

ABSTRACT OF PHD PROJECT

“BECOMING A ‘DONOR’: NATIONAL ROLE CONCEPTION, REFORM DYNAMICS AND LEARNING IN CHINA'S FOREIGN AID SYSTEM”

The People's Republic of China¹ has emerged as one of the major development donors. Its rise has triggered a controversial debate within the predominantly Western development community about the implications of China's non-conditional aid and its frequent connectedness to trade and investment. In formal external statements the Chinese government objects to the critique underlining that China's aid is based on the lessons from its receiving and providing aid since the early 1950s, and its economic development. Yet internally, the criticism has prompted vivid debates about aid modes, need for reform, and the role(s) China should play in international development.

With my dissertation, I contribute to the relatively new research field of Chinese foreign aid by introducing aspects of Chinese development discourse and aid system dynamics that so far have remained largely neglected in the mainstream development debate. I argue that Chinese aid is undergoing a complex adaptation process from the “leading developing country” to a “responsible stakeholder” in global governance. It is not only shaped by international factors, but has to take into account contradictions within the governing elites, conflicting interests, and not the least the Chinese general public.

¹ In the following: China.