Title: Wetland Governance: Constructed landscape and modernity towards ecological civilization in Tai Lake Basin, China

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Dissertation Abstract

The term ‘wetland’ [湿地], which refers to simultaneously as dangerous swamps or valuable ecosystems, points to its long association with a nature-culture dichotomy. This dichotomy was reconfigured at the beginning of the 21st century when the construction of wetland parks began to be mainstreamed in Chinese planning policies. This dissertation explores the roles of different social actors and organizations involved in the construction of wetland parks, which have come to be assumed as a panacea to various urban problems, such as biodiversity loss, water pollution, and nature-deficit disorder. More specifically, this research seeks to investigate the administrative, material, and knowledge formation of wetland park governance in China’s Tai Lake basin—a historical site embedded with competing images of a traditional water town as well as a highly urbanized modern city.

This research will utilize the theoretical frameworks of political ecology and cultural landscapes to explore the complex dynamics entailed in the shaping of wetland parks. It aims to illustrate the ‘ecological governmentality’, whereas different social actors became involved in wetland construction and played a role in inscribing specific ecological values in these environments according to their own aspirations. Ultimately, this project will offer a new perspective to understand nature as socially constructed infrastructures in a new paradigm of biocentric aesthetic and social order.

Ecological restoration through Multi-layered dikes in Sanshan Island National Wetland Park