



The Struggle for Sustainability in Rural China: Environmental Values and Civil Society

Bryan Tilt

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Though China's economy is projected to become the world's largest within the next twenty years, industrial pollution threatens both the health of the country's citizens and the natural resources on which their economy depends. Capturing the consequences of this reality, Bryan Tilt conducts an in-depth, ethnographic study of Futian Township, a rural community reeling from pollution.

The industrial township is located in the populous southwestern province of Sichuan. Three local factories—a zinc smelter, a coking plant, and a coal-washing plant—produce air and water pollution that far exceeds the standards set by the World Health Organization and China's Ministry of Environmental Protection. Interviewing state and company officials, factory workers, farmers, and scientists, Tilt shows how residents cope with this pollution and how they view its effects on health and economic growth. Striking at the heart of the community's environmental values, he explores the intersection between civil society and environmental policy, weighing the tradeoffs between protection and economic growth. Tilt ultimately finds that the residents are quite concerned about pollution, and he investigates the various strategies they use to fight it. His study unravels the complexity of sustainable development within a rapidly changing nation.

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