



The Systematic Approach to the Construction of Eco-Civilization in China

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Abstract. The systematic approach is an important philosophical method that runs through Marxism, offering a fresh perspective on understanding China's eco-civilization construction. Rooted in Marx's view of nature and drawing from the ecological wisdom of traditional Chinese culture, China's eco-civilization construction embraces diverse contemporary Western ecological trends with an international outlook. This systematic approach permeates every aspect and process of China's eco-civilization construction, manifesting in establishing a systemic ideology to transform development concepts, coordinating systematic layouts to strengthen top-level designs, enhancing systemic governance to improve practical capabilities, and setting systemic goals to enhance value leadership. The systematic approach to building eco-civilization in China enlightens us to uphold holistic thinking, maintain an open attitude, and grasp the dynamic evolution of systems in understanding natural ecosystems and promoting the construction of eco-civilization, which contributes wisdom and strength to building a beautiful China as well as a clean and beautiful world.

Keywords: Eco-civilization; Systematic approach; Systematic layout; Systematic governance; Systematic objectives.

1 INTRODUCTION

Since the Industrial Revolution, there has been a continuous effort to transform and exploit nature, resulting not only in economic development and the accumulation of wealth but also in increasingly intensified conflicts between humans and nature and a growing ecological crisis that is difficult to reverse. The ecological crisis is not merely a matter of environmental pollution but a comprehensive issue caused by economic and social factors such as imbalanced economic development, low resource utilization efficiency, imperfect governance systems and capabilities, and consumerist lifestyles. This necessitates both ecological theory and ecological construction practices to adhere to a systematic approach, which means it is essential to strive to achieve the optimal mindset for problem-solving by utilizing the principles and methods of systems theory to understand phenomena, emphasizing grasping things in the context of interconnected systems, and exploring the laws within the dynamic processes of interaction among systems and elements^[1]. Specifically, within the relationship between humans and nature, it entails connecting human-nature relations with human-human and human-social

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relations as components of a compound ecosystem. Based on this foundation, it involves coordinating the various elements of the ecological system, exploring the evolutionary laws of the ecosystem, improving the quality of the ecological environment, and advancing the practice of eco-civilization construction. Guided by the systematic approach, China has continuously pursued a distinct path of eco-civilization construction.

The systematic approach is an important worldview and methodology of Marx and Engels' dialectical materialism and historical materialism.

The construction of eco-civilization in China has consistently maintained a sentimental attachment to the inheritance and promotion of excellent traditional Chinese culture. The philosophical ideas of 'the unity of man and nature' and 'the way of nature,' the classic lines of poetry 'Don't disturb the birds in the spring; the child waits for the mother in the nest,' and the family motto 'With every meal, remember the labor and difficulty; with every thread, appreciate the effort to obtain,' these simple and wise views on nature still serve as profound warnings and enlightenments. This fully demonstrates the foundational role of ecological wisdom in Chinese traditional culture in shaping the concept of eco-civilization [2].

Since the mid-twentieth century, with the continuous publication of ecological works such as "A Sand County Almanac," "Silent Spring," and "Only One Earth," Western ecological ideologies have emerged successively, including ecological ethics, ecological politics, and ecological modernization. The ecological modernization movement aims to promote the transformation of the production and lifestyle of industrial society, as well as, through technological innovation and green development, change the modernization mode that is only driven by growth and high environmental pressure.

2 TOP-LEVEL DESIGN: COORDINATED SYSTEMATIC LAYOUT

Since 2012, in the face of increasingly severe ecological deficiencies and the people's need for a beautiful ecological environment, China has placed eco-civilization at a new strategic and historical height. It particularly emphasized strengthening the top-level design of eco-civilization construction based on the overall situation and entire process of modernization. China incorporated eco-civilization construction into the overall layout of the "Five-Sphere Integrated Plan" and coordinated the promotion of ecological development in economic, political, cultural, and social construction in 2012. Pollution prevention and control was included as one of the three major battles in 2017, becoming a directional indicator for evaluating the achievements of building a comprehensively well-off society and people's satisfaction. Chinese government required, giving prominence to eco-civilization construction in the overall layout of modernization, and deeply integrating the concept of eco-civilization into all aspects and the entire process of economic, political, cultural, and social construction.

Integrating the concept of eco-civilization into economic development is manifested in the close integration of economic growth and ecological protection under the guidance of the green development philosophy. In terms of strategic design, the quality of

the ecological environment is closely related to the process and quality of building a comprehensively well-off society and socialist modernization. In the specific practice of ecological economic construction, in recent years, to promote green, circular, and low-carbon development, supported by a green technological innovation system, China has continuously optimized and upgraded its industrial structure. Industries such as pollution control, eco-tourism, and leisure and wellness have embraced a period of development, and the dialectical unity of beautiful scenery and material wealth is gradually being realized.

Integrating the concept of eco-civilization into political development is manifested in maintaining the leading role of the ruling party in ecological construction and actively promoting institutional reforms for eco-civilization. China pointed out at the National Conference on Ecological and Environmental Protection, “All regions and departments should strengthen the ‘Four Consciousnesses’, resolutely uphold the authority and centralized unified leadership of the Party Central Committee, resolutely assume the political responsibility for eco-civilization construction, and fully implement the decisions and deployments of the Party Central Committee.”^[3] In 2013, China proposed deepening institutional reforms for eco-civilization around the goal of creating a beautiful China. In September 2015, the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee deliberated and approved the “Overall Plan for Eco-Civilization System Reform,” which clarified the overall requirements and principles of eco-civilization system reform and made detailed institutional arrangements in various aspects such as natural resource property rights, land and space development and protection, spatial planning systems, and eco-civilization performance assessment. This provides institutional guarantees for advancing the modernization of ecological governance system and capacity. The concepts of “Beautiful China” and “Eco-Civilization” were enshrined in the 2018 Constitutional Amendment of China, indicating that eco-civilization construction has become a political strategic will of China.

The integration of natural ecological conservation into cultural development manifests as the promotion of ecological wisdom in traditional culture and the advocacy of establishing a value system for green living. The construction of an eco-cultural system with Chinese characteristics is first reflected in the exploration of ecological wisdom inherited from traditional Chinese culture. The Chinese people believed that the simple ecological thinking of ancient people regarding the relationship between humans and nature, such as “the unity of man and nature,” “the way of nature,” and “moderate use.” These provide cultural origins for the construction of ecological culture. At the same time, the construction of ecological culture aims to transform people’s values, change the anthropocentric values of industrial civilization, establish the concept of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature in the era of eco-civilization, break free from the mindset of consumerism, extravagance, and money supremacy under capital dominance, and promote green consumption and green living.

The concept of natural ecological conservation integrated into social development is reflected in meeting the people’s need for a beautiful ecological environment. The pursuit of a good life by individuals is not only a need for material and cultural goods but also an aspiration for a beautiful ecological environment. In May 2020, China passed the first Civil Code of the People’s Republic of China, known as the “encyclopedia of

social life.” The seventh chapter of the Civil Code addresses issues such as liability for environmental pollution and ecological damage, burden of proof, responsibility for ecological restoration, and punitive compensation, providing strong legal protection for the environmental rights of citizens. People not only have the right to pursue a good ecological environment but also have the obligation to protect it. Ecological protection and environmental governance require government-led social participation. Winning the battle against pollution prevention, as well as defending the blue skies, clear waters, and clean lands, require every citizen to start with actions such as waste sorting, low-carbon travel, and green consumption.

3 GOVERNANCE PRACTICE: STRENGTHENING SYSTEMATIC GOVERNANCE

Eco-civilization construction ultimately needs to be implemented in ecological and environmental governance. In recent years, China has vigorously enhanced the governance of the ecological environment. Large-scale ecological governance projects have been carried out in important ecological functional areas such as the Qinling Mountains, Inner Mongolia, the Three Rivers Source, the Qilian Mountains, the Yangtze River Basin, and the Yellow River Basin, focusing on addressing regional ecological issues such as water pollution, land desertification, and soil erosion. Significant achievements have been made, creating “green miracles” like the Saihanba Forest Farm, the Three-North Shelterbelt Forest Program, and the Mu Us Desert. The ecological governance achievements in China are not only a result of the dedication and efforts of generations but also stem from consistently following natural laws and employing methods of ecological environmental system governance.

Ecological governance needs to achieve comprehensive management of “mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, lakes, and grasslands.” “Nothing in nature happens in isolation.” Atmospheric conditions, sunlight, trees, rivers, soil, and other natural elements are all part of the material circulation process within the same ecosystem. These elements are interdependent and interconnected, unable to exist independently without other elements. Any disruption in one link can lead to the collapse of the entire ecosystem. While promoting the development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt, Chinese government demands that we must consider the entirety of the ecosystem and the systematic nature of the Yangtze River Basin, coordinate ecological elements such as mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, lakes, and grasslands, and implement effective ecological restoration and environmental protection projects. This demonstrates that the application of ecological environmental governance is targeted at a compound ecological system composed of nature, economy, society, and other elements. During the governance process, the interrelationships of each element must be comprehensively considered, and potential chain reactions resulting from changes in one element must be anticipated. The ultimate goal is to achieve harmony among various elements, subsystems, and aspects, ultimately leading to the overall improvement of the ecological environment.

Ecological governance must be integrated into the overall process of urban planning and rural revitalization. Every detail of urban planning and construction must consider the impact on nature, and must not disrupt the natural system. This requires that urban planning and design must first strictly adhere to ecological protection redlines, strengthen the planning of core functional areas, optimize the spatial development pattern, and incorporate indicators such as resource and environmental carrying capacity, current economic density, and future development direction into the comprehensive consideration of regional development and utilization, in order to promote coordinated and sustainable development of population, resources, environment, and economy. China put forward the rural revitalization strategy in 2017, emphasized the priority development of agriculture and rural areas, and explicitly stated the general requirements of “promoting thriving industries, creating an ecologically livable environment, fostering a civilized countryside, ensuring effective governance, and achieving prosperity.” From the strategic context of eco-civilization construction, the prosperity of rural industries aims to promote clean and standardized agricultural production, and to build rural characteristic tourism industries based on the rural landscape and local flavor. Ecological livability aims to create a beautiful natural environment and human habitat. Civilized rural customs are reflected in respecting and loving nature. Effective governance aims to promote the rural toilet revolution and sewage treatment. Prosperous living means not only an abundance of material resources but also the realization of a better life. In summary, ecological environmental governance is an important dimension of the new urbanization construction and rural revitalization strategy, and must strengthen ecological protection and environmental governance throughout the entire process of strategic implementation.

4 VALUE LEADERSHIP: ACHIEVING SYSTEMATIC OBJECTIVES

Humanity shares a common existence on Earth, and in the face of ecological crises, humans are always a community of shared destiny. The construction of eco-civilization requires enhancing values guidance, transforming the egoism and individualism mentality under the dominance of private ownership, and guiding the people to achieve a shift in values from “self” to “greater collective” in ecological construction practices. Horizontally coordinating the goals of “Beautiful China” and “Clean and Beautiful World” actively guides global ecological governance. In 2012, China established the goal of building a “Beautiful China” in eco-civilization construction, which not only serves as the guiding principle for China’s eco-civilization construction but also constitutes a green element of building a socialist modernization. In recent years, Chinese government called on the people to participate in voluntary tree planting activities, advocated for everyone to establish eco-civilization awareness, participate in tree planting and afforestation to increase greenery, promote the spirit of “Saihanba,” transform the value goal of building a beautiful China into the conscious actions of the people and foster a national ethos of participation in eco-civilization construction^[4]. At the same time, China actively participates in global ecological governance, strictly abides by the

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, took the lead in signing the Paris Agreement, cooperates with countries around the world to address global climate change, provides Chinese wisdom and makes Chinese contributions to reduce global carbon emissions, and promote the 2030 sustainable development agenda. China has engaged in deep cooperation with many developing countries in clean energy, ecological protection, green agriculture, and other fields in the construction of the Green Silk Road.

Vertically balancing the interests of contemporary people with the well-being of future generations safeguards the good life of the people. Planting trees for the benefit of future generations. We all enjoy the shade from trees planted by our predecessors, but we must also plant trees ourselves. The construction of eco-civilization will have far-reaching effects and benefits for generations to come. We should not exhaust the resources for the survival of future generations prematurely in the pursuit of temporary wealth. It is not only about ensuring ‘blue skies, clear waters, and pure land’ for the present, but also about leaving ‘a more beautiful environment with bluer skies, greener mountains, and clearer waters’ for our descendants. The ‘clear waters and green mountains’ are not only the ‘mountains of gold and silver’ for the present generation, but also the natural resource foundation for future generations to create their own ‘mountains of gold and silver’. This reflects the inheritance and development of Xi Jinping’s eco-civilization ideology based on the historical materialism of Marxism and embodies profound temporal and systematic thinking.

5 REALISTIC INSPIRATION FOR ADHERING TO SYSTEMATIC APPROACH OF ECO-CIVILIZATION CONSTRUCTION IN CHINA

The systematic approach provides us with a new methodological perspective for analyzing eco-civilization construction in China. To guide the practice of eco-civilization construction with the systematic approach, we must adhere to holistic thinking, maintain an open attitude, and grasp the dynamic evolution of the system in understanding the natural ecosystem and the process of ecological environment protection.

As revealed by Capra, a key theme of the ecological worldview is that there is a fundamental interconnectedness and interdependence between all phenomena... the properties of parts are determined by the dynamics of the whole ^[5]. Ecosystems are organic wholes composed of biological, environmental, and other elements within a certain time and space in nature. The systematic approach of eco-civilization construction enlightens us to uphold holistic thinking when considering the relationship between humans and nature, the relationship between ecological construction and other fields, ecological construction between nations, and ecological construction between regions.

As pointed out by Whitehead, one actual entity is located in other actual entities ^[6]. For a system to maintain its orderly development, it must be open to the environment to obtain the necessary material, information, and energy. The same applies to natural ecosystems, which cannot exist independently but must undergo exchanges of matter, energy, and information with the surrounding environment. In order to promote the

sustainable development of natural ecosystems, an open attitude must be maintained in eco-civilization construction. This entails embracing an open mindset, considering natural ecosystems within their environmental context.

As Bergson discovered, the world's process is a grand improvisation; the impulse of life has no goal, no purpose, no external signposts, and no internal guiding principles [7]. Natural ecological systems continually evolve with the passage of time and changes in the environment. Therefore, the construction of eco-civilization must keep pace with the times and grasp the dynamic evolutionary process of the system and its environment. Currently, in the context of a community with a shared future for mankind, it is crucial to grasp the strategic importance of eco-civilization construction and understand individual national position and role in global ecological governance. This requires a real-time understanding of the dynamic evolution of natural ecosystems and their surrounding environments.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Systematic approach is an important worldview and methodology for China's eco-civilization construction. This is reflected in various aspects, such as thinking about natural ecosystems, understanding the relationship between humans and nature, top-level design and planning layout for eco-civilization construction, and setting goals for eco-civilization construction. This worldview and methodology not only summarize the experiences of world eco-civilization construction practice, but also inherit and develop Marxist ecological views, traditional Chinese cultural ecological wisdom, and contemporary Western ecological trends. It possesses profound theoretical and practical logic, pointing out the direction and path for promoting harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, building a beautiful China and a clean and beautiful world.

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