



***The Chinese way to greenways:
implementation processes and outcomes of
four cases in the Central Zhejiang City-
Region***

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Environmental issues have necessitated inquiries for China's city-regions to devote more attention to sustainable development. A remarkable manifestation is in the growing popularity of regional greenway development. Greenway development at such a large scale involves a multiplicity of actors and a complexity of institutions, resulting in diverse outcomes. This paper evaluates the different implementation outcomes and explains the difference from an institutional perspective. An assessment framework, consisting of social, economic and ecological indicators, is developed to assess the four selected greenways in the Central Zhejiang City-Region, each led by a unique actor (i.e., a township government, a county department, a cross-agency department or a state-owned company).

The results show that the greenway led by the cross-agency department performs better than those managed by other actors in terms of cultural promotion, tourism development, regional integration and habitat connectivity improvement.

Such good performance is largely due to the coordination of a powerful, double-hatted, cross-agency and inclusive department that could foster institutional linkages within administrative jurisdiction, between adjacent governments, and across government hierarchy. This is in contrast to the township-led greenway, which has the worst performance among all selected greenways due to the lack of a powerful actor for efficient and integrated greenway implementation.

The greenway led by the county department does not contribute significantly to the tourism sector because it fails to constitute a distinct attraction on its own, but merely acts as a link to tourist attractions that are already well-known to the public. In addition, although this greenway has a relatively high level of public accessibility, the built-up area constitutes a small proportion of land use along the trail, implying this greenway has bypassed the core of established communities. Confronted with competing expectations from the region for increased greenway length and those from the county government for limited funding and land quotas, the county department tends to prioritise greenways located in less-populated areas where land acquisition cost is much cheaper, at the expense of low greenway usage.

When the state-owned enterprise takes a lead, greenway development is oriented towards rural tourism, which is achieved by paving the greenway close to local communities and improving the rural facilities so that the greenway itself is turned into a tourist attraction. The greenway has a large funding base because the state-owned enterprise could circumvent the financial constraint imposed on governmental actors and fund greenway projects through external financial activities. The partnership between the state-owned company and sitting tenants also accounts for the success of the greenway as a rural tourism destination.

The analysis of the diverse implementation outcomes across the Central Zhejiang City-Region leads to the conclusion that the administrative status and structure design of the coordinating organisation make a huge impact on greenway performance. Equally important are the establishment of a complete set of supportive institutions and the enforcement of these institutions in the greenway development process.



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