

## **Pollution as Smokescreen: Pollution-induced Contention in Liushuwan Village of Zhejiang Province**

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In recent years China has witnessed an alarming rise in rural social unrest over concerns of industrial pollution. While pollution-related contention is stereotyped as “victims resist polluters”, this paper will present another type of contention prevailing in self-industrializing rural China where pollution is used as smokescreen for other rural conflicts by investigating a more than ten year long pollution-induced contention and its recent solution in Liushuwan village of Zhejiang Province. In places where villagers are running the factories themselves, either in the form of family operation or labor hiring, pollution is not seen as a foreign monster but part of their daily life. Usually what matters is not pollution per se, but the pre-existing political, economic and social cleavages in the local community. This paper will illustrate how the pollution was taken as inevitable by both villagers and government officials and how village factional politics dominated the contention and its resolution. The case of Liushuwan village will force us to reconsider the tendency to frame the discussion of contemporary Chinese protests in terms of rising rights consciousness. In the meanwhile, it also offers a new perspective to understand the implementation gap in China’s environmental laws and policies.