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To all interested in social quality

Concerning: 3rd IASQ Info letter:
A Chinese-European collaboration

Amsterdam/The Hague, 19 Feb. 2015

Dear all,

In between the Western and the Chinese New Year the IASQ completed two studies in the context of the EU-China project on environmental protection. In January 2015 a related delegation from Jiaxing and other Zhejiang Province cities and a number of people from the city of The Hague discussed their interpretation of effective environmental protection at the Institute of Social Studies (ISS). A main issue was how environmental conflicts in the Western world are handled. The project's overall aim was to create an understanding of the applied model of the city of Jiaxing (in the Zhejiang Province) in order to strengthen the role of its citizens in environmental protection issues. The IASQ responsibility in this project was threefold. First, Kai Wang, as temporary assistant of the IASQ, explored the role of citizens in Jiaxing according a number of essential social quality assumptions, namely the interplay of the tension between systems (political, business) and the world of daily life (of communities) and between societal and biographical processes. Following the work in Jiaxing, this frame of reference was applied in explorations of the Dutch city of The Hague. (see comparative research report IASQ-projects page).

This research report was then used as basis for a comprehensive study about citizens as main actors in the development toward overall sustainability (**Working-paper nr. 14 website**). Background was IASQ's **Working-paper nr. 11** produced on behalf of the Rio+20 conference in 2012, addressing the gaps in the dominant global sustainability debate with regard to neglecting citizens and the urban context. It also used its work recently carried out in the 'demonstrationproject for sustainable urban development' of the quarter Laak of The Hague. The outcomes were used in Kai Wang' exploration in The Hague, as well as in Jiaxing. A working paper on the demonstrationproject is forthcoming shortly.

The study argues that the development of the Jiaxing model is an essential answer to address dramatic changes of urban processes in China and other Continents. Furthermore, the comparison between Jiaxing and The Hague – in the light of interpretations of global tendencies – demonstrates a highly interesting difference. A wide range of initiatives is undertaken in Jiaxing (debates, education, broadcasting) to involve communities and to connect them with policy-makers. This also implies a form of disciplining these communities. In contrast The Hague local NGO's are completely free and show a wide range of activities addressing environmental issues, however without any form of orchestration. The study concludes with policy advice how to enhance communities with support of knowledge institutes in order to enable them to play an equal role compared to the political system and the business world. This implies a strong change of orientation of knowledge institutes as addressed in the Dutch demonstrationproject (see also working-paper nr.8).

We hope the implementation of the Jiaxing model to eight other Chinese cities will be successful and that a manifold of universities, connected with these eight cities can constitute a platform of knowledge institutes. The IASQ currently researches the possibility of creating a European counterpart platform, based in the Hague. We like to keep you informed about this.

With all my best wishes,

Laurent J.G. van der Maesen