



001 \ issued JANUARY 2021 / QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS FOR NMAP & CTEA

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HARMONIOUS WORLD: LEGEND VS REALITY

A QUALITATIVE STUDY INVESTIGATING CHINA'S ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ABROAD

Harmonious World: Legend vs Reality

The New Media Advocacy Project (NMAP) and Center for Transnational Environmental Accountability (CTEA) commissioned this qualitative study to understand Chinese audiences' perceptions about China's environmental impact abroad. This information will be used to inform strategic media that will champion experts' ongoing work to promote tighter regulations and consideration of local communities. This report will be followed by creative concepting and media production with CTEA, with the aim to create a media piece that will resonate with Chinese audiences, in particular Chinese investors and companies.

Despite the ongoing and rapid financial investment portfolios of Chinese companies globally, natural and human life must be prioritized and protected. In Guinea, the country of focus for this project, mining threatens local livelihoods, health and wellbeing of communities. In advance of any media design or intervention, a look at the foundational values, priorities, frameworks of belief and motivational mechanisms either for or against environmental protection within China provides a helpful starting point.

Our recommendation is a dual approach both within China and within Guinea to harness influence at each level for effectiveness. For more details about the research design and methodology, please refer to the appendix.

Executive Summary

After speaking with a variety of experts, media practitioners, researchers, and Chinese citizens, the overall picture reveals a nuanced and sophisticated nationalistic value structure that emphasizes **economic development first** under the guise of the myth of the longstanding **Africa/China win-win friendship**. This is recused from environmental impact due to the **rapid growth** and **relative youth** of China's industrialization, their **strong state influence**, **restriction of freedom of expression**, and **lack of precedent of wide-scale bottom up change**. This nationalistic value structure is also underscored by a **harmonious world narrative** that establishes China as a **world superpower**, bringing back **Confucianism ideals and old world imperialism** to justify **hasty and risky business practice** that does not benefit Africa equally.

In order to effectively establish **new environmental laws** in China, **enforce environmental laws** in host countries, **encourage authentic relationships** with civil society both within China and abroad, **engender penalties** to environmental infractions and **encourage better practices**, future media and messaging should appeal to **the cost of reckless environmental practices** on economic growth, **public embarrassment** and **demotion of respect of China** on the international stage, while paying careful attention not to fall into the trap of **western anti-China rhetoric**. There is clearly an **absence of information** in general about China's activities abroad, and the **youth seem particularly strategic** as a target audience, due to their **separation from nationalistic influences**, **access to digital media** and fluency with use, and perhaps **willingness to dissent** on their way towards the **Chinese dream**.

Overall, establishing care and concern for environmental issues can not happen in the western model of care-outrage-action, but rather utilizing an **ecological narrative**, in that environmentalism comes as a result of environmental politics, driven by economic need and demand, not awareness equating to change. Therefore, a **top-down, power-to-power strategy**, combined with a **bottom-up digital media** campaign is our recommendation. The change has to come from the top but public pressure seems critical to reinforcing government action and establishing new values and norms, a natural response and desire of China to be seen as a global world leader both in business, science and culture.

The media/stories should be in **Chinese voices** and *create links between* **Chinese communities experiences and challenges with environmental issues locally to environmental challenges abroad**, engendering an **interconnected worldview** in which mutual flourishing is necessary to truly achieve a "harmonious world" fit not just for one superpower, but prioritizing the wellness of all of life, everywhere.

Results

RQ1: What do Chinese mining companies perceive about their environmental impact in Guinea?

We did not have the opportunity to formally interview Chinese mining companies about their activities in Guinea, (we had brief informal conversations), but we can extrapolate from other interviews with people deeply familiar with the topic that Chinese companies consider their impact in Guinea and other investments in Africa as a “**win-win**” situation. Under this philosophy, China’s developmental ethos of “economic development first” is advanced, in contrast to a western model which emphasizes democratic reform in tandem with aid. Further, China views their ability to “help” African countries as an extension of the **Confucian value system** and **old-world imperialism**, sharing China’s superior knowledge, culture and talents with other countries. (Confucian value system refers to the ancient and traditional values of Chinese society, stemming from the religion of Confucianism, which has goodness, benevolence, and dignity for human life at its core.)

The **win-win narrative** builds on a 500-year story about friendship between China and Africa, where China differentiates itself from western countries as **not** coming to Africa to enslave people and colonize, but rather to work together in friendship for mutual development. Of course the story is not quite that simple, but in general, respondents cited that African political leaders endorse this myth and believe in what China has to offer: a rapid and unprecedented growth and the willingness to share those business practices and lessons in order for mutual growth and development, unlike western countries which come with agendas. In this sense, China’s own tale of becoming a world superpower in a relatively short time adds to this image of China as a helpful friend. This story is further emphasized by tales of Chinese workers living in the same conditions as Africans, thereby in relative equality. However, this myth-making does not take into account the aggressive business deals and practices that primarily benefit Chinese financial interests and not African financial interests much less the interests of their civil societies and communities, who receive no meaningful consultation or partnership whatsoever.

In general, respondents cited that China is committed to environmental protection, citing their recent carbon neutrality commitment, progress made on large pollution reduction projects and the power of the strong state to enact and enforce policies if so desired. But there is clearly a **fissure between care and practice**, and the influence of “economics first” is a major driver of environmental negligence.

There is also reason to believe that investors may simply be unaware of mining companies’ poor environmental practices abroad. Awareness of such issues could kickstart stricter monitoring and evaluation structures, enforced with penalties and consequences. If investors, and ultimately the financial structure is engaged, there could be room for accountability. The same goes for Chinese banks and other financial lending institutions. Further, some respondents genuinely do not think China has a negative impact abroad, or blame it on the necessary bumpy road to progress. **Countering this idea with concrete examples that illustrate that environmentalism and business are not mutually exclusive is important.**

Win-Win Narrative:

“So in China’s version you have a long history and story of win-win—almost 500 years of history... in the 1960s, they drafted policies for how to guide Chinese-African relationships... there is always this longterm history.”

“So when China built the railway in Zambia in 2009, they worked side by side with Zambian counterparts—same salaries, living in the same places.”

“It is true that China came in 15th century and they didn’t take slaves or colonize—and they also started giving aid as an equal partner—but they miss out on all the other parts... tell one side and not all sides—but it’s not that the side is not true.”

“Propaganda that we are advancing together... western countries in Africa for many years and they failed, but finally China is there and it’s doing better.”

“China-Guinea and China-Africa relations date back to the era of independence and have exhibited the ability to withstand difficulties such as Ebola and Covid-19, compared to Western actors that often withdraw from Africa when crises arise.”

Economic Development First:

“The Chinese people are blinded by economic development in the impression that they are not very enthusiastic about protecting the environment.”

“The contradiction between power competition and environmental protection among economic development countries.”

“They come with money and technology and machines—habitual thinking—and expect host country governments to solve all their issues.”

“Number one for them is business and you can see with the companies with a problematic record. How they operate in China is similar to how they operate overseas.”

“They will do whatever they need to do to keep business going instead of prioritizing the environment—that’s why we have so many problems.”

“In many ways Chinese companies are no different than western companies. What would it take to behave in environmentally conscious way?”

“In general for Chinese companies, because of pandemic, GDP of China will drop and so every opportunity to bring profit will be pursued.”

Results

RQ2: What is the salience of environmentalism within China?

Within China, there is in general a high **valence** (high strength of an emotional state) around environmental protection, with references to environmentalism as synonymous with survival. Respondents describe their philosophy of why environmentalism matters by citing the **virtuous ecological cycle**, the **marriage of sustainability and survival**, how **the living world is an intrinsic part of human nature**, an **interconnectivity** with other countries and the global ecosystem, and the necessity of environmental protection to ensure a **thriving future**. There is a motivation for environmental protection, but the **fissure between care and action** was cited as well as **limitations in power** and agency as barriers to enacting change. Further, it is clear that there is an intentional separation between local stories and information and the communities themselves in order to control information flow, and therefore making it impossible to take action locally. Respondents cited this lack of relevant information repeatedly, also referencing that people more or less do not know what is happening in other countries either. **State-controlled media** commands the narrative and stories that threaten that narrative are suppressed. Despite this, interviewees still gave examples of local, **bottom-up** mobilization around environmental issues resulting in successful action by the government.

In one story, Chinese villagers blocked the road to a gold mine, resulting in an open negotiation with the government. In another example, there was a group of Chinese citizen scientists monitoring water quality across the province—this was a volunteer-led group. The government ended up really relying on this testing and improving regulations in their area.

The case of air pollution regulation in China is an important reference as this has resulted in large-scale environmental protection regulations, at the behest of community members. Respondents stressed that part of the reason Chinese people do not care about environmental issues abroad is simply because they are unaware they are happening and they recommended creating links to Chinese experiences of environmental issues as a pathway to build bridges.

Some respondents said Chinese companies have no negative environmental impact abroad, but that was the minority. The majority of respondents cited specific ways they personally are committed to environmental protection; from **waste reduction** to **vegetarian diets**, to ideas around **diversifying communication platforms** and **avenues to raise awareness**. *There seems to be a sense that environmentalism is good for China and good for the world, and could also help continue to establish China as a world superpower by being a green leader.*

Philosophy of Environmental Protection

“The progress of human civilization and the natural ecological cycle are basically contrary to each other.”

“Environmental protection means the future of the world to me.”

“China has the values of the community of heaven, earth and people, and tends to think about survival and sustainability.”

“Protecting the environment is the real benefit for the present, and the merits are for the future.”

“When it comes to environmental protection, no country, no one can be alone.”

“Within China, the idea of an ‘ecological civilization’ has gained great importance.”

“Similar to how environmental protection gained awareness in China, there must be a strengthened sense of shared destiny of mankind.”

“Reducing waste and consumption is actually environmental protection.”

“So they tout themselves as leaders of environmental protection by developing renewable resources and implementation at a large scale.”

Valence

“It is our duty to protect the environment, and the task is also very heavy.”

“Environmental protection means health and environmental protection means survival.”

“The Chinese people are also awakening their environmental awareness, believing that air pollution is a very serious problem, and they are increasingly concerned about the environment.”

Results

RQ3: What are the value systems supporting China's development abroad?

The **root cause model**, emphasizing economic development first and not democratic reform, underlies China's efforts abroad, and differentiates China from western approaches to development. China further establishes itself as a **responsible and great power**, underscored by **Chinese pragmatism**, to prove that its approach is indeed advancing global sustainability. Some scholars argue that at the center of all of China's efforts is a return to **old-world imperialistic** ideals, understood as a **Confucianist revival**, or **harmonious world** paradigm, in which China is achieving the dream of a world superpower through a return to the silk road era when China was a big power—hard won through a strong military, advanced science and superior culture. Many still believe in this philosophy and understand development abroad as a fulfillment of this harmonious world myth, in which China is helping other nations in a kind of shared destiny of all mankind.

But really at the center of China's development abroad is a deep commitment to **economic development first**, “making profit” no matter what, and ignoring environmental impact on the road to growth. One respondent noted that, “repeating China's path—of economic development first—is wrong, and we have our prize in China a.k.a. pollution to show for this.” Therefore, there are real costs to this singular commitment which also makes it more challenging to influence people from altruistic or moral grounds, when the foundational nature of the value system is a mismatch. However, China's rapid and unprecedented growth is an enormous feat and not to be discounted.

“In western countries you think about the environment and human rights impact. But in China, you can progress very fast, so they consider it a better model and that's why they are so passionate about Chinese investment in Africa—to develop Africa very quickly.”

In the same vein, Africa welcomes this investment and is willing to disregard their own laws and regulations, accepting bribes and “gifts.” In addition, it has been cited that often Chinese businesses do not know what the local environmental laws are because they are not even translated. Further, Africa is buying into the responsible and great power appeal and wants what China has—rapid financial growth—and is willing to sell their resources to get it.

In addition, the Chinese government will be hesitant to impose early restrictions: *“the Chinese government does not want to impose too many barriers for China's investment overseas which have only started in recent decades and were very nascent.”*

Root cause model

“China believes if they have economic development and jobs they won’t join terror groups. Sometimes this backfires—local militia may feel this investment benefits one more than other. Sometimes called ‘root cause model.’”

Responsible and great power

“Responsible and great power is a common phrase—Joseph Stiglitz said China could become a responsible stakeholder so they used the phrase to say they will be a major power.”

“Chinese wisdom from this government—that we will share our wisdom of development with developing countries—all contributes to China’s understanding of its identity.”

“In the past it would be biased to be a responsible and great power but now President Xi is saying we are a responsible and great power—it’s a very central idea that guides China’s diplomacy.”

“China wants to build this image of a responsible great power, but if it’s regarded as a stain on the reputation, they can regulate company behavior when they discover the problem.”

Chinese pragmatism

“Chinese pragmatism—it’s real. There are this many people, and we need this many resources to make that happen and so we are the people to do it. We have people, power and the right technology so it makes sense to take this on and we will get rich doing it.”

Confucianist revival

“Confucian principles that emphasize obedience to authority, adherence to hierarchy, and maintenance of order and boundaries.”

“Countries along the Belt and Road can benefit from China’s experience in environmental governance, learn from history, and promote cooperation for sustainable development.”

“Confucius values could be inspiration. The BRI is kind of a revival of the old silk road when China was a big international empire.”

Harmonious world

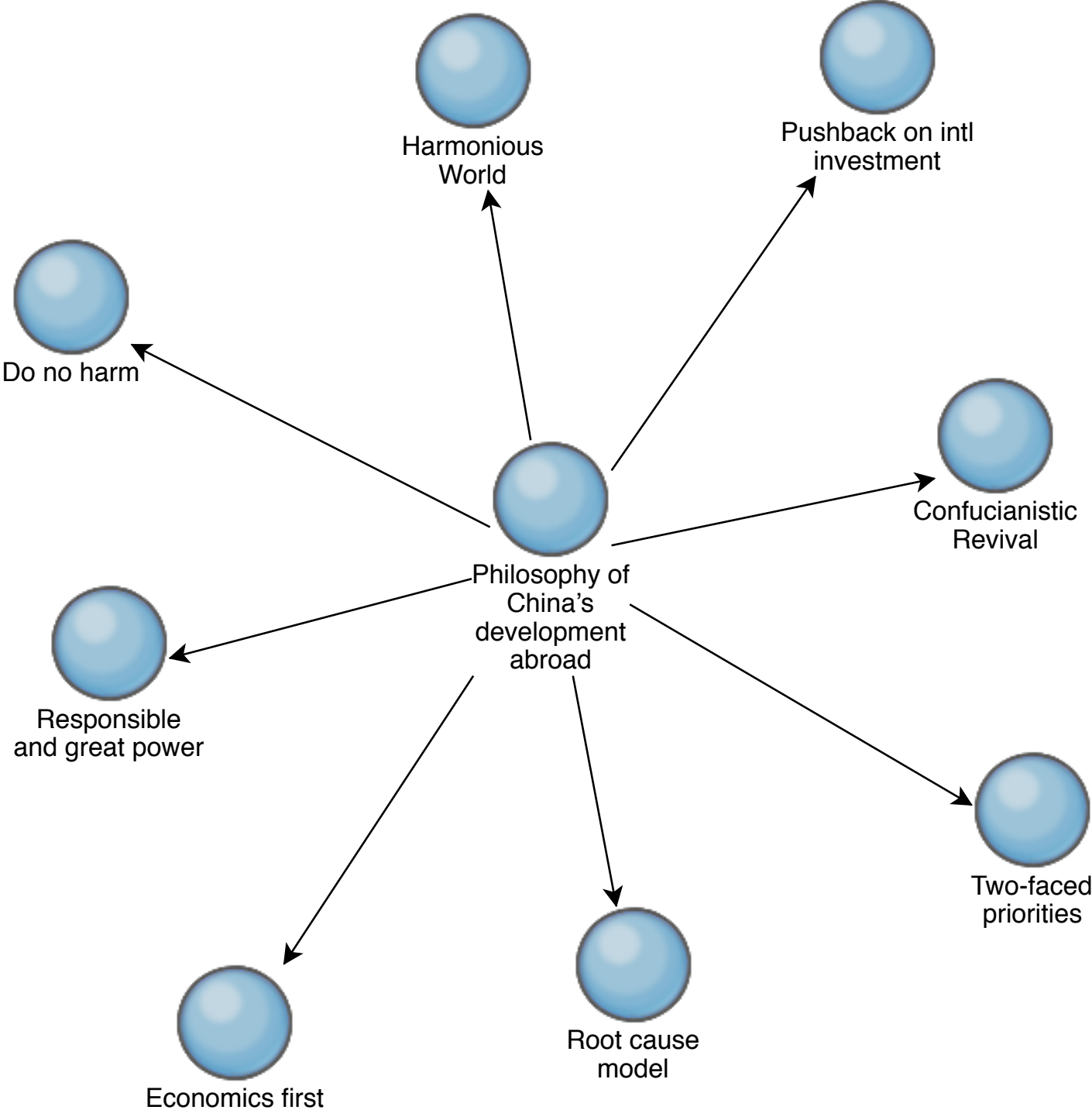
“Green Belt and Road is also in line with Chinese ideologies such as the ecological civilization and the shared destiny of mankind.”

“Overall story from China is built on concept of a harmonious world—not doing anything to exploit anyone—builds on what they are already doing and in contrast to westerners.”

“On the Chinese news, I hear about how helpful they have been in Africa: how they are setting up infrastructure etc... comes with perks... employment and infrastructure.”

“Harmonious communication and interaction will promote each other's multi-dimensional ‘rational’ understanding of the world.”

“Similar phrases like ‘harmonious world’ were from the previous government... borrowing from Confucius idea that countries are diverse but we can accept diversity for peace and development.”



Results

RQ4: What are the areas of entry to disrupt frameworks of belief in order to improve accountability surrounding China's environmental impact through the mining sector in Guinea?

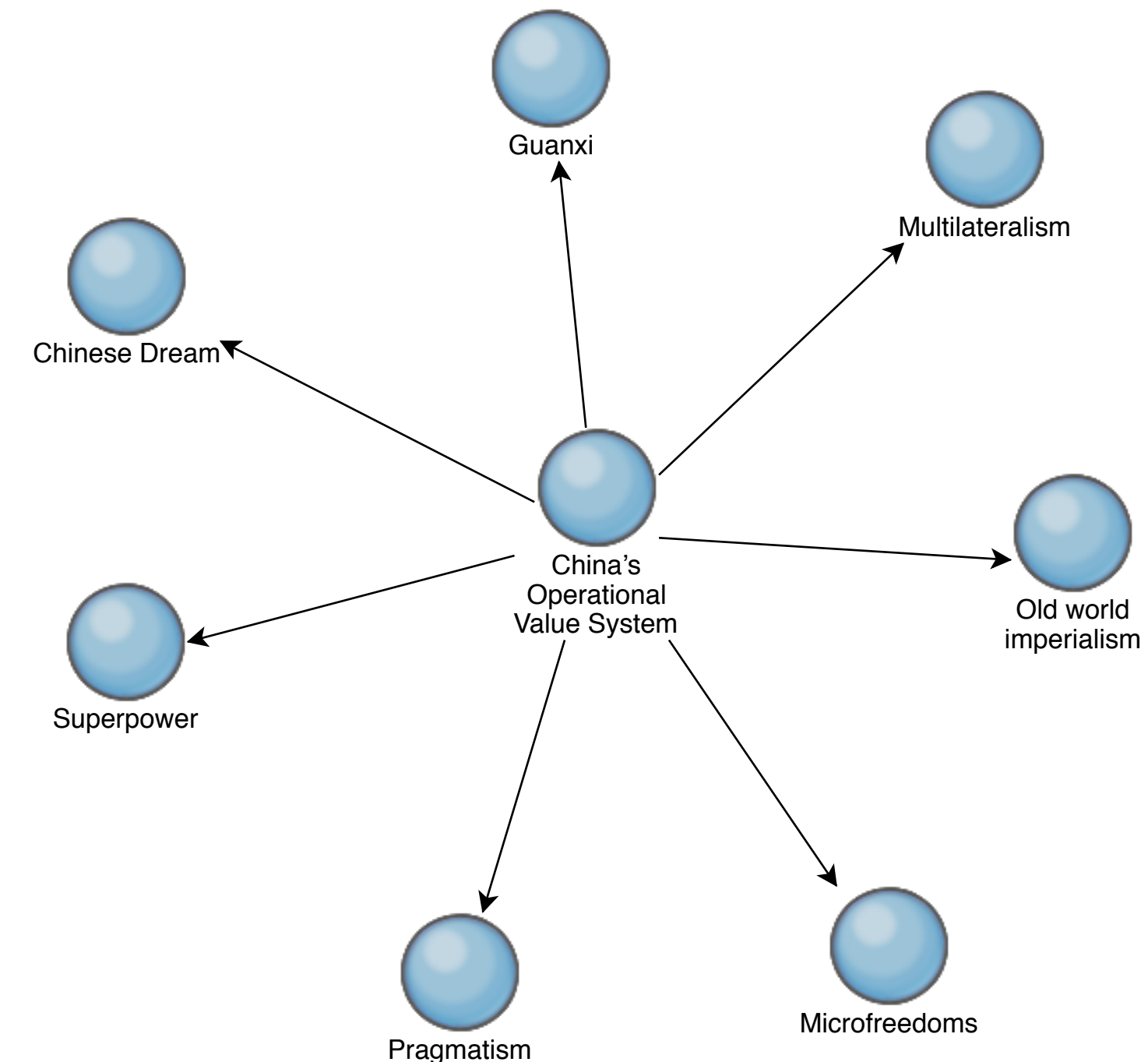
To answer this question it is necessary to establish what China's **operational value system** is as well as the **psychological profile** at a systems level, before being able to identify areas of disruption. Further, examples of **dissent** and **bottom up change** are helpful, as well as concrete examples of what we call **spark media to challenge narratives**, as well as suggestions for **environmental accountability**.

China's value system includes a network of interlocking values, some of which overlap with the previous research question (superpower, pragmatism, old world imperialism).

Unique to this discussion is **Guanxi**, or a "pure form of social capital"—think big brothers—also known as "dage." This kind of male solidarity, paternalism and mutual aid places a strong value on the role of relationships in business functions and the strength of these social networks, necessitating a **power-to-power** approach, in a **top-down** setting to render influence and pressure. This dynamic also emphasizes trust and access as critical to gaining influence.

The **Chinese Dream** purports upward mobility, becoming an urban consumer, good family member, citizen and worker, in contrast to the more individualistic American dream.

Respondents noted China's commitment to **multilateralism** in contrast to the United States, which is becoming more and more isolationist, which further positions China as a **superpower** with benevolent aims.



Guanxi

“Chinese business operates strictly on Guanxi.”

“They were expected to put their brotherly relationships above all other commitments.”

“Chinese business is all about negotiation—less about the contract, more about the banquets, dinners, deals made at the table.”

Chinese Dream

“Chinese Dreams... Shared Human Destiny... those words represent that propaganda... represents Chinese model.”

“China dream is about upward mobility, becoming an urban consumer, good family member, citizen and worker.”

“China dream is borrowing from American dream.”

Multilateralism

“China says we support multi-lateral system supported by the UN and against unilateralism... this promotes free trade.”

Superpower

“China is the superpower of Asia and now the world.”

“China is developing and gaining strength.”

“The Chinese identity is about being a big and important country worldwide.”

“Confucius values could be inspiration. The Belt Road Initiative is kind of a revival of the old silk road when China was a big international empire.”

Results

The **psychological profile** includes the role of **shame**, the **individualistic** and **collective selves**, the critical influence of **losing/saving face**, and this fissure between **public and private personas**. There is a special attention placed on **youth** who respondents said are diverting from the nationalistic norms and pursuing pleasure and materialism and consumerism at a greater pace than their elders and with less interest in the nationalistic ethos. Further, the youth were cited as a strategic target audience because they may be more willing to dissent. **Eating bitterness** is a kind of victim mentality, “leveraging cultural empowerment and solace in a hostile world.”

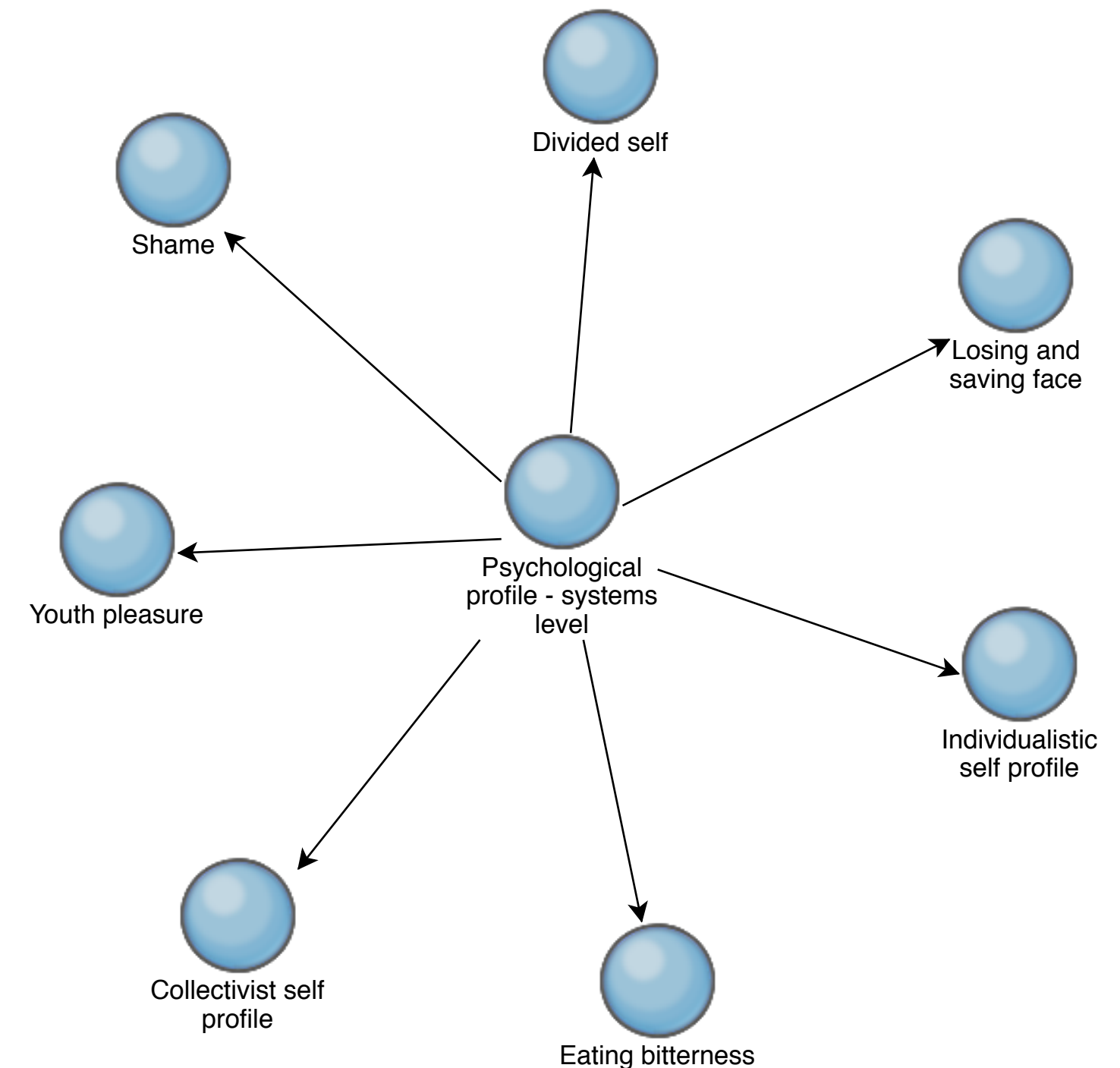
China’s dream includes personal progress and collective progress and so themes that emphasize collective growth and flourishing are critical. **Public shaming** was mentioned repeatedly as influential and motivating as there is a strong value around **saving face** and avoiding embarrassment and shame, at all costs. Therefore, calling attention to infraction can be motivating as an effort to save face; however, that can quickly be reversed once the attention moves on. Public shaming might be a strategic pathway to influence, but it’s important the content is not seen as western anti-China rhetoric, which would be quickly discounted.

“Any messages should be constructive and not threatening, to ensure that the Chinese government and/or executives save face.”

Culturally, there is a strong emphasis on saving face: *“actions that lead to the loss of face for one’s self and one’s extended social circle are referred to as the ‘loss of face.’”*

“China doesn’t want to be blamed of being the biggest pollution emitter, and carry that blame.”

Therefore, **inspiring environmental protection as a way to save face** is a pathway.



Losing and Saving Face

“China wants to avoid scandals. In Latin America, for example, they try to address these issues especially when it comes to some European countries... they want to avoid such trouble.”

“The maintenance of mianzi (face) is an important shame regulating social norm in Chinese society.”

Youth Pleasure

“Younger generation doesn't have the nationalism... doing a lot of personal wealth, pleasure... the TikTok generation... they don't have a strong national identity... for the society. It's more about yourself.”

“These youth are seeking alternatives to the thick Guanxi relationships that they are embedded in. They want to find spaces where they do not always have to worry about acting appropriately.”

“The new generation lost that... more focused on personal pleasure and economic success.”

Collectivist profile

“It's much less about personal responsibility than it is in the west—for better or worse.”

“But China's dream is more collective and includes having China as a central player on the world's stage. The American dream is more about individual success.”

Public shaming

“Chinese companies faced with this criticism have actually changed their ways.”

“Public shaming kind of works—kind of works in all cultures—but in Chinese culture the idea of losing face is deep and people will do whatever it takes to not let a story get out.”

“China wants to build this image of a responsible great power, but if it's regarded as a stain on the reputation they can regulate company behavior when they discover the problem.”

“Confucian values could be inspiration. The Belt Road Initiative is kind of a revival of the old silk road when China was a big international empire.”

Results

Dissent is difficult due to lack of **access** to information, **censorship**, lack of **freedom of expression** and control by the government of what narratives move into the public sphere. Further, there are consequences for any kind of **public protest**, and in many areas it is even illegal to gather groups of people. There are not the same western social norms around community mobilization or lobbying influential leaders. Influence needs to come from **the top down**, with good examples set by international companies or from other powerful people in influential positions and reinforced by strong public opinion. There are counter-cultural examples of art and even communities living outside of the normal cultural expectations within China, but for widespread change to happen, respondents stressed there needs to be a tie to **financial consequences**, and how **business investments will be riskier** if environmental impact is not considered, leading to loss of money and property and influence.

Further, there were examples of **spark media** that did engender change and challenge narratives. After a documentary on China's air pollution named "Under the Dome" came out in 2015, environmental awareness of the general public increased. "Under the Dome' had a lot of social impact on air pollution in China." For examples of change internationally, the hydropower project in Myanmar was stopped at the behest of local and international NGOs. Another successful story is in Ecuador where there was a privately owned Chinese company in indigenous people territories. A local group organized and tried to stop it, and then indigenous people sued, and won.

And lastly, a host of specific ideas were given for environmental accountability including: building **real consensus with communities**, creating and enforcing **penalties and consequences** for environmental infractions (penalties are already enforced in China and are effective motivators), establishing **rigorous monitoring and evaluation bodies, long-term national policies** such as the recent revision to the Wild Animal Conservation Law, and the Green OBOR Alliance which has been established that connects major international organizations, MEE FECO and UN institutions to initiate dialogue between the government and the public. Further ideas include educating stakeholders and investors about their investments impacts in countries abroad so that they can put pressure on the companies themselves, as well as advocating to the Economic and Commercial Counsellor's Office in Chinese embassies. Furthermore, **incentives** need to be considered: for example, reforming the supply chain for coal and cement would benefit local communities and increase profits.

Finally, suggestions were given around making a **Chinese environmental law** that demands companies to not only comply with host country law but China's own international environmental law. Further, there needs to be **education around local laws** since some aren't translated or are unknown. In addition, stricter environmental laws are needed in host counties to protect themselves from exploitation.

Dissent

“Some private groups you can share with—at the dinner table, after drinks—but that can even become not safe to share.... then they have a micro-blog, WeChat, to share and making a video to tell stories—TikTok—but this is all at a personal level... not challenging national ideology or beliefs.”

“I have seen shows canceled the day before.”

“If you directly challenge the government, it’s not good. Police will come. The contents on WeChat just get deleted.”

Access

“Problem is these stories are in English and in international media, not within China. There should be more channels to share this.”

Freedom of Expression

“I can show my film but sensitive topics I have to leave out.”

“Most documentaries end up overseas—the sensitive ones—or are played underground in China... it’s possible to see it but hard.”

Censorship

“Censorship on WeChat had keyword and image search to delete content right away and that account would be closed.”

“General feeling is there is more censorship in recent years.”

Spark Media

“Pressure through social media—it’s still possible. Local governments definitely don’t want such things to happen.”

“On a large-scale level, the second a protest is video’d, then it’s a problem, because other people can see it, and it can be so damaging for the reputation of whoever did it that it can be motivating and effective.”

Discussion & Recommendations

In response to the analysis, the following are recommendations for overall key narratives that could be pursued in the next creative phase within both China and Africa, and then more specific recommendations in terms of content, influence and style. In line with this report's title, the vision of any future media intervention is to challenge the notion of "harmonious world" while ushering forth a world in which harmony is actually equitable for people and planet. Therefore, harmonious world is both a play on this deeply important value within China and an aspiration towards a new future.

Overall Key Narratives:

1. **The cost of recklessness:** This narrative proves how reckless environmental practices have a negative cost on economic growth, will invite public embarrassment and demote China's position of respect on the international stage.
2. **Ecological civilization:** This narrative emphasizes that environmentalism comes as a result of environmental politics, driven by economic need and demand, not awareness equating to change. This narrative establishes care and concern for environmental issues as a rightful outcome of good politics with economic sense, in contrast to the western model of care-outrage-action.
3. **The hard facts:** This narrative fills the gap of the absence of information in general about China's activities abroad, using facts and "proof" to show the negative environmental impact abroad and how this conflicts with the Chinese vision of a harmonious world. This narrative must explore how this rapid development is in direct conflict with the ethos of China's vision for the world.
4. **World leader:** This narrative explores how environmental action will position China as a global world leader both in business, science and culture.
5. **Truly harmonious world:** This narrative creates links between Chinese communities experiences and challenges with environmental issues locally to environmental challenges abroad, engendering an interconnected worldview in which mutual flourishing is necessary to truly achieve a "harmonious world" fit not just for one superpower, but prioritizing the wellness of all of life, everywhere.
6. **Win/Win:** Expose the hypocrisy of the Africa-China win/win myth by outlining what China has gained in contrast to what Africa has gained in partnership examples to show that this vision is more an ideology than a reality.

Key Narrative Features:

- Walk a delicate line with public shaming while not appearing as anti-China propaganda.
- Lean heavily on Chinese voices.
- Raise awareness while utilizing key values and norms as the driver of change, not an imposition of a western set of values.
- Approach should be anchored in politeness and humility, not moral superiority.

Content Theme Ideas

In China

- Employ the use of public shaming, but be aware that this can be quickly discounted as just anti-China sentiment so has to be done skillfully.
- Bust “economics first” myth by showing how pollution in China is the prize of this narrative and there are other consequences that are also financially costly to this mentality.
- Stress that investments are at stake unless environmental concerns are addressed, and appeal to China setting a superior moral and cultural precedent for the world by creating tighter regulations (thus utilizing harmonious world themes in the content itself.)
- Must feature Chinese voices. Western voices will be discounted as anti-Chinese propaganda.
- Pair solution and problem together or even just solution; these kinds of environmental stories are allowed in China.
- Feature just an environmental solution: these stories would be allowed and can be used as leverage or a bridge to further dialogue.
- Connect environmental situation overseas to experience of Chinese people as they have gone through a lot of environmental challenges themselves, but don't know and aren't aware of what people are facing abroad. Thus create a common link and bridge for care and engagement.
- Work with the “ecological civilization” theme, meaning the theory that ecology and environmentalism comes as a result of environmental politics, driven by economic need and demand, not awareness equating to change which is a more western model.
- Emphasize incentives for environmental legislation: highlight economic, political, public attention and reputation benefits.
- Lean into the idea of advancing China's influence worldwide (a.k.a. Chinese dream) via sharing environmental standards of home country abroad with compliance to principles of best practices.
- Stress pragmatic importance of addressing environmental issues.
- Cite evidence and science as “proof” so any environmental evidence is not discounted.

In Africa

- Detangle the win-win Africa/China friendship myth. This myth has been sold to Africa in contrast to western developmental priorities and although compelling and attractive to African nations, they need to see the backlash effect and how it doesn't actually benefit them.
- Show success stories from other countries within Guinea to mobilize vision and support for tighter environmental laws and translation of these laws. Africa doesn't have to suffer industrialization and selling off of natural resources to develop like China.

Discussion

PATHWAYS OF INFLUENCE

- Power-to-power: a.k.a. targeting people in positions of influence as well as organizations, companies, governmental bodies etc (regional organizations like ASEAN, embassies, labor unions, Chinese banks to put more conditions on the lending.)
- Advocate directly to companies in China to adhere to stricter environmental regulations as an aspirational draw to influence development abroad and continue to establish China as a global green leader.
- Target youth: youth may be less nationalistic, and more interested in creating new ethos—aspirational values combining collective and individualistic “Chinese dream.”
- Top-down: investors don’t know and/or aren’t aware of negative environmental impact and could hold companies accountable or demand change.
- Bottom-up: public pressure from Chinese mass audiences via digital storytelling targeting young people—showing that ignoring environment could threaten realization of “Chinese dream”.

STYLE

- Short, TikTok style video series.
- Lean into emotionally evocative forms.
- Animation could be great as well, but have a real story in documentary style in short format.
- Include a workshop—it is a safe way to start a discussion online. Workshops can really help people to share and accept new ideas and provide a comfortable environment and entertaining style.
- Speak to a human level.
- Do not appear superior or morally advanced, be extremely humble and polite.

Change is possible, and is already happening, thanks to the hard work of the many activists, lawyers, environmentalists and artists dedicated to protecting people and planet.

Special thanks to the many participants who shared their wisdom, experience and perspectives for this study.

Research designed and analyzed by Lindsay Branham, NOVO, and Karen Heredia, NMAP.

 **NEW MEDIA
ADVOCACY
PROJECT**

A partnership between


Center for
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NOVO

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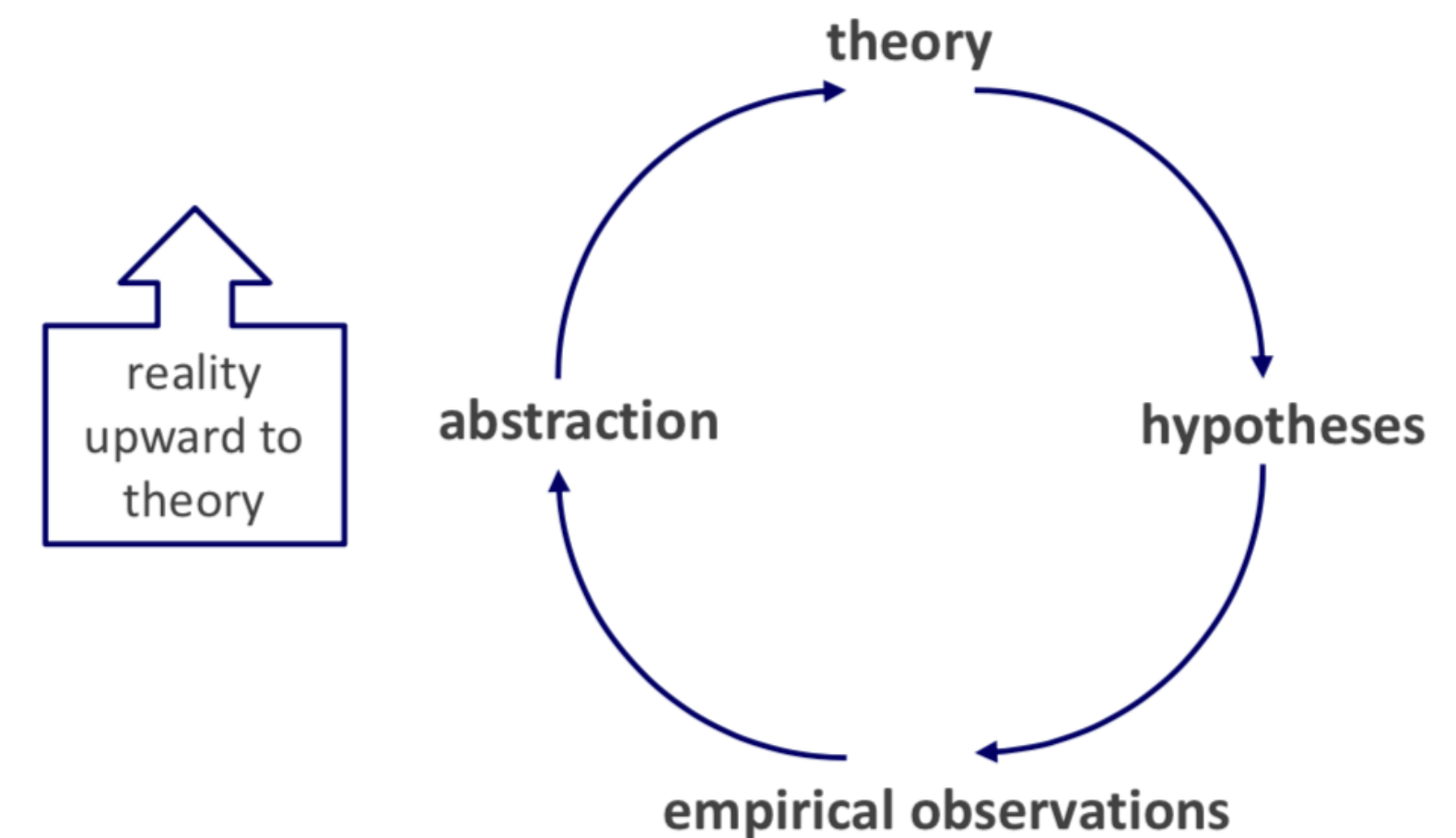
Appendix

Research Design

Scientific reasoning: Inductive scientific reasoning, meaning an approach to generate statements beginning with concrete, repeated empirical evidence and working toward concepts formation and theoretical relationships.

Theoretical perspective: Pragmatism—from multiple case studies, determining patterns, relationships, descriptions, associations, and explanations. Looking to make theoretical predictions to infer the probable evolution of events or outcomes over a period of time.

Sampling methodology: Theoretical sampling until saturation was achieved (meaning the themes and ideas were repeated enough to engender confidence that further interviews were not necessary); 8 WeChat survey respondents of Chinese general population; 16 interview respondents mix of academics working on China, media experts and activists, non-profit representatives and mining representatives; 2 forms of desk research investigating literature and media landscape. For a full list of respondents see page 28. To see the WeChat survey questions see page 29 and to see the semi-structured interview questions, adapted for each audience, see page 30.



Miller & Brewer (2003); Neuman (2006); Pelto & Pelto (1978)

Appendix

Data Analysis

Using a mixed-methods approach, Thematic Analysis (TA) was primarily used, combined with elements of Cross Case Analysis (CCA). Each interview was read multiple times and a list of themes was created. A meta-theme was written for each interview. Meta-themes across interviews were compared and compiled into a master list. Common themes became codes and the criteria for good codes was applied. All the interview and desk research data was imported into NVivo12, a software for analyzing qualitative data. Each data source became a case and each case was coded thoroughly using the theme matrix. Sets, or second level constructs, also understood as relationship themes, were created to seek patterns, not just descriptions of the data or interpretations of the phenomenon. Therefore, coding is in and of itself an analysis process.

For the full codebook: aka the breakdown of themes, sub-themes and definitions, see attached Codebook document.

The research questions driving this process are:

RQ1: What do Chinese mining companies perceive about their environmental impact in Guinea?

RQ2: What is the salience of environmentalism within China?

RQ3: What are the value systems supporting China's development abroad?

RQ 4: What are the areas of entry to disrupt frameworks of belief in order to improve accountability surrounding China's environmental impact through the mining sector in Guinea?

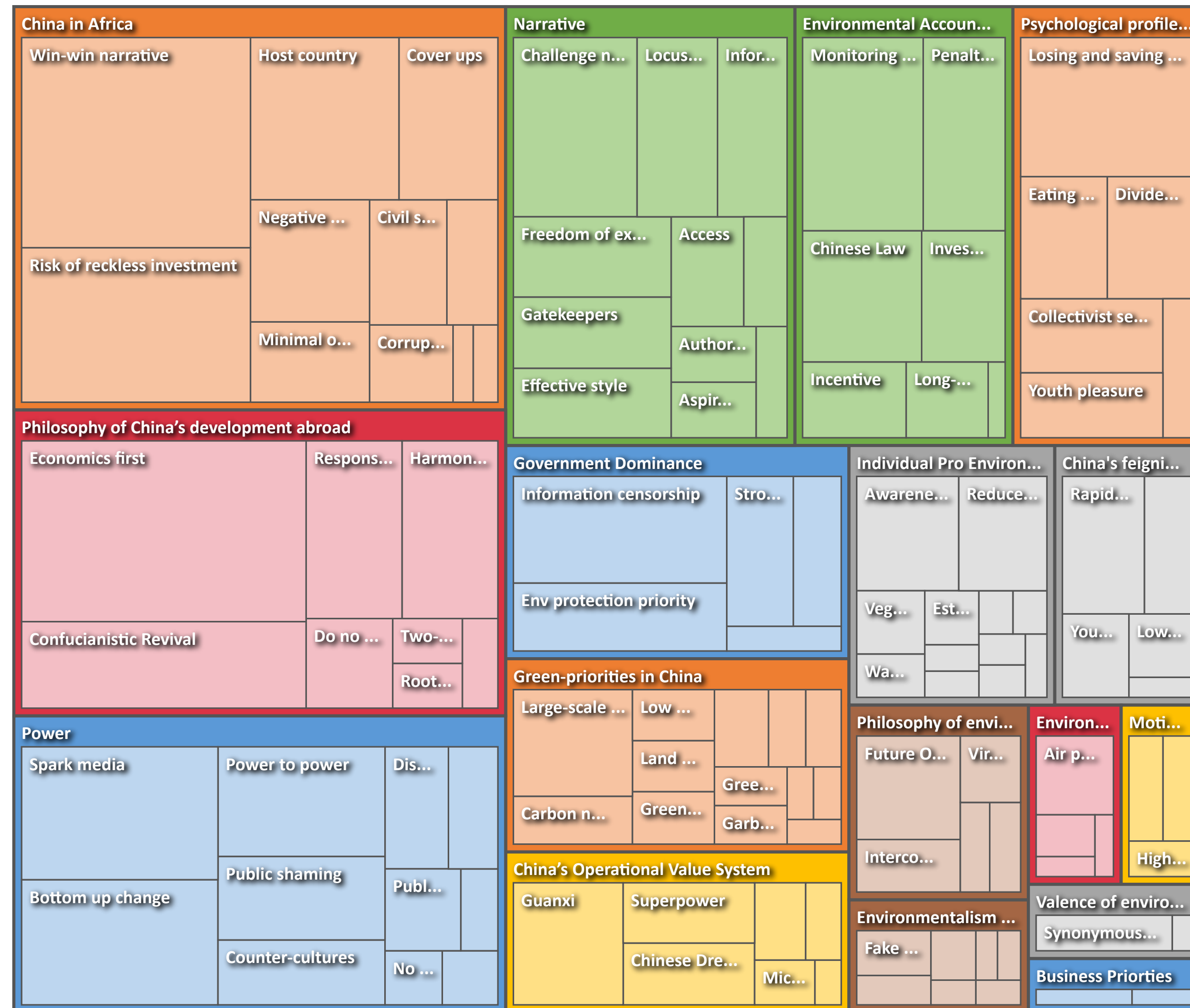
Top Level Meta-Pattern Themes

THEME	DEFINITION	FILES	REFERENCES
Business Priorities	Investments at home and abroad.	3	5
China in Africa	Relationship with African countries, philosophies and impact.	12	108
China's feigning innocence	Reasons / theories why China shirks responsibility or ignores environmental impact abroad.	5	21
China's Operational Value System	The main values that proliferate culture which may have direct influence of environmental protection and lack thereof.	7	30
Environmental Accountability	Ideas for and suggestions for how to encourage China's environmental accountability - mostly abroad but could relate to in-country as well.	6	52
Environmental issues within China	Priority environmental issues within China - salience, frequency and importance.	3	9
Environmentalism abroad	How environmental issues are understood outside of China.	2	11
Government Dominance	How China's large state influence infiltrates into private life and makes environmental protection at home and abroad challenging to change.	9	40
Green-priorities in China	Actions/policies China has taken to advance environmental protection within China.	6	36
Individual Pro Environmental actions	What actions people take on an individual and small scale to protect the environment.	7	29
Motivational structure for environmental protection in China	What motivates and predicts environmental care and protection efforts.	3	8
Narrative	How narratives are formed, shared and ingested - content, distribution, and opportunities.	10	69
Philosophy of China's development abroad	Philosophical underpinnings motivating China's development abroad - a.k.a. the Belt and Road Initiative.	11	82
Philosophy of environmental protection	Philosophical underpinnings for environmental protection.	2	19
Power	How power is controlled, given, manipulated and used, and the role of power to enact change.	11	80
Psychological profile - systems level	The "psychological profile" of Chinese system so as to craft media that can relate to and take this into account as the way people may think and operate.	10	46
Valence of environmental protection	Emotion/affect towards environmental protection	2	7

HIERARCHY CHART

Themes (codes) by frequency of references throughout the data set. This graphic is meant to be a quick glance look of how often certain codes appeared.

For a full list of references and frequencies, see the attached Codebook.



Respondents

Occupation	Country	Source	Method	Industry	Nationality
Vice Chairman	China	Direct	Informal interview	Mining	Chinese
Environmental Lawyer	USA	Direct	Semi-structured interview	Law	Chinese
Filmmaker	USA	Direct	Semi-structured interview	Media	Chinese
Senior Consultant	China	Direct	Informal interview	Mining	Chinese
Filmmaker	USA	Direct	Semi-structured interview	Non-profit	Chinese
Consultant, Environmental Resources Management	China	Direct	Informal interview	Environmental	Chinese
Unassigned	China	Direct	Informal interview	Mining	Chinese
Fullbright Scholar	USA	Direct	Semi-structured interview	Non-profit	American
Chairman Mining Sector	China	Direct	Informal interview	Mining	Unassigned
Linguist Professor	China	WeChat	Survey	Academia	Chinese
Artist	China	WeChat	Survey	Media	Chinese
Filmmaker	China	WeChat	Survey	Media	Chinese
Small business owner	China	WeChat	Survey	Private sector	Chinese
Real estate	China	WeChat	Survey	Real estate	Chinese
Filmmaker and professor	USA	Direct	Semi-structured interview	Media	Chinese
Writer	China	WeChat	Survey	Media	Chinese
Applied Materials	China	WeChat	Survey	Mining	Chinese
Senior Researcher	Denmark	Direct	Semi-structured interview	Academia	Chinese
Non-profit	China	Direct	Semi-structured interview	Non-profit	Chinese
Researcher	Denmark	Unassigned	Semi-structured interview	Academia	Danish
Doctor	China	WeChat	Survey	Medical	Chinese
Non-profit	China	Direct	Semi-structured interview	Non-profit	Chinese
Mining sector	China	Direct	Informal interview	Mining	Chinese
Non-profit	China	Direct	Semi-structured interview	Non-profit	Chinese
NMAP	USA	Literasure review	Desk research		
CTEA & NMAP	USA	Media Landscape	Desk research		

WeChat Survey

1. What does environmental protection mean to you?
2. What do you think is a Chinese citizen's role is in environmental protection?
3. What comes to mind when you consider China's development abroad?
4. What do you think is China's environmental impact abroad?
5. What is an environmental issue you care about and why?
6. What is one thing you have done in response to Question 5?

Semi-structured interview questions

1. What is your organization's area of focus?
2. What projects are you working on that relate to environmental protection?
3. Please describe the current environmental protection efforts within China and how that has changed in the last few decades.
4. What do you think is China's responsibility to environmental protection in host countries where Chinese development projects are underway?
5. During your work, what is your experience like working with or gaining collaboration with the Chinese government? What were the challenges?
6. What would you say is the primary ideology and philosophical base of the Chinese government towards environmental protection within China? What about outside of China?
7. What activism or protest actions have been effective regarding environmental issues within China?
8. What are the most effective avenues for change-making?
9. How do you see the Green Belt Road Initiative philosophy influence attitudes / perceptions in Chinese culture? (AND how does the Belt Road Initiative use Chinese culture/values to create a strong case for Chinese development abroad?)
10. What is the general population-level attitude towards environmental conservation in China?
11. What is the perception of the west? Particularly of the American dream and how does that differ from the Chinese dream of harmonious world?
12. What fosters more independent thinking or what have you seen that has worked well?
13. What do you think would be persuasive to Chinese government officials to enhance environmental protection laws and policies?
14. Have you seen any media used nationally that was particularly poignant in influencing either the general population-wide audience or decision-makers around environmental issues?
15. Is there a cultural norm/conversation in any age group investigating or taking responsibility for China's environmental impact in host countries?
16. What are the barriers to China's negative environmental impact in host countries becoming more widely known and discussed within China?
17. What sources would be believable to people?
18. If people knew about the negative environmental impact China's development is perpetrating in other countries, what would the response be?
19. What values and beliefs do you think need to be challenged in order to advance environmental protection laws and policies within China and abroad?
20. Is there anything else you would like to add?