

Green Economy in Guizhou Province: Theory and Practice

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The development of healthy sustainable economy in Guizhou entails green economy based on the human-centered notion and the ongoing economic and social transition. This paper argues for three stages involved in the process from sustainable development to green development. In Guizhou, green economy is not merely a means of environmental management, but also a design for coordination between economic development, resources conservation, and environmental protection. Seen in this way, it is an important pattern for Guizhou's economic development.

Keywords: Guizhou, green economy, sustainable development

Foreword

Green economy has been rendered considerable attention in Guizhou Province, China for some time. Its main focuses are direction of development, tasks, opportunities, challenges, strategies, and measures as well as the relationship between green economy and overall well-off society. In these fields we are happy to find a few scholars' contributions. Xie Jian assumes that the full-pace development of green agriculture, green manufacturing, green service industry, and green financing together with the accelerated construction of ecology-friendly economic system should be the orientation of Guizhou's green economic development (Xie, 2019). Chen Chang postulates that the ecological industry should go hand in hand with industrial ecology for the good of Guizhou's green economy (Chen, 2019). Meng Hongyan proposes the opportunities, challenges, strategies, and measures for Guizhou's green economy (Meng, 2016). Zhong Lina thinks that green economy is conducive to the overall construction of well-off society (Xiaokang society) (Zhong, 2015).

Undoubtedly much academic fruit has been achieved in understanding the positive effects of ecology on economic development, given that Guizhou is a province with affluent ecological resources. Yet, we find that there is still some room for improvement in studying the necessity for green economy in Guizhou and the development process and practice concerned. This paper attempts to present a view on the necessity, process, and practice involved in promoting green economy in Guizhou, based on China's national economic strategy, Guizhou's local geographical and social conditions, and a favorable orientation for Guizhou's economic development.

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Necessity of Green Economy in Guizhou

At present Chinese economy is in the stage of acceleration “gear” and structural adjustment, and hence “joys” and “pains” co-exist. In western countries it took hundreds of years to go through this stage, but in China only decades have elapsed for this objective. Granted, there are piles of progress in the sense of either social recognition or economic glory. Nevertheless, problems and contradictions also surface, blocking the sustainable economic development of China, including Guizhou Province, if they remain unsolved. The Chinese government, led by President Xi Jinping, advocates poverty reduction and well-off society, applauded nation-wide and world-wide. Green economy should be assumed to accord with the national strategy of improving the overall well-being of the Chinese people. Guizhou is a mountainous province with abundant ecological resources, and thus its adherence to green economy is consistent with Guizhou Province government’s guideline: stick to favorable local conditions, take a road different from east China’s coastal provinces, build well-off society, and strive to realize new breakthroughs in Guizhou’s economic and social development.

First, green economy is suitable to Guizhou’s local conditions.

Guizhou, abbreviated as “qian” or “Gui” in Chinese, is located in southwest Guizhou, whose major landscape features are plateau, mountains, valleys, rivers, and limited space of flat land. It borders Hunan Province to the east, Sichuan Province and Chongqing Municipality to the north, Yunnan Province to the west, and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region to the south. Guizhou is a typical landlocked province with a long history, unique natural environment, benign climate, and a big number of ethnic peoples.

As an underdeveloped province in west China, Guizhou Province is characterized with a large percentage of poor population. Surely, much economic progress has been made here since 1949—the founding of the People’s Republic of China. Nonetheless, this province is still much more backward than other provinces, particularly those on the eastern and southern coasts. The main economic drawbacks in Guizhou are low economic revenues, small per capita incomes, slow development rate, undesirable economic quality, limited exploitation of local resources, rough level of economic development, and ecological vulnerability. To keep up with other provinces in building well-off society in 2020, we must change our manner of development and increase our development rate in Guizhou. Hence, two tasks are put ahead of us: catching up and changing. In order to meet our objective, there seems no other alternative but accelerating our development.

Guizhou’s natural ecology is vulnerable. Mountains and hills occupy 92.5% of its land, and hence it is a major forest in the south of China. The Yangtze River watershed and the Pearl River watershed cover 65.7% and 34.3% of Guizhou’s land respectively, and thus it is an important ecological protection zone in China. Particularly it should be mentioned that the karst landscape accounts for 61.9% of Guizhou’s land, and here rock desertification is more or less serious in 78 counties of Guizhou (the total being 88). In this sense, ecological well-being does not only affect Guizhou’s economic development and ecological protection, but also the ecological security of the Yangtze and Pearl Rivers watersheds.

The provincial conditions outline a contradiction of development in Guizhou: It is making efforts to develop economy and reduce poverty while having to fare well in ecological construction and environmental protection. This dilemma should not be unique in Guizhou only, but probably common in other provinces. To solve this problem, we propose a strategy of “ecology-based economic development”, or a pattern of circulating economy.

This we hold to be is a new path of green economic development.

In the early years of China's Reform and Open-up (starting from the 1980s) economic development was a priority; in the 21st century scientific development and green development are much emphasized (Hu, 2012, p. 177). For the long-term development of Guizhou, a balance must be struck between economic development and ecological protection. The Yangtze River and the Pearl River are Mother Rivers in China and their ecological health is not just a matter of Guizhou's people but also a matter of the entire Chinese population. Hence, ecological well-being in the forms of blue sky, lush landscape, and bright waters should be formed and maintained.

Second, green economy is a reflection of urgent need for sustainable healthy development of Guizhou's economy.

We have just mentioned Guizhou's main economic drawbacks. To change the situation, we must exert efforts in reducing the high consumption of fossil energies, the high emission or discharge of hazardous matters, and the serious pollution, and meanwhile improve economic efficiency. Green economy is a desirable option as it sticks to circulating development, low-carbon development, and healthy sustainable development. There is no reason for Guizhou to reject this alternative.

Third, green economy is consistent with the notion of human-centered development.

Green economy is characterized with rational consumption, low-level pollution, and increased ecological capital as well as green wealth and welfare for human happiness, harmony between human beings, and harmony between man and nature (Hu, 2012, p. 33). To be human-centered, we must first of all care about the general public's well-being and health. Maslow's needs hierarchy covers five types: physiological, mental, belonging and caring, respect, and self-realization. In the past the Chinese people had to meet the physical need of feeding themselves first. In contrast, now their food problem is not so urgent, at least in the sense of quantity. What they care about most is food quality, environmental cleanness, and healthy living. As a result, "environment-friendly", "health-friendly", and "nutrition-balanced" become hot words in contemporary Chinese society. Thus, the human-centered notion of green economy is to the liking of the Chinese nation.

Fourth, green economy is a wise choice for Guizhou's economic and social development under the present circumstances.

Green development is a notion popular with the public, supported by the national strategy, such as the 13th Five-Year Plan, and it can motivate the active participation of individuals, corporations, and government in innovation and the breakthrough development of economy as the pollution-free and renewable resources-based notion is rooted in the minds of more and more people. In another word, ecological cost, human health, and sustainable development should be coordinated in social and economic development (Hu, 2012, p. 35). President Xi Jinping, while inspecting Guizhou Province, encouraged Guizhou's people to pursue an ecology-based path of development, different eastern provinces, and even other western provinces. In the future ecology-based development should be a guideline for any and all social and economic development measures in Guizhou under the present circumstances of actively building well-off society, thoroughly furthering political and economic reform, earnestly ruling the country by law, and strictly requiring the ruling political party (Tang, 2016, p. 7). To facilitate the implementation of the central leadership's requirement and the general public's appeal, the industries of "Big Poverty Alleviation", "Big Tourism", and "Big Ecology" are being carried out in Guizhou. All

of these strategies and measures are based on Guizhou's natural conditions, or the green development notion. In this way, Guizhou's economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological developments are pursued in the right way (Tang, 2016, p. 7).

Process of Green Economy Development in Guizhou

The development strategies from sustainable development to green development in Guizhou have undergone three stages.

First stage: 2001-2005 when sustainable development strategies were implemented in Guizhou. In 2000 the provincial government's report stated that sustainable development strategies were to be carried out in Guizhou, with focuses on integrated ecological governance in 16 counties, natural forest protection projects in 64 counties, harnessing of 20 million km² land with soil erosion, and return of 65,898 acres of land from farming to grass and forest situations. Besides, natural preserves and scenic spots were to be under strict ecological protection. Mining was to be controlled, and land compensations were to go into effect. Sustainable development was somehow achieved with strict laws and regulations and the public's conscious adherence. Nevertheless, there was still much room for improvement as connections between ecology and poverty alleviation, economic structural adjustment, and economic-social return needed to be strengthened.

Second stage: 2006-2010 when ecology-based development became a key strategy in Guizhou. In 2005, the provincial government's report proposed abiding to development based on ecology and changing the means of economic growth. It emphasized more work in pollution control, circulating economy and strict management of land and mining resources for the purpose of reasonable use of land, benign protection of environment, low consumption of energies and materials, and high quality and security. This was particularly so for the high-consumption industries. In the 11th Five-Year Plan the provincial government of Guizhou highlighted the construction of environment-friendly society, which takes into account the notion of ecologically-centered economic development and the relevant practice. Following the provincial government's report and the 11th Five-Year Plan, efforts were made in energy conservation, environmental protection, forestry expansion, and coordination between ecology and economic revenues. As a result, the environment for the Yangtze River and the Pearl River watersheds was further improved, and the public started to better taste the economic benefits of ecology. For instance, rock desertification dropped in the karst areas of Guizhou, and new industries went into operation based on local ecological resources. Hence, sustainable social and economic development was better implemented during this period.

Third stage: 2011-2015 when green economy was promoted. In 2011 the provincial government's report of Guizhou proposed that the overall requirement for green economy during the 12th Five-Year Plan be scientific development, transformation of economic development manner, optimization of environment, improvement of the general public's livelihood, and active coordination between economic and social development and population, resources, and environment. The report specified the reduction of the emission of so², chemical oxygen demand (COD), and the discharge of ammonia and nitrogen and things alike as an objective; also, demands were made as to the increase of forest coverage to about 45%. It stressed the importance of rational development, which is meant to phase out high-consumption low-effect industries and accelerate the construction of energy-efficient industries and ecology-friendly mode of production. During this period, pollution was further

reduced, environment was made better and healthier, and forests and grass came into sight everywhere. The construction of irrigation facilities lessened rock desertification and more and more people joined hands in wetland preservation, clean energy projects, and other ecological protection activities.

During the 12th Five-Year Plan the provincial government reiterated the significance of ecology and environmental protection. The strict regulations bore positive outcomes. For instance, the major pollutant emissions were placed below the national level, the arable land reached 4.398 hectares, the forest coverage went up to 45%, and wood stock volume accounted for 380,000,000 m³. Noteworthy is the government leadership's discussion in the provincial government's report on the importance of green development with much attention to forestry, forest protection and rehabilitation priority, energy conservation, resource management, response to climate change, and introduction of low-carbon technologies to industry, architecture, transport, and agriculture.

In the 13th Five-Year Plan, the provincial government of Guizhou stated that the notion of green development should be rooted in the general public's minds and that we must realize the importance and benefits of coordinated development between ecology and economy. Harmony has been a household word since the publication of the provincial 13th Five-Year Plan. It is a positive relationship between man and nature, consistent with the Chinese government's view that green mountains and bright waters are wealth. In September 2016 the provincial leadership's 7th plenary session of the 11th committee made it clear that green development and ecological priority must be pursued in economic and social development. This requirement has been followed strictly in the projects of Big Poverty Alleviation, Big Data, Big Tourism, and Big Health for the purpose of building an energy-efficient, ecology-friendly society as well as the wealth and happiness of the general public.

Green Economy in Guizhou: From Notion to Action

In Guizhou green economy is not merely a measure of environmental management but also an institution for the coordination between economic development and resources conservation and environmental protection. Hence, the notion becomes a social practice for everyone here.

First, a thought of green economy has become a strategic planning.

From 1996 to 2000 (the 9th Five-Year Plan) the provincial government of Guizhou started to emphasize the importance of ecological construction, green economy, and environmental protection, and accordingly made some top-level designs. During the 10th Five-Year Plan sustainable development centered on ecology was written into strategic planning. The 11th and 12th Five-Year Plans further stressed the importance of green economy, sustainable development, and circulating economy in the forms of documents, orders, and specific measures.

Second, legal support for green economy in Guizhou.

The provincial government stresses the importance of legal support for green economy. By March 2015, 56 local laws and regulations have been legislated for environmental protection, which accounted for 20% of total local laws and regulations. Even now 36 of them are in effect. Cities and counties also emphasize environmental protection. Take Guiyang city for example. The city has passed 27 local laws and regulations for environmental protection and ecological construction, 20 of which are still in effect. In other counties 38 local laws and regulations have been legislated for the same purpose, 32 of which remain effective¹. These laws and regulations

¹ *Colorful Guizhou*. Website. June 12, 2015.

act as strong guarantee for green economy in Guizhou.

These laws and regulations concern the environmental protection of woodlands, lakes, waters, mines, farmlands, geology, and scenic spots. They are either basic laws or regulations covering many fields or specific ones concerning a spot, for example, Hongfeng Lake, a hot issue, for example, farmland or water transport management of Guiyang, and a public complaint, for example, water quality improvement of Baihua Lake of Guiyang or noise control in Guiyang. Efforts have also been made in the legislation of circulating economy, relevant to Guiyang city (Regulations Promoting the Circulating Economy of Guiyang City) and the monitoring of drinking water hygiene of Guizhou Province (Regulations Concerning the Monitoring and Management of the Drinking Water Quality of Guizhou Province). Similar laws and regulations have been made in terms of ecological construction and environmental protection, for instance, Regulations Concerning Energy Conservation and Energy Consumption Reduction of Guizhou Province.

Third, specific funds for energy conservation and pollution emission reduction. To facilitate green economy, specific funds for energy conservation and pollution emission reduction have been established. They have been used for corporate green development, industrial zone ecological enhancement, and the recycling of wastes. Over the past few years over 50 billion RMB has been in Guizhou (Li, Hu, & Wang, 2016).

Fourth, innovation in institutions and systems related to green economy. To promote green economy, the provincial government has formulated systems for performance evaluation, leadership auditing prior to departure and retirement, and ecological destruction accountability. Such documents as “Measures on the Evaluation of Performance of Leadership in Guizhou” have been exercised. Of the indexes, ecological construction accounts for 14% of the performance evaluation. Besides, those leaders who committed mistakes or crimes in ecological protection must be punished through legal means. In this way a better ecological environment has come into being.

Fifth, pilot projects of ecological civilization have been successful and now green civilization construction is being expanded. Since 2009, Guiyang, a city for pilot ecological projects on the second-batch list of China’s ecological civilization construction, has witnessed much progress in ecological civilization construction, green economy development, and environmental protection. Based on these pilot projects, technologies, policies, and experiences have been contributing to green economy and circulating economy throughout Guizhou Province.

Conclusion

In this paper we discussed the notion of green economy and other relevant ones. It can be found that green economy has benefited the people of Guizhou under the right leadership of the provincial government and with the concerted efforts of the leadership and the general public. It should be reiterated here that green economy centered on ecology will continue to serve as a guide for Guizhou’s social and economic development in the years to come.

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