

## Research stay in China

The University Alliance for Sustainability allowed me to go for a short research stay to China. Part of my visit was the participation in the International Summer Program “Local Wisdom for Sustainability in the Anthropocene”. The Summer Program is the first of its kind and has been organized by Guizhou University and Peking University within the network “Green Alliance for a Sustainable Future” (GAUSF) which has been initiated by Peking University in 2014. FUB is partner to this international network on sustainability. The summer program took place from 10-19 July 2015 in the southwestern Chinese province Guizhou. Also three graduate and PhD-students from FU Berlin’s Environmental Policy Research Center (FFU) – Kerstin Geppert, Dongping Wang and Laslo Jäger – took part in the program. It was a great opportunity for both, students and staff, to get into an in-depth discussion about the core of sustainable development. Tensions between economic development, modernization and maintenance of traditional knowledge and of agricultural practices have not only been debated on theoretical grounds. In addition to lectures, excursions to smaller towns and villages illustrated these conflicts in daily life. My lecture on the German energy transition met with a lot of interest and provoked a controversial discussion about the feasibility of policy transfer and essential features of sustainable energy transformations. The exchange further helped to enlighten the connection of local environmental conflicts in the respective partner countries and global sustainability challenges. I used the opportunity to deepen the strategic partnership with Peking University meeting up with PKU staff also in Beijing. At PKU, we were discussing different concepts in the realm of sustainable development and environmental protection. For me it was interesting to learn that neither the internationally framed term sustainability nor the concept of ecological modernization, which has especially been coined in Germany, is necessarily perceived as an adequate reference point to advance environmental protection in China. If a term is to be successfully applied in the Chinese context, also a specific Chinese framing seems to be important. This may explain the creation and successful uptake of the term eco-civilization.

With regard to future research, it may be interesting to compare projects being implemented under the headlines of different terms such as “eco-civilization”, “sustainable development”, or, “ecological modernization” – does terminology make a difference? In addition, it would be interesting if any of these initiatives can also be put in the wider context of societal transformation. This is especially relevant since those socio-technical transitions, e.g. towards a low-carbon economy, require not only technical innovation but also imply a societal dimension of change. As a follow-up, we are preparing a conference on urban sustainability in collaboration with PKU, amongst others. Personally the research stay confirmed that getting familiar with each other’s traditions and (scientific) cultures is key for further collaboration in research and teaching.