects affecting the quality of the environment such as noise, soil, air and odour pollution and external safety. The concept of 'quality of life' has not been explained but is taken for granted in this study, and likewise their concept of 'liveability'. To analyse the outcomes of their various suggestions for increasing the sustainability of cities we indeed need **indicators**. Our new study argues that these indicators are hard to be found if we only dispose of empty concepts as point of departure<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, how to reflect upon the urban space as a comprehensive totality on the basis of the implicit individualistic orientation of the 'quality of life' or 'social capital' approaches? Their main concerns are the individual appreciation of life styles. Missing is a theoretically grounded interrelation of their ideas about the socio-political, socio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-environmental dimensions of societal life thus of sustainability as well (see Figure-1).

#### **4.3 A UN Habitat and UNDP China contribution**

In the same vain the UN Habitat strongly criticized the lack of attention for metropolises and cities in the debate on sustainability in 2009. It concludes that the first decade of the twenty-first century has been marked by overwhelming challenges including a food crisis, an energy crisis, a financial crisis, and a growing realization of the consequences of climate change: *'thousands of organizations are developing tools and offering policy options to meet these challenges. But these activities are disparate and tend to ignore an equally unprecedented mega trend: that the world is undergoing an irreversible process of rapid urbanization. Failure to accommodate this mega trend has resulted in unsustainable forms of production and consumption, poverty and social exclusion, and pollution'*.<sup>73</sup> And of course these forms cannot be changed by the Dutch Energy Agreement alone. It also claims that in order to create positive conditions in the near future, attention should be dedicated to 'sustainable development' of interconnected urban or societal spaces in all continents. The second IASQ comment on the outcomes of the Rio+20 conference was the underdevelopment of the urban context in the global debate on sustainability.<sup>74</sup> Also from the side of the Municipality of Hangzhou and the Zhejiang University, an understanding of the role of the urban context supposes comparable research at global level, which would imply a consistent globally

<sup>72</sup> Van der Maesen, see note-4, Herrmann, see note-27.

<sup>73</sup> UN (Habitat) (2009), *For a better Urban Future* (Paris: UN).

<sup>74</sup> Van der Maesen et al, see note-48.

accepted conceptual framework.<sup>75</sup> The arguments for analysing the Jiaxing model may be found in the conclusions of the UN Habitat.

This is also the case with a recent and impressive UNDP China study about sustainable cities in this country. We may derive arguments from this study why the investments in Jiaxing are important. It argues that the battle against climate change, the fight against inequalities, and the response to a rapidly ageing population will depend on measures taken within the context of China's burgeoning cities. In other words China's major objectives and endeavours will thus be won or lost in its cities. Explicitly, the focus is on the different central dimensions of the urban context as well.<sup>76</sup> The reasons for the increased attention to the 'urban question' in China are the consequences of the massive internal migration. In 2011, the migrating population reached 260 million. During the next two decades, nearly 310 million more people are expected to migrate from rural to urban areas.<sup>77</sup> The politics and policies thus far should be changed urgently: *"the current performance evaluation system for local governance is focused mainly on economic growth, with little attention to resource conservation, environmental protection and social development, and there are no incentives for sustainable planning and development. The current system of organizations and regulations has given the government great discretionary power, and failed to establish checks and balances, and systems of monitoring and supervision. This often leads to the 'principal agent problem' for state-owned assets".*<sup>78</sup>

It is interesting to compare the study about the application of social quality indicators<sup>79</sup> with the UNDP's proposals about monitoring, which are embedded in the traditional non-theorised distinction of dimensions according the traditional debate on sustainability. It argues for example that: *"it is important to have indicators that best reflect local conditions. These could measure current issues, and factor in long-term economic, environmental and social goals, that support sustainable development".*<sup>80</sup> At this stage it is already important to notice, first, that the China UNDP Report underpins the arguments also for the orchestration of activities of citizens to cope with environmental questions of Jiaxing and other cities of the Zhejiang Province. Second, notwithstanding this important conclusion, the Report does not theorise

<sup>75</sup> K. Lin (2011), The Prototype of Social Quality Theory and its Applicability to Asian Societies, *International Journal of Social Quality*, 1 (1) pp. 57-71

<sup>76</sup> UNDP China (2013), 'China National Human Development Report: Sustainable and Liveable Cities: Toward Ecological Civilization', (Beijing: China Publishing Group Corporation).

<sup>77</sup> UNDP China, see note-76, p. i.

<sup>78</sup> UNDP China, see note-76, p. 89

<sup>79</sup> Van der Maesen et al, see note-10, Van der Maesen, see note-4.

<sup>80</sup> UNDP China, see note-76, p. 91,

the nature of indicators. This is not surprising because it implies the application of a general conceptual framework which is lacking in this Report. The construction of indicators – and see e.g. the social quality approach – concerns a methodological outcome of an underlying theory.<sup>81</sup> Third, this Report also applies the simplified distinction between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. We will comment on this issue in section- 4.4.2. Therefore the challenge for Jiaying city as well as the other eight cities of the Zhejiang Province is to stimulate further theoretical and methodological research.

#### **4.4 Points of departure for a general framework: three fields and four dimensions**

##### *4.4.1 A preliminary definition of sustainability in relation to two other fields*

From the side of the IASQ (as successor of the EFSQ) a serious comment is made on the global debate about the development toward sustainability as one of the three fields to orient on (see Figure-1). It is based on the work of a Dutch think-tank of experts in 2010 and 2011 (see section-2.3.2). Inspired by this new approach, we are able – and see the work of the Dutch think-tank - to present a **preliminary definition** of sustainability. A definition is necessary because as M. Bernard et al pointed out clearly we lack a theoretically grounded interpretation of the concept. Therefore it has come to mean '*many different things to different people within different settings, partly because the concept is vague and partly because of the need to use the concept for different purposes and within different situations*'.<sup>82</sup> In order to understand 'environmental protection' we should know what is meant by 'sustainability', since protection refers to the notion and object of sustainability. The Dutch think-tank referred to the issue of the 'resilient system' as presented in the work by J. Rockström et al who tried to identify and quantify planetary boundaries that must not be transgressed.<sup>83</sup> The proposed definition of the field of '**sustainability**' is: '*a state of dynamic equilibrium between the entire interactive ensemble of non-living and living entities, functioning within the boundaries of a resilient system*'.<sup>84</sup> These living entities include the reciprocity of human actions, resulting in

<sup>81</sup> D. Gordon, L.J.G. van der Maesen (eds), 'Indicators of Social Quality: Application in fourteen European Countries', *European Journal of Social Quality*, 5 (1 & 2), pp. 1-300, with contributions by: A. Walker, V. de Maesschalck, S. Hacking, M. Vuori, M. Gissler, D. Bouget, F. Salladarre, M. Ebert, I. Ostner, U. Brand, S. Kuhnel, M. Petmesidou, P. Polyzoidis,, S. Altorjai, E. Bukodi, S. O Çinneide, J. Cushen, F. O Gablan, C. Saraceno, S. Terracina, P. Steffen, C. de Neubourg, H. Perista, P. Perista, I. Baptista, M. Filipovic, S. Mandi, R. Boskic, J. Monreal, S. Titos, B. Demeyer, SF. Farrel; G. Therborn, S. Therborn, A. Siltaniemi, M-J Kauppinen, P. Herrmann.

<sup>82</sup> M. Bernard, K. Darkch and M. Khayesi (2009), 'Spatializing Development and Environmental Discourses: The Case of Sustainable Development and Globalization', in: M. A. Salih (ed), '*Climate Change and Sustainable Development: new Challenges for Poverty Reduction*', (Cheltenham UK: Edward Elgar), pp. 179-92.

<sup>83</sup> J. Rockstrom et al (2009), 'Identifying and quantifying planetary boundaries that must not be transgressed', *Nature*, 461, pp. 472-475 (see also Van Renswoude et al, note-24).

<sup>84</sup> Van Renswoude et al, see note-24.

the development and change of '**societal complexities**' as the second field. They will contribute to either sustainable or unsustainable conditions concerning the boundaries of the resilient system. A key point for increasing sustainability concerns how to cope with the immediate effects of societal complexities of our world, because they may cause serious conflicts and/or the crossing of the boundaries of the resilient system. To deal with these conflicts and to stick to the boundaries of the resilience system implies new forms of governance at local, national, regional and global levels as well. In other words we need to accentuate the socio-political/legal dimension of sustainability and the whole field of societal complexities alike.<sup>85</sup> Because these complexities will be realized especially in the urban context a further condition is to stimulate '**sustainable urban development**' as the third field to orient on, noticing that its adjective is referring to the noun of sustainability. In other words this definition intrinsically concerns the interrelationships of the three fields (see also Figure-1).

#### 4.4.2 *A critic on the distinction between the economic, social and environmental dimension*

In order to understand this sub-section it is worthwhile to use Figure-1 as point of reference. Specifically, the IASQ commented first on the traditional threefold distinction - the economic, social and environmental dimensions - as introduced in the famous UN-report on 'Our Common Future'.<sup>86</sup> Since its publication in 1987, the 'social dimension' obtained an important place in global debates on sustainability (as a field of perspective), without any applicable conceptual meaning. It remains a black box, a rag bag of everything that is not economic or environmental.<sup>87</sup> It functions as an evidence *suis generis*. A serious consequence of this 'threefold dimensional approach' – underpinned by Nobel laureates Stiglitz and Sen as well – is the negation of the interconnectedness of processes which influence and change the socio-political/legal dimension. This implies a negation of the role of the economic, political and cultural power systems. Furthermore it neglects as argued above the interconnectedness of the socio-cultural dimension referring to the role of communities and residents. Secondly, the IASQ commented on the fact that the global debate lacks an interconnection with changes of the four dimensions in both other fields of perspectives – namely of societal complexities and sustainable urban development - and the consequences of these changes.

<sup>85</sup> T. Cadman (2011) *Quality and Legitimacy of Global Governance: Case Lessons from Forestry* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan). See further: T. Cadman (2012), 'Evaluating the Quality and Legitimacy of Global Governance: a theoretical and analytical Approach', *International Journal of Social Quality*, Vol. 2 (1), pp. 4-24.

<sup>86</sup> UN (1987), '*Commission for Sustainable Development: A Brundtland Report*', (New York; UN).

<sup>87</sup> Van Renswoude et al, see note-24.

Therefore the recent conclusion by Brundtland about the political refusal to address the challenge of sustainability<sup>88</sup> is also a consequence of the non-defendable threefold approach and the lack of connection with both other fields.<sup>89</sup> As a result of the theoretical development of 'social quality thinking', the concept of the 'the social' gained a new 'post-war' meaning and refers to the 'productive and reproductive relationships of human beings'.<sup>90</sup> The relevance of this meaning may be actualized with the help of the recent presentation of the German debate on 'the social'.<sup>91</sup> Seen in the theoretical perspective of social quality thinking, the 'social dimension' concerning the field of overall sustainability – as well as in the research of the fields of societal complexities and sustainable urban development - should be changed into the 'socio-political/legal' and the 'socio-cultural/welfare' dimensions, taking on board the extensive scientific literature on both dimensions for understanding the nature and reciprocities of these three fields. Arguments for this plea are also presented in previous sub-sections and underpinned in the third main book on social quality.<sup>92</sup>

#### 4.4.3 *The interconnectedness of the three fields and the four dimensions*

With this in mind, we suppose that the ideas of the UN Habitat and many others about the environmental dimension are at least implicitly interrelated with their ideas about three other dimensions as illustrated in Figure-1. Therefore the arguments for analysing and enhancing the Jiaying model demand attention to these interrelationships. This point has not explicitly been addressed in the Jiaying documents. Implicitly, the necessity is underpinned by Bauman, referring to the production of 'human waste', or wasted lives of huge populations of migrants and refugees. According to him, it is a side-effect of a particular form of economic progress led by top-earners. This form is based on the Western economic paradigm - focussed on the accumulation of profits - which nearly determines all other three dimensions. Bauman concludes, that *"as the triumphant progress of modernization has reached the furthest lands of the planet and practically the totality of human production and consumption has become money and market mediated and the processes of commodification, commercialization and monetarization of human livelihoods have penetrated every nook and cranny of the globe, global solutions to locally produced problems or global outlets for local*

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<sup>88</sup> Brundtland, see note-41.

<sup>89</sup> Van der Maesen, see note-4; Van Renswoude et al, see note-24.

<sup>90</sup> Van der Maesen et al, see note-10, Van der Maesen, see note-4, Herrmann, see note-27.

<sup>91</sup> L. Leisering (2013), 'Guest Editorial: The 'Social'. The global Career of an Idea. A thematic Issue', *International Journal of Social Quality*, 3 (2) , 1-142. A booklet in collaboration with: F-X Kaufman, U. Davy, M. Seeleib-Kaiser, P. Manow, K. Won Sub, Shih-Jiunn Shi, E. Rieger.

<sup>92</sup> Van der Maesen et al, see note-10.

excesses, are no longer available".<sup>93</sup> His conclusion is rather pessimistic. Right or wrong, the human waste side-effect of what is called 'economic progress', the global increase in inequality and many self-interested and corrupted financial strategies call for new thinking and acting. It cannot be expected that advocates of the dominant economic approach, with their suppositions about the unlimited possibilities for regulation by market forces, will be the source of any new horizon.<sup>94</sup>

In traditional global debates on the field of 'overall sustainability' as well as the field of 'sustainable urban development' the focus is oriented one-sidedly on the socio-economic/financial and the socio-environmental dimensions. And because of the dominant economic paradigm and the negation of the socio-political/legal and socio-cultural/welfare dimensions, the socio-environmental dimension remains subordinated to the first in these debates.<sup>95</sup> However, two other important aspects are underdeveloped as well. As argued above, first, in the discourse on sustainability both other fields are not understood as constituting factors for overall sustainability (see Figure-1). Exactly the recognition that they are will stimulate the awareness that two dimensions - the socio-political/legal and the socio-cultural/welfare – should be accepted as an alternative of the 'social dimension' (as an empty rag back) and should be appreciated as important as the socio-economic/financial and socio-environmental dimensions. Second, that all four dimensions should be interconnected in order to comprehensively understand changes in all three fields respectively as well as the interrelation and reciprocity of these three fields. Addressing these issues in a constructive way will pave the way for Figure-4, see below.

With regard to the EGP-project of the Province of Zhejiang we may conclude at this stage, that the methodological questions presented above have not been discussed yet. The general aim to strengthen 'governance for increasing environmental protection' is restricted to two dimensions (socio-political/legal and environmental dimensions) of one field (overall sustainability). For the elaboration of the Jiaying model and its implementation to eight other metropolises more research should be carried out to overview all dimensions and all fields and the way they are interrelated in order to increase knowledge and to deliver points of departure for related processes of communication.

<sup>93</sup> Z. Bauman (2006), '*Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcomes*', (Cambridge: Polity Press), and: T.L. Friedman (2009), 'There is No Magic Bullet', *International Herald Tribune*, 2 February.

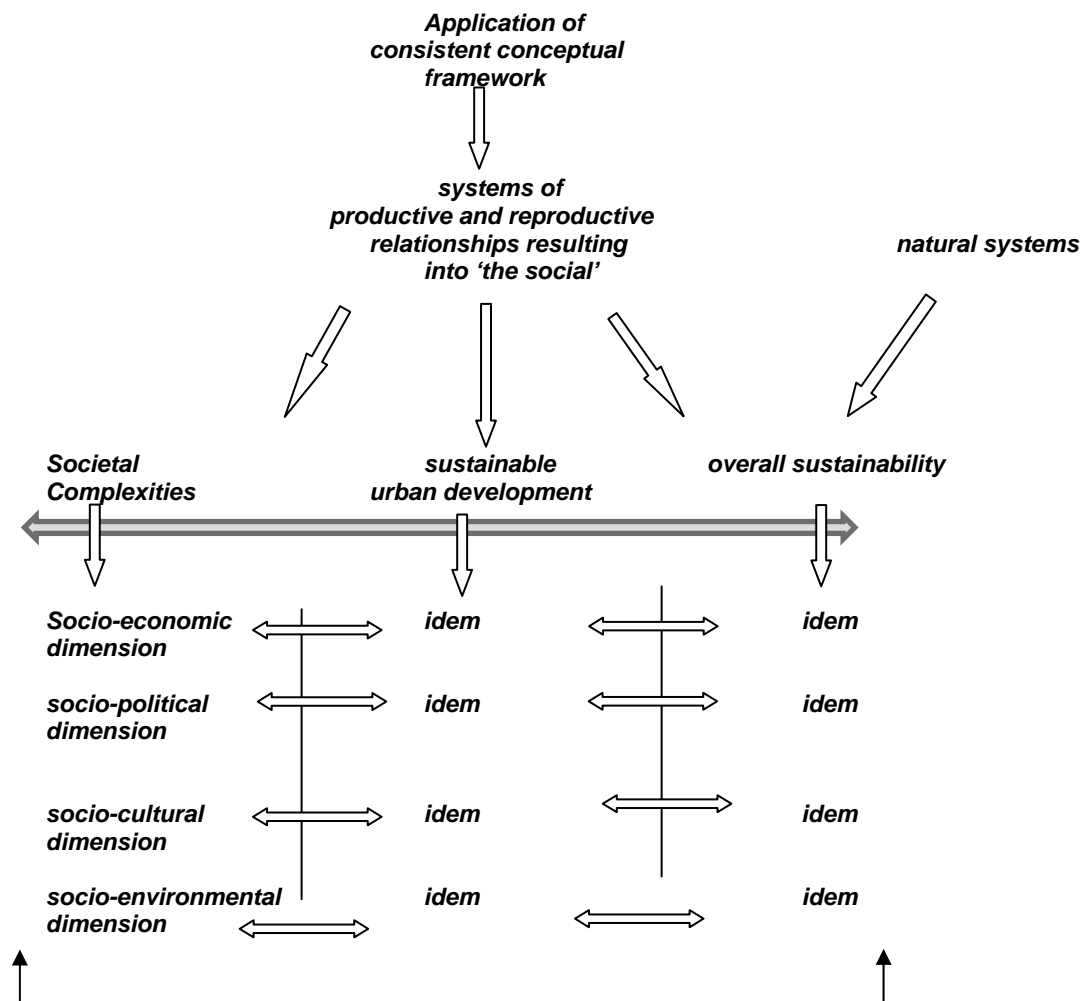
<sup>94</sup> S. Corbett and A. Walker (2012), 'The Big Society: A Critical Perspective', *The Political Quarterly*, 83 (3), pp. 487-493..

<sup>95</sup> M. Lehtonen (2004), 'Environmental-Social Interface of Sustainable Development: Capabilities, Social Capital, Institutions', *Ecological Economics*, 49 (2): pp. 199-214.

#### 4.4.4 A summary of the underlying suppositions and its illustration

Based on the way of reasoning in previous sub-sections we are able to summarise the applied suppositions and to illustrate this summary in the following figure. It emphasizes the application of a consistent conceptual framework to all three fields and their four dimensions. As a result of this procedure, points of departure will be created as condition for understanding the interrelationships of these three fields. This theme does not play a role in the global debate with regard to overall sustainability and sustainable urban development (see note-24); in the general debate about the Jiaxing model this did not play a role either.

**Figure 4: Analysing three fields of perspectives and their interrelationships**



The applied suppositions may be summarized as follows:

- The fields of perspective of overall sustainability is determined by the nature of the existing productive and reproductive relationships as well as the nature (and borders) of the natural systems. The outcomes are decisive for both other fields,
- All four dimensions are relevant for all three fields of perspectives,
- In order to understand changes of these dimensions and the interrelated consequences in each field they should be analysed with the help of the same unequivocal conceptual framework (this can be various frameworks: they have to dispose of a 'heuristic meaning').
- As a result of the application of such a heuristic framework to each dimension researchers are able to analyse the reciprocal outcomes in each field,
- If that will be successful, researchers will be able to understand the changes within each field in an interrelated way as condition for a comprehensive understanding of the interconnectedness of these three fields,
- Social quality thinking constitutes such a heuristic conceptual framework and theoretical set of social quality indicators based on this. It will pave the way for a comprehensive understanding of all interrelations.

In order to really understand the Jiaxing model we have to connect it in analytical sense with the context as illustrated in Figure-4. The model primarily accentuates (and isolates) the role of local CBO's, NGO's, and residents connecting the socio-environmental and the socio-political/legal dimensions. The accent on the transition from government to modern deliberative forms of 'environmental governance' – see therefore the EGP-documents - concerns the heart of this connection. This connection can only be understood by analysing the relations with both other dimensions. For discussing this transition in the full context (see Figure-1 and Figure-4) it makes sense to also refer to the research by Cadman. He argues, that this transition is neither straightforward nor uncontested. Alternative institutional arrangements have not replaced the sovereignty of the nation-state, but they can both complement, or compete with conventional national and international institutions: *"these arrangements are exemplified by the growing number of socio-environmental, market-based initiatives built around the concept of sustainable development (...) Within a global environmental policy-making arena, there is a fundamental interplay between democracy and sustainability. Problems of a trans-boundary nature such as carbon-dioxide emissions cannot be solved by any one state (...) As a result, the many parties both creating, and being affected by environmental change, must find means of collectively solving problems of*



*universal nature*".<sup>96</sup> Implicitly this is a plea for broadening the scope of analysis. The transition from government to governance, also for strengthening environmental protection is intrinsically related to all four dimensions.

## 5. Empirical explorations in Jiaxing and The Hague

### 5.1 Preliminary remarks

This section is based on two empirical explorations, the first in the Chinese city of Jiaxing in the Zhejiang Province<sup>97</sup> and the second in The Netherlands, namely the Dutch city of The Hague (part of the European Union).<sup>98</sup> These explorations were carried out by the IASQ and compared afterwards.<sup>99</sup> It regards one of its targets as partner of the EGP-project.<sup>100</sup> We will restrict ourselves to two aspects of the comparison of both explorations: (i) the structure of the strategies to address environmental issues in the urban context of both cities and (ii) the applied suppositions and practices of public participation in these issues. In order to moderate the comparison we should make two general remarks.

The first remark is that it will be necessary to recognise that there are remarkable differences between both countries (and therefore their cities) which will influence a comparison. In a general sense these can be summarized as follows:

- The extent (territory and population) of China and The Netherlands essentially differ: China's territory is 230x the Dutch one and it has 80x more residents. This demonstrates the high density of the population in the Netherlands.
- Their socio-political histories and related underlying philosophies differ as well, resulting in a tendency of top-down governmental practices versus bottom-up political practices,
- Their socio-cultural histories differ enormously and the Chinese history is very old and the Dutch history it is relatively young. Therefore applied concepts as democracy, governance, public participation, social organization and social mechanisms refer to different historical conceptual frameworks resulting in different connotations,

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<sup>96</sup> T. Cadman (2012), 'Evaluating the quality and Legitimacy of global Governance: a Theoretical and Analytical Approach', *International Journal of Social Quality*, Vol. 2 (1), pp. 4-24, p. 18 See furthermore: T. Cadman (2011), 'Quality and Legitimacy of global Governance: Case Lessons from Forestry', (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan)..

<sup>97</sup> Wang, see note-7.

<sup>98</sup> Wang, see note-8

<sup>99</sup> Wang, see note-9.

<sup>100</sup> CEECZJ, see note-2.

- Their socio-economic and socio-political configuration strongly diverge: a governmental communist oriented steering system with a political free space for neo-liberal oriented enterprises versus a much more systemic connected governmental steering approach with neo-liberal oriented enterprises.
- In the case of China a start is made with the development of a Chinese (Asian) oriented welfare system versus a long history of the Dutch welfare system which is inspired and influenced by other European welfare systems since the beginning of the previous century.

Notwithstanding these differences it will be possible to create an understanding of the **applied strategies** addressing environmental challenges and the role of the manifold of stakeholders (CBO's and NGO's) to compare the outcomes of both issues. If an exploration of related practices is suitable for communication on intersubjective as well as international (intercultural) level it will be possible to apply a similar conceptual framework. More difficult is to understand the **consequences** of the differences because they are determined by at least the five (and many other) points summarized above. The endeavour to compare the outcomes, are important because this may contribute to a debate about essential aspects of overall sustainability on global level. Since overall sustainability is not a local, provincial, or national but a global issue this debate is a necessity for its development.

A second remark concerns the consequence of enormous waves of migrants in China. As already noticed, recently 260 million people changed from living in rural areas to urban areas. In the next 20 years about 310 million people are expected to join the urban population. That is more or less the whole population of the USA.<sup>101</sup> At this moment, millions of migrants in China *"don't have residence rights, which limits their families' access to social services, education and even the right to own housing in some cases (...) most local governments are under heavy fiscal pressure when it comes to providing public services"*.<sup>102</sup> From a Western perspective therefore, cities in China have exploded into huge metropolises in 'no time'. The accent was and will remain to first of all build enough houses to manage these waves. In the past hundred years this has not taken place in The Netherlands to such an extent. We may recognise a smooth extension of its small towns and cities, integrating all aspects of urban life in a rather comprehensive way. A good example is the planned extension of the city of Amsterdam in the second part of the previous century, caring for accessible green parts

<sup>101</sup> UNDP China, see note-76, p. 101.

<sup>102</sup> L. Lan (2014), Test sites identified for urbanization Program', *China Daily*, 8/9 November.

between the new quarters. This enables residents to enjoy the parks and water in the vicinity of their houses. They therefore use their bicycles as well as an accessible dense public transport system. With this governmental supported urban planning huge attention is dedicated to environmental circumstances. Without enough awareness of current environmental problems the outcomes of this planning tradition with an accent on extensive green urban parks only stimulated an increase of this awareness. Noteworthy is the fact that in the Netherlands the land is in the hands of public authorities (local governments); not in private possession. The growth of metropolises and megacities all over the world is leading to the contrary. According to the International Della Rocca Foundation – for decades engaged with urban issues – the globalization has placed the breakdown of citizenship in megacities at the centre of the tragedies of modern humanity: “of a total of 20 million human deaths occurred in 2011, more than 15 million are attributable to the city: 9 million from hunger, 2 million from cancer (data relating only to urban causes), 1 million from road accidents and 3,5 million for pollution. A picture that relegates the issue of capital punishment, which were only 680 (0.03% of the urban data) to an infinitely lower level. Why do people and institutions only emphasize the principles of lesser importance, while ignoring the real problem, the container of all the problems, which determines the actual human drama?”<sup>103</sup> As we noticed above, this also concerns the metropolises and megacities in China.

## **5.2 The city of Jiaxing: structure and public participation**

This sub-section is based on the exploration of the Jiaxing model (see note-7)

### *5.2.1 The structure of environmental strategies in Jiaxing*

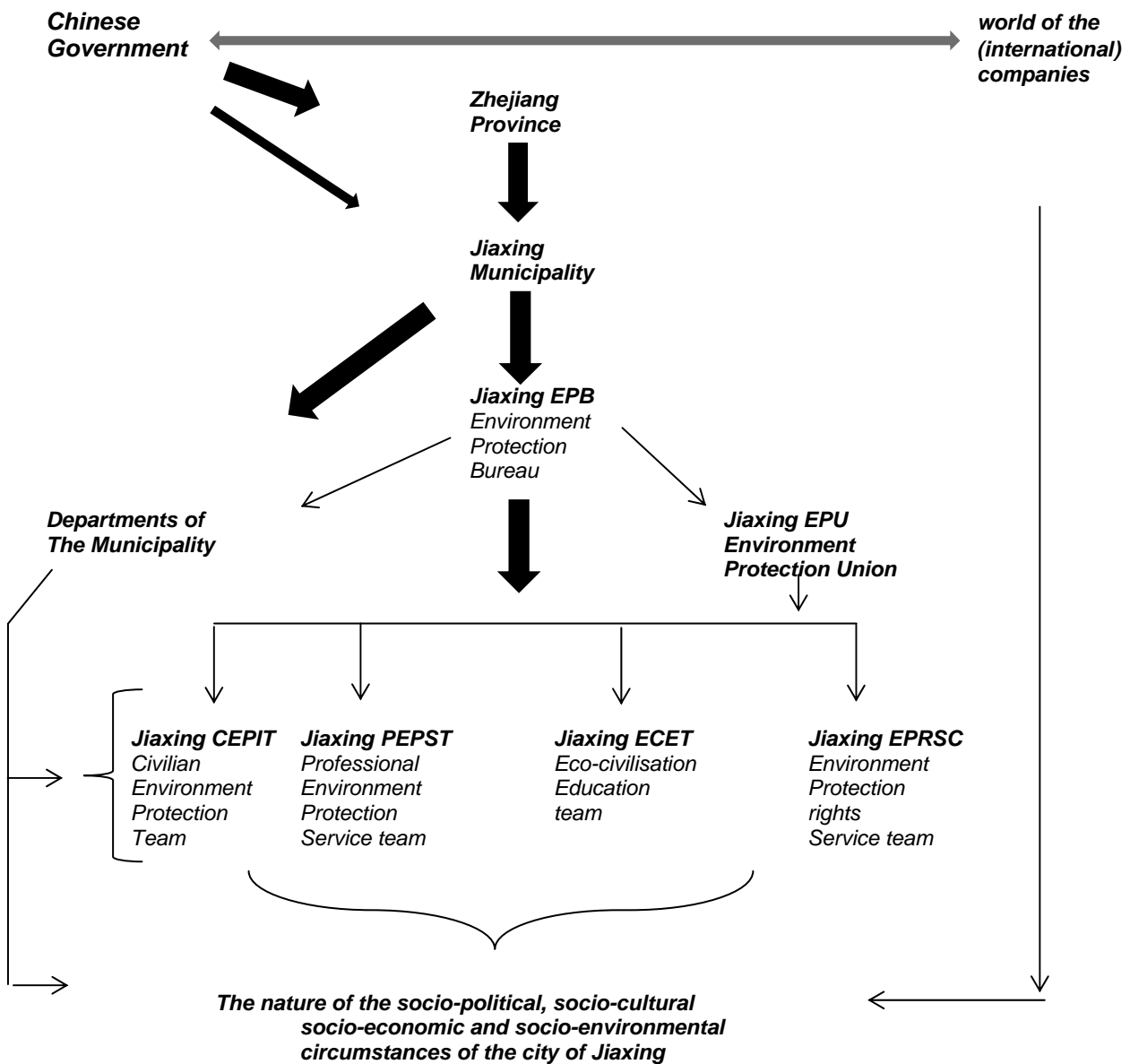
According to Lin and Zhu, currently China is still in the early stages of democratic environmental policies. At this stage the legal procedures for this process of democratization (or public participation) should be enhanced for being effective. They argue, that this is also a necessity because current approaches are rather formalistic and dominated by the power of the administration of the city. Notwithstanding this, the recent activities (see Jiaxing experiences) pave the way for a model to address environmental issues by especially

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<sup>103</sup> C. Beguinot (2014), ‘UN Event: The contribution of the Della Rocca Foundation’, (Rome: DRF).

accentuating the structural relationships of the different actors.<sup>104</sup> Thanks to this, for a Chinese and also a global debate about environmental issues in the urban context researchers dispose of a clear overview of actors and their relationships which enables them to explore the outcomes rather systematically. It also enables them to distinguish between the 'formal relationships' and the 'informal relationships' which are relevant behind 'the scenes'. Figure-5 presents our interpretation of the formal relationships.

**Figure-5: The Jiaxing model according the respondents**



<sup>104</sup> K. Lin, H. Zhu (2014), 'Environmental Governance, Due Process Theory and Social Innovation: the Case of Jiaxing city. A paper presented to the International Conference of Sustainable Development, environmental Public participation and Social Quality, June 23-25', (Hangzhou: Zhejiang University).

The main actor in this structure is the Environmental Protection Bureau of the municipality (**EPB**). This local governmental bureau plays a dominant role. It implements reporting and disclosure of environmental data and information. Furthermore it is responsible for the planning and supervision of the public participation in environmental governance; it controls the daily functioning of the local Environmental Protection Union (**EPU**) and its four specialised teams. The EPU is the complex of all local BGO's and NGO's in Jiaxing, involved – thanks to the EPB and the four teams - in the protection of the local environment, supervising enterprises' behaviour, educating people, broadcasting environmental protection knowledge and coping with the complaints on internet blogs. This model concerns the connection of the EPB, different municipality departments, EPU and the four teams.

According to Lin et al, the Jiaxing city implemented a clear inspection and supervision of processes, influencing environmental aspects: *“through: the ‘Naming List’, ‘Apology Letter’ and ‘Jury system’, and lowered the governing and treating cost and improved the overall environmental governance through introducing public participation. The ‘Juror’ phenomenon means the public working as ‘environmental judge’ (...) the ‘Naming list’ endows public the right to name polluting enterprises during the environmental protection process (...) the ‘Apology Letter’ means the innovation system intensifying the environment credit assessment mechanism construction by virtue of social opinions’.*<sup>105</sup> In a recent EGP-report this ‘Naming List’, ‘Apology Letter’, and ‘Jury System’ are called the *“typical democratic governance mechanism of consultation, hearings, and deliberation [which] plays a positive role in the Jiaxing Model “*, including the ‘Round Table’, ‘Planning Review Meetings’, ‘Study Meetings’, ‘Education and applicant Media’.<sup>106</sup> As we will notice, this systematic approach is non-existent in the city of The Hague.

According the official presentation of the Jiaxing model, the EPU is steering the four specialised teams in order to strengthen the role of CBO's, local NGO's and citizens. This is of course a point for discussion in the near future. This structure opens relevant channels for the public to join local environmental governance. Local BGO's and NGO's and residents can assist to implement some inspection work on factories and companies. In some cases, they have decisive power in decision-making. In the past, this kind of work was only conducted by the local government. Furthermore, CBO's and local NGO's and residents can get updated information in terms of environment protection and other fields from the EPU. In addition the

<sup>105</sup> Lin et al, see note-104.

<sup>106</sup> EGP (2014), ‘Policy Suggestion Report’, (Hangzhou: CEECZJ), pp.7-8

structure encourages disclosure of environmental information both from the governments and companies, and encourages communication between companies and CBO's and NGO's. In general this structure initiates the first step of public participation in environmental governance, making the communication and cooperation easier and more feasible between diverse actors.

### 5.5.2 *First impressions about participation*

As respondents of the Jiaxing exploration explain that there are at least three reasons for the constitution and working of this structure. Namely: (i) the deterioration of local environment, (ii) the explosion of critic from the public, and (iii) the change of the governmental approach, due to the growing awareness of the authorities that a closed local governmental system cannot be effective anymore. Since its industrialisation and inappropriate farming, the surrounding environment seriously degenerated in the past decades. Air pollution and water pollution are the most severe problems for residents in Jiaxing. This degeneration has threatened the quality of daily circumstances of local residents and their health. Critic from the public increased and influenced the local stability.

According to the respondents, recently authorities in China have recognized that residents – in this case the population of Jiaxing – should play a responsible role in addressing environmental problems and challenges. This is expressed in the quotation, that “*without public participation the whole ecological system cannot operate*”.<sup>107</sup> This implied to start with a collaboration with local CBO's (in statu nascendi) and NGO's. In the case of Jiaxing respondents explain, that in fact local NGO's in Jiaxing are governmentally organised. For this reason a more adequate name is GONCO, meaning 'governmentally organized non-governmental organisation'. This name demonstrates the strong relation with the political authorities of Jiaxing as well as of other cities and metropolises in China, determining their political and financial state of affairs. From a European perspective, the name 'CONGO' seems to be confusing.<sup>108</sup>

The exploration clarified furthermore, that according to respondents there are different reasons why this model causes some difficulties at this stage. Firstly, the capacity of associated CBO's, NGOs (or GONGO's), and individual residents in public participation is

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<sup>107</sup> EGP-project, see note-12.

<sup>108</sup> K. Wang et al., see note-9.

underdeveloped because of the lack of facilities and instruments. Secondly, support from the society to the actors of the EPU as instrument to also connect CBO's and NGO's is weak as well. One of the reasons is the insufficient awareness of the population of Jiaxing about the causes of the pollution. Respondents explain that it is therefore difficult to strengthen the position of local CBO's and NGO's. Thirdly, residents are generally passive in public participation due to a lack of adequate examples how to act. In other words the rationale to participate is not clear for most of them. Fourthly, the trust relationship between formal actors in the structure of the model is weak, which decreases the efficiency and effectiveness of the public participation mechanisms. In the same vain the public satisfaction survey on ecological environmental quality – held in the Zhejiang Province in 2010 – demonstrated that “over 80% of the residents deemed that local environment was polluted and over 20% was not satisfied with the control of environmental pollution”.<sup>109</sup>

### **5.3 The city of The Hague: structure and participation**

This sub-section is based on the exploration of environmental practices in the city of The Hague in the beginning of 2014.<sup>110</sup>

#### *5.3.1 Two issues as introduction: bad performance and an interesting example?*

In order to also understand the differences between the urban circumstances and strategies for environmental protection between Jiaxing and The Hague we have to make two general remarks as well. The first concerns for a number of particular facts applying to The Netherlands especially relevant for its environmental issues, namely: (1) its population density per square meter is very high (3x higher than in China), (2) its automobile-use became the highest in the world, and (3) the intensity of its agriculture is playing a huge role as well. Notwithstanding the fact The Netherlands is a very small country, it is the largest exporter of agricultural products in the world after the USA. These three issues cause serious difficulty to remain ‘within the resilient physical boundaries’ and they are responsible for the fact that the Dutch’s ‘Ecological Footprint’ is much higher than for example the Chinese Footprint. As concluded in the comparative study between China and the Netherlands<sup>111</sup>, The Netherlands perform badly in the European ladder of important monitoring devices with

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<sup>109</sup> EGP-project, see note-3, p.5

<sup>110</sup> Wang, see note-8.

<sup>111</sup> Wang, see note-9.

regard to environment, climate and the nature.<sup>112</sup> However, according to the respondents of the exploration in the Hague, the current major tasks in terms of environmental protection in this city are - except the traditional attention for environmentally attractive urban planning – especially oriented to energy-saving in buildings and discovering renewable energy.<sup>113</sup>

A second remark concerns the socio-political and socio-cultural orientation. The comments in The Netherlands on the role of governments and companies refer to old traditions. The focus is always on bottom-up processes and activities. The positive socio-political and socio-cultural stimulus for these activities refer to strong traditions since the early Middle-ages, where local communities were responsible for the safety of the land and water household. Therefore they constituted community based organizations not dominated by worldly or religious authorities, incomparable with the top-down system of surrounding countries as England, Scandinavia, France etc. Especially this tradition strengthened a strong and lively societal bottom-up political culture. Dutch citizens grew up with a productive dialectic between bottom-up and governmental top-down processes. In modern times this dialectic paved the way for political ideas about a 'facilitating governmental attitude'. Governmental institutions facilitate (or have to facilitate) the bottom-up non-profit-making enterprises and local investments in order to also strengthen their action potential. And also the outcomes of the current urban planning should deliver the points of departure for the development of these enterprises and local investments. Before World War II so-called 'private organisations' (not ruled by governments or companies) for health care, education, sport, cultural activities, work-conditions etc. dominated, and churches also played an important role. After World War II The Netherlands became the home base of (1) **Greenpeace International**<sup>114</sup> with a strong support by Dutch people, of the (2) International **Friends of the Earth**<sup>115</sup> also with strong support by Dutch people, and of (3) the International Fair Trade Organization with more than **forty 'fair trade municipalities'** in this country, thanks to the activities of community-based groups (CBO's). Also more than (4) **forty strong communities** in this country are associated with the movement of '**transition towns**'. The population of the Netherlands is smaller than Beijing's. This demographic comparison demonstrates the huge density of environmental and ecological initiatives and activities in this country.

<sup>112</sup> Natuur en Milieu (2011), '*Ranking the starts. The Netherlands in comparison with other European countries in the field of environment, nature and climate*', (Utrecht: [www.natuurenmilieu.nl](http://www.natuurenmilieu.nl)).

<sup>113</sup> K. Wang, see note-8 and 9.

<sup>114</sup> [www.greenpeace.org/international](http://www.greenpeace.org/international).

<sup>115</sup> [www.foei.org](http://www.foei.org)



The Transition Towns - started in the United Kingdom – aim to create “*happier, fairer and stronger communities, places that work for the people living in them and that are far better suited to dealing with the shocks that will accompany our economic and energy challenges and a climate in chaos*”, by: (1) starting awareness around peak oil, climate change and the need to undertake a fair and just community led process to rebuild resilience and reduce carbon emission, (2) to connect existing groups including local government, (3) to hold focused events that help to form groups to look at all key areas of life (food, energy, transport, health, micro-economic daily circumstances etc).<sup>116</sup> The Fair Trade Town’s movement – also started in the United Kingdom – refer to any community in which people and organisations use their everyday choices to increase sales of Fair Trade products and bring about positive change for farmers and works in developing countries. Becoming a Fair Trade Town is a shared achievement and an opportunity for local governments, schools, businesses, community organizations and activists to work together. These communities are already active in seventy countries across five global regions and try to create greater equity in international trade and to contribute to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions, and securing the rights of marginalized producers and workers.<sup>117</sup> In The Netherlands some small towns are at the same time also transition towns and fair trade towns; both aspects reinforce each other.<sup>118</sup> Finally, in the beginning of the previous century a start is made in the Netherlands with the Union for Maintaining Nature Monuments. At this stage it has 735.000 members and it is responsible for 355 large natural areas.<sup>119</sup> With regard to changing energy production, change of food production, reducing carbon emissions etc the Dutch Institute of Nature and Environment is very active to start projects everywhere.<sup>120</sup>

This Dutch configuration of environmental and ecological oriented activities contributes to a new awareness also in the city of The Hague. However, its residents are not really very active compared to existing Dutch transition towns and fair trade towns. In the quarter of Laak of this city a start was made with an approach which may contribute to broaden these activities though. It concerns the experiment of the ‘**communicationcentre**’ for deepening the collaboration between policy makers, business people and residents or citizens. This is one of the reasons to compare the Hague/quarter Laak with Jiaying. In the following section this point will be discussed.

<sup>116</sup> [www.transitiontown.org/www.transitionnetwork.org](http://www.transitiontown.org/www.transitionnetwork.org).

<sup>117</sup> [www.fairetradetowns.org](http://www.fairetradetowns.org)

<sup>118</sup> The municipality of Schijndel in The Netherlands is as well a fair trade town as a transition town.

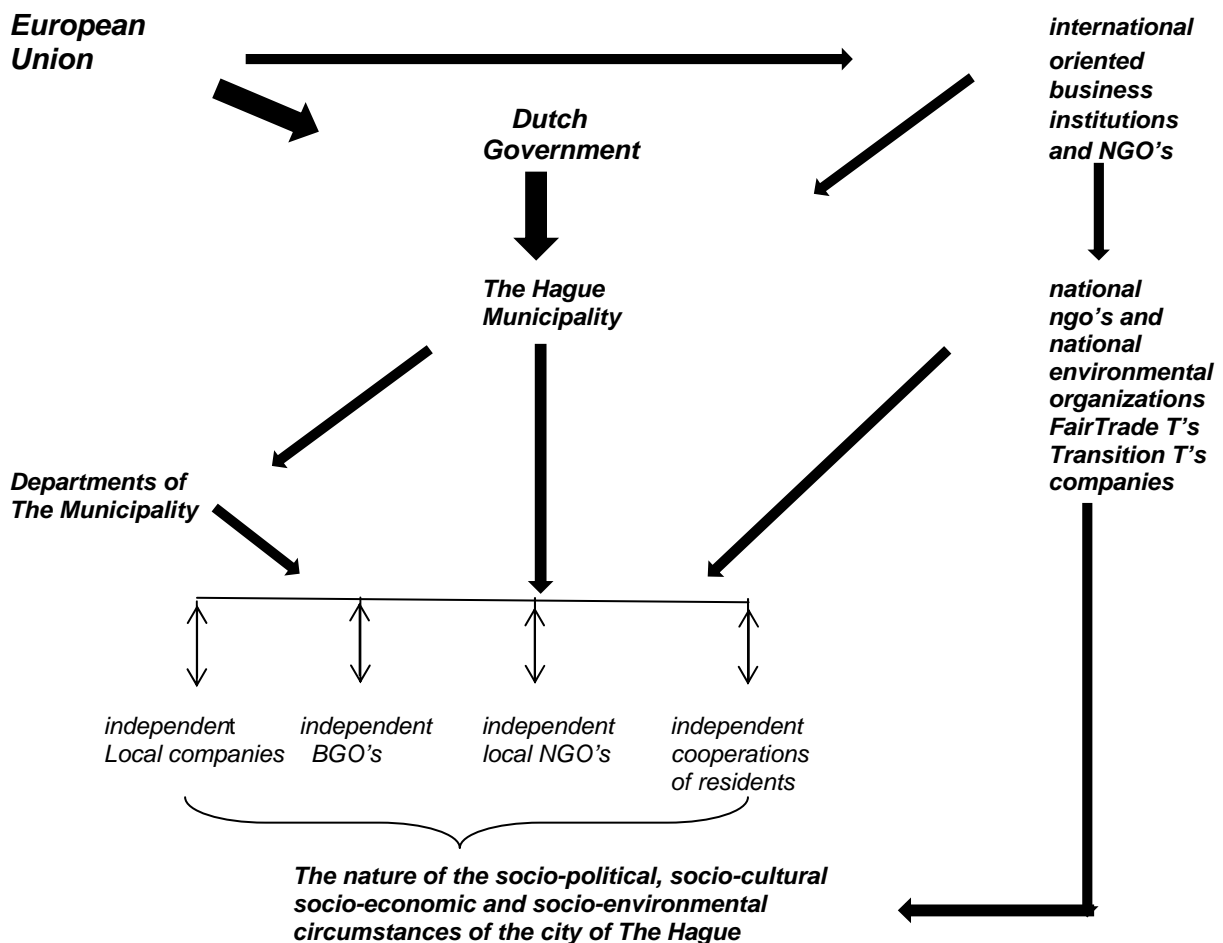
<sup>119</sup> [www.natuurmonumenten.org](http://www.natuurmonumenten.org)

<sup>120</sup> Nature and Environment, see note-112.

### 5.3.2 The interplay of many actors: a structure or a configuration of negotiators?

For many decades a manifold of governmental and real non-governmental based organisations – operating on local, provincial and national level - invested with substantive (also financial) support by Dutch people in environmental issues. All of this stimulated the increase of community based action groups (CBO's) and various community based environmental practices in the Netherlands (see e.g. the Fair Trade Towns and the Transition Towns). These CBO's are oriented on a complex of related issues in the community. Their work is and will be complemented by existing local NGO's, which are 'specific issue oriented' organisations connected with those of provincial, national and international level. All of this resulted in a complex interplay of different actors, as illustrated in Figure-6. This figure is made comparable with the Jiaxing figure, in order to recognise the differences.

**Figure-6: Non- institutionalized relationships for environmental oriented strategies**



In the case of the city of The Hague there is no model, no plan for operations, no systematic approach, no attention for legal questions, education and communication strategies. Figure-6 only illustrates the way independent actors are coping with each other; Figure-5 illustrates a model how to cope with each other. In this way we may explain the formal institutionalized structure as developed in Jiaxing does not exist in The Hague. The patterns to address environmental issues in the Dutch case refers to the concept of the 'Polder model' (which in the strict sense of the word is not a 'model'). It refers to the century old tradition of dealing with the land and water household, as mentioned above. It concerns a form of negotiating, consensus-building and collaboration of all relevant actors. The more and more explicit environmental policies in The Netherlands since 1970s by a manifold of actors can be envisaged as a logical outcome of this tradition. Figure-6 illustrates or expresses the position of the manifold of actors or segments, which operations are bound to general rules of the civic legal system. There is not a central authority which determines the specific rules of the game on local level like the EPB in Jiaxing.

### 5.3.3 *The issue of participation*

#### 5.3.3.1 *A general view*

Based on findings in scientific papers and interviews, we can conclude that environmental governance in The Netherlands is following the traditional way of dealing with daily circumstances, namely with an accent on bottom-up processes. Experiencing the increase of the public awareness of environmental problems since the 1970s, and the deep anchored consciousness of the disadvantages of a one-sided political top-down approach, Dutch environmental oriented policies paved the way for environmental consultation activities. These policies were made in collaboration between representatives of the national government, labour organisations, companies, NGO's etc. Meanwhile, environmental NGOs and institutions became stronger in this country. This had a positive effects on local community based groups. Section-3.4 already referred to the recent Dutch energy agreement for sustainable growth as an outcome of this form of 'polder-negotiation', involving most actors of Figure-6 on national level.<sup>121</sup> Nowadays, governmental bodies on local, provincial and national level explicitly operate as facilitators. According to many respondents, the local

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<sup>121</sup> SER, see note-59.

government invest money and time to encourage companies, NGO's and CBO's to take responsibilities and initiatives. In the socio-political dimension these actors are enabled to make their own plans. However, their plans should be in the same line with the general visions and objectives given by the local and provincial authorities and national government. The last is responsible for adequate rules of the game.

With regard to the city of the Hague, respondents of the exploration explained that since the government is less willing to appoint civil-servants to play a main role in local neighbourhood management – also due to insufficient local knowledge and financial shortage – it stimulates local residents to involve in their neighbourhood development. CBO's and local NGOs are crucial to local development. However, any structural approach is lacking.<sup>122</sup> They dispose of a 'socio-political space' to take initiatives and to manage environmental oriented activities. They also have to deal with some difficulties, such as financial shortages, ineffective and inappropriate communication, insufficient support from local residents, etc. However, innovative ways of communication, self-governance and management by local CBO's and NGO's are becoming more effective.<sup>123</sup>

### 5.3.3.2 *Participation versus involvement*

Exactly because the old political bottom-up culture in The Netherlands, the European applied concept of participation is rather criticized in the Dutch world of CBO's and NGO's. Usually it is restricted to express one's opinion during public debates. Policy-makers are free to decide whether they will use this opinion or not (as is the case of companies or large non-for-profit organisations involved in public debates). Exactly because this aspect of the Dutch political culture 'private foundations' (called 'stichtingen') established long ago were constituted by citizens and dispose of a politically accepted legal status. They were and are allowed – if applying the general rules – to cope with the fiscal authorities independently, to employ fund seeking activities etc. These legal bodies make their own decisions and negotiate with local, provincial and national governments etc. We may find a very high density of these 'private foundations' in this country. Next to these foundations we may recognise also (1) cooperations of small companies and groups of citizens and (2) unions of workers or e.g. automobile owners etc (called 'Verenigingen'). They also dispose of a legal status however, both apply different forms of decision making compared to the foundations. BGO's or NGO's

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<sup>122</sup> K. Wang, see note-8.

<sup>123</sup> K. Wang, see note-8.

can be a private foundation, a union or a cooperation or an association without a legal status. They are independent with regard to their strategies and policies and sometimes they are financially dependent of local, provincial or national governments. In that case national, provincial or local governments dispose of the power to stimulate a consensus with policy-makers and the members of the foundations or unions. But foundations, cooperations and unions can also be financially independent thanks to the contributions by their members and private funds. This old well founded political culture and its particular expressions (see foundations, cooperations and unions) may be appreciated as part of the socio-political configuration which essentially differs from the Chinese political configuration. Therefore the question what Chinese environmental groups can learn from European groups (and in this case the Dutch one) and vice versa is difficult to answer. In the Dutch case the accent is more on 'involvement' in political processes instead of participation as a possibility – guided by people in power - to express opinions and ideas to policy makers, who will be decisive. The difference in the political culture results in different strategies addressing environmental protection. Figure-5 expresses a well-founded structural approach with different instruments to seriously deal with environmental issues. Figure-6 expresses a configuration of rather independent bodies which try to cope with aspects of environmental issues in their own way. In the recent Hangzhou Forum – oriented on governmental urban strategies and the role of citizens - the question is raised whether the European example – referred is to the democratic based procedures - can be effective. At the same time questions are raised whether Chinese citizens can play an autonomous and responsible role to cope with their daily circumstances.<sup>124</sup> In the light of the essential challenges concerning overall sustainability this difference makes a European-China comparison highly important.

## **5.4 The Jiaxing-The Hague comparison**

### **5.4.1 Some interesting differences**

From a certain point of view in Jiaxing the EPU assists the EPB in its daily functions. However, the financial resources of this union are not secured. According to respondents, some activities cannot be done at all. In fact almost every activity of the EPU is on voluntary base. According to respondents, voluntary work without any allowance could discourage the

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<sup>124</sup> Hangzhou Forum (2014), '2014 Life & Development Forum: Assembly of Cases on Urban Governance', (Hangzhou: Hangzhou Municipality).

initiatives of the members of the EPU. In other words, its main function is to involve community groups, knowledge-institutes, and residents of Jiaxing. Compared to the Jiaxing approach, in the Dutch context (and according to the respondents also in the context of the city of The Hague) at the end of the day there is an uncertainty with regard to the effectiveness of environmental oriented strategies because of a lack of an effective structure. Therefore, neither governments nor companies, CBO's or NGO's are sure about the outcomes in the near and far future. Whether the sustainability objectives could be achieved is out of the hand of any single actor. At this stage the recent Dutch Agreement (see note-59) is criticized from different sides because of its lack of effectiveness. Just this feature of the Dutch way of acting implies an effective and high quality communication between all different actors in order to understand what takes place. In the Dutch case, all interview respondents subscribe to this.<sup>125</sup>

From the explorations in Jiaxing and The Hague, we may further recognise some interesting differences and similarities.<sup>126</sup> Firstly, environmental issues are more and more important for both cities even though their specific strategies are oriented in a different way. Jiaxing cares more about air and water pollution. The municipality of The Hague is oriented on energy-saving to address the issues of climate change. Secondly, public participation or involvement concerning environmental issues is strongly stimulated in Jiaxing; the municipality of The Hague like all Dutch municipalities play a role at the background. It is oriented on general policies, however, because of the multiplicity of all engaged actors the outcomes are insecure. Thirdly, with regard to environmental questions governments of both cities have problems to communicate properly with groups of citizens. This implies transparent and comprehensive knowledge about environmental issues and modern forms of communication to disseminate it in an understandable way. For different reasons both are not developed in China or in the Netherlands. Fourthly, local NGO's in Jiaxing are more or less organised by the local government. They are therefore called GONGO's, which is at the end of the day a tautology. The Dutch circumstances are completely different. NGOs on local and national level are independent if they remain within the borders of the general law. Although they sometimes receive substantial financial support from the political system, this support may be used for the objectives of the receiver. Of course all actors - in China and The Netherlands - do understand that cooperation instead of protesting is preferred if the circumstances are positive. Fifthly, both Chinese and Dutch communities are active in local environmental

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<sup>125</sup> K. Wang, see note-9.

<sup>126</sup> K. Wang, see note-9.

issues. They both have motivated and active members and they both find it is sometimes hard to motivate and mobilise local residents on a huge scale to support environmental oriented community activities.

#### 5.4.2 *Three remarkable differences*

##### 5.4.2.1 *A strong local orchestration in Jiaxing*

The Jiaxing governmental Environment Protection Bureau (EPB) already started to develop and apply measures for improving the 'public participation' in this city's socio-environmental dimension in 2008. In 2011 this resulted into a collaboration of agencies which is called the Environment Protection Union (EPU). Its operations as well of those of the EPB changed drastically thanks to the rapid development of information and communication technologies. Diverse kinds of communication are emerging such a web-chat, online message, mobile phone message, blog et. In addition, hotline 12369 was established in order to receive calls from the public.<sup>127</sup> As an outcome of national and local regulations, the EPB implements reporting and the disclosure of environmental data and information, the air quality index is published daily; and an air quality index in the north part of the city is published weekly. Furthermore, information from factories, work inspection and environmental impacts assessment results are also published; see also the official website of Jiaxing EPB. This important local change agent also stimulates the recruitment of members of the EPU and delivers financial facilities. According the EPB's 'Environmental Protection Law of People's Republic of China' from 2014, all levels of the local government should improve education on environment protection, encourage civilian organisations and civil groups to implement educational work of environment-related laws, regulations and knowledge.<sup>128</sup> This example of local orchestration for coping with environmental challenges and a societal application of communication technologies is missing in The Hague.

##### 5.4.2.2 *Attention for waste-filling in the Netherlands: the case of Amsterdam*

An instructive example about environmental protection interventions which are highly effective and supported by the population can be given from The Netherlands – with its rather pragmatic attitude. During the past years municipal landfilling has fallen from 160 kg in 1995

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<sup>127</sup> Wang, see note-7.

<sup>128</sup> Wang, see note-7.

to only 8 kg in 2008. Land usage is also carefully balanced among urban, industrial and agricultural purposes. To reduce waste streams, most Dutch cities have implemented the national recycling programme, “but Amsterdam’s Afval Energie Bedrijf (AEB, Waste and Energy Company) has instead constructed a waste-to-energy power plant financed and owned exclusively by the municipality. The city eschews the national programme in favour of its clean incineration system, making the AEB plant unique in The Netherlands. In Amsterdam (as most other cities) glass, paper, cardboards and plastic products are separately collected for recycling purposes in containers. The objectives with the AEB plant are – thanks to this form of waste-supply by households – to produce electricity, raw materials and heat.<sup>129</sup> The China UNDP Report concluded that: “*The AEB plant has a net energy yield of 30 percent, comparable to the 2006 global average for coal plant efficiency. Today’s most advanced coal plants realize a maximum efficiency of 49%, but use a controversial fossil fuel source rather than recovering energy from municipal solid waste. AEB claims the plant mitigates climate change by reducing Amsterdam’s heat and energy dependency on fossil fuels.*”<sup>130</sup>

#### 5.4.2.3. *A free socio-political space in Western countries*

The city of The Hague and all other Dutch cities exhibit essential characteristics of the Western approaches to environmental protection; this is also the case for The Netherlands as a society. Therefore we may recognise similar types of actions in this country and, for example, the United Kingdom (UK). Possibly, in the UK these characteristics are more pronounced. Recently a case-study by Hinrich Voss was published about the ‘High-Speed 2’ rail line proposal by political authorities in the UK. It presents the outcomes of a different socio-political culture compared to China. The so-called ‘public participation’ in local transport planning became a cornerstone in the UK since the late 1990s. This case demonstrates the impressive role of action groups. Some seventy local action groups have joined up to form AGAHST, the Federation of Action Groups against High Speed Two. One of the conclusions is that the power of the public to make considerable changes to the high-speed rail line plan – attesting important parts of the natural environment – is constrained in this process, which focuses on consultation rather than involvement. This caused an impressive powerful national bottom-up organised action group, remaining within the acceptable socio-political space. It demonstrated (and demonstrates) that national and local governments that support

<sup>129</sup> AEB (2010), ‘Waste and energy company’ (<http://www.afval.amsterdam>).

<sup>130</sup> UNDP China, see note-76, p. 150.



public participation need to work toward more open and transparent participation mechanisms; what in fact do they mean with participation? One of Voss's conclusions is that *“the top-down approach reaches out to and engages communities. Similarly, the bottom-up approach sees the public reach out to the organization. Neither process is necessarily the more effective one, or provides greater social quality. What drives successful stakeholder management, however, is the early and sincere involvement of the public”*.<sup>131</sup>

## 6. What can Europe learn from China; what can China learn from Europe?

In this section we try to bridge the explorations of previous sections and our policy advice as presented in the final section by reflecting on theoretical questions relevant for the elaboration of the Jiaxing model and its applicability in eight other cities/metropolises of the Zhejiang Province. Therefore we will apply a local frame of reference, referring to the social quality work and applied in the ‘demonstrationproject’ of the city of The Hague. We will dedicate our attention to issues of (1) the functionality of adequate knowledge and (2) related processes of communication as conditions for an effective involvement of citizens (groups) contributing to environmental protection. With this in mind, which preliminary remarks can be made about the applied concepts of participation, governance and democratic instruments as took place in the case of Jiaxing and The Hague? The rational is to contribute to ideas about what Europe can learn from China and what China can learn from Europe with regard to the issue of environmental protection. For the IASQ this means a new step compared to its contribution on sustainability to partners of the Rio+20 conference in June 2012.<sup>132</sup>

### 6.1 A local oriented frame of reference as originated in Europe

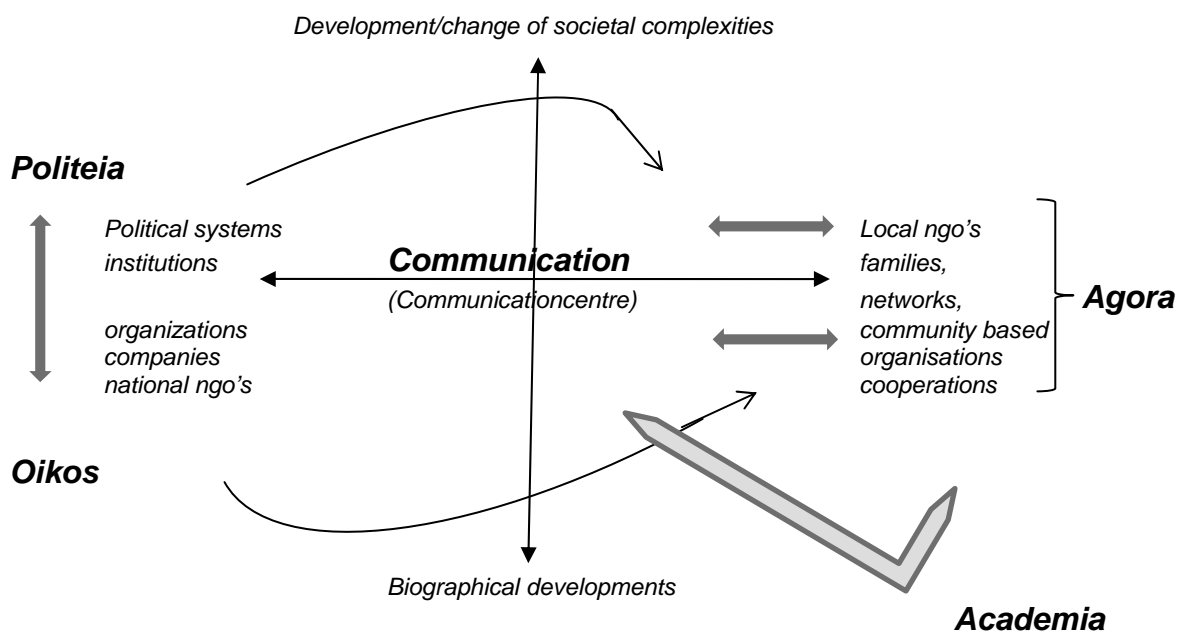
From the first explorations of the similarities and differences of strategies and approaches to strengthen the role of citizens in defense of environmental and ecological characteristics of the urban surroundings – see comparison Jiaxing and The Hague - it is clear that a straightforward comparison is highly difficult. All types of actions – by policy makers, bureaucrats, citizens, academicians, business people etc – take place in a contextual configuration. Exactly these configurations differ enormously between Europe and China. This is illustrated with both figures about the structure of actions (Figure-5 concerning Jiaxing and Figure-6 concerning The Hague). Notwithstanding these differences, on a more abstract

<sup>131</sup> H. Voss (2014), ‘Environmental Public Participation in the UK’, *International Journal of Social Quality*, Vol 4 (1), pp. 26-41, p.38.

<sup>132</sup> Van Renswoude et al, note-24.

level we will be enabled to compare the context and nature of strategies and the way citizens experience the outcomes with the help of a local oriented frame of reference. As well as in China, as well as in Europe we can distinguish between the so-called five worlds, namely the Politeia, the Oikos, the Agora, the Academia and the world of Communication, playing a role in the interplay of two basic societal tensions:

**Figure-7: Five relevant worlds**



- **Politeia**, namely the political system on city level and its departments,
- **Oikos**, namely companies, non-for-profit organisations and professional NGO's,
- **Agora**, or the complexity of daily circumstances on local level and its actors,
- **Academia** of (fragmented or connected) knowledge institutes.
- **Communication** (centre) for connecting representatives of the other worlds, and conveying their interests, cognitive orientation and languages,

This figure is used in the document comparing strategies or activities oriented on environmental issues in Jiaxing and The Hague to explain the differences and similarities on a more abstract level.<sup>133</sup> This local oriented framework is derived from the theory of social quality (see section-2.3.3).<sup>134</sup> This figure is elaborated further and applied for analysing six

<sup>133</sup> Wang, see note-9.

<sup>134</sup> L.J.G. van der Maesen and A.C. Walker (2014), 'The start and development of the social quality approach between 1995 and 2015', (Amsterdam/The Hague: IASQ, working-paper series nr. 13, [www.socialquality.org](http://www.socialquality.org)).

innovative practices of the 'demonstrationproject' of the quarter Laak of the City of The Hague (see section-5.3.1).<sup>135</sup>

With regard to societal strategies for strengthening environmental protection - the main objective of the Jiaxing model and the EGP-project – we need first of all an adequate local oriented frame of reference. This is a condition for recognizing practical differences and similarities of the outcomes of these strategies in Jiaxing and The Hague. In other words needed is a higher level of abstraction to bridge the practical differences and to understand the similarities. As said, for the first time this took place in the comparison between the explorations in both cities. The theoretical work related with Figure-7 may be appreciated as a European endeavour for constructing this frame of reference. In previous sections it is argued that a global consensus about an applicable frame of reference is missing. On the local level of the quarter of Laak in The Hague a start is made with the elaboration of this frame of reference as an endeavour to fill this gap. This work was financed by the European Commission, the municipality of The Hague and participating organisations (one of them was the IASQ).<sup>136</sup> It can be applied to The Hague as a whole and Jiaxing as well.

## **6.2 Real knowledge and communication as conditions for environmental strategies**

### *6.2.1 The need for real knowledge*

The application of this frame will demonstrate that an orchestration of independent knowledge institutes and independent forms of communication concern the black box of the Jiaxing model and the environmental oriented activities in The Hague on the level of the municipality. Communication with (1) representatives of the world of policy-makers (Politeia), (2) companies, non-for-profit institutions and organisations as well as national NGO's (Oikos), (3) and local NGO's and CBO's anchored in communities, and (4) knowledge institutes (Academia) is a condition for making progress with environmental protection strategies. These worlds all speak 'their own (policy) language'. Furthermore, these worlds differ in societal positions, facilities, power, knowledge and information. Representatives of the local Politeia and Oikos are interrelated with national, regional and global partners, completely outside the scope of representatives of the Agora. These societal differences should be a

<sup>135</sup> L.J.G. van der Maesen et al, see note-20. Further: L.J.G. van der Maesen, H. Verkleij (2014), '*Annual Report of the EFSQ (IASQ) about 2011 and 2012*', (Amsterdam/The Hague: IASQ).

<sup>136</sup> H.G.H. Nijhuis et al (2011), '*The contours of the Demonstrationproject of the quarter Laak of the city of The Hague*' [in Dutch]', (The Hague: Municipality of The Hague).

point of departure for all endeavours to engage citizens (of the Agora) in questions of e.g. environmental protection. Neglecting these differences prevents the real base for this engagement. The unequal societal position of the political systems (Politeia), the national oriented companies and NGO's (Oikos) and local actors (Agora) should be compensated by a strong support of the Academia (delivering adequate knowledge to especially the Agora) and a system and processes of communication based upon this.

This mirrors the presentation by Des Gasper about the role of the human security framework concerning climate change. Strengthening accountability at both global scale and national scale requires a change in perspective: *"Accountability is important because, amongst other reasons, unaccountable power-holders are not perfectly diligent, perfectly benevolent, perfectly informed and perfectly competent. Social accountability, transparency and participation require more though than only procedures for reporting and channels for communication. They require relevant ideas and principles, regarding the criteria in terms of which power-holders are to be held accountable. Perfect procedures remain empty if there are no notions about what – and who - should count and be counted"*.<sup>137</sup> But according to Jeremy Rifkin, we have to add something highly essential. Until now we have been used to thinking of the capitalist market (the Oikos) and government (the Politeia) as the only two means of organizing economic life but: *"we overlook the other organizing model in our midst that we depend on daily to deliver a range of goods and services that neither market nor government provides. The Commons predates both the capitalist market and representative government and is the oldest form of institutionalized, self-managed activity in the world"*. And just because the revolution of communication technologies a new form of connecting billions of people is possible, pushing new forms of self-management, *"mostly democratically run organizations, including charities, religious bodies, arts and cultural groups educational foundations, amateur sports clubs, producer and consumer cooperatives, credit unions, health care organizations et cetera"*.<sup>138</sup> In other words the notions about what and who are changing drastically. It also implies a new form of collaboration between knowledge institutes in order to go beyond traditional thinking and science productions. Because of the ICT-revolution, the relationships between Politeia, Oikos, Academia and Agora are changing fundamentally and this has consequences for the Academia as well. The comparison between Jiaxing and The Hague demonstrates that in Jiaxing a manifold of initiatives are

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<sup>137</sup> D. Gasper (2014), Human Security Analysis as a Framework for Value-Oriented Governance – the example of climate change', *International Journal of Social Quality*, Vol. 4 (2), forthcoming.

<sup>138</sup> Rifkin, note-67, p.16.

taken to use new communication technologies for the case of environmental protection (see section-5.4.2.1).

## 6.2.2 *Change of communication: UK and Italian research outcomes*

With the help of adequate knowledge, communication processes may deliver support to the equalization of positions. And thanks to the new technologies this is not wishful thinking anymore. New forms of 'translations' may pave the way for openness, transparency, respect, equality and to transcend the differences between these worlds. This is a condition for The Hague, given the rather independent position of its main actors (see Figure-6) and the lack of sufficient communicative relationships. These actors are not sure about the outcomes of their interventions in the near future. And for different reasons the development of an effective high quality of communication is a condition for the success of the Jiaying model as well (see Figure-5). It is not the independencies of all engaged actors, but exactly the dependency of most actors of the rather dominant policy strategies and the lack of an overview of strategies applied by (international organised) companies, provincial and national authorities. Especially these companies (Oikos) do not play a clear role in the Jiaying model: their activities and consequences for environmental aspects are not focused on. With regard to the new technologies, the outcomes of the Oxford Internet Survey (see Claire Wallace, below) demonstrates, that frequent internet users were more likely to have a feeling of political efficacy, meaning how far people felt that they can influence politics and the role of companies.<sup>139</sup> According to Claire Wallace, this means that *"one of the most important by-products of digital communications is in enabling people to control their lives in terms of banking, energy, consumer activities and personal profiles (...). This extension of personal efficacy is one of the most potentially transformative aspects of digital technology in relation to self-realization as one of the crucial dimensions of social Quality. This kind of empowerment interacts recursively with social cohesion and Social inclusion (...). Accordingly, it seems that the pessimistic predictions of Ulrich Beck and Robert Putman about the dissolution of community are premature. Digital communications open up new kinds of community with new kinds of trust, relationships, and forms of mobilization, which do have implications for Social Quality."*<sup>140</sup>

<sup>139</sup> W.H. Dutton and G. Blank (2011) , 'Next Generation Users: the Internet in Britain. Oxford Internet Survey Report', (Oxford: Oxford Internet Institute).

<sup>140</sup> C. Wallace (2012), 'Can Information and Communications Technology Enhance Social Quality?', *International Journal of Social Quality*, Vol. 2 (2), pp.98-115, p. 111.

According Renato Fontana cs, with regard to the question of communication we also learn another aspect from Italian surveys. The nature of communication itself needs to be changed: a paradigm shift is urgent. In usual circumstances the oscillation of media attention with respect to environmental issues explains the fickleness of environmental demand and the consequent exit of this from the agenda of public politics and policies. Most citizens find that information provided has lost its credibility, even if well documented. Furthermore, the sources of information - referring to, for example, the economic dimension or the socio-political dimension – often are conflicting. On the basis of the author's opinion surveys in Italy, it can be concluded that individuals look for examples for 'real people' enabling the possibility of identification with and reflection of the emotionality of users.<sup>141</sup> This is what happens with the movements of the 'Transition Towns' and 'Fair trade Towns' in especially Northern Europe and other continents (see section-5.3.1).<sup>142</sup> Exactly this last point implies the need to adopt new interpretative categories for thinking about the environment. In other words, information as an aspect of public participation or public involvement is problematic when it is estranged from the context of the socio-cultural dimension of daily circumstances. Furthermore, information is not the same as well-founded knowledge about causes and consequences (with regard to strategies influencing environmental circumstances). In other words, the accent on 'information disclosure' as an aspect of the Jiaxing model, is important but not sufficient. Information should present the points of departure for real knowledge about what takes place.

The authors conclude that the public needs a change of mechanisms that underlie the media industry, thus the current nature of communication processes. This also implies a change of cultural paradigms and a transformation toward communication of the real aspects of environment problems: *"Good communication introduces elements of growth toward a critical consciousness that will enable us to move away from failures more severe than what the obsession for industrial profit has already done to the planet. (...) the information (both in general and specifically regarding the environment) in line with the new trends of the development of technology, should be thought of as short but effective, so as to attract the attention of the public for the shortest time possible. Information should be associated with clear and explicit guidelines for the retrieval of additional informational materials for adopting*

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<sup>141</sup> R. Fontana and M. Ferrucci (2014), 'Environmental Sustainability as Indicator of Social quality: The New Opportunities Offered by Communication', *International Journal of Social Quality*, Vol. 4 (1), pp. 41-57.

<sup>142</sup> Transition Towns, see note-116, Fairtrade-Towns, see note-117.

*best practices*".<sup>143</sup> In other words, these Italian surveys refer to the question that actors of the Agora need a real understanding about environmental questions 'in their terms' in order to be able to develop their daily circumstances in a sustainable way. This implies an understanding of the interests of power-holders of the Politeia and of the Oikos, as well as an understanding of the consequences of the unbridled operationalization of their interests. This implies knowledge about the interrelations between parts of the Politeia and of the Oikos, on national and international level, the legal ones and the illegal ones. Support from the side of the Academia is a condition sine qua non.

### 6.2.3 *The Academia: what do we learn from the Jiaxing approach*

What the Jiaxing model brings focuses on is the notion that a condition for effective operations and interventions for the Agora - thus especially for community based organisations (CBO's) - is an overview of what happens in Jiaxing with regard to all elements, which influence the environmental (ecological) aspects. Needed is a comprehensive overview. From the side of the Academia this should imply a strong collaboration of all knowledge institutes, which are oriented on one of these elements. In Jiaxing as well as in The Hague – and the hypothesis is: as everywhere – this is lacking. The Academia is highly fragmented. From the explorations in Jiaxing and in The Hague no information is given to policies or strategies to go beyond this fragmentation. A fragile exception is the 'demonstrationproject of Laak of The Hague'; its experience delivers the inspiration for this section.<sup>144</sup> A consequence is that in Jiaxing (and in The Hague) environmental initiatives and interventions are not connected in research and their underlying theories with: (1) the all-encompassing idea of 'overall sustainability, (2) its connection with changes of societal complexities and (3) the outcomes in the urban context, resulting in sustainable or unsustainable urban development (of Jiaxing or The Hague). This theme is illustrated in Figure-1 and refers to our application of a general theoretical frame of reference. Also as a consequence of not addressing these fields of perspective respectively and their interrelationships no distinction is made between the four dimensions of these three fields as illustrated in Figure-4. Especially the various representatives of the Politeia and the Oikos are influencing these three fields and its four primary dimensions. Without a real founded knowledge about these influences and their consequences it remains quite impossible from the side of the Agora to play a responsible role in environmental protection as a topic

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<sup>143</sup> Fontana et al, see note-141, p. 54.

<sup>144</sup> Van der Maesen et al, see note-135.

intrinsically connected to these fields and their dimensions. Especially for the Chinese ambitions – to implement the outcomes of the Jiaxing model to eight other cities/metropolises in the Zhejiang Province – a broadening of the approach seems to be important. Environmental protection is an aspect of sustainable urban development. Without progress with this development a real protection cannot be effective. However, the orientation on the sustainable urban development of Jiaxing and the other cities/metropolises implies a well-founded understanding of the change of societal complexities as well as of how to contribute to overall sustainability. In the previous sections we tried to demonstrate the meaning of knowledge about these three fields of perspectives. The ICT-revolution is just stimulating this form of reasoning, because the actors in the Politeia and Oikos have to change their propositions about the four essential dimensions of daily circumstances, namely the socio-economic, the socio-political, the socio-cultural and the socio-environmental dimensions. This has a huge consequence for understanding the realities we are living in and will live in in the future.

#### 6.2.4 *China's speed and quality of urbanisation*

According to the important UNDP China Report, the concept of sustainable development as an important 'field' has emerged over the past few years as a prerequisite for urban planning, involving a balance of economic, social and environmental imperatives. It concludes, each of these points is under strain in China's cities.<sup>145</sup> In previous sections we made some changes of this approach (see section-4). The three supposed dimensions of the field of sustainable development are changed into four dimensions. More or less in line with this Report we argue, that overall sustainability will be realised in the urban context as space of 80% of mankind in the future. This implies a connection with the field of sustainable urban development. Therefore both fields should be related theoretically and practically. This theme is not addressed in the work concerning the Jiaxing model. The Report refers to the Chinese economist Wu Jinglian, who identified four reasons for the inefficiency of Chinese urbanisation,<sup>146</sup> namely: "*a flawed land rights system, a misconceived government role in urbanisation, a hierarchy that rewards city size above all other criteria, and a general misconception that larger cities are always better*".<sup>147</sup> Rightly, the Report notices that the uniqueness of China's urban transformation simply means that there are no obvious lessons

<sup>145</sup> UNDP China, see note-76, p. 61.

<sup>146</sup> W. Jinglian (2013), '*The growing Pains of Urbanisation*', ([http://english.caixin.com/2013-01-22/10048502\\_i.html](http://english.caixin.com/2013-01-22/10048502_i.html)), last accessed June 2013)

<sup>147</sup> UNDP China, see note-76, p. 61.



or best practices to adopt. Notwithstanding this *“unless bold, creative and decisive action is promptly taken, cities may turn into major obstacles to China’s development aspirations, instead of acting as the engines for progress”*.<sup>148</sup>

### **6.3 Public participation, governance and democratic rules**

#### *6.3.1. The interpretation of the concept of participation based on utilitarian propositions*

Addressing challenges as discussed in previous sub-sections we will argue that also an adequate theoretical understanding and related concepts are needed in order to understand these challenges and to develop well-founded strategies to deal with them. It is also a condition for reaching a consensus between policy-makers, entrepreneurs, residents and academics how to address the interrelationships of the three fields and four dimensions as illustrated in Figure-1. One of the characteristics of the debate about the Jiaxing model - and also environmental oriented approaches in e.g. the city of The Hague – is the lack of such a consistent conceptual framework. According to Chinese scholars and policy-makers, one of the most essential aspects of the Jiaxing model concerns the enhancement of public participation in the environmental dimension. In order to discuss the outcomes of the previous sections we have to make some pre-considerations about this concept. It is applied in at least two different ways. They are not synonyms because they refer to two scientific orientations which are rather antithetical. The first orientation concerns **the utilitarian** points of departure which claims – in simplified terms - that human beings are atoms of societal aggregates striving for profit and preventing of losses.<sup>149</sup> It refers to the Chinese interpretation of the accent on the ‘I’ in Western thought. As the Chinese philosopher Lu Weidung argues, *“the collapse of ‘we’ [also in China] is an inevitable trend as the forming of private ownership and households in modern society. More attention is paid on individuals than on groups, which weakens the unity of human beings while brings benefits somehow. Actually, human beings need to make a choice of this dialectic and opposite social pattern”*.<sup>150</sup>

The utilitarian orientation delivers points of departure for neo-liberal politics and policies in especially Western countries. Also the dominant Western economic paradigm is embedded in these utilitarian principles. Public participation as concept functions in this context as

<sup>148</sup> UNDP China, see note-76, p. 100.

<sup>149</sup> L.J.G. van der Maesen et al, see note-10

<sup>150</sup> L. Weidung (2012), ‘The return and rebuild of ‘we’’, in: Development Research Centre, *‘2012 Life & Development Hangzhou Forum: we make life better. Reference Material’*, (Hangzhou: DRCHM), p. 94.

strengthening the role of these 'atoms' in order to diminish the expenditures of the state for health, welfare and cultural provisions. It is popularized as strengthening of the 'participation society' as an alternative to the 'welfare state society'. The argument for underpinning the so-called 'participation society' is mainly for budgetary reasons. As concept it is connected with the concept of 'civil society' (see below). It refers to the way of thinking, stimulated by the World Bank with its promotion of the idea of social capital. Citizens more effectively have to use their own 'social capital' and by doing this they constitute their own identity, namely the '**civil society**' next to the '**state**' and the '**market**'. Like in the traditional debate on sustainability, analysts and policy-makers promoting social capital do not bother about the adjective 'social' and suppose, therefore, that the economic concept of 'capital' can be connected with a convenient adjective.<sup>151</sup> In the same vain the concept of cohesion is discussed in the context of the World Bank as the glue of this civil society.

This theoretically groundless connection may be the basis of the World Bank for analysing societies as aggregates of individual people and processes of transformation. Moreover, according to Coole, the interest in this approach of social capital and social cohesion is best understood as a policy initiative designed to repair the ideological resources of the contemporary neo-liberal states: *'its significance has altered as it is subordinated to strategies of governance and becomes integral to experiments that Western governments are undertaking to renew or reinvent the means of managing their populations as a project of civil renewal.'*<sup>152</sup> It does not become clear why the World Bank and its followers discuss themes such as trust, values and norms under the heading of social capital, because they also discuss these topics under the heading of social cohesion, without explaining the ontological-conceptual aspects of both concepts either. For the World Bank, social capital and social cohesion seem to be different sides of the same unknown coin. It is logical that the related concept 'civil society' is unclear too. Do we have to make a distinction between the state society, the market society and the civil society, knowing that production, distribution, and consumption processes - thus also reproduction processes - are intrinsically connected with each other? This ungrounded distinction is also paradoxically applied in studies on the Human Development Index as a serious supposed point of departure for indicators and their

<sup>151</sup> Van der Maesen et al, see note-10, p. 116.

<sup>152</sup> D. Coole (2009), 'Repairing civil society and Experimenting with Power: A Genealogy of social Capital', *Political Studies*, 57 (2): pp. 374-96, p. 375

application.<sup>153</sup> As we notice, the important UNDP China Report also used this Human Development approach as an evidence *suis generis*.

### 6.3.2 *The interpretation of the concept participation based on expressionistic propositions*

In a second context of interpretation – the expressionistic point of departure - it is argued in simplified terms that people are ‘social beings’. As a result of theorizing ‘the social’ in ‘social quality thinking’, the adjective ‘social’ has a specific meaning as the outcome of the dialectic between processes of people’s self-realisation and processes resulting into the formation of collective identifies: the dialectic between actor and structure. This is in fact the issue Lu Weidung is referring to.<sup>154</sup> This issue is extensively elaborated in the third main book on social quality.<sup>155</sup> In this theoretical orientation, public participation is a function of social empowerment. This supposition of people as social beings is antithetical to the first supposition about people as atoms, connected with utilitarian propositions. It is of interest to notice that the Chinese interpretation of the concept of ‘we’ thus has a strong affinity with the expressionistic orientation. The interpretation of the concept of empowerment also differs in both orientations. In the utilitarian one it refers to the Kantian notion, where ‘the social’ is nothing else than an ‘invisible contract’, drawn between individuals and not on grounds of necessary control of individual behaviour. According to Herrmann, “*this can be seen as an acknowledgement of power, although it fundamentally divides the individual and the social, power is then equalled with responsibility, responding in accordance with the ability to rationally perceive the work and to act accordingly*”.<sup>156</sup> In other words, the social in this tradition is not considered as being an unique entity, constituted by social actors. It concerns individual capabilities. Participation is an instrument in the supposed **duality** between actor and structure for strengthening their capability.

In the expressionistic orientation it concerns the development of a vision for increasing the power of the individual in control over his/her own life, overcoming the limitations of traditional economic thinking. Empowerment is understood as a matter of focusing on the individual as a fundamentally ‘social entity’ or being embedded in the dialectic between processes of individual self-realisation and the formation of collectivities. With this in mind Herrmann defines social empowerment as: “*enhancing the participation of people to enable them to*

<sup>153</sup> Van der Maesen, see note-4, p. 89.

<sup>154</sup> Weidung, note-150.

<sup>155</sup> Van der Maesen et al, see note-10, Chapter-11.

<sup>156</sup> P. Herrmann (2012), ‘Social Empowerment’, in: L.J.G. van der Maesen et al, see note-10, pp. 198-223, p.203

*balance personal development and coordination with their immediate and more distant social and physical environments. In other words, the social quality approach understands empowerment as a means to enable people to control the personal, communal and societal environment to foster their own development.*<sup>157</sup> Participation in the second orientation refers to a process to enable people's self-realisation in the supposed **dialectic** between actor and societal wholes. It refers in fact to an effective '**involvement**' for constituting and changing their own daily circumstances. This should enhance the social empowerment of people in the socio-political/legal, the socio-cultural/welfare, the socio-economic/financial and the socio-environmental dimension.

Voss's study about environmental **public participation** in the UK demonstrates the existence of different interpretations of participation. Access to information according to Voss is indeed a pre-condition to better understand if and to what extent people and the environment could be affected through water, soil, air or noise pollution. But we have to raise at least two questions. The first concerns the necessity of a precise understanding of the concept of participation. Following the recent theoretical discourse about this issue, Voss distinguishes between (1) participation as an interactive process to shape decision making (reactive mechanisms), (2) a consultation to get the public's opinion, and (3) as only information exercise to explain the public what is going on and how they will be affected. The second question is, what do we mean by 'the public'? This concerns the identification of relevant stakeholders. Voss draws on the concept of the 'salient stakeholder' in order to capture the spatial and temporal differences in importance across stakeholders. He accepts the supposition that one of the aims of public participation is to build understanding and trust among (salient) stakeholders, from which organizational legitimacy and legitimacy for a particular behaviour can follow.<sup>158</sup> Especially his first interpretation of participation as an interactive process has a strong affinity with expressionism while the second and the third refer to utilitarian points of departure.

In the case of Jiaying the accent is laid on the socio-environmental dimension. In order to really understand the results of related processes – facilitated with the help of the model – we should also analyse the effects of participation as an 'interactive process' (and thus involvement) with regard to the three other dimensions, because the interrelationships (or reciprocity) of these dimensions are an undeniable reality. In the case of the Jiaying model it

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<sup>157</sup> Herrmann, see note-156, p. 219.

<sup>158</sup> Voss, see note-131.

is interesting to know whether it concerns the first, second or third form of supposed participation?

### 6.3.3 Participation and NGO's in China

For answering the final question (see above) it is of interest to refer to the study by Neil Munro about the willingness to join environmental NGOs in China. First of all he remarks, that the socio-political bases of willingness to join these NGOs is progressing, but that there are few studies of public attitudes toward environmental NGOs. He further notices that for the social quality it is important to analyse this topic because these NGOs are illustrative of a wider phenomenon, namely of repressed demand for participation.<sup>159</sup> In his empirical exploration he found that instrumental considerations are central to willingness to engage: *“this is an important insight for anyone who is concerned in a practical sense with motivating participation [in China]. At the same time, the article has shown that engagement also relies on specific ideological cues, on the availability of a social identity which facilitates engagement and on social capital networks which provide channels for dissemination of relevant values and information”*.<sup>160</sup>

The outcomes of his study are relevant for analysing the significance of the Jiaxing model and also what happens in the Dutch city of The Hague compared to Jiaxing. However, for understanding the applied concept of participation (see quotation) – seen as well with our distinction of two interpretations in mind (both previous sub-sections) – a lot of work has to be done. He concludes that China's environmental NGOs are not able to provide the channel for mass participation in environmental governance which China's citizen say they want: *“Combined with reforms aimed at encouraging the development of mechanisms for popular participation and fostering the development of a vigorous third sector, would not only do a great deal to ameliorate an unfolding environmental crisis, but also in the long term fill in some of the gaps in China's social cohesion. As long as civil society organisations do not damage the state's governing capacity, and there are very few that have such an intention, stronger environmental NGOs can only be to the benefit of the Chinese state and people”*.<sup>161</sup> Seen from a theoretical perspective, Munro refers to different concepts which demand for an explication in order to analyse and to understand the outcomes of the Jiaxing model: namely

<sup>159</sup> N. Munro (2013), 'the Socio-political Bases of Willingness to Join Environmental NGOs in China: A Study in Social Cohesion', *International Journal of Social Quality*, Vol 3 (1), pp.57-82, p.59.

<sup>160</sup> Munro, see note-159, p. 71.

<sup>161</sup> Munro, see note-159, p. 72

government, governance, social capital, social cohesion, participation. His empirical conclusions can be a great help to pave the way for a consistent and coherent application. This is highly relevant for understanding e.g. the differences and similarities of Chinese forms of participation and the Western European forms of participation. According to Munro, the appropriateness of different forms of participation is effectiveness.<sup>162</sup> But compared to quantitative aspects of simple objectives, 'effectiveness' in the context of complex societal relationships is or does not have an evidence sui generis.

#### 6.3.4. Governance and democracy

In the documents about the Jiaying model the concept of 'governance' is as important as the concept of 'participation'. This issue also needs to be theorised in order to function appropriately in the analyses of the three fields of perspectives and their four dimensions (see Figure-1 and Figure-4). According to Des Gasper, the idea there could be a single universally appropriate procedural and institutional framework for governance has been a fantasy of some international funding organisations and analysts of the past generation: "*The fantasy survived partly because of the vagueness around the term 'governance', and the failure to distinguish between: first, very general notions that cover all forms of managing behaviour – for example notions that refer to all rule-setting and rule-application or to all exercises in guiding behaviour or all exercises in governing; second, more specific notions that exclude some types of governing and are defined in contradistinction to those; and third the idea of 'good governance', which should not be equated with either of the first two. Too often the failure to distinguish has meant that authors try to capture the general aura of authority and sophistication that attaches to the term 'governance', and to transfer both the aura and the term to just one particular set of arrangements for governing – for example, working through multi-stakeholder networks or indirect 'steering' by a government or provision of support for private businesses – and to advocate that particular set alone as constituting 'good governance' universally*".<sup>163</sup> In his study he presents a table of definitions of government in order to help distinguishing different meanings.

Studies about governance usually refer to the distinction between the state, market and civil society; in the dominant discourse they form a triangle. Different relationships between these

<sup>162</sup> N. Munro (2014), 'letter to the coordinators of the EGP-project about the analysis of the Jiaying model', (Glasgow: University of Glasgow), 12 June.

<sup>163</sup> Gasper, see note-137.

phenomena should produce different forms of governance. If we connect this idea with Figure-7 – in other words if we discuss this idea with some social quality assumptions in mind – we may summarize a few problems with this triangle. Within a society the ‘state’ (Politeia) presents the national, provincial and local governments with a whole range of departments, influenced by international power-holders and especially by local, national and international business configurations. The term ‘state’ does not dispose of an unequivocal meaning. The market is a mechanism applied by the Politeia, as well as the Oikos and the Agora. There are a manifold of other mechanisms operating in the context of the two basic tensions as illustrated in Figure-7. In common sense language the market refers to the world of international, national and local business (Oikos); the legal ones and the illegal ones. The relationships between the complexities of the Oikos and the Politeia essentially differ all over the world. In other words, the mechanism of the ‘market’ as part of the triangle is inadequate for identifying societal processes and the power-holders behind these processes. The concept of ‘civil society’ is hanging in the air as well; societal complexities encompass political systems, the business world, and daily circumstances of people. We may understand the outcomes of the transformation of these complexities by analysing the outcomes of the interplay of both tensions as illustrated in Figure-7. These outcomes regard the nature of the productive and reproductive relationships constituting the daily circumstances of people at a certain space and during a certain time. We should really doubt whether the three concepts of the triangle dispose of any heuristic meaning in order to understand processes, influencing daily circumstances and whether these circumstances contribute to the development of overall sustainability or decrease sustainability.

According to Tim Cadman, the concept of ‘governance’ refers to a fundamental shift *“occurring in the national and international public/private sector balance, which is delivering opportunities for a global form of governance, in which both civil society and corporations are playing a key role. The practice of democracy in this globalized context questions the relevance of traditional modes of democratic governance, and their ability to effectively address global problems, or even to represent the interests of state and society in a globalized world. Particularly when the boundaries between public and private authority – and national and supranational responsibilities – are becoming increasingly blurred.”*<sup>164</sup> Notwithstanding our remarks on the use of the concept of ‘civil society’ (see above) and ‘democracy’ (see below) the question is – with his remarks in mind - whether we need to

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<sup>164</sup> Cadman, see note-85, p. 18

rethink the concept of governance on local level for understanding the nature of the Jiaxing model. Until now it is applied in a rather easy way. Important is to analyse how decision-making processes with regard to environmental protection (and all other aspects of the overall sustainability) are produced and what the role is of community based groups and local NGO's in these decision-making processes.

With this question in mind it is of interest to refer to a recent British study by Steven Corbett. He comments on the dominant positions of the Politeia and Oikos in the Western hemisphere. Corbett argues, that in most Western democracies citizens have grown distrustful of politicians, sceptical about democratic institutions and disillusioned about how the democratic process functions. They are also severely constrained by politics (Politeia), which is strongly influenced by the most powerful economic actors (Oikos).<sup>165</sup> This concerns the heart of the socio-political dimensions of societal processes. He comments the current emphasis of policy-makers on how to transform 'top-down policy practices of government into more complex governance processes, because this emphasis remains estranged from relationships and practices in daily circumstances of people. He derives a new perspective from the social quality theory in order to contribute in a new way to '**participatory democracy**'. The dominant view of representative democracy - eloquently explained also by Joseph Schumpeter in the mid-twentieth century – reduces the role of citizens under modern circumstances to that of disempowered and passive consumers, choosing between political brands that are presented to them every few couple of years. This empowerment is also stimulated by the increase of the complexity of modern societies. So, in order to create possibilities for a responsible role for citizens, new forms for the application of participatory democratic principles are needed. But again, what do we mean with 'democracy, democratic principles and democratic institutions? Debates about the Jiaxing model also refer to these three themes in a non-systemic way. Decades ago, Giovanni Sartori published his famous book on 'Democratic Theory'. He opens with the supposition, that "*my argument is that in the final analysis the existence of democracies depends, other things being equal, on the popularization of the idea of democracy, in the sense that a clear understanding of what democracy is about is a major condition (although not the only one) for behaving democratically. For wrong ideas about democracy make a democracy go wrong.*"<sup>166</sup>

<sup>165</sup> S. Corbett (2014), 'A Critical Qualitative Study of the Relationship between Social Empowerment and Participatory Democracy in the UK', *International Journal of Social Quality*, Vol 4 (1) , pp.7-25.

<sup>166</sup> G. Sartori (1967), '*Democratic Theory*', (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers), p. 5.



With this in mind we should continue to clarify how to give a modern fundament of – in terms of Corbett – ‘participatory democracy’ and its meaning to support the objectives of the people behind the Jiaying model. Indeed we need new possibilities and facilities for ‘bottom-up’ processes. But the distinction between state, market and civil society refers, implicitly, to the traditional discourse on empowerment which does not invoke a meaningful critique of power relations or societal structures but emphasizes individual responsibility, as expressed by neo-liberal theorists. It is from here that the ideology of the ‘participation society’ enters the scene. Corbett made a plea that the focus should be on ‘social empowerment’ as in the theory of social quality. He argues that, *“Britain’s democratic disillusionment is not simply a renewal of trust in the role of elected politicians, nor in a renewal of the mid-twentieth-century compromise between capital and labor (traditional social democracy), but is likely to necessitate the creation of a new participatory democratic institutions and culture in society. This requires broader societal engagement with the concerns of social quality and, especially, social empowerment (...). [this implies] bringing in the values of liberty, equality and solidarity in a positive equilibrium appropriate for full democracy and the structural transformation of institutions that this entails.”*<sup>167</sup> This implies that citizens should dispose of all adequate information and knowledge as well as effective systems of communication to play a responsible role. He demonstrates this in two case studies related with community based organisations in Britain in order to explain what a broader societal engagement can mean in the praxis of everyday life.

In conclusion of this section it is again of interest to refer to Sartori’s conclusions from 1967, which disposed of a prophetic value in the current European debate on liberty, freedom of expression and security: *“I do not hold that it is obligatory to revere democracy. What I do hold is that it is obligatory to use the word ‘democracy’ in strict relation to its historical and semantic connotation, and in a way that will not deceive. And I consider that this is a scientific duty, a rule with which the political scientist must comply – at least, if he wants his science to exist quo science.”*<sup>168</sup> Finally he remarked: *“Western man has enough liberty and is tempted by the glow of prosperity: consequently he attaches a decreasing value to individual liberty and an ever growing value to economic welfare and security. His idea becomes sécurisme. The cult of security. He is less aware of the importance of a constitutional State which will take care of his needs. And it will be a huge, ever growing protective State, since the spiral of*

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<sup>167</sup> Corbett, see note-165, p. 22.

<sup>168</sup> Sartori, see note-166, p. 443.

*needs has virtually no limit: for in the end, as Hegel said, it is no longer need (the necessity), but opinion (the desire) which has to be satisfied.*<sup>169</sup>

Participation, governance, and democracy as concepts with which to develop new approaches to pave the way for sustainable urban development as the most important point of departure for the development to the overall sustainability should be developed further in the context of the always changing societal complexities, especially with the explosion of new communication technologies in mind which will fundamentally influence these three fields.

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<sup>169</sup> Sartori, see note-166, p. 451

## 7. Policy advice

Further enhancing the comparison with European experiences may be helpful to elaborate the Jiaxing model for environmental protection and its applicability for eight other cities/metropolises in the Zhejiang Province and other Asian and European cities as well. With **Figure-7** and its explanation in mind, in order to elaborate this model and to implement it in other cities, the previous sections may deliver points of departure for the following policy advice.

First, it is worthwhile, to enhance the role of the **Academia** for :

- a. paving the way for a specific connection of universities with each of the eight cities and to organise an **intercity-platform** of these universities for creating points of departure to learn from each other. This is also important for debating the outcomes in comparison to those of other cities in Asia, Europe, et cetera.
- b. developing an equivocal conceptual framework to better understand the significance of applied concepts for analysing processes, strengthening the environmental protection of all these cities in the Province of Zhejiang and as an instrument for the comparison with other cities (ad-a).
- c. developing a better understanding of the work on behalf of the environmental protection as an aspect of 'sustainable urban development' to contribute to overall sustainability with the help of a more founded conceptual framework (ad-b). This will pave the way for connecting Jiaxing experiences with the Asian and the global debate on development toward sustainability. This connection is a condition for enhancing the work carried out in the Zhejiang Province and mainland China.

Such an advice is recommended on international level since concepts as participation, governance, community development, information disclosure, democracy, sustainable development et cetera are – seen from a global perspective – understood in a confusing way. The Zhejiang Province in collaboration with Chinese universities can help to transcend this confusion. This proposal is implicitly subscribed by the Chinese UNDP in 2013. We like to repeat one of its conclusions, namely that: *“the current performance evaluation system for local governance is focused mainly on economic growth, with little attention to resource*

*conservation, environmental protection and social development, and there are no incentives for sustainable planning and development, the current system of organizations and regulations has given the government great discretionary power, and failed to establish checks and balances, and systems of monitoring and supervision. This often leads to the 'principal agent problem' for state-owned assets".*<sup>170</sup>

Second, it is worthwhile to dedicate attention to the **Agora** in order:

- a. to strengthen the position of main actors in the **Agora**, namely community based organisations, local ngo's and individuals. Implicitly this is one of the main conclusions of the last Hangzhou Forum of November 2014.<sup>171</sup> In terms of many of its participants 'social organizations on local level' should play a more responsible role in the elaboration of daily circumstances and also with regard to environmental protection. They need facilities to play this role as citizens in their own terms.
- b. To develop relationships between these main actors and representatives of the Academia to have an adequate access to information, that may be comparable with the information presented by the local government (see **Politeia**) for establishing 'checks and balances'. This is important for (1) collaborating with the government and its departments and (2) with companies (**Oikos**) in order to cope with cities on environmental issues together. This is also important for taking initiatives to try and change the current attitude of the population of cities in order to better support environmental conditions (e.g. to combat production of waste). Therefore these main actors should dispose of a realistic budget in order to work with 'community oriented professionals' to strengthen the role of community based organisations and local ngo's of the cities.

Third, it is important to elaborate a **modern system of communication** for:

- a. The operationalization of the first and second advice,
- b. connecting the different worlds of the political systems, companies, community groups and academics in an equal way.

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<sup>170</sup> UNDP China, see note-76, p. 89

<sup>171</sup> Hangzhou Forum see note-124.