COMMUNITY-BASED SUSTAINABLE LIVING: CASES IN BEIJING

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In August 2000, the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Bidding Committee promised for the first time to support model green communities, or communities with sustainable living, within the Action Plan for a Green Olympics.\(^1\) Five years later, the government expressed its support for green communities when the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) evaluated green communities and commended the most outstanding ones.

Since 2000 green communities have appeared throughout the country. The theme for the World Environment Day of 2005 in China was “Everyone participates in building a green planet.” Over the years, “green community” has become a catchword among both decision-makers and the general public. In building green communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as Global Village of Beijing (GVB), have played an active role through their creative and practical programs. They have repeatedly shown a genuine knack for promoting environmental protection and public participation. Practice has shown that NGOs can cooperate with the government in implementing green communities in China’s transitional society.

The term “green community” is now well known in China, and the government plays a key role in promoting the concept. In 2000, the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Bidding Committee issued the Action Plan for a Green Olympics, officially listing the effort to create green communities as part of the Green Olympics.\(^2\) The guidelines on National Environmental Promotion and Education for the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2001–2005) calls for gradually establishing green communities in forty-seven key cities, raising public awareness of environmental protection, and promoting social ethics. In addition, the guidelines call for the

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building of green communities as a step towards the ultimate goal of building civil society, while promoting cultural and ideological progress.” In July 2004, the SEPA issued the Circular on Further Promoting the Building of Community-based Sustainable Living to encourage building more green communities all over the country. Moreover, the appendix to the document, A Guide to Building Green Communities, provides a framework and standard for building green communities. By June 2005, there were 2,300 provincial and municipal-level communities that were recast as green communities; the SEPA gave awards to 112 of these.

Government agencies and non-governmental organizations have reached a consensus on what a green community should be. It is, by definition, a community with environmental protection facilities, which is managed through the mechanism of public participation. It is the beneficial interaction between the public and the government that results in this consensus.

I. Setting up a Green Community—Jiangongnanli: a Pilot Community

Based on earlier achievements in promoting a green lifestyle and recycling, the Global Village of Beijing came up with the idea of remodeling a green community, where residents practice water and energy conservation, as well as garbage classification for recycling and other uses. In 1997, supported by the Environment and Sanitation Administration as well as the Office of Civil Society of Xuanwu District, Beijing, the GVB experimented with remodeling green communities. In the Jiangongnanli community of Xuanwu District, the GVB, the district government, and the residents launched a publicity campaign and “greening” training programs. As part of the promotions for the “green community” concept, this slogan was permanent carved on a stone wall in the neighborhood.

On April 23, 1999, a day after World Earth Day, the Jiangongnanli pilot green community came into being, co-sponsored by the Global

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4 See the official website of the State Environmental Protection Administration, http://www.zhb.gov.cn/eic/6490867298147878912/20051118/13039.shtml.
5 Liu Xiaoxing and Xu Qi, Xie Zhenghua Chuxi Quanguo Lüse Chuanjian Huidong Biaozhang Dahui, (Xie Zhenghua Attends the National Green Campaign Award Ceremony), Chinese Environment News, June 6, 2005.