

Contextualizing “economic growth” in the ecological crisis in China

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60 years after the 1949 revolution, and 30 years after the Reform, the greatest achievement China can apparently boast of is its fast economic growth, but the gravest problem both the government and the general public acknowledge is a profound ecological crisis. The two come as twins parented by the same modernization effort. While it may seem manifest to anyone with some reasonable sense that the environmental red alert is no false alarm, and it has not only badly affected the majority of the population, but also compromised the gains of economic growth and increased China’s dependency on foreign resources, the question that needs to be addressed seriously is: why is it so difficult to introduce a critical reflection as well as a substantial change in practice and policy?

So, while China’s economic growth is represented by the World Bank, IMF, governments in developing countries, and even leftist parties (such as the Communist Party of India (Marxist)) as a success model to be emulated, the weight of the immediate, medium and long term environmental catastrophes shows that the economic success is transitory and unsustainable, and is the cause of loss of livelihoods of rural peasants and urban poor displaced by development projects and polluted environment.

This presentation attempts to ask some questions about some major facets of Chinese society today, and tackle the task of going beyond the constraints of thought that mislead by making one feel good.

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