

Sabrina Weithmann

The Evolvement of Standards in China

Insights from the Electric Vehicle Sector



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Preface

Throughout China's economic rise since the economic reform and opening in 1978, China has faced various challenges resulting from established structures of the world economy. To engage in global trade, China has taken various efforts to accommodate its economic development within these structures, yet, not always in the best interest of established market leaders. This study investigates the evolvement of Chinese domestic standards that deviate from international standards. Hence, complexity theory is applied to provide a novel perspective on China's efforts in becoming an internationally respected standardization power and to furthermore shed new light on the debate surrounding China's standardization set-up and efforts. The detailed case study analysis, which is presented in the core of this research, picks up the example of the electric vehicle industry to illustrate the evolvement of processes that result in deviation of standards. Based on the findings, this study proposes that a country needs to pass three major phases in order to develop standards that support technology leadership – Adopt, deviate and set. This is further illustrated in the 'Three-Phase Standardization Development Concept'.

The research results are based on participatory observation and expert interviews conducted throughout several research stays in China between 2013 and 2015. As most interviewees asked for anonymity, this research applies a consistent codification system that discloses only the position, type of organization or company and the date, but not the names of the respective interviewees. In order to adhere to academic standards, a supplementary list with the decryption of coded information was given to those reviewing this study. Information gained throughout participatory observation has been used according to best judgment and anonymized where appropriate to protect sources. Moreover, the author's role during participatory research was strictly limited to observation and made clear to the interviewees at all times.

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