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Abstract

While the environmental movement in southern Taiwan exemplifies the recent worldwide trend of social movements with participants seeking local identity and autonomy in an increasingly global but deterritorialized world, it also has distinctive local characteristics derived from Taiwan's unique geo-political history. In Taiwan, environmental movements were an integral part of the larger process of democratization. In their effort to create a cleaner and greener environment, green activists in Kaohsiung, the second largest city in Taiwan, set up examples of citizen participation and assisted in establishing within the existing administrative framework formal mechanisms for public involvement. More crucially, via the language of ecological conservation, they helped to create a powerful political discourse that not only fundamentally challenged the central government's legitimacy, but also forced the country to rethink and refashion the foundation of Taiwan's national identity that, in turn, aided the efforts of environmental preservation. [urban development, environmentalism, social movement, civil society, Kaohsiung, Taiwan]

The rivers of Kaohsiung are dead. The color of the ocean is darkened. The sky is contaminated. The mountains are about to die. It is our responsibility to do this, to push forth the birth of the Wei-wu Park, to leave our offspring with a beautiful plot of land. We are here to strike the first blaze of the Southern Green Revolution. We will carry the torch of its spirit and, from Kaohsiung, ignite the fire to the whole country.

Writer and newspaper editor Wu Chin-fa, a founding member of Kaohsiung's Green Movement (Tseng 1996:179)¹

Introduction

Meant to be provocative, the term "Southern Green Revolution" was coined by Kaohsiung-based writer and newspaper editor Wu Chin-fa to refer to a stream of urban environmental activisms organized and executed primarily by middle-class professionals (including writers/journalists, educators, doctors, architects, and artists) in southern Taiwan since the early 1990s. Different from environmental movements in the 1980s that

tended to be victims' movements with short-term objectives—frequently seeking monetary compensations for existing injuries, sickness, or loss of people's property—and provided limited opportunities to challenge the dominant power structure, activists in the “Southern Green Revolution” engaged environmental and social issues. They carried broader goals for social transformation such as democracy, citizen participation in policy making, human rights, gender and ethnic equality, and environmental protection. They advocated alternative visions of development, and were devoted to limits to growth and quality of life (Hsiao, Milbrath and Weller 1995:101).

In the larger context, the Southern Green Revolution refers to a broad coalition of organizations and individuals in southern Taiwan that includes the cities and counties of Tainan, Kaohsiung and Pingtung. The concern of the movement is not limited to urban problems but includes regional issues such as the restoration of Kaoping River (Shie 2004; Tseng 2000) and the anti-dam movement in Meinung (Meinung People's Association 1994). In this article, however, I focus on the creation of urban parks in Kaohsiung City, the second largest city in Taiwan with a population of 1.5 million that is also the country's hub of heavy industry and a world-class port,² and examine the transformative effects that the Southern Green Revolution had on Kaohsiung and, further, how the change in Kaohsiung yielded a chain of impact on Taiwanese society.³ While the environmental movement was, first and foremost, intended to create a cleaner and greener environment amongst Kaohsiung's notorious industrial pollution, this article argues that it also belongs to the recent worldwide trend of social movements with participants seeking local identity and autonomy in an increasingly global but deterritorialized world (Nash 2005). Yet, Taiwan has its own predicament, derived from a unique geo-political history, that gives its social movements a local essence. In Taiwan where authoritarianism ruled political life into the late 1980s, environmentalism was never simply about the environment but also a close ally of the country's democratization movement (Ho 2003a; Lee and So 1999:303). Activists of the Southern Green Revolution not only set up examples of citizen participation but, further, assisted in establishing within the existing administrative framework formal mechanisms for public involvement (Hsiao, Chiang, Chi, Chu, Lin 2005:191–213). More crucially, via the language of ecological conservation, they helped to create a powerful political discourse that not only fundamentally challenged the central government's legitimacy, but also forced the country to rethink and refashion the foundation of Taiwan's national identity that, in turn, aided the efforts of environmental preservation.

Taiwan and global environmental movements

Castells (1996:377–428) postulates that a fundamental opposition emerged in the current process of globalization between two spatial logics: one about flows that organizes the simultaneity of social practices from afar by means of telecommunication and information systems and the other about places that privileges social interaction and institutional organization on the basis of physical continuity. While the former is taking precedence over the latter, a disjunction between the global and the local is created as a result. Local places gradually lost the ability to represent themselves as well as to govern their own affairs

to remote, unaccountable business interests, governments, or international governance bodies. In response, recent social movements, particularly environmental movements, in the world have placed emphasis on locality and on the control by people of their living spaces. Grassroots democracy is the political model in most of these movements (Castells 1997:124–125). Similarly, Nash (2005) emphasizes the growing autonomy sought by participants in recent social movements around the globe. In the current world order where homogeneity is increasingly demanded and necessitated, and differences are eliminated, cultural identity and expressions are resources of social mobilization in the sense that they “provide an ever-changing frame of reference that animate social movements and serve to validate the changes they institute or the revitalization of an imagined past without conflict” (Nash 2005:13). Subsequently, the claims for autonomy and the right to cultural diversity pose the ultimate challenge to the homogenizing world order (Nash 2005:10).

The environmental movement in Taiwan dovetails with the trends identified by both Castells (1997) and Nash (2005), but with distinct local characteristics. First appearing as a response to Taiwan’s worsening environmental problems due to the country’s ruthless industrialization, the environmental movement quickly joined forces with other social movements emerging since the early 1980s to challenge the Nationalist Party’s (Kuomintang [KMT]) authoritarian rule that based its legitimacy on a China-centered national ideology. The hesitation of the Taiwan government to suppress with coercive means many of these movements (including the environmental movement) gave rise to an array of collective action repertoires that helped to create a “public sphere” which “political dissidents and social activists could utilize to facilitate the reorganization of political structures” (Hsiao 1999:41; also Tang 2003; Tang and Tang 1997; 1999). Taiwanese sociologist Hsinhuang Michael Hsiao (1999:41) points out that the significance of Taiwan’s environmental movement rested on its omnipresence and direct impact on local politics. This is particularly meaningful given that the KMT as a political party did not simply control the political life of the Taiwanese but, through political maneuvering, it also acted as a major player and investor in especially upstream industries of a monopolized nature such as petrochemicals. The Taiwan state capital and the KMT party capital were often one and the same or, at least, interchangeable under this circumstance (Wang 1995). The term “party-state capitalism” was coined to depict this particular mode of capital accumulation (Wang 1993). The locally motivated, self-organized environmental protests, with demands of localized decision-making and resource redistribution, thus had the potential to affect both of Taiwan’s political structure and economic system (Tung 2006:6).

Along with the call for political democratization came discussions about Taiwan’s national status and cultural heritage (H. Lü 2002). Ideologically, many of the social movements in Taiwan since the 1980s had a strong emphasis on local culture and history. This was in part a result of the political opening that made permissible a conceptualization of a nationscape based on the land actually inhabited by the population of Taiwan and governed by the national government on Taiwan instead of based on an imagined, KMT-propagated, unified China. This was particularly important to Taiwanese-independence advocates seeking cultural legitimacy for an independent nation. Local historical research, in this political

context, was a manifestation of cultural resistance against the KMT regime (H. Lü 2002:52). Political-nationalist significance aside, I would argue that an emphasis on local history and culture had a direct bearing on the outcome of Taiwan's environment movements. It has been widely recognized that "the success of environmentalism as a social movement depends largely on activists' ability to frame environmental issues symbolically, and to deploy representations of nature and society in order to persuade policy makers and other citizens to support their cause" (Harper 2005:222). This is especially crucial in Taiwan where, similar to the situations in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe wherein the authoritarian communist governments had a tight (if not total) control over the resources of the country, autonomous collective activities outside the realm of the state were not easy to achieve (Pickvance 1998; Yanitsky 1999). Effective social mobilization—or the lack thereof—under this circumstance was thus closely related to the presence of identity-based strategies (Dawson 1996). In both cases a linkage was made between environmentalism and national identity, only that in the former Soviet Union and many of the Eastern European countries the target or enemy was the imperial center of Russia (Dawson 1996; Tickle and Welsh 1998) and, later, a capitalist West gone wild (Harper 2005). Yet in Taiwan it was the Chinese Nationalist other represented by the central government located in the capital city of Taipei in northern Taiwan (Hou 1999; Reardon-Anderson 1997).

Kaohsiung: The geography of moral legitimacy

The development of Kaohsiung as an industrial center began with the Japanese who perceived Taiwan as a colony of high economic and military value in the expanding Japanese empire. While Kaohsiung has the advantage of a natural harbor, the Japanese saw it first as a first-class fishing and commercial port as well as a manufacturing center and later, especially after the onset of the Pacific War in 1941, an important military base for the empire's southward advancement. The Japanese worked out detailed plans to transform Kaohsiung into a modern city. They built the harbor, constructed roads and railways to connect Kaohsiung with the surrounding regions and the rest of the island, set up modern amenities of electricity and running water, and established the gridiron of streets (Chang 1995:177–237; Cheng and Wei 2001). By the early 1930s, they also built up industrial infrastructure including steel plants and oil refineries.

These construction efforts were of great significance. Equipped with the port facilities and other infrastructure from the Japanese years, Kaohsiung quickly developed into a manufacturing center, and its status was becoming increasingly important corresponding to Taiwan's rapid, though harsh, industrialization, in the post-World War II era (Chang 1995:177–237). In addition to container logistic centers, steel plants, shipyards, ship-breaking, scrap metal, and cement (both mining and processing) industries, when the Taiwan government decided to speed up its own petrochemical industry after the oil crises in the 1970s, Kaohsiung was chosen to be the site for this industry. As a matter of fact, the first naphtha cracker plant was constructed in the Kaohsiung port area in 1968, followed by a second one in 1971 (Hsu and Cheng 2002:902).⁴ In addition, Kaohsiung City is surrounded by industrial zones.⁵ In the early 1990s, there were approximately 6000 registered industrial

plants in Kaohsiung, with an average of 60 to 80 firms per square kilometer, a number far higher than the average of five to ten factories elsewhere in Taiwan. Most of these factories are highly polluting, and also quickly depleted local water and other resources due to the nature of their production. Especially the petrochemical industry requires a huge supply of clean water in the manufacturing process. Amid these industries, 40 chemical hazards were detected during the 1980s. The health of Kaohsiung City residents had been greatly compromised. Dr. Tseng Kui-hai, one of the founding members of Kaohsiung's green movement and a respected chest specialist, further attested that cancer had become the No. 1 cause of death in Kaohsiung City since 1980, two years earlier than the rest of the country. This confirmed local activists' fears that Kaohsiung was not only the "Mecca" of pollution, but had also become a 'haven' of cancer (Tseng 1996:183–184).

Furthermore, among the 16,300 acres of land designated as the vicinity of Kaohsiung City that should come under the jurisdiction of the Kaohsiung City government, only less than 7,000 acres are actually in the city government's charge. Aside from the various export processing zones and industrial parks overseen by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Kaohsiung has several military bases that are controlled by the Ministry of National Defense. Most of the harbor area is under the direct management of the Kaohsiung Harbor Bureau of the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, which was only gradually returned to Kaohsiung City in the early 2000s (K'ung-chien 2002:44).⁶ Despite the fact that Kaohsiung was primarily known as a harbor city, the majority of the city's residents, until recently, were never allowed to set foot near the water. All of these matters are somehow rooted in the Japanese colonial legacy when Kaohsiung was built to be a fishing/commercial/industrial/military port according to the Japanese empire's blue print. As a result, neither the Kaohsiung City government nor the city's residents have full control over the destiny of their own city.

Taiwan is well known for its highly decentralized industrial system, with firms and factories spreading to almost all corners of the country (Hsiung 1996; Hu 1984; A. Lee 2004; Shieh 1992). Accordingly, Taiwan's environmental movements are of a ubiquitous nature. Especially, anti-pollution protests were never limited to certain locations (Hsiao 1999:41). This does not mean, however, that environmental degradation is of the same enormity everywhere, or affects individual well-being in equal manners; neither does it mean that the environmental degradation is experienced or understood by people in different locales in the same way. Hsu and Cheng (2002) identified three distinct regional economies in Taiwan's postwar industrialization, each with its own interactive pattern of industrial organization, state policy, market operation, and popular action by local population and civic associations: labor-intensive industries in central Taiwan in the early export-oriented stage in the 1960s; basic, capital-intensive industries in southern Taiwan, especially around the Kaohsiung area, in the import-substitution period in the 1970s; and the high-tech semiconductor industry in northern Taiwan, centered on the Hsinchu Science Park, during the industrial upgrading in the 1980s. In the case of Kaohsiung, the state played a crucial role in fostering the petrochemical industry, initially by directly using public funds to build the first few naphtha refineries and other necessary infrastructure and later by setting up regulatory mechanisms to reduce transaction costs and market uncertainties in order to encourage private capital investment

(Hsu and Cheng 2002:903).

Under authoritarianism, without much social resistance, the polluting petrochemical and other related industries were developed in southern Taiwan, geographically distant from the political center of Taipei (Hsu and Cheng 2002:903). What is more, through granting special permissions to only a handful of private enterprises (most of which with a KMT-affiliation) to operate in the petrochemical and other heavy industries, the government not only gave a small group of companies a monopoly in many upstream industrial products, but also created close ties with a few individuals (in Kaohsiung or elsewhere) who have garnered huge profits from Kaohsiung yet have little regard for the city (Hsiao, Chiang, Chi, Chu and Lin 2005:191; Wang 1995). Furthermore, due to Taiwan's tax structure, the profits of these companies were taxed by the local government at their headquarters (i.e. Taipei) but not where the production actually took place (i.e. Kaohsiung). As a result, it was the Taipei City government and the residents of Taipei who were enjoying the fruits of these industrial endeavors, whereas the Kaohsiung City government and the people of Kaohsiung had to bear the consequences of environmental and health degradation, and the lack of city funds for public investment and social development.

Environmental activism as citizen movement

Given the differential economic policies, Kaohsiung City residents deeply felt that they were considered as secondary citizens, and their welfare was overlooked, by the central government. Environmental activists in Kaohsiung, however, did not merely reiterate the indignation felt by the residents in their city but epitomized through environmental and health costs the consequences borne by the city residents for the decisions made by policy makers in Taipei and the South-North inequality embedded in these decisions. Some of the activists also articulated the problems faced by Kaohsiung as a calamity fundamental to the capitalist mode of production. Borrowing the words of one of the activists well versed in Marxist analyses, the policy makers of the central government in Taipei treated Kaohsiung primarily as a "productive machine for the accumulation of the nation's capital" (Chung 1996:34). They were simply unsympathetic to the lives of Kaohsiung residents. Little thought was given to the public interests of the city. As a result, Kaohsiung was in urgent need of green space and cultural facilities, a citywide public sewer system, and more educational resources. Kaohsiung needed a better plan for urban development and zoning regulations needed to be more clearly addressed to the public.

With these concerns in mind, the green activists in Kaohsiung embarked on two natural park movements, to push for the Takao Hill and Wei-wu Parks on former military land. The activists pressured the Kaohsiung City and County governments with a forceful discourse based on deeply felt local history and identity. They also attempted to sustain their accomplishment through citizen mobilization and participation. Ultimately, they sought to change the political structure by pushing to be a formal part of the policy-making body, thereby localizing the processes of decision-making and resource distribution.

The Takao Hill Natural Park movement: Initiating “public involvement”

I am just a simple truck driver, and I can't talk big theories. [To answer your question of] why I became a Takao Hill volunteer tour guide, once I was driving a group of Japanese tourists to see the divine trees in the Southern Cross-island Expressway region, and saw some of the older men and women in the group bowing to the trees with reverence. I asked them why. They told me that it was already a rare accomplishment for any human being to grow old into the age of seventies: “But look at these trees! They have lived for hundreds or thousands of years. [They deserve our deepest respect.]”

Mr. Lu K'un-ming, one of the earliest ecological tour guides of the Takao Hill Association for Natural Park (T'u 1993:8)

The environmental conservation movement in Taiwan has to be a self-initiated awakening process of the people. It will no doubt be slow and gradual. But only through such a process can the people's will be consolidated, a public consensus be reached, and the strength of resistance against suffering, exploitation, abuse, and injustice be accomplished. We demand that the power holders return the rights and dignity to the rightful people, and, by doing so, return the future to the land.

Writer Wang Chia-hsiang, a founding member of Kaohsiung's Green Movement (Wang 1993:269–270)

The Takao Hill (or Ch'ai-shan [Ch'ai Mountain]) Natural Park Movement started as a rescue operation to save Ch'ai-shan from over-mining by the cement industry, zealous real estate development by special interest groups, and a sudden and rapid increase of tourists. Located on the northwestern fringe of Kaohsiung City overlooking the Taiwan Strait, Takao Hill was designated by the Japanese military in 1907 as a “peace preservation forest,” a protected woodland that banned the entry of ordinary people. Takao Hill continued to be a strategic site for defense and remained under the charge of the Taiwanese military in the postwar era. Only in the early 1990s, after the lift of martial law, did the military begin to relent its control to the civilian authority and gradually open the mountain to the public. Paradoxically, the nearly century-long exclusion of the general populace also protected Takao Hill from Kaohsiung's ardent industrial development in the past few decades. Towards the end of the twentieth century, Takao Hill was a rare wilderness and natural wonderland in urban Taiwan. In addition to a diverse ecosystem with native fauna and flora, Takao Hill was also home to groups of wild Formosan Rock Macaques, the only nonhuman primate species (*Macaca cyclopis*) indigenous to the island who was frequently referred to by the Taiwanese as their “national treasure” yet whose natural habitat had been greatly reduced by human settlements.

The newly granted access to Takao Hill, however, quickly drew a large influx of hikers and visitors, often beyond the capacity of the mountain. Many of them left garbage behind and took plants and herbs away with them. Some even poached the monkeys (T'u 1993:54–67). Also, due to the early confusion about the jurisdiction over the mountain that involved many as well as different levels of government agencies, Takao Hill seemed to fall into a state of anarchy which, in turn, made the appropriation of public land for private use and profits permissible. Soon enough assorted restaurants began to appear along the ridge of the mountain, followed by a cluster of villa-type abodes, with some of the best views overlooking Taiwan's western coastline. On a smaller scale, some regular hikers built resting spots, placing benches and planting strips of flowers of their liking alongside the hiking trails (T'u 1993:68–75). A few of these flowers were invasive imported species and killed some Takao Hill's indigenous plants (Ch'en 2006). Local environmental activists were also concerned about the fact that the limestone mining rights of the Taiwan Cement Corporation in the adjacent Shou-shan (Shou Mountain) was to be terminated at the end of 1992 and, as a result, the company had been speeding up the mining operation that was pushing too close to the edge of Takao Hill that shared the same geological makeup as Shou-shan (T'u 1993:54–67). It seemed that, after the termination of the mining rights, Taiwan Cement was planning on developing commercial as well as residential properties on the abandoned mining district. This would likely trigger a new wave of real estate development at the base of Takao Hill. The needs of an enlarged population would place more burdens on Takao Hill's already fragile ecosystem (Wang 1997). Under these circumstances, the grassroots Takao Hill Association for Natural Park (THA) was formed in May 1992, with a clear objective: to push for a natural park status for the newly opened Takao Hill region so that there would be a clear legal framework as well as government support for its conservation.

Before the formation of the THA, quite a few regular Takao Hill mountain climbers, mostly middle-aged or retired, had on an individual basis picked up the garbage left behind by casual hikers, kept an eye on the monkeys and protected them from poaching or friendly intrusion, and carried pots of tea or water, placed them along the hiking trails, and served them to thirsty visitors (Wang 1993:23). They also helped to dissuade ill-disciplined tourists from conducting damaging behaviors. Quietly, these daily volunteers assisted in the preservation of Takao Hill and set up a precedent for public involvement.

The initiators of the THA marveled at the volunteers' spontaneity and, against the backdrop of Taiwan's silenced political culture after the KMT's half century-long authoritarian rule, called for Kaohsiung City residents to follow the example of these volunteers and bring forth the spirit of civilian self-rule. In contrast to previous environmental protests whose goals tended to focus on instant retribution, Kaohsiung's green activists saw the Natural Park movement as a long-term campaign. The idea of a "natural park" was primarily to introduce the least human intervention, thereby allowing Takao Hill's indigenous vegetation to grow and prosper on its own course; it also involved educating tourists so that they could be informed and join the force of conservation (Wang 1993:25). Ultimately, the goal was to instill among residents of Kaohsiung an awareness of the relationship between

the city's history and its natural habitat, which the green activists hoped would blossom into a local, "nativistic" cultural consciousness powerful enough to not only oversee the city's own public affairs but also serve as the most solid political support for Kaohsiung to challenge the discriminatory policy of the central government in Taipei (Wang 1993:270).

Takao Hill finally became a natural park in 1998. The road to success was not easy. The park's legal status has not fended off every special interest group or individual transgressor who has an eye on the mountain's land and natural resources. Activists of the THA and its many allies continue to have to fight for the government's support as well as to raise the public's awareness.⁷ Over the years, however, the THA and, later, its successor the Takao Hill Park Association⁸ did succeed in training a troop of ecological tour guides-volunteers, developing outreach programs for local schools and universities, and expanding the support of especially residents of Takao Hill's neighboring communities. Starting from 2001 the Takao Hill Park Association managed to secure financial and human resources to organize an annual one month-long Ch'ai-shan Festival, each year with activities centering on a plant or animal species significant to the ecosystem of Takao Hill. Through all these efforts, "natural park" is no longer an alien concept but has become part of the daily vocabulary that requires the attention of both Kaohsiung City residents and the city government.

The Wei-wu Park movement: Building an "ecological city"

If the Takao Hill Natural Park Movement built its success on raising public awareness and enticing Kaohsiung residents in the actual practice of environmental conservation, the Wei-wu Park Movement focused its battle primarily on government agencies and public (especially elected) officials, and strived to achieve its goal by face-to-face dialogue and persuasion (Hsiao, Chiang, Chi, Chu and Lin 2005:209–210; Lü 2004).⁹ Ideologically, activists of the Wei-wu Park Movement, many of them also active THA members, also helped to advance a South-based ecological-cum-political discourse.¹⁰

Similar to Takao Hill's military status, Camp Wei-wu was an army barrack during the Japanese period while still a marsh area on the fringe of Kaohsiung City. After World War II Camp Wei-wu continued to serve as a military training center, until 1979 when it was deemed by the government as no longer fit for its original purpose. This opened the opportunity for debate about the redevelopment of the 67 acres of land that is now a parcel of valuable urban property in the center of metropolitan Kaohsiung. As a result, various proposals were offered by the local governments in southern Taiwan, elected officials at all levels, business groups, scholars and urban planners, ranging from using the land for public housing, commercial real estate, a trade center, a new Kaohsiung city government office complex, to a university. However, the Ministries of National Defense and of the Interior, the two central government agencies overseeing Camp Wei-wu, insisted on using the land to construct military family housing (Hsieh 1997; Yeh 2005). The argument went on for years.

Amid these wrangles the Wei-wu Park Promotion Association (WPPA) was founded in

March 1992, advocating the establishment of a natural park on the site of Camp Wei-wu. The task of the WPPA, however, was different from that of the THA. While Takao Hill had been a secluded forest in need of conservation, Camp Weiwu was virtually a man-made environment after nearly a century of active military service. To establish a natural park on Camp Wei-wu meant to create a natural habitat almost from scratch. Yet, this shortage also became a powerful rally point. In August 1994 at a WPPA-organized public hearing on the planning of the Wei-wu park, Wu Chin-fa, then a chief editor of the *Commons Daily*, a major local newspaper, voiced the ultimate concern of Kaohsiung's green activists:

“We don't want just any park. What we want is a park with a southern perspective. The flora planted in the park has to be an integral part of the southern ecosystem, and the plants have to be original to Kaohsiung so that we can breed them locally and not import them from elsewhere. The central government in Taipei has always imposed the knowledge and worldview developed in the north on other parts of Taiwan. But we say no more” (K'ung-chien 1994).

Local folklorist and conservationist Hung T'ien-chun continued to elaborate at the public hearing:

“To recreate a natural habitat with Camp Wei-wu-based ecological characteristics, we urge that the Construction and Planning Commission [responsible for the park construction] contact the Endemic Species Research Institute and the Taiwan Forestry Research Institute in order to establish a seedling of native species... Given that Camp Wei-wu used to be a marsh, we should also recreate a wetland environment, so that the park can, once again, attract fireflies, geese, ducks, and Pheasant-tailed Jacanas that are indigenous to Taiwan... Also, there used to be many Sika Deer [a Taiwan-only species] in the earlier history of Formosa [that we should bring back]... Only by restoring the park to its original state, can we rebuild an ecosystem with a rich diversity that is truly Taiwanese and can we call this a worthy project” (K'ung-chien 1994).

Clearly articulated in the words of these southern environmental activists was the idea that the locally motivated, grassroots conservation movement was, and should be, an extension of the larger struggle to awaken a native cultural consciousness rooted in Taiwan (Wang 1993:267).

Through the WPPA's tireless efforts of lobbying, public relations building, information dissemination, and public hearings and other events—most of which were new and rare up to this point in Taiwan's local self-governance—in 1993 the central government agreed that the vacant land of Camp Wei-wu should be reserved for park use. However, the battle was far from over. Owing to the limited fiscal resources particularly at the local government level, the Wei-wu Park remained a plan on paper (Hsieh 1997). The WPPA, along with other local activist groups, continuously fought administrative foot dragging and pushed hard for the realization of the park plan, at times with great frustration (T. Lü 2004). In 1998 Frank Hsieh of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) became the elected mayor of

Kaohsiung. In 2000 Chen Shui-bian, also of DPP, ran on a South-based, Taiwan-centered campaign platform and won the presidential election which ended more than fifty years of the KMT rule on Taiwan and marked the first time in history an opposition candidate took over power democratically in a Chinese state. These changes brought about substantial allocation of government funding to the Wei-wu Park construction and other public projects in Kaohsiung and elsewhere in southern Taiwan.

Transformation in Kaohsiung

So often we talk to our kids about the love to our native land. After a while, the talk simply becomes a sham, since we never teach them anything about the place they actually live. I am not opposed to teaching Yellow River, Yangtze River, in school. But before teaching our children Yellow River or Yangtze River, shouldn't we tell them about our own Takao Hill and Ai River? They shouldn't be just feeling happy from visiting the monkeys. There is so much more that we could teach them. There is this rich history and culture that they should know.

*Writer and newspaper editor
Wu Chin-fa (Wu 1993:39)¹¹*

In a discussion of the relationship between urban public space and the public sphere, Harvey (2006) cautions against premature optimism over the existence of the former as an evidence of the latter. Given that cities around the globe are increasingly entrenched in an unstable economic environment characterized by transnational capital that is highly mobile and speculative, they are forced to engage in fierce rivalry, taking on strategies such as place-making, to secure jobs and investment (Brenner and Theodore 2002:367; Smith 2002). The appearance of public space, therefore, may be more a result of inter-urban competition rather than a sign of the public sphere (cf. Harvey 1989:12; Peck and Tickell 2002:393). As such, “[c]ontestation over the construction, meaning, and organization of public space only takes effect... When it succeeds in exercising a transformative influence over private and commercial [or other institutional] spaces” (Harvey 2006:32). The current development in Kaohsiung seems to attest to Harvey’s warning, as there is no denial that the recent change in Kaohsiung’s urban landscape was also a process of assets transformation and reuse (Kaohsiung City Bureau of Public Works 2002; K’ung-chien 2002). Charles Lin, Director-General of Kaohsiung City Bureau of Public Works, noted in a 2002 magazine interview that urban redevelopment, including the creation of green space like parks and recreational waterfronts, was a strategy sought actively by the Kaohsiung City government in its attempt to revitalize the city’s economy after it was hard hit by Taiwan’s recent economic restructuring (mainly deindustrialization) (Dialogue 2002; A. Lee 2004; Lin 2003; Wang 2004). This may have explained the city government’s willingness to cooperate with local activist groups in recent years. As a result of urban renewal, property values around places like Takao Hill or Camp Wei-wu have risen, thereby enriching a few home owners and real estate developers (Hsiao, Chiang, Chi, Chu and Lin 2005).

Nonetheless, I would argue that the environmental activists' efforts transformed the city and had a large impact on other parts of Taiwan, especially the south. This is not because they succeeded in overhauling the logic of capital. Rather, by grounding their campaigns and vindications on Taiwan's historical-spatial inequality, they managed to upset the dominant political ideology, which, in turn, provided a conduit to a participatory practice in the governance of everyday decisions whose effect could be gradually felt by ordinary citizens (cf. Nash 2005:13). One might argue, however, that this achievement was at least aided by—if not exactly a part of—the Taiwan government's concerted effort of community-building as a means to deepen Taiwan's democracy as well as to forge a consensus on Taiwanese (national) identity (H. Lü 2002; Tung 2006:197–198). Specifically, the southern green activists might have benefited both financially and administratively from the Integrated Community-Making Program, a state-sponsored community development project enacted by the Council of Cultural Affairs in 1994 that urged local governments to incorporate into their public policy grassroots initiatives and channeled funds directly to support locally instigated cultural activities (cf. Chuang 2005). In other words, critically speaking, the Southern Green Revolution was not a citizen movement completely independent from the state. Yet, given the lack of material resources in the non-governmental sector primarily due to the state's authoritarian rule until recently, grassroots activists or organizations were constantly forced to solicit funding from the government.¹² In spite of this financial predicament, the initiatives of social reform still had to come from the grassroots activists themselves. Furthermore, their endeavor was followed by activist groups and municipal governments elsewhere, and popularized particularly in southern Taiwan, as a model of urban redevelopment. Together, this trend helped to create a public forum where a locally based, Taiwan-centered discourse was made powerful enough to influence the election results at both the local and central levels, which further engendered the possibility of alternative visions about the future that were different from past state projects.

On the experiential level, Kaohsiung residents quickly noticed changes in their city's landscape. It is apparent from my field research that many are genuinely pleased with the increase of green, open spaces and the growing number of free cultural, performance activities taking place on these spaces. Now they have more things to do and more places to go, either for day trips or simply to have a morning outdoor exercise before going to work or to take a stroll in the neighborhood. As an indication of the citizens' appreciation, Mayor Frank Hsieh's approval rating was 78 % in 2004, after six years on the job, rising from 12.6 % in 2000, the second year into his tenure (China Post 2000; Huang 2004). It also becomes clear from the many conversations I had in Kaohsiung that residents now take great pride in their city. I was often told how nowadays one could invite friends to visit Kaohsiung with confidence because there were many places to take them, whereas in earlier years one was hesitant even if a friend offered to come to Kaohsiung voluntarily. Many taxi drivers testified to the surging number of tourists. Lately, changes in Kaohsiung also caught the attention of national media (all based in Taipei). A 2004 survey in *Global Views*, a leading Taiwanese monthly business magazine, named Kaohsiung Taiwan's second most attractive city, and placed it the fifth among Taiwanese cities with distinctive architecture (Ts'ai 2004). Kaohsiung is no longer that cultural desert with only smokestacks and cargo

ships.

With surging self-confidence comes a renewed identity to the city. How this new identity was taken by many as the first step to make a better life became evident during the course of my research. Only when one identified with—and loved—one’s own city, I was often told, could one begin to commit to the city’s cause of building a better future. The awakening of this communal spirit is essential to the ongoing success of Kaohsiung’s green activists. While the activists succeeded in taking part in the Kaohsiung Urban Planning Commission, and pushed the Kaohsiung City government to establish a “Community Architect System” in 2002 to localize community development decisions,¹³ they relied on the continual support and mobilization of Kaohsiung City residents to exert pressure on the government. Grassroots democracy is a process of mutual reinforcement.

The most significant impact of Kaohsiung’s green movement, however, remains its creation of a powerful rhetoric that resonated with the discontent of the larger Taiwanese society especially in the south. Environmental movements had always been an integral part of the democratization movement, which, in essence, was to de-legitimize the KMT rule on which Taiwan’s infamous party-state capitalism was founded and many of the environmentally destructive industrial policies were formulated (Tu n.d.). The local challenge to the KMT domination through elections was well underway in the 1980s. It was in part within this context that the “Southern Green Revolution” discourse was able to emerge. Yet, the call for a “Southern Green Revolution” also provided a focal point around which further political mobilization could rally. I would argue that the environmental activists’ efforts helped to consolidate the local sentiment that ultimately led to the victory of Chen Shui-bian in the 2000 presidential election and the change in political regime in Taiwan (Chen won the reelection in 2004). This in turn considerably reinforced the significance of local governance and made the break-up of the party-state capitalism possible.¹⁴

Conclusion

In the past few decades, two important and complementary—but at times competing—models have emerged that give insight to the question of social mobilization (Dawson 1996:10). On the one hand, resource mobilizational theories focus on how, structurally, the access to mobilizational resources and the availability of mobilizational opportunities shape the patterns of mobilization. On the other hand, identity-based approaches emphasize the role of culture, ideas, and group identity in explaining the rise and process of social mobilization. Recent research on Taiwan’s environmental movements (e.g., Ho 2003b; 2004; 2005a 2005b; T. Lü 2004; Sie 2004) tended to adopt the former approach and focused on the question of political alliance (or the lack thereof) between political parties, government officials, and environmental/social activists. The issue at stake was whether a civil society could emerge in Taiwan and how we could understand its nature given the country’s young and burgeoning democracy and the grassroots organizations’ continuous reliance on government resources, which bears a broader significance to the understanding of social activism particularly in contemporary post-authoritarian countries.

This article, however, chooses to emphasize the second approach and, through the creation of urban parks in Kaohsiung, examines the role that national/cultural identity played in the success of a social movement.

The environmental movement in Kaohsiung exemplifies the recent worldwide trend of social movements with participants seeking local identity and autonomy in an increasingly global but deterritorialized world (Castells 1996; 1997; Nash 2005) but with distinct local characteristics. After more than a decade of effort, Kaohsiung's green activists not only set examples of citizen participation but, further, assisted in establishing within the existing administrative framework formal mechanisms for public involvement. Their example is now followed by activist groups and municipal governments elsewhere, and popularized particularly in southern Taiwan, as a model of urban redevelopment. More crucially, via the language of ecological conversation, they helped to create a powerful political discourse that not only fundamentally challenged the central government's legitimacy, but also forced the country to rethink and refashion the foundation of Taiwan's national identity that, in turn, aided the efforts of environmental preservation.

Notes

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¹All translations in the following are mine.

²The population of the Greater Kaohsiung area, however, is around 2.75 million. In comparison, Taipei, the largest city and capital of Taiwan, has approximately 2.6 million residents; the population of metropolitan Taipei amounts to 6.5 million. The total population of Taiwan, (September 2004), was about 22 million, and the population density was 626 persons per square kilometer. The size of the country is 36,179 square kilometers (Government Information Office [GIO] 2006).

³This paper is a part of the larger project in which I examine urban development in Taipei and Kaohsiung in the context of current global economic competition and local/national political contention. In addition to secondary data such as media and environmental movement accounts, for this paper, I interviewed key figures in Kaohsiung's environmental groups including the Takao Green Association for Ecology and Human Studies, the Takao Hill Association for Natural Park, the Takao Hill Park Association, Wetlands Taiwan, and the Alliance of Kao-Pin River Restoration. Some of these individuals were directly involved in the Southern Green Revolution, although they are no longer active in the present environmental movement. They provided me with their personal experience and insights. Others were too junior in the early 1990s to play a principal role in the Southern Green

Revolution, but have since then become major actors in the environmental and other social movements in southern Taiwan. Because of their current activism, they were able to evaluate the effect of the Southern Green Revolution on the present state of social movements in southern Taiwan.

⁴A naphtha cracker plant is usually large and highly polluting; it refines oil products into precursors of plastics, perhaps the most important industrial product in Taiwan's economy until recently.

⁵The Jen-wu Ta-she Industrial Park is located in the northeast of Kaohsiung City, the Tainan scrap metal industrial park is in the north, the Lin-yuan Petrochemical Industrial Park is in the south, and the Niaosung Industrial Park (with a concentration of leather-tanning factories) is in the east.

⁶The Ministries of Economic Affairs, National Defense, and Transportation and Communications are all central government agencies that answer to the prime minister of the Executive Yuan.

⁷For example, see the website of the Ecological Education Center of the Kaohsiung City Teachers' Association (<http://eec.kta.org.tw>) and the homepage of the Takao Hill Park Association (http://home.kimo.com.tw/tha_home).

⁸The Takao Hill Park Association was founded in March 2001 by THA activists. The THA was essentially dissolved, or transformed into this new organization. The Takao Hill Park Association is an officially registered nonprofit organization, as opposed to the earlier THA that was a spontaneous civil group. The change in name reflects the new priority and direction now that Takao Hill has become a natural park. The official non-profit status of the renewed Takao Hill Park Association also reflects the new relationship between the Taiwan government and the civil society in the new millennium, which is no longer hostile but at times cooperative.

⁹For a personal account of the early struggle of the Wei-wu Park Movement, see Tseng (1996:170–211).

¹⁰This is best illustrated by the essays in Takao Green Association for Ecology and Human Studies (1996).

¹¹Yantze River and Yellow River are the longest and the second longest rivers, respectively, on Mainland China. Ai River, on the other hand, flows through the center of Kaohsiung City.

¹²The question of whether it was possible for an NGO to maintain its independent status if it had accepted money from the government merits more investigation.

¹³Established in 2002, the "Community Architect System" was founded to encourage Kaohsiung City based architects to work with local communities in order to help improve the community environment. It encourages officials of the Kaohsiung City government, architects, local community residents, and construction firms to pool together their ideas in the design and execution of any public works projects. Director-General Charles Lin called this a "process of common consciousness development and a learning opportunity for the whole society" (Dialogue 2002).

¹⁴Chen Shui-bian relied heavily on votes in southern counties and cities, particularly where the "Southern Green Revolution" originated, for his victory in both the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections (see the map of voting results by county in <http://www.answers.com/ROC%20presidential%20election%2C%202000> and

<http://www.answers.com/topic/rocpresidential-election-2004>).

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