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Governing Environmental Conflicts in China: Under what Conditions do Local Governments Compromise?

Yanwei Li, Joop Koppenjan & Stefan Verweij

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Abstract

In recent years, governing environmental conflicts concerning the planning, construction, and operation of urban facilities has increasingly become a challenge for Chinese local governments. Chinese governments seek adequate responses to deal with these conflicts, for instance by ignoring criticism and sticking to initial decisions, by suppressing protests, or by compromising. In this article, by analyzing 10 cases of conflict in China using crisp-set qualitative comparative analysis (csQCA), we aim to investigate which combinations of diverse conditions lead to changes in local governments' decisions. Four contextualized paths to explain both the presence and the absence of these changes are identified. These findings increase our understanding of the mechanisms underlying the governance of environmental conflicts in China and may inform Chinese governments and non-state actors who are seeking ways to deal adequately with them.

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