I. Introduction

This paper attempts to explore the changing relationship between the state and civil society in Taiwan by using women’s movement as a case study. My major empirical interest is in analyzing the apparent shift of feminist advocacy organizations from social movement into NGOs forming partnerships with the state to deliver service. The empirical phenomenon will be situated in a theoretical framework of the state.

I will begin with a discussion of the changing nature of the state. In conventional perception the state was regarded as a centralized, unified entity with constitutional sovereignty of parliament and the core executive. In recent decades, the state has been described as networks of policy comprised of various actors across different sectors. The increasing participation from civil society actors in public policy has been lauded as enhancement of democracy. On the other hand, the diminution of direct state influence is described as ‘hollowing out’ of the state; and the state as networks of multifarious actors is also described as ‘fragmentation of the state.’ In this paper, I echo the concept of the state as networks or intersection among various sectors. However, I will argue that as policy networks proliferate, the state has the ability to set up the rules and environment under which these networks operate. Parallel to the so-called fragmentation of the state, various strands of civil society have segmented and professionalized, each of them being sutured into a particular set of networks.

Readers of this paper may find out that women have disappeared in this paper, and even civil society barely exists. That is exactly the empirical and theoretical point I want to raise. When gender mainstreaming policy was introduced in recent years, administrative and procedural issues such as accountability format, performance indicators, budget analysis, statistics predominate policy-making regarding women’s rights. In the meantime, coalition among different social movement such as gender, environment, labor, human rights, which was active in the 1980s and 1990s, barely existed since 2000. This is a paradox that as partnership between civil society and government was advocated and put into practice, proliferation and expansion of
policy networks absorb social forces, with the result that civil society as a whole seemed to disappear. In section II below I will start with theoretical introduction of the changing nature of the state and its relationship with civil society. Section III will present an outline of the relationship between the state and women’s organizations in different historical phases. Section IV will discuss gender mainstreaming policy that is the current framework of gender policy in Taiwan.

II. Governance, Governmentality and Civil Society

Before we formally present a definition of civil society, we have to keep in mind the fact that civil society is often defined in a negative way by what it is NOT and plays a supplementary role to the point of reference and departure. Civil society is also called non-governmental organizations or non-profit organizations, and the rationale for its existence is due to the failure of the state or the failure of market. In recent years some scholars became skeptical about such negative approaches and attempted to look for the social origin of civil society (Anheirer and Themundo, 2002).

If defining civil society by its distinction from the government and the business sectors does not do justice to the intrinsic importance of civil society, then in contemporary social and political theories, the state can no longer exist on its own, either. The state has lost monopoly on power to control and regulate. The state has been conceptualized as self-organized networks of policy (governance), or as being sidelined by ensemble of institutions, discourses, calculations and tactics that allow exercise of diffused power (governmentality). The state and civil society thus define and become complement to each other.

1. Civil Society

According to Center for Civil Society, London School of Economics and Political Science, civil society can be defined as:

Civil society refers to the arena of uncoerced action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market. Civil societies are often populated by organizations such as registered charity, development non-governmental organizations, community groups, women’s organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy
We can further explore this passage by referring to the book *Civil Society* by Michael Edwards (2004). Edwards approaches civil society through triple layers: first as associational life; second as good society; finally as the public sphere. Civil society means voluntary associations of people for common interests and goals. However, there are a diversity of associations which may espouse contradictory assertions on the very same issue, for example, pro-life and pro-choice regarding women’s reproductive rights and abortion. Edwards goes on to raise the principle of good society. Civil society exists to promote good society, on equal terms with the state and market. But what is good society? How do various parts of society collaborate and know which direction to go? Here we need the public sphere, a space for the emergence and expression of diversity of opinions to engage with each other, debate, disagree, and in the process citizens learn to concede to reach consensus.

In pre-modern period, production, consumption, and human activities take place mostly in the family and the community. The roles of both the state and market are limited. With the growth of industrial capitalist society, the state and market expand, and many of the traditional functions of the family have been replaced by the state or market. Theories of civil society have gained ascendancy in recent decades due to several factors. First, ordinary citizens and academic researchers alike see the importance of enhancing the role of civil society to counter-balance overexpansion of the state and market. Second, changes at the macro-level has led the very nature of the state to shift from being a top-down vertical authority into a horizontal networks of policy making and resource allocation (Marinetto, 2007).

Women’s movement and other social movements such as labor, environment, and consumer rights had played an important role in steering the direction of civil society towards an integration of associational life, ideals of good society, and practices of the public sphere by debates, discussion and advocacy. Civil society includes religious organizations, charity and philanthropy, self-help groups, which mostly operate without explicit goals of influencing public policy; the social movement aspects of civil society, on the contrary, contain a strong sense of mission for social reform and policy advocacy. Civil society as manifested and instantiated by social movements is independent from the state (in the sense of not in direct control or intervention by the state), and at the same time strongly wishes to participate in the process of policy

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1 Center for Civil Society, LSE, retrieved February 13, 2008, from http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/what_is_civil_society.htm
making and implementation. In this paper I will argue that in addition to emphasizing the ascendancy of civil society, we have to look at the changing nature and function of the state. The state has changed from being a unified, centralized top-down authority into nodal points of policy networks with various actors that are outside or beyond the central executive. Women’s movement initially challenged the state from a marginal position; since 1990s, mechanisms for coordinating women’s affairs across the public sector and the voluntary sector (women’s organizations) were set up. As these mechanisms grew larger in terms of budget, number of organizations involved, tasks to be done, the state as interface and ensemble of networks has absorbed and appropriated more and more forces from the civil society.

2. Changing Nature of the State: Governance and Governmentality

As mentioned above, the state had been regarded as a unified and centralized top-down authority, with constitutional sovereignty of parliament and the central executive. In recent decades, the state has faced challenges to its monopoly of power from two sides: on the one hand, the increasing salience of global economy, on the other hand, crisis in election democracy which led to increasing demand from grass-roots organizations and civil society for more participation. In this process, theorists of the state began to use the term ‘governance’ to describe the new ways of governmental functions.

Governance is often confused with government; these two are highly related, but governance as a process-oriented aspect can be applied also to business corporation, to NPOs, to community, or even to a project. There had been a traditional distinction between politics and governance: the former is about solving divergent opinions to reach common goals, and the latter is the administrative, process-oriented. However, contemporary theories began to questions this distinction and point out that both involve the exercise of power.

There are three approaches to the exercise of power: 1. top-down, hierarchical methods; market mechanism, constituted by supply and demand, using the principle of competition; 3. public-private partnership (PPP), focusing on collaboration of government, business, and civil society. It is to the third approach that contemporary scholars turn to use the term ‘governance.’

of autonomy from the direct intervention of the state. Since the early 1980s, the policy networks of government have undergone important changes. Networks located around functional departments grew with the incorporation of new policy actors from the private and voluntary sectors. This has resulted in a decentered government, where the central state’s ability to steer and control policy has been weakened due to the growth, complexity, and independence of inter-organizational networks. New actors and agencies beyond government, rather than central departments, are integral to the policy network.

The studies informed by inter-organizational perspectives come to the conclusion that it is unlikely for policy to be strategically directed by a single agency located in a neat hierarchical system of authority. The processes involved in making and forming policy are inevitably the results of interactions among a plurality of separate actors with separate interests, goals, and strategies. (Scharpf, 1978: 347). This does not necessarily entail modern political processes are uncoordinated free-for-all. Interactions tend to stem from the ways units voluntarily coordinate under their actions. Such coordination occurs without deliberate steering on the part of a central authority or overarching power (Marinetto, 2007: 56).

In this context, governance refers to self-organization, inter-organizational networks that are typically interdependent whilst enjoying significant autonomy from the State (Rhodes, 1997: 15). Rhodes argues networks located around functional departments grew with the incorporation of new policy actors from the private and voluntary sector. This has resulted in a decentered government, where the central state’s ability to steer and control policy has been weakened due to the growth, complexity and relative independence of inter-organizational networks. One of the implications of this development is that central government has become increasingly dependent upon governance to effect policy implementation and service delivery. Now actors and agencies beyond government, rather than the central government, are integral to the policy network. This phenomenon has been termed by some scholars as the ‘hollowing out’ of the state.

Hollowing out refers to the way the state has been eaten away and fragmented. Smith (1999) studies British polity and points out internal and external factors leading to hollowing out. Internal forces include market orientation such as privatisation, contracting out services, the setting-up of quangos and quasi-markets. (Quangos means quasi-nongovernmental organizations financed by the government to perform
public functions but acts independent of the government.) External forces include globalization, such as the international free-flowing of production and finance.

While some scholars describe the state as being hollowing out, others doing research regarding the operational details of policy networks argue that the central state has lost the power of direct intervention, but retained the ability to manipulating the conditions under which policy networks operated (Taylor 1997: 451-2). In other words, the state continues to exercise influential power by structuring the policy environment and defining the rules under which actors of the networks interact (Morgan et.al. 1999). In spite of the importance of networks—or precisely because of these networks that deal with cross-cutting public issues that cannot be confined to a specific department, scholars have argued that the state was strengthened, not weakened. More civil servants or out-sourced project personnel were recruited to meet the new demands and expectations from various sectors, including civil society.

While governance scholars stress the point of horizontal networks of procedures, actors of the networks do not receive attention. Foucault raises the concept of governmentality, which is meant to be the link between politics and the state on the one hand, and the formation of identity and subjectivity on the other hand.²

Foucault argues that the power apparatus of the state may be all-present but it is unable to dominate all power relations. The authority of the state is dependent on existing relations of power, forms of power that do not necessarily originate in the state.

The presumption that power is a centralized force, used intentionally to oppress and proscribe is challenged. Power operates in a manner which is not readily conscious, and it proves highly diffuse and progressively delimits through the very humane practices, and freely pursued activities, that underpin Western democracies. Traditionally the state is regarded as a unified and centralized authority, but this kind of notion has been displaced by a more diffuse, random and unintentional view of political power.

In poststructural theories, government activity is multifarious and located throughout the state and society. The concept of governmentality embraces the idea of

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² Foucault did not have a book entirely devoted to the issue of government and politics. He developed the idea of government rationality, or governmentality, in lectures and interviews. These ideas were published posthumously. Many scholars follow his ideas and explore them further. See Graham Burchell et.al. (1991), *The Foucault Effect.*
power as a multidimensional entity, infiltrating even the minutiae of everyday life, which is just as much able to be constructive as to constrain. Governmentality is the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific form of power. Governmentality also implies the notion of the decentered, fractured, disjointed state.

Foucault once indicated that in political theories we need to ‘cut off the King’s head’ (1980: 121), and he further suggested that power does not always originate from the state. The origins, forms, and exercise of power are multifarious and diffused to both large and small aspects of everyday life. The concept of governmentality serves as a link to connect government and politics on the one hand, and on the other hand formation of self, identity, and subjectivity. To govern, it begins with the individual level of self-governing; pedagogical instruction of children is also an important part of governing; and finally, the conventional perception of governing as related to the activities of government is explored by Foucault through detailed analyses of surveillance of police, medical institutions, and production of knowledge.

In political theories there are many followers who adopt the concept of Foucauldian governmentality, such as Miller and Rose (1990). In Western countries the major application of this concept is used to describe how neo-liberal regime advocates entrepreneurial spirit among citizens, in order to cut-off welfare budget. Here enterprise culture is a powerful instance of the interface between government and self-formation.

Both governance and governmentality theories begin with the diminution of the state power; terms such as ‘hollowing out’ or ‘cutting off the king’s head’ have been used. However, in detailed research results, we see the increasing influence of the state as the arena, platform, or interface of various networks of policy advocacy and resource allocation. While civil society has growing salience in democratic process, civil society anchors itself in terms of how it can better interact with the state to exert influence.

In this paper, instead of an analysis of neo-liberalism and enterprise culture, I will focus on the role of women’s movement and the advocacy of gender mainstreaming policy in changing the state into ‘ensemble of institutions, analyses, calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of power.’ Women’s movement on the one hand contributes to the pace of change regarding the role of the state as networks, and on the other hand, the increasing scale and complexity of policy networks absorb
and appropriate forces from women’s movement and civil society, with the result that
gender identity seems to become subsumed under the identity of belonging to a
specific piece of project. Gender itself is fragmented and professionalized according
to specific areas of substantive issues (education, health, welfare) or procedural issues
(being involved in the government restructuring). These details will be presented in
the IV section of this paper, which focuses on gender mainstreaming policy.

Before we start with gender mainstreaming policy developed in recent years, we
need to have an overview of the relationship between the state and society in the case
of women’s organization. The following section will present the different phases of
the state-society relationship.

III. Historical Developments Regarding State–Society Relationship

Below is a table to summarize the state/society relationship across three historical
periods. The first stage is from 1940s to 1970s, this is a period characterized by the
dominance of the KMP party, which adopted state corporatism to incorporate every
walks of life, including women’s organization into party organizations. The
emergence of feminist movement in Taiwan began in the 1970s and came to high tides
in the late 1980s and the 1990s. The second half of 1990s witnessed the partnership
between state and civil society, which was further enhanced after 2000.
Table 1: State/Society Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/society Relationship</th>
<th>KMT party (1940s-1970s)</th>
<th>Civil society (1980s-1990s)</th>
<th>partnership (since 1995-)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actors</td>
<td>Elite women in the Party mechanism</td>
<td>Elite women in the Academic and cultural circles</td>
<td>NGO chief executives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Chinese nationalism: help building the nation to overthrow communism</td>
<td>Gender equality</td>
<td>Gender mainstreaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field of actions</td>
<td>KMT women’s unit</td>
<td>Social movement; street protests; media; the Legislative Yuan</td>
<td>Commission on the Promotion of Women’s Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Attitudes</td>
<td>Openly express party affiliation</td>
<td>Neutral; detached; critical</td>
<td>Collaborate with state machinery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This paper examines the post-war development of women’s movement in Taiwan in terms of the changing relationship between the state and society. There are four stages in women’s movement. The first (1945-1970) is dominated by the ruling party KMT. At this time, under authoritarian rule and martial laws, the ruling party and the state are equivalent, and the party develops extensive networks of women’s organizations according to occupations and regions. State and society work closely during this period, with the former as the dominating and directive force. The second stage, 1970-1990, is the period of feminist movement, which self-consciously attempts to keep autonomy and later develops a critical stance against the government. The third stage, in the 1990s, is the transitional stage, when the oppositional party DPP won the municipal election of the Taipei city. Taipei city government establishes women’s right commission, inviting women’s movement activists to be commissioners. The fourth stage begins since 2000, when DPP obtains national power and announces the policy for promoting civil society and the partnership between state and civil society. To what extent this partnership can be based on equal terms with dialogue and policy deliberation is still to be observed. Since 1990s’ women’s movement in Taiwan has gone through transformation from resistant and protesting movement to become part
of state machinery for policy-making and execution. The theoretical and practical implication of this transformation will be addressed in this paper.

The 1990s saw the convergence of different social, political, economical forces which led to a high tide of social movement, in particular women’s movement. These social, political and economical forces included the liberalization of previously chartered industries, from banking, insurance, telecommunication, to media industries such as newspapers, radio, cable TV, satellite TV. Within a few years, there appeared a great increase in the number of newspapers, magazines, cable TV news programs, TV talk shows with viewers’ call-in. The changed environment and increased competition forced the well-established old media organizations to adopt new issues and perspectives. Gender issues became a hot topic during the 1990s, and the activities of women’s movement, compared with 1980s and post-2000, received broad coverage.

In terms of political development, the then-oppositional party DPP won several election campaigns. The most important of all these is the election victory of Mr. Chen Shui-Bian to be the Mayor of the Taipei City. As oppositional party, DPP had aligned itself with various kinds of social movements and progressive agenda, such as labor, environment, social welfare reform. DPP was then supportive of women’s movement. However, women’s movement in Taiwan tends to remain neutral in party affiliation. Many members personally support DDP, others in favor of KMT or New Party—the party that split from KMT in the 1990s and gained passionate support from urban middle-class who were suspicious of Taiwan nativist movement. In spite of the fact that many members had their inclination for specific party, within women’s organizations, gender was regarded as priority. Explicit and open interaction with specific party in the organizational name was subtly avoided at that time. According to Fan Yuan, a sociologist investigating social movements in Taiwan, among labor, environment, and women’s organizations, women’s organizations were least politicized. Their politics is gender, not party and election campaigns.

Thus we can say women’s movement in the 1990s experienced a “golden time” of mobilizing protests against issues such as sexual harassment, rape, family violence and enjoyed considerable media reports. In the cultural circle, gender issues are widely debated, and in the academic world, women’s studies and gender studies also began to gain momentum.

Although members of women’s organizations tended to be reserved for open endorsement of specific parties and politicians, there were still a small number of
them who chose to provide staunch support. During the Taipei City mayor election campaign of 1994, a few members were in charge of drafting policy proposals regarding women’s welfare. Among them, Professor Liu Yu Hsiu was the leader. She advocated the “Scandinavian Model,” meaning the partnership between civil society and the state. In particular, she advocated the establishment of a commission composed of both city government officials and representatives from women’s organizations. After the election, Mr. Chen won and Professor Liu strongly advised him to initiate the commission as soon as possible. It was established in 1995, with the name of Commission on the Promotion of Women’s Rights. This is the first time women’s organizations had the access to the policy planning and implication of the government—at the level of municipal government. This is indeed a historical landmark in the development of women’s movement.

So far we have seen the dual directions in the 1990s: protesting against gender bias on the part both of the general public and government; and since the establishment of the Commission in 1995, collaboration between the city government and women’s organizations.

In addition to the commission belonging to the Taipei City Government, the central government also set up a commission of similar nature, in response to great pressure from women’s organizations and the general public. In 1997, Commission on the Promotion of Women’s Rights, under the Executive Yuan and convened by the prime minister, was formally established. At that time the central government was KMT administration. For the first few years, this commission remained dormant; in contrast, commission of the Taipei City government was active.

IV. Gender Mainstreaming and the Growing Complexity of Policy Networks

Gender mainstreaming is the policy approach adopted by UN. In previous approaches regarding the advancement of women’s status, women are the target group, and programs for training, education, protection from violence are set up to deal with women’s issues. In this approach, women become the problems that society and the state must deal with. In contrast, gender mainstreaming advocates the ideas that in all processes of policy formation, implementation and assessment, gender perspectives should be integrated in order to realize in advance whether there exists a gap between male beneficiaries and female beneficiaries. Therefore gender mainstreaming does not target women as specific groups in need of supplementary resources from the public sector. Instead, in all major policy areas that were once regarded as neutral,
such as economics and trade, science and technology, agriculture, transportation, health, education and training, gender analysis exploring the historical and social conditions that contribute to gender inequality will be conducted in the initial stage of policy planning.

Gender mainstreaming was first adopted by UN in the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi, 1985, and developed into detailed guidelines and Declaration in The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995. Women’s organizations in Taiwan attended these conferences in 1985 and 1995, but did not bring what they had learned into the domestic lobby efforts to pressure the government to adopt gender mainstreaming. In the 1990s, Taiwanese feminists were preoccupied with consciousness raising and the reform and amendment of old legislatures. The Commission on Women’s Rights Promotion, advocated by pro-DPP feminists and first established at the level of the Taipei city government in 1995\(^3\), can be said to be the practice of gender mainstreaming. However, at that time, these feminists used the terminology of participatory democracy and corporatism of state and society—or, to use one buzz word popular in the 1990s in Taiwan, “the Scandinavian Model.”

After the DPP won the presidential election in 2000, an increase in the number of female ministerial-level officials was evident, as ‘one-quarter system’ (women should occupy at least one-fourth of high level position) had been DPP’s formal party policy since 1997. Members of women’s movement activists serve in a variety of positions, including heads of ministerial-level organizations, commissioners of Commission on Women’s Rights Promotion (CWRP) and other kinds of commissions such as welfare policy. Some of them began to introduce the concept of gender mainstreaming. It seemed that gender mainstreaming is similar to CWRP at the city level and central level. Coordination across different government agencies and partnership between the public sector and the NGOs sector are emphasized. However, the increase in scale with regard to gender mainstreaming reinforced and accelerated existing features that the previous section of this paper points out: governmentality and governance on the one hand, and on the other hand the segmentation and fragmentation of women’s interests, or evaporation of women.

1. Gender Mainstreaming

Gender Mainstreaming was first brought out at UN The Third World Conference on

\(^3\)Taipei city government took the lead in establishing CWRP; CWRP at the level of the central government was established in 1997.
Women, in Nairobi, 1985. In 1995, The Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing, which results in the Beijing Declaration and Beijing Platform for Action, BPfA, Gender Mainstreaming was systematically used as the tools and strategies of policies regarding the enhancement of women’s status.

In July 1997, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defined the concept of gender mainstreaming as the following:

"Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality."

Responsibility for implementing the mainstreaming strategy is system-wide, and rests at the highest levels within each nation. There are several basic principles of mainstreaming which include the following points:

• Adequate accountability mechanisms for monitoring progress
• The initial identification of issues and problems across all area(s) of activity should be such that gender differences and disparities can be diagnosed in the initial stage of policy planning.
• Assumptions that issues or problems are gender neutral should never be made.
• Clear political will and allocation of adequate resources for mainstreaming, including additional financial and human resources if necessary, are important for translation of the concept into practice.
• Gender mainstreaming requires that efforts be made to broaden women's equitable participation at all levels of decision-making.
• Mainstreaming does not replace the need for targeted, women-specific policies and positive legislation.

The ruling party adopted the terms and concepts of gender mainstreaming in 2004 Presidential campaign and then formally started this in 2005. According to the UN framework, gender mainstreaming includes 12 critical areas of concern:

• women and poverty

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● education and training of women
● women and health
● violence against women
● women and armed conflict
● women and the economy
● women in power and decision-making
● institutional mechanism for the advancement of women
● human rights of women
● women and the media
● women and the environment
● the girl-child

For the technical part of initiating gender mainstreaming policy, there are three administrative components: gender analysis; sex-disegregated data; budget-analysis. We can see the statistic dimension is the prerequisite without which gender mainstreaming can hardly get moving. In the last decade of the twentieth century, women’s organizations had devoted endeavors to the substantive areas such as violence against women, education, etc. without using the buzz word gender mainstreaming. After the advocacy of women’s organizations and formal adoption by the central government in recent years, great efforts have been put into the infrastructure of administrative coordination networks, such as collecting sex-disegregated data and statistics of budge growth.

These details show us the increasing significance of horizontal, network development of government and public policies. Substantive issues such as women and health or violence against women remain important, and programs about them are implemented with specific reference to gender mainstreaming—I raise this point here not as a criticism, as recipients and beneficiaries do not have to know the terminology. What I want to emphasize is the phenomenon that in policy-advocacy area at the central executive level, when the term and concept of gender mainstreaming is used, it is largely related to bureaucratic procedures, accountability structure, performance criteria, assessment tools and formats.

As we will see in the following parts about attending CSW and advocating for a new governmental agency Gender Equality Council, power does not always originate from the state. UN and international affairs can become cultural capital to be valourized by women’s organizations, with the result of women’s organizations taking the lead while the state becoming follower. However, we should keep in mind that this
does not mean women’s organizations have power over the state. I will interpret this phenomenon as the changing nature of the state from being the central authority to ensembles of institutions, procedures, calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of new forms of power which are decentralized, multifarious, fragmented. Although the state has become more like networks of transaction than a direct authority, the state remains the major space for such networks to take shape and operate. Its importance does not decrease; on the contrary, it absorbs various social and cultural forces and provides them with networks and procedures to reconfigure these forces.

2. CSW and CEDAW

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the UN mechanism for policy making regarding women’s rights in the course of national development. CSW consists of 45 commissioners, with the term of four year appointment. CSW has an annual meeting in the first two weeks of March. During these two weeks of official conferences, formal delegations from member countries present country report on status of gender equality; UN officials and experts present results of regional and country reviews; and drafts of declarations are discussed during the sessions. All sessions are open to NGO representatives who have applied in advance for attending. However, these NGOs are observers only, with no right to speak during the formal session.

In the meantime, there are a great number of parallel events and conferences organized by International NGOs (INGOs), and this has been a great opportunity for NGOs from all over the world to come to know each other and start networking for common concerns.

As Taiwan is not a UN member, women’s organizations in Taiwan were not fully aware of the importance of UN until recent years. This does not necessarily entail that in other countries women’s organizations as well as the government recognize the usefulness of UN processes and resolutions. The last decade of the twentieth century appeared to have a pivotal role in opening up access for NGO and civil servants who are not career diplomats. A number of large scale conferences were held in the 1990s, with participation and collaboration from the global civil society. These conferences include:

--1993, World Conference on Human Rights, in Vienna, with the result of Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action
--1994, International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), in Cairo

--1995, Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW), in Beijing, with the result of Beijing Declaration and Beijing Platform for Action.

In the case of attending CSW, there has been a fast increase of number of participants: from six in 2002, to 29 in 2005, and further to 37 in 2006.

Attending the annual meeting of CSW has become a platform of collective learning in an inter-organizational, inter-sectoral environment. It is not only the phenomenon that participants physically will enter the headquarters of UN building in New York and be overwhelmed by the diversity of issues but also the very nature of the Taiwan delegation that facilitates and speeds up group learning of international affairs. Starting from the year 2003, civil servants from different ministries of the central government and from bureaus of local government join the delegation upon request from Commission on the Promotion of Women’s Rights. Women’s organizations take the lead in forming the delegation, and various government agencies follow. This is a rare case in which the government is passive but compliant in meeting the demands from NGOs. This is due to the convergence of two factors: first the sharp importance of UN for Taiwan as a symbol for obtaining complete sovereignty, and secondly the paradox of high degree of politicization regarding UN on the top level and low degree of politicization among mid-level officials. Such phenomena testify to the poststructural theory of power and the state as aforementioned.

3. Commission on Gender Equality

‘Organizational restructuring and down-sizing’ is an important issue that was vigorously planned soon after DPP took power of the central government. Restructuring includes, on the one hand, mergers which intend to down-size the central government and on the other hand, establishment of new organizations to meet the changing demands of public policies and management. Numerous meetings convened by the prime minister himself were held; a great number of further meetings among different ministries and ministerial-level departments regarding details of merging took place following those convened by the prime minister. News regarding contents of these meetings were disseminated through media. All this had been a long process, which, up until now, remains unrealized due to the impediment of the Legislative Yuan. In spite of lack of actual results, for civil society, the process itself
opens up channels of thinking and debating about the role of the central government.

Women’s organizations were not aware of the importance of government restructuring until they were invited by Ministry of the Interior to attend a meeting regarding the possibility of setting up a ‘bureau of children and women’s welfare.’ They were infuriated with the familiar phenomenon that women and children had been put together as one and the same thing by public policy and by the general public. After a short period of expressing dissatisfaction, members of women’s organizations soon realized instead of criticizing the current draft, it was better to adopt a pro-active approach by advocating an independent organization in charge of enhancing women’s status. ‘Ministry of Women’s Right’ came out as the initial idea, and shortly afterward many pointed out ‘gender equality’ is more appropriate than ‘women’s rights’ and this reached consensus in a relatively easy way.

Diversity of opinions began to emerge regarding the position of the organization: is this a ministry—an organization which has full-fledged stipulated authority of policy making and implementation, or a commission—an organization at the ministerial level but only in charge of policy planning and inter-ministerial coordination? Within women’s organizations this had been hotly debated. As the number of ministries is strictly limited in the government restructuring plan, members of women’s organizations were practical enough to know it is impossible to push for a ministry of gender equality. Women’s organizations finally decided to settle for the Commission on Gender Equality. As restructuring involves all existing organizations and new ones to be set up, any members of Legislative Yuan not satisfied with particular details can reject to vote for the bill, the bill sent by the Executive Yuan regarding government restructuring has been dormant for years.

In terms of the case of government restructuring, what are the implications for the development of civil society in Taiwan? To begin with, this is the first time women’s organizations have the formal and open opportunity to actually get themselves involved in planning the administrative machinery of the central executive government. In the past they were mainly engaged in advocating for specific pieces of legislature. Their interactions with the executive branches are mainly about tendering bids to deliver service. Therefore getting involved in the government restructuring is a fresh learning experience. Second, there is no coalition of various sectors of civil society. Women’s organizations were fully occupied with gender quality as a single issue. Third, civil society has not developed a solid discourse regarding the rationale of government restructuring. The government emphasizes ‘down-sizing,’ indicating
that diminution of government size and number of civil servants will increase the efficiency of government. No one questions the dilemma of decreasing size and increasing demands for public service. In the final draft bill of restructuring, the central executive overall increases in size, budget, and personnel. In the meantime benefit packages for civil servants were cut down and non-tenured, contracted workers were recruited. Whether from the side of the central government or from the side of civil society, there has been in lacking concerns with the political philosophy of the state. Fourth, the existing Commission on Promotion of Women’s Rights have played an important role of providing interface between women’s organizations and bureaucrats to discuss details of establishing the new organization. This is a positive case where we see the partnership taking substantive shape by on-going and regular discussions.

V. Conclusion: Rethinking the State and Civil Society

From the previous discussion of gender mainstreaming policy, we can see the increasing salience of policy networks that have multiple actors outside the state. There is indeed the decrease of the direct power of the state. However, the state is not weakened or hollowed out. On the contrary, women’s movement activists rely heavily on the policy networks activated by the state.

The nature of the state has gone through three phases of change: first as the center of power and authority, second as the decentered networks and ensembles of institutions which seem to hollow out, and finally in this paper, as the nodal point of networks that reasserts its strategic importance by setting up the conditions of operations, absorbing power that does not originate from the state to feedback into mechanism of legitimacy.

In this process of proliferation of policy networks, civil society has segmented into professional social service organizations or advocacy organizations. While the conventional notion of the state as a unified entity has to be modified, the notion of civil society as a whole is also under revision. Both fragmented into pieces and then re-sutured into networks of task-forces.

Governance, defined as the process of forming networks and leadership, is not only relevant to the government but also applicable to business, to NGOs, and to a specific project. As more and more organizational actors across various sectors can claim to make use of governance, their self-perception and identity become
increasingly instantiated by the nature they interact with the state. In the case of women’s movement in Taiwan, while the criticism of patriarchy dominated the feminist discourses in 1980s and 1990s, in recent years the term ‘patriarchy’ appeared less often. Instead, activists often talk about what the government should do to secure gender equality, or how they themselves have interacted with the government to do what is expected. The state is a gendered state, while identity of feminists at the same time inserts itself into the state as parts of policy networks. In this sense, we can say gender mainstreaming has forged a new governmentality that serves as the link between the practical techniques of state operation and feminist identity.

References


