Building a New Society on the Base of Locality --
Transformation of social forces in Taiwan of 1990s

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Abstract

The movement of “Community Construction” succeeded the precedent social movements which emerged in the 1980s, and has been evolved into a phenomenon complex which interweaved social movements and public policies in the mid 1990s. The process of local culture movement moving to the “Community Construction” also reflects the emergence and transformation of social forces from 1980s.

Social forces bore its embryo in 1970s and emerged in 1980s. In the early 1980s, social forces were represented through the collective action of self-defense. Since mid 1980s, its have evolved into social movement with a more deliberate organization. In the 1990s, the “localization of social forces” marked a new transformation. This change was deepened by the orientation of the Community Construction policy and turned into the direction of communalization.

Community Construction movement has attracted the engagement of activists from different sectors. Different social sectors have been involved in this social engineering for constructing their homeland into a better society. Five ideal-types about a good society thus have been constructed. First, “indigenous society” hopes to reconstruct a society which cherish its local history and traditional culture. Second, “traditional civilized society” want to build a local society in which habitants live with solidarity and civility. Third, “modern civilized society” wants to elevate the cultural quality of habitant. Fourth, “civil society” emphasizes the importance of grassroots democracy and local subjectivity in order to respond to exterior forces of capitalist development. Fifth, “civic society” aims to construct communities at different geographic scales, in which people of different backgrounds can live together and integrate into a civic nation.
In summary, the localization of social forces has been formed in the 1990s. Communalization was the deepen development of localization. The common axe of these two stages is the reconstruction of the relationship between people and land. Nevertheless, while the former stage emphasized the reconstruction of local culture, the latter stage turned into the formation of community consciousness. On the stage of local movement, it employs reconstruction of local culture as a mean to social reform, the focus was society imagination. In contrast; on the stage of Community Construction, the focus has been shifted to the community imagination by which local identity and national identity was linked. Locality became the fundamental element for defining “culture” and “community”, it’s the essential implication of “rediscovering the locality”.

Key words: localization, social force, social movement, Community Construction, civil society, civic society