

# **Public Participation in Environmental Decision-making Process in China**

A Case Study of the Anti-Nu River Dam Campaign in Yunnan Province

by

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## **Abstract**

The ever-increasing environmental degradation in China is leading people to pay more attention to environmental protection. Although Chinese government has made progress in dealing with environmental problems, the environment still gets worse. Thus, ordinary people began to take part in environmental issues, and make contributions to environmental protection. With increased public concern for the environment, people try to participate more in environmental decision-making so as to mitigate environmental damage.

This paper examines hydroelectric development in the Nu River in Yunnan Province as a case study, which is a plan of building 13 dams on Nu River. Since this area is related to biodiversity protection, ethnic minorities, and World Heritage status, it has received a high-level concern from the public. The paper examines the influence of public participation on the decision-making process of the dam project, including environmental NGOs, corporations, the government, the media and local residents. Due to public participation, the fate of the dam project has changed. It has twice been suspended by Premier Wen Jiabao. This paper employs the Multiple Streams Policy Framework to examine public participation in the project, and explains how those interest groups put their environmental-friendly ideas into the policy agenda and influence the decision of dam construction.

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MPP Essay

Public Participation in Environmental Decision-making in China—A Case Study of Anti-Nu Dam Campaign

**Introduction**

The rapid economic growth in China leads to increasing consumption of energy. Given the traditional carbon-based energy can cause a series of environmental problems, and also cannot fully satisfy current energy demand, the state promotes renewable energy, such as hydropower, which is relatively clean and accessible. In this context, a great mass of dams have been constructed in China, such as the Three Gorges Dam. In 2003, the state was planning to build 13 dams on the Nu River, which then led to widespread public concern and was strongly opposed by environmental NGOs and the media. Then, Premier Wen ordered a halt to the dam construction in 2004 and delayed the work again in 2009. During this period, the number of dams to be constructed on the Nu River has been reduced from thirteen to four. So I am interested in what had caused the reduction? Why the proposed project has caused such a high-level public concern? Why Premier Wen Jiabao decided to order a halt to the dam construction? And finally what roles of environmental NGOs, the media and the government played in the decision-making process on dam construction?

In this paper, I will address those questions in my following analysis. I will first focus on definition of public participation and relevant literature review on environmental public participation in China. Secondly, I will employ the case study of Anti-Nu River Dam campaign in China to examine the role of public participation in the dam campaign. After analyzing this case study, I will argue that public participation has influenced the environmental decision-

making, however challenges still remains. In the last part, I will apply the Multiple Streams Framework to this case study, and illustrate the policy decision-making process in the Anti-Nu River Dam campaign.

### **Definition of Public Participation**

The National Research Council (2008) provides a definition of “public participation” in environmental assessment and decision-making, which includes a variety of mechanisms and processes used to involve and draw on members of the public or their representatives in the activities of public-or private-sector organizations. It also introduces five dimensions of public participation including: 1) who is involved; 2) when-at what points-they are involved; 3) the intensity of involvement, that is, the degree of effort made by the participants to be involved and by the government agency or other convener to keep them involved; 4) the extent of power or influence the participants have; and 5) the goals for the process (National Research Council, 2008, p.14).

### **Relevant Literature and Background of Environmental Public Participation**

According to the World Bank’s overview of China’s environment, China is the World’s third largest consumer of coal and oil, the World’s second-largest source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and the developing World’s largest producer of Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) (The World Bank, 2004). Currently, China has surpassed the United States and became the largest emitter of greenhouse gas. In this context, a great mass of environmental problems have emerged in China, ranging from air pollution, deforestation to water scarcity. Thus, in order

to mitigate environmental degradation, the Chinese government, especially the environmental protection agency has attempted to address those environmental problems.

In China, the highest level environmental protection agency is the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA). \* It plays the key role in designing pollution control policies and programs, but its role in day-to-day implementation of environmental regulations is limited (Ma and Ortolano, 2000). At the local level, organizations concerned with environmental protection and management are environmental bureaus and offices (EPBs and EPOs), and environmental protection commissions (EPCs). Those departments are below the national level and funded by their local governments. Their functions are to carry out national and local environmental regulatory programs and to serve as environmental agencies of the SEPA (Sinkule and Ortolano, 1995). However, Zhang et.al. (1999) found that operation of those environmental institutions encountered numerous difficulties in reality, including the conflict between economic growth and environmental protection at the local level, the weakness of environmental protection bureaus, the lack of resources and incentives for both polluters and government to improve the environment.

In the central government, SEPA encounters a great mass of barriers in implementing environmental regulations. First, in 1998, a governmental reform greatly decreased the staff in SEPA, which diminished SEPA's ability to coordinate high-level environmental policy and stretched its capacity very thin. In addition, SEPA is facing the low level of funding accorded environmental protection (Economy, 2004).

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\* The SEPA has been elevated as the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) in 2008. Since most of events that I described in the paper took place during SEPA years, I refer to SEPA throughout the paper.

In local governments, EPBs also lack sufficient enforcement capability. On the one hand, EPBs are heavily dependent on both SEPA and local government. But EPBs rely on the latter for virtually all their support, including their budgets, career advancement, number of personnel, etc (Economy, 2004). Thus, EPBs will take the local government's concern and interests as priorities. Basically, local authorities would give preference to economic growth and investments over the progressive development of environmental policies and stringent enforcement of environmental regulations and standards (Mol and Carter, 2006). In this context, it is difficult for EPBs to implement effective environmental policy. Also, both high level environmental authorities and local EPBs are facing challenges in underfunding, limited resources, and lacking of independent status, thus their environmental management capacity is poor.

In face of urgent environmental degradation and ineffective implemental capacity of the government, an increasing number of people have participated in environmental protection, which has led to the emergence of environmental public participation. In addition, Chinese leaders have opened the political space for popular participation in environmental protection, permitted the establishment of NGOs, encouraged media investigations, and supported grassroot efforts (Economy, 2004, p.129).

Since environmental NGOs (ENGOS) are the primary participants in public participation in China, there are many possible ways to categorize ENGOS from their structures, objectives, and operations. Yang (2005) categorized ENGOS into seven groups in terms of registration status, including: 1) Registered NGOs: registered as social organizations or private, non-profit work units; 2) Non-profit enterprises: registered as business enterprises but operate as non-profit organizations; 3) Unregistered voluntary groups: Unregistered organizations that function as NGOs; 4) Web-based groups: Unregistered groups that operate mainly through the internet; 5)

Student environmental associations: Registered with campus Youth Leagues yet function and perceived as NGOs; 6) University research centres/institutes: Affiliated with institutions of higher learning but operates as NGOs; and 7), Government-organized NGOs (GONGOs): Social organizations established by government agencies, also known as state-owned NGOs.

Schwartz (2004) divided ENGOS into three groups according to their roles and influence in environmental protection: traditional ENGOS, environmental governmental NGO (EGONGOs), and semi-ENGOS. The first group refers to organizations that have no state funding, and have no official ties to government beyond the necessity of a sponsoring unit. They have difficulties in human capital, funding, accessing data, expanding membership and establishing branch offices. So the influence of traditional ENGOS on environmental policies is limited. As for the second group, EGONGOs can enjoy an easy existence due to its relations to the government. They have sufficient funding, and their members are largely from former governmental officials, but they enjoy less autonomy to develop by themselves. Semi-ENGOS, register within the Chinese university system, so they don't have direct ties to government. They have funds from international organizations and university grants, and are staffed by well-trained college students and professors. Unlike Schwartz, Lu (2005) divided environmental groups into those that avoid confrontation with the government and those that are less fearful of causing offence (Lu, 2005). In general, most ENGOS will avoid actions that could pique the government, since their survival is dependent on the government, unless ENGOS can protect itself, such as the Greenpeace. However, Lu doesn't illustrate why Greenpeace can protect itself.

In addition to the typology of ENGOS, scholars also explore the interaction between ENGOS and other actors in environmental sphere, including the government, the media, and international ENGOS. For the government, on the one hand, Chinese government encourages the

development of a “third force” for dealing with environmental problems. On the other hand, it sets up restricted regulations which hamper the development of ENGOs (Yang, 2005). The media is regarded as the key ally of the ENGO, and works closely with ENGOs (Yang, 2005; Lu, 2005). As for the international ENGOs, they often form partnerships with local NGOs by providing materials and non-material support, ranging from money to expertise (Yang, 2005). However, there is little resource showing between ENGOs and the indigenous peoples.

The active participation of ENGOs makes scholars consider its potential influence on Chinese political change. Yang (2005) argued that Chinese ENGOs may function as both sites and agents of political change. ENGOs provide a field for citizens to practice their political skills and test political limits. Also, as the agent of this change, ENGOs have greatly contributed to development of the current civil society. However, in the near future, ENGOs are unlikely to have a great impact to shape Chinese politics (Yang, 2005; Tang & Zhan, 2008). In this paper, I won't explore much on the influence of ENGOs on political change, but focus on how ENGOs affect environmental decision-making process.

Early scholars not only have been concerned about participants of public participation, but about different forms of public participation. Chung (2006) pointed out that EPBs have created a variety of forms for public participation, such as phone hotline for complaints, questionnaires for affected population and public hearing. Kim and Jones (2006) introduced public participation with Chinese characteristics in environmental sphere. They argued that public hearings soliciting public opinion are called either too late or after decision makers have already made up their minds, only selected individuals are allowed to participate in public hearing, and the public cannot access to relevant information and needed resources to fully comprehend the consequences of the decision. Thus, in order to improve effective public participation, the

government needs to allow the public to access appropriate information. Also, ENGOs can play important roles in helping citizens understand those information and technical data (Chung, 2006; Kim and Jones, 2006).

In general, environmental public participation results from environmental deterioration and ineffective environmental governance. ENGOs have become primary participants and their development has limitations but also has made progress in improving public awareness. Also, they have a network to cooperation with the media and international NGOs, and are supported by those actors. In this paper, I will try to make a case study to illustrate those scholars' viewpoints. Then, I will take a different perspective to look at the case study—that is, employ the policy framework to examine how public participation influences the environmental decision-making process.

## **Methodology**

The research method used in this paper will be a case study, which refers to an anti-dam campaign in Yunnan Province in China. Since this campaign has attracted lots of concern, involved different actors and influenced environmental policy making, it can be regarded as a typical example of public participation. The case study is based on some scholars' fieldwork research and environmentalists' reports on the Nu River Valley, such as Andrew Mertha, Kristen McDonald, Michael Busgen, Philip Brown, Xu Yilin, Wang Yongchen and Yu Xiaogang. Mertha (2008) conducted an extensive field research during 2004 to 2006 regarding dam projects in remote areas in Southwest China. In his research, he applied the Fragmented Authoritarianism (FA) to the policymaking process in China, which states that policy made at the center has

becoming increasingly malleable to the parochial organizational and political goals of the various agencies and regions charged with enforcing that policy (Mertha, 2008, p.5). So he focused on actors who were traditionally excluded from policymaking process but are becoming active players in the politics of hydropower. Similarly, this paper will also place an emphasis on the non-traditional actors in policymaking process, such as ENGOs. However, it will take different policy framework to examine the involvement of the non-traditional actors.

Meanwhile, Busgen also visited the Nu River in 2005. His research reviewed the role of NGOs in the formation of China civil society based on his study in Nu River dam project, especially the role of ENGOs in promoting the free flow of demand and opinion in the anti-Nu River dam campaign (Busgen, 2006). Busgen's research has provided a great mass of detailed information regarding ENGOs in the anti-dam project. In addition, McDonald did her field work in Nu River during 2004 to 2006. She focused on how natural resource governance changed when power and access is devolved to local authorities, explored the conditions that led to the expansion of decision-making process in the Nu River dam project, and the local decision-making after decentralization. Her research placed an emphasis on policy setting in contemporary China, including decentralization, the rise of environmental governance and "Great Western Development Campaign" (McDonald, 2007). Unlike McDonald, this paper will pay attention to the interaction between public participation and policy setting, and how the affected actors influence environmental decision-making.

Brown and Xu conducted their field research in Nu River valley in 2008. They provided the latest information regarding the Nu River dam construction, and examined the resettlement of local people due to this hydropower project. They found that local resettlement plan violated the national regulations pertaining to the Nu River resettlement (Brown & Xu, 2010).

Moreover, Wang Yongchen and Yu Xiaogang travelled to the Nu Valley and its surrounding areas respectively. Their reports focused on current living situation of affected local people. In addition, I collected some Chinese-language sources concerning the dam issue from newspapers and magazines, such as news from Sina and Sohu, reports from the mass media like South China Morning Post and the Southern Metropolitan Daily. Based on those firsthand information and research, I can obtain the timeline, background and different perspectives of dam construction, which enables me to get a comprehensive understanding of the project.

### **Case Study—Anti-Nu River Dam Campaign in Yunnan Province in China**

In 2003, the government decided to build 13 dams on the Nu River in Yunnan Province, which then caused objections from ENGOS, scholars, and the media. Then, Premier Wen ordered a halt to the dam construction in 2004 and delayed the project again in 2009. So what happened to the dam construction during 2003 to 2009, and what factors make political leader to change their mind? Below, I will seek answers to those questions.

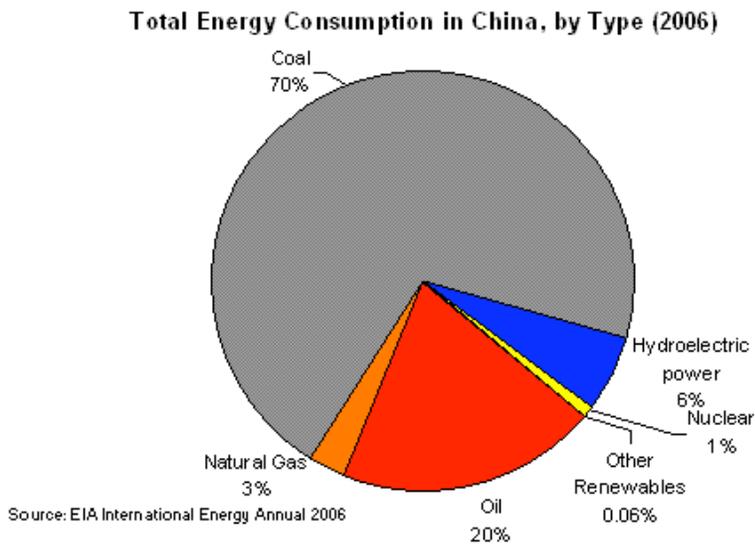
#### **I. The Nu River**

As one of China's last free-flowing rivers, the Nu River is located in a remote stretch of western Yunnan Province. It originates on the Tibetan Plateau, and enters Yunnan Province through Nujiang Prefecture, flowing through or along four prefecture-level administrative areas and ten county-level administrative areas. Then it leaves China and enters Burma, where it becomes the Salween River. In addition, it also flows through China's Three Parallel Rivers World Heritage Site, an area known as the epicenter of Chinese biodiversity. The World Heritage Site contains over 6,000 plant species and is believed to support over 25 percent of the world's

and 50 percent of China’s animal species. Also known for its cultural diversity, almost 300,000 people from thirteen different ethnic groups live in the Three Parallel Rivers Area (International Rivers, 2005).

## II. Reasons for Dam Construction

In this part, I will explore the reasons for dam construction on the Nu River in Yunnan Province. Currently, with rapid economic growth, China’s demand for energy has been increasing year by year. China has emerged from being a net oil exporter in the early 1990s to become the world’s third-largest net importer of oil in 2006. Natural gas use in China has also increased rapidly in recent years, and China has looked to raise natural gas imports via pipeline and liquefied natural gas (LNG). China is also the world’s largest producer and consumer of coal, an important factor in world energy markets (U.S. Energy Administration, 2009). Below is a figure of China’s energy consumption.



**Figure 1: Energy Consumption in China (2006)**

In Figure 1, coals account for a majority (70 percent) of the total energy consumption, and oil supplies 20 percent of the total energy use, and hydroelectric power merely represents 6 percent of it. However, the large consumption of coal can generate a great mass of carbon dioxide, which makes China become the largest greenhouse emitter. As for the oil, given China has become the net importer of oil, it has to spend much money in seeking oil providers and transporting oil. Accordingly, China places emphasis on enhancing energy efficiency and diversifying energy sources. As a renewable energy, hydroelectric becomes a better choice. Thus, a great number of hydroelectric projects have been planned or under construction in China, especially in Yunnan Province. The province has 24 percent of China's hydropower potential and already provides about 10 percent of China's hydropower (Dore and Yu, 2004). In addition, given the increasing demand for energy from east coastal areas, China adopted the "Send Western Electricity East" project in 2000. This project focuses on sending electricity from Western Region to Eastern Region (Han et.al, 2001). As one of provinces in Western Region, Yunnan Province will provide a great mass of electricity for eastern areas. Given Yunnan is abundant with hydroelectric power, and it will focus on dams construction to develop hydroelectricity.

The second reason for dam construction on the Nu River is that dam project could facilitate economic growth in Yunnan Province. According to Statistics 2009, Yunnan is ranked 24 out of 31 provinces in terms of GDP, and the Nujiang Prefecture is ranked the last one in the ranking list of GDP in Yunnan Province (China Statistic Information, 2009). Also, all four counties in Nujiang Prefecture are still designated as "national key poverty counties" and Nujiang Prefecture remains one of the poorest ethnic minority autonomous prefectures in China. With dam construction, a large amount of investment will enter the Nujiang Prefecture, which will benefit infrastructure construction, bringing job opportunities for local people, and facilitate

the development of energy-intensive industries (Brown and Xu, 2010). Although the proposed dams are regarded as a way to lift the local people out of poverty, Brown and Xu (2010) point out that the rural residents of Nujiang Prefecture, who comprise over 85 percent of the prefecture population, have not benefited from the heavy industrial development. In the contrast, many farmers are being left behind by the economic development.

### III. Reasons for High Public Concern

Since the dam project on the Nu River was approved by the state in 2003, it has drawn an increasing number of concerns ranging from ENGOs, scholars to policy makers. Different opinions regarding dam construction has made this project very controversial in China. This section of the paper will try to explore why this project get so much higher public concern.

First, the dam project is close to the World Heritage Site. As mentioned above in the overview of the Nu River, the river flows through “Three River Parallel” area, which was designated as a World Heritage Site by the UNESCO in 2003. According to the description of the UNESCO, “the 1.7 million hectare site features sections of the upper reaches of three of the great rivers of Asia: the Yangtze (Jinsha), Mekong (Lancang) and Salween (Nu River) run roughly parallel, north to south, through steep gorges which, in places, are 3,000 m deep and are bordered by glaciated peaks more than 6,000 m high.” Since the Nu River is related to the World Heritage Site, Building dams on the Nu River may influence the ecosystem of the Three Rivers Parallel. After the approval of dam construction was announced, the World Heritage Site Committee issued a warning to the Chinese government to express their grave concern for this area and its downstream communities (International River, 2005). In response, the Yunnan

provincial government stated that the World Heritage designation only comes into effect at an altitude of two thousand meters, so it excludes the Nu River itself (Mertha, 2008).

Second, the Nu River is known for its biodiversity. According to data from World Wide Foundation (WWF), the Nu River is home to 92 amphibian species, and 143 fish species of which 47 are found nowhere else in the world; 3 areas support endemic birds. Also, it has the world's greatest diversity of turtles including the Giant Asian Pond Terrapin and Bigheaded Turtle. Thus, environmentalists express strong concern on the proposed dam construction.

Moreover, the Nu River is one of the most ethnically diverse regions in all of China. Nujiang Prefecture is home to 22 ethnic minority groups, out of the total 25 represented in Yunnan Province and 55 in the whole country. Lisu comprises 50% of the current population of Nujiang Prefecture, while the remainder is composed of Bai (29%), Han (8%), Nu (6%), Pumi (3%), Tibetans (1%), Dulong (1%), Dai (1%) and Yi (1%) (Magee and McDonald, 2009). With the dam construction, those ethnic groups who are living along the river will be resettled. Tilt (2010) examines three key areas of vulnerability experienced by local ethnic groups as they related to the Nu River dam project: "The first is economic vulnerability. Local government takes the dam project as a poverty alleviation strategy, but it turns out that the majority of electrical power generated by the dam project will be sent to east coastal cities. The second is vulnerability in terms of governance and decision-making. Most villagers cannot access to decision-making process regarding the displacement. The third vulnerability is related to cultural autonomy. The local ethnic groups are not regarded as indigenous people by the Chinese government, and their culture and traditional lifestyle cannot get sufficient attention and protection from the state. In the face of the hydroelectric project, the future of these ethnic

groups, such as changes in their culture and social network due to the dam construction, has drawn public concern” (Tilt, 2010).

Another reason for this high public concern is that the Nu River is a trans-boundary river. It is shared by China, Thailand and Burma. In Thailand, the area the Nu River flows past is a national park and a wildlife sanctuary, so people are worried that the environment will be disrupted by the creation of dam project upstream (Butler, 2004). In this context, more than eighty NGOs in Thailand sent a letter the Chinese ambassador in Bangkok on the Nu River issue in 2003 (Mertha, 2008). Also, the Thailand government has its own dam plan on the river, which may be affected by China’s dam project. Thus, protesters here called on Beijing to consult local people in Burma and Thailand (Butler, 2004).

#### IV. Players in the Anti-Nu River Dam Campaign

Since different players were involved in the Anti-Nu River hydropower development, before I introduce the campaign, I will first explore the players, including NDRC, SEPA, Huadian Power Company, Yunnan provincial government, the prefecture government, ENGOs, the media, the international community and affected local people.

The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) would be an important player in the NRP. It was formerly the State Planning Commission (SPC), charged with the overall economic and infrastructure development of the country. In 2003, it was merged with the State Council Office for Restructuring the Economy and parts of the State Economic and Trade Commission and recast as NDRC. Since it has tremendous power and administrative range, it is regarded as the “small State Council” (Mertha, 2008). In the Nu River dam project, it is NDRC that proposed the project and put it into practice.

As discussed previously, the State Environment Protection Administration (SEPA) is the highest-level environmental protection agency. Although management of environmental protection in China is shared by many agencies and actors depending on the issue, SEPA and its local bureaus involve a full range of environmental activities, including law drafting, monitoring, enforcement, environmental impact assessments and research test (Economy, 2004). Thus, SEPA is also involved in the dam project, and convened meetings to review its potential environmental impact on the Nu River Valley.

The Huadian Power Company (Huadian) is the chief promoter in hydropower development. It is one of the five state-owned corporations split off from the former Ministry of Electric Power. In 2003, Huadian announced the formation of the construction entity Yunnan Huadian Hydropower Development Company, with registered startup capital of 200 million yuan (approx.USD 24 million). At this time, the shares were split between China Huadian Corporation (51%), Yunnan Development Investment Co (20%), Yunnan Electricity Group's Hydropower Construction Co (19%) and the Yunnan Nu River Electricity Group (10%) (Dore and Yu, 2004; McDonald, 2007).

As for the Yunnan provincial government and the prefecture government, they are administrative agencies in the province and the prefecture respectively. Since Yunnan is a relatively poor province compared with its counterparts, it is eager to develop the economy, and take the dam construction as a good opportunity for development.

NGOs would be important participants in the campaign, especially the domestic NGOs, such as Green Earth Volunteer (GEV), Green Watershed (GW) and Friends of Nature (FON). GEV was founded by Wang Yongchen in 1996, a reporter from China National Radio, and this

organization focuses on raising public awareness of environmental protection. GW is the first Chinese NGO that specializes in water management, and was founded by Yu Xiaogang in 2002, who has worked for years on water issues within the Three Parallel Rivers region of northwestern China (Mertha, 2008). FON is the first ENGO in China, was established by Liao Congjie in 1994, who is a professor of history and vice-president of the influential Academy of Chinese Culture and a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Like GEV, it also centered on public awareness of the environment and has a modest attitude toward environmental issues. Their concern for hydropower development in Yunnan largely led to the review of the dam project by the government.

Another player in the campaign is the media. In the Chinese environment movement, the media is always regarded as an ally of ENGOs. After the 1992 United Nations Conference on environment and development, the Chinese government has increased publicity of environment issues and awareness of many public holidays such as Earth Day and World Environmental Day. Since then, the amount of environmental reporting on official conferences and government-organized activities has increased (Wen, 1998). Also, with an increase of public concern about environmental issues, the public started to take part in environmental activities. In this context, the media coverage on environmental issues increased. Moreover, there are some journalists who are themselves dedicated environmentalists, such as Wang Yongchen. They choose to work with ENGOs rather than newspapers to organize environmental activities. Also, some ENGOs have media-based membership, which can help those ENGOs promote their environmental programs and get more public support (Wen, 1998). Hence, the cooperation between ENGOs and the media can enable the public to learn how to protect the environment and deal with environmental problems. However, in the NRP, it refers not only to environment protection, but also to the

state's plan in energy and economy. Thus, the media coverage on this issue should be in line with government policy, which would complicate the role of the media in this project.

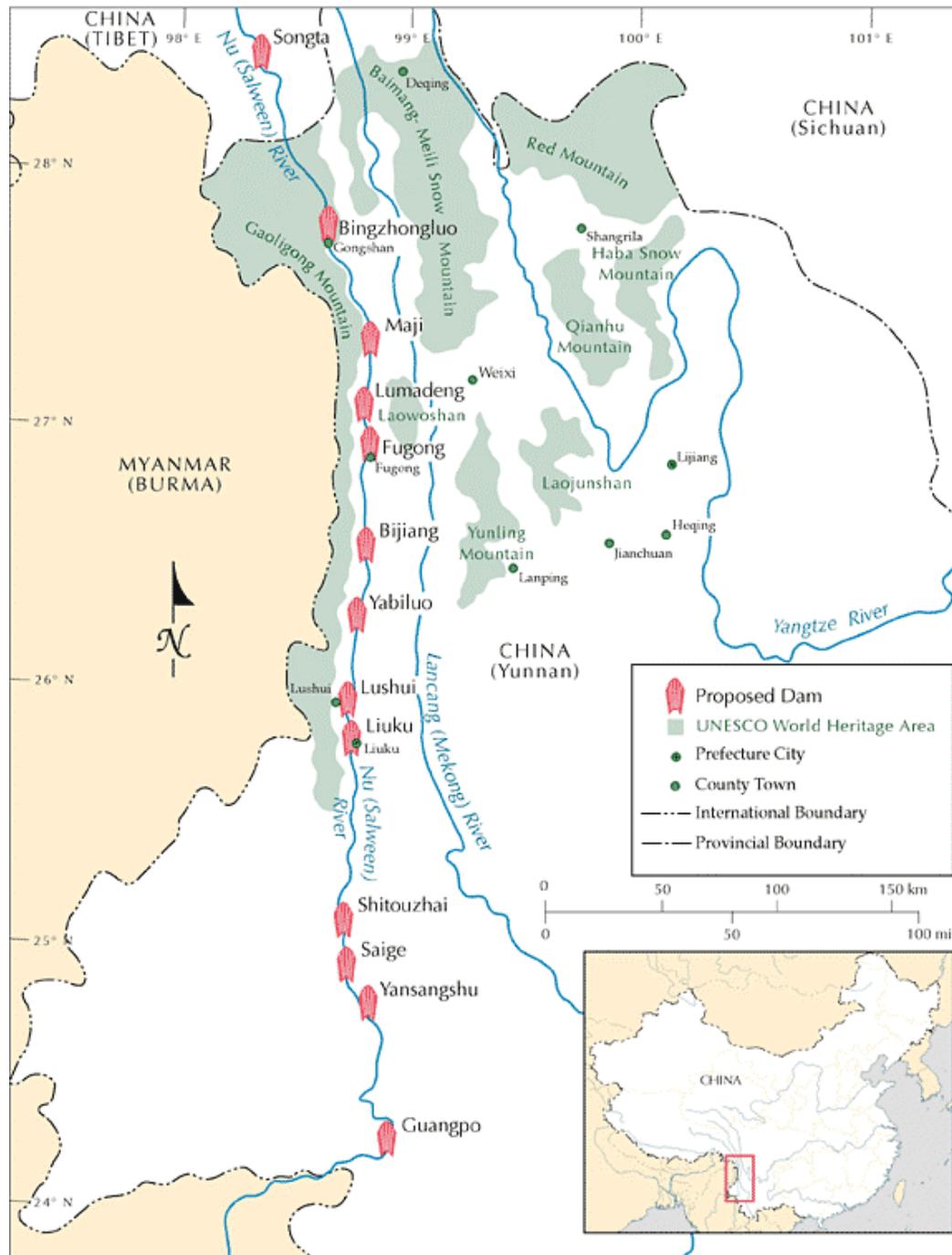
The international community is also a player in the campaign. Since the Nu River is a trans-boundary river, other countries which share the Nu River are highly concerned about the dam project, such as downstream countries Burma and Thailand. In Thailand, the river goes through a national park, given upstream dams could influence the ecosystem of the park and the river's surrounding communities, ENGOs sent an open letter to Chinese Ambassador to express their concern. However, little materials mentioned Burma's attitude toward the dam project.

The last but not least player in the campaign is the affected local people. Because of proposed dam construction, local people living close to the dam sites were facing displacement. According to Wang Yongchen's (2006) field report about the affected people, few of them knew much about the relocation issue, and they just listened to the government. Also, affected people had not been consulted by the government regarding dam construction and resettlement. However, they had a strong trust in the government and hoped to get proper compensation. Brown and Xu (2010) examined the implementation of resettlement policy on one of the thirteen dams, Liuku Dam, and found that resettlement plan violated the national regulations. Even if the local people are the most directly affected by dam construction, such as their social network and living style, their participation in decision-making of the dam project is limited, and so far, little research has mentioned it.

## V. The Nu River Project (NRP) and the Anti-Nu River Campaign

In the late 1970s, the Chinese government had conducted preliminary studies on the feasibility of building dams on the main branch of the Nu River (Brown and Xu, 2010;

McDonald, 2007). In addition, the prefecture governmental leaders have displayed a strong interest in hydropower development of the Nu River, but the infrastructure weakness and term limits of those leaders prevented the project from gaining much momentum (McDonald, 2007). In 1999, based on the assessment of energy situation in China and the request of a group of representatives from the National People's Congress, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) decided to adopt the NRP. Then the Water Resources Hydropower Planning Institute organized a bidding contest and sent the Beijing Survey and Design Institute and the Huadong Survey and Design Institute to undertake the planning of the NRP, which finally led to a proposal of thirteen dams on the Nu River (Mertha, 2008). The following Figures summarize basic information about those dams. Figure 2 is the map of the proposed dams. It lists thirteen dams along the Nu River, and those dams are very close to the UNESCO World Heritage areas. Figure 3 illustrates the details of those dams, including the dam height, their generating capacity and estimated displaced population. This figure indicates that the dam project has a total hydropower of 21320 MW, which is more than the Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River (Mertha, 2008; Busgen, 2006). In addition, it can be seen that the smallest dam is Liuku, which has 35.5m in height, and a hydropower of 180 MW.



**Figure 2: Map of Proposed Dams**

(Source: <http://www.internationalrivers.org/node/445> )

Dam Name	Dam Height	Reservoir Size (m3)	Generating Capacity (MW)	Estimated Population Displaced
Songta	307m	6,312 billion	4200	3633
Bingzhongluo	55m	13.7 million	1600	0
Maji	300m	4,696 billion	4200	19,830
Lumadeng	165m	663.6 million	2000	5092
Fugong	60m	184 million	400	682
Bijiang	118m	280 million	1500	5186
Yabiluo	133m	344 million	1800	3982
Lushui	175m	1, 288 billion	2400	5190
Liuku	35.5m	8.1 million	180	411
Shitouzhai	59m	70 million	440	567
Saige	79m	270 million	1000	1882
Yansangshu	84m	391 million	1000	1882
Guangpo	58m	124 million	600	34
Total			21,320	48,371

**Figure 3: Thirteen proposed dams on the Nu River**

(Source: McDonald, Kristen.(2007). Damming China's Grand Canyon: Pluralization without democratization in the Nu River Valley.)

On March 14, 2003, the Yunnan provincial government signed an agreement to develop hydroelectric stations on the Nu River with Huadian Power Company (Huadian). Their plans for

hydropower development in Nujiang prefecture were approved by the NDRC on 14 August 2003. According to the plan, the power station at Liuku would be built first.

In the spring of 2003, at the meeting attended by hydropower specialists from Beijing and Kunming (the capital of Yunnan Province), the local experts all supported the project, but scholars from outside Yunnan Province expressed their doubts on the project. However, merely the views of the local experts were carried in the local newspapers (Mertha, 2008). On September 1, 2003, after the implementation of new Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Law, the State Environment Protection Administration (SEPA) convened a first expert panel to review the plans to develop the hydropower on the Nu River. Since more general concerns related to the loss of biodiversity, geological instability, cultural disruption, and lack of faith on promised poverty alleviation, SEPA had a serious reservation to the plans (Dore and Yu, 2004). In late September 2003, in order to counter SEPA's opposition, the Yunnan and prefecture governments convened a "Yunnan experts" meeting, and argued that concerns were manageable and damming should proceed (Dore and Yu, 2004).

After the dam issue was discussed by different level of governments, it also had attracted public concern. Since officials failed to achieve a consensus on the plan within SPEA, an official who disagreed with the plan broke the news to Wang Yongchen (the head of an ENGO) and sought backing from them (Lu, 2005). She introduced this official to Professor He Daming, who is a famous river expert in China. Then, on an expert forum organized by SEPA and attended by more than seventy experts and ten journalists, He presented his opposition to the dam project, which then caught ENGOs' attention (Mertha, 2008). In response to He's opposition, in October, Wang Yongchen and her group, the Green Earth Volunteer (GEV) organized a petition in which sixty-two people from the fields of science, arts, journalism, and grassroots environmental

protection signed their opposition to the Nu River Dam project at the second meeting of the China Environmental and Culture Promotion Society (Mertha, 2008). Meanwhile, another local activist Yu Xiaogang, who is the head of the Green Watershed (GWS), began his own survey of the Nu River Valley. In December, a 45 minute television documentary was prepared by China Central Television (CCTV) which has presented ‘both sides’ of the debate (Dore and Yu, 2004).

With the media’s coverage about this program, an increasing number of ENGOs had become concerned about it, and a close ENGO network started to emerge. At the beginning of this campaign, most of activities were driven by those committed individuals, such as Wang Yongchen and Yu Xiaogang. Both of them were supported by four ENGOs (GEV, GWS, Beijing Global Village (BGV), and FON). The two ENGOs, the BGV and FON let the other two take the lead in it. In addition, a number of other ENGOs also participated in the campaign without affiliating themselves closely with the network (Busgen, 2006).

Under the participation of different interest groups, the Nu River Dam project has become a highly complicated and controversial issue. On February 18, 2004, Premier Wen Jiabao ordered a halt to the dam construction, and stated that “we should carefully consider and make a scientific decision about major hydroelectric projects like this that have aroused a high level of concern in society, and with which the environmental protection side disagrees” (Yardley, 2004).

Even if the dam construction had been halted, the struggle over it was continuing. In February 2004, a group of environmentalists, journalists, scholars and experts, organized by Wang Yongchen, travelled to the Nu River Valley and traced the route of all thirteen proposed dams (Mertha, 2008). In October 2004, Yu Xiaogang brought some peasant representatives to an international conference in Beijing organized by the UNDP, the World Bank and NDRC, where peasant representatives criticized the current hydroelectric project (Lu, 2005). Then, on August

2005, an open letter signed by the GEV, BGV, FON, Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs and other environmental organizations called for publicizing the environmental impact assessment of the NRP and holding the public hearing on the project. In response to Premier Wen and the public's concern, the NDRC and the SEPA had to review the project. The Vice-Minister of SEPA Zhu Guangyao indicated that there would be a great adjustment of the NRP, which would reduce the number of dams from thirteen to four. The four dams are Liuku, Saige, Yabiluo and Maji (Chen, 2006). Yet, In March 2008, NDRC published its five-year plan for energy development, which listed dams on the Nu as key projects (Moxley, 2010). Also, according to Brown and Xu's (2010) field visit to the Nu River Valley in 2008, they confirmed that dam construction at Liuku and Saige had begun.

However, the fate of this hydropower project remains uncertain. Shi (2009) reported that Premier Wen ordered a halt to work on the Liuku hydropower station in April 2009, and told local authorities not to resume the plan until the impact of NRP on the ecology and local communities was fully understood. This is the second time that Premier Wen put the controversial project on hold through his personal intervention. Currently, in the 2010 National People's Congress, the Nujiang prefecture officials sent their NRP proposal to every Yunnan representative and tried to get support for this project from the provincial government and NDRC (Chen, 2010). Obviously, the local government is still eager to develop the Nu River Valley. Since different interest groups are still working on the project, the future of the NRP remains to be seen.

### **Five Dimensions of Public Participation in the Anti-Nu River Campaign**

In this section, I will focus on public involvement in the campaign based on the above-mentioned five dimensions of public participation, including: 1) who is involved; 2) when-at what points- they are involved; 3) the intensity of involvement; 4) the extent of power or influence the participants have; and 5) the goals of the process.

As discussed above, the NDRC, SPEA, the Yunnan provincial government, the prefecture government, Huadian Power Company, ENGOs and the media are primary players in the campaign. In addition to them, the local people are also involved in the policy process. However, their perception of this project is unknown due to a lacking of related research. Thus, I will merely focus on other players' attitudes toward the project. Basically, they can be divided into two groups, one is pro-NRP, and the other is anti-NRP. The former consists of NDRC, the Yunnan provincial government, the prefecture government, and Huadian. The latter includes SPEA, the ENGOs and the media. For those proponents of the project, what they are concerned about is the economic benefits the project will bring. The NDRC, as a central-level agency charged with economic development, developing the Nu River hydropower is part of its responsibility. The Yunnan provincial government and its local governments regard the NRP as an important strategy of poverty alleviation, since the NRP could bring a great deal of investment to Yunnan and promote infrastructure development. Huadian is the primary investor of the NRP, as one of the five hydropower companies, it tries to build its own business as soon as possible by the NRP in the competitiveness of 'hydropower rush'. For the opponents of the NRP, their primary concern is the environment. The responsibility of SPEA is environment protection. ENGOs and the media also try to make a contribution to dealing with environmental issues. But the local state-owned media is an exception, since it has to keep in line with the local governmental policy.

The second dimension of public participation is when actors get involved in the process. Generally speaking, the decision-making process of the NRP is top-down. It was proposed by NDRC, reviewed by the SPEA, and then carried out by the cooperation of Huadian and the Yunnan provincial government. During the process, there was no public hearing or the participation of the local people. According to Wang Yongchen's interviews with 100 affected households by the proposed dams in 2006, those people had a strong trust on the government, and just listened to the government and obeyed the authorities' instruction (Chen, 2006). Thus, the involvement of different levels of government dominant the early stage of the NRP, but the participation of the local people failed to draw the attention. Then, since governmental agencies cannot reach a consensus on the NRP, and SPEA tried to find allies outside, ENGOs and the media then got involved in the NRP. Their bottom-up participation challenged the traditional top-down decision-making process and had a great impact on the NRP. ENGOs organized people to send petitions to the government, and wrote specific reports on the NRP. The media covered those ENGOs' activities and then raised public concern on the issue.

As for the intensity of involvement, those players' activities vary with respect to levels of involvement. NDRC and the Huadian are the most active promoters of the NRP, in cooperation with the Yunnan Province government. It is NDRC that led the dam project, so it has highly intensive involvement in the NRP, including sending specific institutions to undertake the planning, setting meetings, reviewing the process of the dam project. As the primary investor of the NRP, Huadian had begun its preliminary work on the NRP before the project was approved by NDRC. Also, after the Premier Wen ordered a halt on the NRP in 2004, Huadian resumed Liuku dam construction without permission from the government in 2008 (Lu, 2008). On the anti-NRP side, SEPA had set several expert panels to review the project. ENGOs were working

on anti-dam activities by sending open letters, organizing trips to the Nu Valley, and calling for disclosure of environmental impact assessment of the NRP. As for the media, it would expose every change of the process of the NRP to the public.

In addition, during the decision-making process of the NRP, the amount of power each player has is different. Among the bureaucratic departments related to the NRP, NDRC enjoys the largest power, it holds the right to approve or reject the project. SEPA is in charge of reviewing the environmental impact of the project, but has no power to stop the dam project singlehandedly. Huadian, as a state-owned company, enjoys great discretion in hydropower development. The Yunnan provincial government and the local authorities have the largest amount of power within the province, which enables them to mobilize the local people and the local media to support the dam project. All the above-mentioned players have the “hard power,” which is mandatory and can effectively influence the development of the NRP. However, for ENGOs and the media, their power heavily depends on the public support. They can only exert pressure on the governmental agencies related to the NRP, and then indirectly influence the NRP. The power they have can be regarded as the “soft power,” and cannot produce binding outcome.

The fifth dimension of public participation is the goals of the process. Basically, actors hold two very opposite attitudes toward the NRP. Proponents tried to develop the hydropower of the Nu Valley, but opponents tried to stop the dam construction. It is their different goals that determine their attitudes to the NRP. The goal of the proponents consists of poverty alleviation, economic development and energy demand. The goal of the opponents is environment protection and resettlement of the local people. An interesting thing is that both sides are trying to protect interests of the local people. The proponents claimed dam construction could bring jobs for local people, and electricity generated by those dams could improve their living situation; the

opponents argued that resettlement would have negative effect on their culture and social network, and most electricity generated by dams would send to eastern coastal cities. However, as the most affected stakeholder, the local population, they failed to express their ideas in public by themselves, which enabled both sides to interpret their ideas differently.

## **Policy Framework on the Nu River Project: An Application of Multiple Streams**

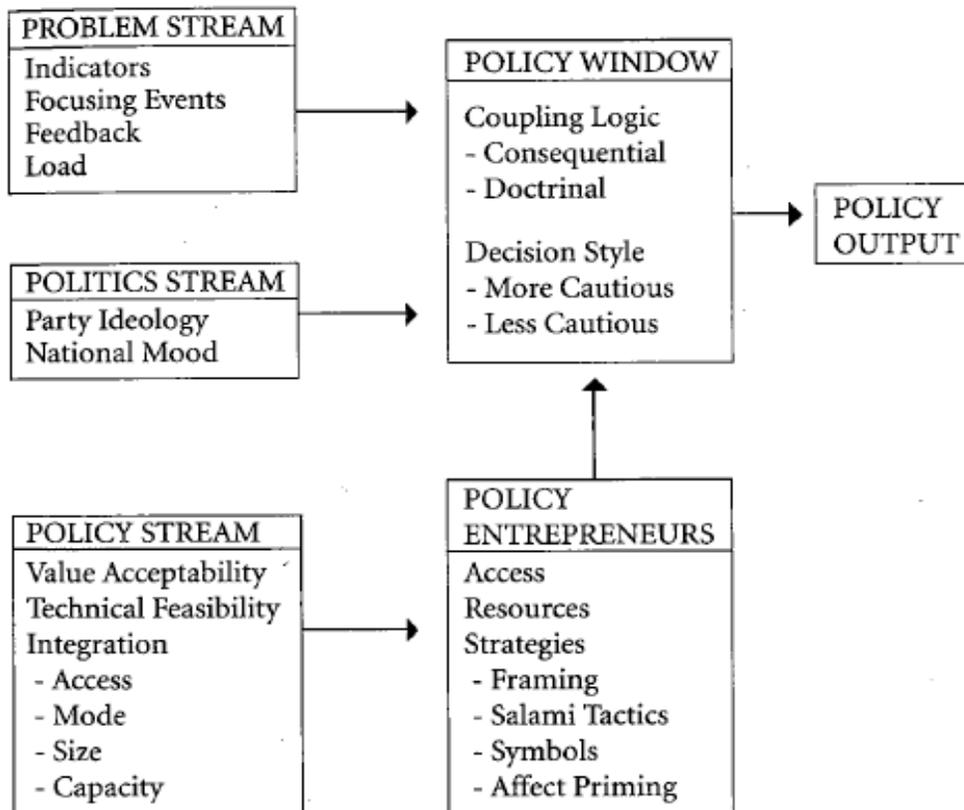
### **Framework**

This part will employ a policy framework to examine the decision-making process of the Nu River project. According to the characteristics of the project, this part will use the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) to illustrate the policy formation process. Below, the section will first introduce the MSF, and then incorporate this policy framework into the Nu River hydropower development.

As a policy framework, MSF focuses on how policies are made by national governments under conditions of ambiguity, and views policy choice as the collective output formulated by the push and pull of several factors. The unit of analysis is an entire system or a separate decision. The framework is based on three assumptions, including: 1) Individual attention or processing is serial, systemic attention or processing is parallel. So the number of issues can be considered by policymakers is small, and the projects that the entrepreneur will push for adoption is limited. But the government can also attend to many issues simultaneously; 2) Policy makers operate under significant time constraints, which mean that there is a sense of urgency in dealing with this issue; and 3), The streams flowing through the system are independent, and the input has its own life (Zahariadis, 2007). In addition, the MSF highlights the logic of political manipulation,

which aims primarily to provide meaning, clarification, and identity. Under the condition of ambiguity, the most important aspect of entrepreneurial activity is not to pursue self-interest, but to clarify or create meaning for those policy makers, and others who have problematic preferences (Zahariadis, 2007).

The following Figure 4 illustrates the elements of the MSF, and how those factors work together. The first is the problem stream, which refers to different problems that the policy makers want addressed. Those problems draw attention by indicators, focusing events, feedback and problem load. Indicators can display the existence and magnitude of a condition. Focusing events could direct attention to specific evaluative dimensions of particular problems. Feedback is experience from previous programs. Problem load means the number of difficult problems occupying the attention of policy makers (Zahariadis, 2007).



#### **Figure 4: Diagram of the Multiple Streams Framework**

(Source: Nikolaos Zahariadis (2007), *the Multiple Streams Framework: Structure, Limitations, Prospect.*)

The second is the politics stream, including party ideology and national mood. It focuses on the main notion that a majority of people have in a given country. The third stream is the policy stream, which includes numerous ideas that compete to win acceptance in policy network. The selection criteria are based on value acceptability and technique feasibility. Since policy networks are not equal, the level of integration can affect the mode and tempo of ideas. Integration is determined by participants and their four dimensions: size, access, mode and capacity. Policy window means the moment that choices are made when three streams are joined together. Basically, windows are opened by compelling problems or by events in the political stream. Policy entrepreneurs are individuals or corporate actors who attempt to couple the three streams. Their success depends heavily on access to policy makers, resources, and manipulating strategies (Zahariadis, 2007).

As a controversial issue in China, the Nu River project has attracted widespread concern from scholars, environmentalists, public officials, etc. Participation of those actors has brought different ideas into the policy process regarding dam construction. In the following part of the paper, I will focus on the decision of suspending the dam construction after public participation. In other words, this section will employ the MSF to illustrate the Anti-Nu River project.

##### **I. Problem Stream**

After the announcement of developing hydropower in Nu River in 2003, a great mass of people had expressed their objection to it, such as environmentalists, scholars and certain public officials. Their first primary argument is that the dam construction could lead to environmental

damage in the Nu River and its surrounding areas. Those opponents cited data to show that the area is home to a variety of flora and fauna. But whether dam construction has a negative effect on the environment remains controversial in China. The focusing event in the anti-dam project would be an open letter from Thailand. More than eighty NGOs signed the letter and sent it to the Chinese Ambassador in Thailand on the Nu River issue (Mertha, 2008), since people who live upstream of this trans-boundary river were greatly concerned about dam construction.

In addition, the opponents' second argument is that the local people were facing relocation problem because of the dam. According to McDonald's field interview (2007) at Liuku Dam, some local people did not want to lose their farmland, familiar living environment, and social network due to the dam construction. Also, they were afraid that they would be treated unfairly in the compensation of their relocation. The local people's worries about the change in their lives from resettlement also had been mentioned in Wong Yongchen's interview. Moreover, the previous relocation experience from the Manwan Dam on the Langcang River, which led to anger of resentment among those affected people (Mertha, 2008), would influence the perception of the local people in the Nu River project.

The third argument of the opponents is that the dams cannot lift people out of poverty. Brown and Xu in their field research (2010) pointed out that currently people have not obtained any benefit from the dam construction. McDonald's field interview (2007) also indicated that some local people do not think they will benefit from those dams. In addition, the feedback from Manwan Dam showed that even if the dam had been built, local people can't afford the price of the electricity generated by the dam (International Herald leader, 2003). Thus, whether local people can benefit from the proposed dams remain to be seen.

## II. Politics Stream

Although the Nu River project was proposed by the state, it failed to get the support from all departments, such as SEPA, which still has reservation about this project. The primary discrepancy within the bureaucracy lies in the environmental issue, which is related to China's current environmental situation and the state's attitude toward the environment protection.

The environmental protection did not become a major issue until after the United Nations Conference in Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972. Since then, the Chinese government has begun to pay attention to the environmental protection. A legal basis for environmental protection was established by Article II of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China in 1978. The environmental Protection Law of the People's Republic of China (for trial implementation) and a series of related decrees were promulgated in 1979. After 1979, China embarked on economic reform and began a market friendly strategy to advance the economy. With a great number of factories and plants being constructed in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and coastal open cities, the development of the economy inevitably has had a negative effect on the environment. In this context, the government put environmental concern as a higher priority in its policy-making agenda. Several major environmental laws, regulations and guidelines were issued during the 1980s, such as the Environmental Protection Law (Sinkule and Ortolano, 1995). In 1990s, after the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992, Chinese officials began to incorporate the ideal of *sustainable development* into their planning process. Also, in 1993, the government for the first time cited public participation as a goal in environmental protection (Economy, 2004), which then led to the emergence of various ENGOs in China. In addition, the government put the environmental goals in the Five Year Plan and tried to improve the environmental quality by those goals. Hence, the government is always concerned

about the environmental issue, and will reflect the environment-related project, such as the Nu River project.

Another indicator of the government's increasing concern for environment is the status of SEPA. As the leading environmental protection agency, the status of SEPA has been changed with the nation's ever-increasing attention to the environment. When it was established in 1982, its status was bureau-level and under the Ministry of Urban and Rural Construction. In 1987, it was raised from a bureau to an agency directly under the State Council, which gave it cabinet level status. This new agency was charged with directing environmental protection at the national level. In 1993, a Committee on Environmental Protection was formed and led by the former administrator of SEPA, which increased the authority of SEPA (Sinkule and Ortolano, 1995). However, even if SEPA had cabinet level status, its capacity of participating in high-level decision-making was weaker than its counterparts in the State Council. Thus, there were calls for SEPA to be upgraded to a ministry (the Beijing News, 2006). In 2008, in the 11<sup>th</sup> National People's Congress, SEPA was elevated to the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP), which would enable SEPA to obtain more leverage on environmental issues, such as the Nu River project.

As a primary participant in this dam project, SEPA had convened several expert panels to review the project, and expressed reservation about it. However, it did not stop the hydropower development on the Nu River in 2003. Currently, as the MEP, whose power had been expanded, its participation might influence the decision-making process of the dam project in the near future.

### III. Policy Stream

Since the dam project could have a negative effect on the Nu River and its surrounding areas, and the state had already taken environmental protection as priority, different policy recommendations were put forward about this project. They focused on the environmental impact of the project, and called for public hearing and disclosure of environmental impact assessment (EIA) reports of the project.

The concept of EIA was firstly introduced in 1973 during the First Conference for National Environment Protection. Then, it was included by the trial implementation of the Environmental Protection Law. The main idea of it is to conduct analyses that forecast and evaluate likely adverse environmental effects that would accompany a proposed project (Sinkule and Ortolano, 1995). For a long time, EIA had been regarded as the main regulatory instrument for environmental protection. But it did not become a legal requirement until the new EIA Law was approved in October 2002 and came into effect on September 1, 2003. The new law requires EIAs to be conducted whenever environmental and social impacts are expected to be large. Also, it requires public participation, including hearings, in deciding major projects (McDonald, 2007). Basically, the EIA Law is more stringent than its former version. Coincidentally, the approval of the Nu River project was just before the implementation of EIA Law, which might free the developers of the constraints of the law.

In the Nu River project, the opponents cited the EIA law, and pointed out that the nation encouraged relevant units, experts and the public to participate in the EIA process in appropriate ways (International Rivers, 2005), since the detailed EIA report was not released by the government. Opponents who are outside the bureaucracy cannot access it, had no idea about the procedure of this project. So they sent an open letter and called for publicizing the report. It is noticeable that the strategy taken by opponents is non-confrontation, and arguments they

employed are based on the law. In other words, they still keep their demonstration within political limits.

#### IV. Policy Entrepreneurs

During the decision-making process of the Nu River project, there is no doubt that policy entrepreneurs played vital roles in it. They depend on their professional knowledge, prestige and social network to exert effect on the project. The following part will focus on three policy entrepreneurs: He Daming, Wang Yongchen and Yu Xiaogang.

He Daming is a famous river expert, particularly on the Nu River. Also, he is head of the Asian International Rivers Center at Yunnan University. He did plenty of research on rivers in Yunnan and obtained a great amount of information on those rivers. In 2003, He got the news about dam construction from Yunnan Daily. Meanwhile, an anti-dam official contacted He, tried to seek backing from him due to He's expertise on rivers. Later on, He was invited to attend an expert panel organized by SEPA, and he strongly opposed the dam project based on his research. His voice was soon covered by the mass media. The media even compared He Daming with Huang Wangli, a scientist who was against the Sanmen Dam (Wang, 2006). He's opposition soon caught the attention of the media. Basically, He's opinion can get lots of attention in that he is a famous expert working in a prestigious institute for river system, the Asia International Rivers Center. In Chinese traditional culture, people always respect intellectuals and trust what they say. Hence, He got much support and his anti-dam viewpoint also influenced the public. However, as an ordinary scholar, He was unwilling to be involved in this controversial issue which was related to political debate. Also, his life has been disturbed by his involvement (Wang, 2006).

Wang Yongchen, one of Chinese environmental movement pioneers, founder of Chinese ENGO Green Earth Volunteer (GEV), also played an important role in the dam debate. During the Nu River project, the anti-dam official first contacted Wang for help, which got Wang and her group involved in the dam issue. Since Wang is a reporter from China National Radio, she tried to combine her career with NGOs—that is, the combination of the media and ENGO. Her position enables her to establish close relationship with the government, and get much information from it. In addition, most volunteers in her ENGO are journalists, who can promote environmental projects led by Wang. With the linkage to government and the media, Wang's environmental activities got lots of public support. In the Nu River project, Wang organized journalists to visit the Nu Valley and the dam sites. Also, Wang traveled to the Nu Valley several times by herself and interviewed some affected households. Thus, her reports on the dam project drew much attention.

Like He Daming, Yu Xiaogang is also an expert on water issues and Three River Parallel areas in Yunnan. As an opponent of the Nu River project, Yu not only employed his professional knowledge of water and river to support his position, but also conducted field research on the dam issue. Before the Nu River project, Yu had already finished his research on another dam Manwan Dam in Langcang River, and exposed the negative environmental and social impacts of dam construction. Hence, when Yu became aware of the proposal for thirteen dams on the Nu River, he did the survey on the Nu Valley and published it in order to involve more people to participate the discussion of the project. In addition to being an expert on rivers, Yu Xiaogang is also a head and director of an ENGO Green Watershed (GW). In the Nu River project, he and his group organized a forum of the Nu River dialogue to discuss the dam project. Also, his group worked with other ENGOs and launched a “Save Nu River” campaign (21 Century Business

Reports, 2004). Depending on his expertise and his ENGO, Yu became the key player in the anti-Nu River project. In 2006, Yu was awarded the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize<sup>†</sup> for his pioneering work in protecting rivers and watersheds in China.

## V. Policy Window

When policy entrepreneurs coupled the three streams together, if the right policy window opens, policy entrepreneurs will push their preferred ideas or projects into the policy agenda. In the Nu River project, policy entrepreneurs had found the right policy window, which is a good moment for environmental protection, and pro-environment policy makers were in power.

As the aforementioned, the state has been concerned about environmental problems since 1970s. Different environmental laws and regulations had been formulated and adopted by the state. Currently, China has become more open than it before to the world, and is willing to integrate itself to the world. Since international community has regarded the environmental problem as an important issue for all people, China also bears pressure from the international community in dealing with environmental problems. In addition, current Chinese leadership has given higher attention to environmental degradation, especially Premier Wen Jiabao, who wants to become an environmental Premier in China (Dudek, 2007). His attitude will count considerably in the Nu River dam issue.

In addition to Premier Wen, the vice Director of SEPA Pan Yue is another important pro-environmental official in the central government. Pan launched an “environmental protection storm” in 2005, 2006 and 2007. Their targets included major companies such as a major contractor for the Three Gorges Dam. The storm not only made SEPA lots of enemies, but also

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<sup>†</sup> It is an international prize given annually to grass-root environmental activists.

promoted the image of SEPA in the public eye. Since Pan is also pro-environmental, it would be helpful for those policy entrepreneurs who tried to put their anti-dam ideas into policy agenda.

## VI. The Decision-making Process of Anti-Dam campaign

Problems emerged when the announcement of dam construction on the Nu River, as the one of the only two free-flowing rivers in China, the proposed dam might pose a threat to the area's biodiversity and ecology. In addition, the public and the state are strongly concerned about environmental protection, and the whole society has already reached a consensus on dealing with environmental problems. The state's commitment to environmental protection also can be regarded as the public choice. In face of potential environmental problems related to dam construction and national mood in environmental protection, pro-environmental policy entrepreneurs tried to seize the opportunity to make their voice be heard by the state. They highlighted that an EIA should be conducted on the project, and called for public disclosure of EIA reports. Also, they cooperated with the media to promote their ideas and tried to win public support. Moreover, the current Chinese government pays attention to environmental protection, and highest-level policy makers, such as Premier Wen and Vice Director of SEPA Pan Yue, they opened the policy window for those policy entrepreneurs, and finally got anti-dam ideas into the policy agenda. Given the project would have great environmental and social impact on the Nu River and its surrounding areas, it had been stopped by Premier Wen in 2004. Even if detailed work had been conducted about its potential environmental impact, the project was halted again in 2009.

## **Conclusion**

The future of hydropower development on the Nu River remains uncertain, even if different interest groups continue to participate in the discussion of the project from 2003 to present, especially the newly emerged ENGOs, such as Green Earth Volunteer (GEV) and Green Watershed (GW). These organizations have been cooperating with intellectuals, the media, and launched a bottom-up anti-dam campaign in China. The strategies used by the campaign are non-confrontational, including publishing their research on the dam related issues, signing petitions and sending open letters, which avoid challenging Chinese political limits. Their participation has changed the traditional top-down environmental decision-making process, which has been dominated by bureaucracy. In addition, due to their active participation, the dam project received widespread public concern, and related policy makers also beard much pressure from the public and the international community. With the joint effort of ENGOs, scholars, and the media, policymakers ordered a halt to the dam construction in 2004 and 2009. It is noticeable in the public participation is the role of SEPA and Premier Wen Jiabao. SEPA, as a governmental agency but took the side with ENGOs. Premier Wen, as the head of government and leads the cabinet, his voice actually had a definitive influence on specific national plan, such as the Nu River dam project. Wen's involvement in the dam issue indeed had determined the fate of the dam construction. Thus, the success of public participation in the Nu River dam issue partly due to the support of SEPA and Premier Wen, and partly because of efforts of ENGOs, intellectuals and the media, especially the participation of policy entrepreneurs, such as He Daming, Wang Yongchen and Yu Xiaogang. Their effort was so effective and was able to get support from the national leader. Thus, in the case study of anti-Nu River dam campaign, environmental public participation has indeed enhanced. Yet, even if the dam was suspended, given China's ever-

increasing demand for energy, this dam construction would be likely to go forward in the near future.

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