

VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY

Civil Society in East Asian Countries

**CONTRIBUTIONS TO DEMOCRACY, PEACE
AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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About Authors

Linas Didvalis is a lecturer of political science, sustainable development and East Asian studies at the Department of Regional Studies and the Department of Cultural Studies of Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania. His research interests are sustainability issues in East Asia region, environmental movements in Japan, Korea and China, and Japan's environmental policies. Didvalis received his Ph.D. from International Christian University, Tokyo, Japan.

Bruce Grover is a doctoral candidate at the University of Heidelberg, Germany. He is a member of the LGF research group on 'Religion and Global History' at Heidelberg and focuses primarily on political thought and action in interwar period Japan.

Hao-Tzu Ho is a Ph.D. candidate in Anthropology at Durham University. She was a visiting doctoral researcher at Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences at The University of Hong Kong (2016-17). She received her MSc in Anthropology and International Development from the LSE. Her current research focuses on urban anthropology, contemporary East Asian societies, political economy, sustainable movement, happiness and wellbeing.

Sunhyuk Kim is a professor in the Department of Public Administration at Korea University, Seoul, Korea. He is the author of *The Politics of Democratization in Korea* and *Economic Crisis and Dual Transition in Korea*. Kim has published numerous articles on Korean politics in journals such as *Democratization*, *Journal of International and Area Studies*, *Asian Survey*, *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies*, *Asian Perspective*, *Korea Journal* and many others, and has contributed to a number of edited collections. Kim holds a Ph.D. in political science from Stanford University. His research interests include civil society, democratization, and regional cooperation.

Yu-Ree Kim is currently Korean Foundation Visiting Professor of the Vytautas Magnus University (VMU), Kaunas, Lithuania. Before joining the VMU, she worked as a Research Fellow of the Research Institute for North Korea and Northeast Asia at Korea Eximbank, Seoul, Korea. Previously she had been a researcher and lecturer at the Institute for International Affairs at Seoul National University, a Korea Foundation Junior Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington D.C. in 2012, and also worked at the Korea Institute for Future Strategies as a researcher from 2006 to 2008. She holds a Ph.D. in International Studies from Seoul National University in the Republic of Korea. Her research interests are the Inter-Korean relations, DPRK foreign relations, and international cooperation in East Asia, among others.

Jan Niggemeier is a Ph.D. student in Political Science at the Graduate School of East Asian Studies at Freie Universität Berlin. He focuses on labour issues, environmentalism, gender and other areas of social movement activism in Japan and East Asia. He holds a MSc in Asian Studies from

Lunds Universitet and a MA in Japanese Studies and Language from Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg and Keio University.

Runya Qiaoan is currently a Ph.D. candidate at Masaryk University (Brno), a researcher at Mendel University (Brno) and she is also an analyst at Institute of Asia Studies (Bratislava). Runya holds a Master's Degree of Sociology from Masaryk University and a Bachelor's Degree of Philosophy from Sun Yat-sen University (Guangzhou). Besides, she has been on exchange at University of Toronto, National Chengchi University and Utrecht University. In the past five years, she has been studying and living in the Czech Republic, Canada, Taiwan and the Netherlands. Runya's research interests include civil society and NGOs, cultural sociology and China-Central Eastern Europe relations. Runya's publications include papers and book reviews in international scientific journals, such as *The China Quarterly*, *Journal of Cognition* and *Culture and Europe-Asia Studies*.

LINAS DIDVALIS

Civil Society in East Asia

RECENT TOPICS AND TRENDS

Abstract: This article proposes an argument that research on civil society in East Asia has been attracting increasingly more attention from scholars of various fields that leads to more diverse and complex academic output. To verify the claim, this article provides an overview of recent topics and trends of research in the field both in quantitative and qualitative terms. This allows to indicate the main trends and spot less used approaches and overlooked researched areas. The results proved the initial argument to be largely true, especially starting with the new millennia when the number and variety of scholarly works jumped to unprecedented heights. Since the interest shows no particular signs of slowing down, we can expect that the research output at the beginning of 21st century will allow us to enjoy growing complexity and variety in the field.

Keywords: civil society, East Asia, research trends

Pilietinė visuomenė Rytų Azijoje: naujausios tematikos ir tendencijos

Santrauka: Straipsnyje iškeliamas argumentas, kad Rytų Azijos pilietinės visuomenės tyrimai sulaukia vis daugiau įvairių sričių mokslininkų dėmesio, ir tai didina akademinių publikacijų įvairovę bei plečia jų kompleksiskumą. Siekiant patvirtinti šį teiginį, straipsnyje pateikiama kokybinė ir kiekybinė naujausių Rytų Azijos pilietinės visuomenės tyrimų tematikų ir tendencijų apžvalga. Tai leidžia išskirti pagrindines kryptis, atkreipti dėmesį į mažiau paplitusias prieigas, pastebėti netyrinėtas sritis. Gauti rezultatai iš esmės patvirtino pirminį teiginį, ypač vertinant šio tūkstantmečio pradžią, kai tyrimų skaičius ir įvairovė pasiekė anksčiau nematytas aukštumas. Vertinant tai, kad susidomėjimas Rytų Azijos pilietinės visuomenės tema nerodo atslūgimo ženklų, galima tikėtis, kad šios srities tyrinėjimai XXI a. pradžiugins vis augančiu sudėtingumu ir įvairove.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: pilietinė visuomenė, Rytų Azija, tyrimų tendencijos.

Introduction

This article proposes an argument that research on civil society in East Asia¹ has been attracting increasingly more attention from scholars of various fields that led to more diverse and complex academic output. This follows a more general trend that was indicated by some authors. For example, Edwards (2004: 11) states that the end of the Cold War “gave the idea of civil society a prominence it had not enjoyed since the Enlightenment”. This prominence gave boost to scholarship that approach civil society from political, legal, social and many other perspectives, and keep the field expanding and further developing.

To verify the claim, this article provides an overview of recent topics and trends of research in the aforementioned field both in quantitative and qualitative terms. The review covers only publications

¹ East Asia is defined here as a region that is comprised of People's Republic of China, Republic of China, Republic of Korea, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and Japan.

made in English language and acknowledges the limitations tied with such a choice that was mainly made due to practical reasons: lack of access to non-English academic databases and author's limited knowledge of Chinese and Korean languages. Although few would doubt that internationalization of academic publications has progressed significantly in the recent decades, research published in vernacular languages can still offer a rich ground for those who would like to perform a similar review on scholarly works written in Chinese, Korean or Japanese.

This article is divided into two main parts. The first one is an overview of thematic spectrum of research done about civil society in East Asia. It helps to indicate the main trends and spot less used approaches and overlooked researched areas. The articles that the readers can find in this volume are also presented here. The second part provides quantitative data to illustrate publication trends and to verify the argument about the expanding quantitative nature of this research field. The article is finished with conclusions.

The spectrum of topics

An overview of existing literature on civil society in East Asia allows us to make a robust argument for using the Cold War as a line that sparked a period of much more dynamic scholarship about civil society in China, Korea and Japan. Research done before 1990 was rather limited and mainly done from the political science perspective by borrowing approaches that can be seen in the works written about the Western countries. We can mention such authors as Nee and Mozingo (1983) who wrote about state-society nexus in China, Leung (1982) who focused on community participation in Hong Kong, McKean (1981), Reich (1984) and Broadbent (1986) who looked at environmental movements in Japan, and Edmunds (1983) who was one of the pioneers of research on clashes between local communities and nuclear power industry in Japan.

Japan receives the most attention among researchers compared to China and Korea, and produces research that took a while to reach other countries in the region. For example, Matsui (1990) who analysed feminist movements in Japan. In contrast with China and Korea, Japan was able to provide easier access to its domestic politics and supply numerous cases of civic movements whose activity peaked in the 1960s and 1970s. As the second largest economy in the world, it also generated much curiosity about its development model and society's role in it. Finally, Japanese scholars themselves produced literature in English language this way enriching international scholarship and boosting foreign interest. Meanwhile, in-depth research on Korean and Taiwanese civil society is almost absent before 1990, with only few exceptions, such as Moore (1988) and Hsiao (1990), and rather limited when it comes to China. This is about to change soon when the legacy of democratization, environmental and labour movements becomes more widely acknowledged, especially after democratic reforms in South Korea and Taiwan.

The last decade of 20th century marked a growing interest in the power of the people to topple regimes and contribute to creation of dynamic democracies (Edwards 2004: 11-12). South Korea and Taiwan were two good case studies to analyse this process in East Asia, while China and North Korea acted as examples where civic movements have limited influence over politics. For example, in the 1990s we see first in-depth analysis of South Korea's case by such authors as Ahn (1992), Koo (1993), Suh (1998), Kim (2000) and others. However, few authors depart from democratization issues and look at other perspectives. Examples of that could be Dalton and Cotton (1996) and Lee (1999).

Scholarship on China was also inspired by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Brook and Frolic (1997) presented a detailed critical description of China's civil society. Other authors attempted to

take a more nuanced look, like Madsen (1998) who analysed the state of China's Catholics, or Lollar (1997) and Zhao (2000) who inquired whether China's economic reforms had any impact on civil society activism. Meanwhile, research on Taiwan follows more general trends that resemble scholarship tied with South Korea: here we can see general overviews (Hsiao 1996), emergence of new social movements (Chang 1997) and analysis of environmental activism (Hsiao 1999).

The 1990s also mark emergence of first examples of regional comparative studies. Serrano (1994) was one of the first authors who provided a broad overview of civil activism in East Asia, covering China, Japan and South Korea. This was followed by study of Yamamoto (1996) and Compton (2000). Meanwhile, Arne and Persoon (1998) and later Lee and So (1999) released a much-needed comparative analysis of Asia's environmental movements. Smaller studies that compared social movements of two countries also emerged: Chu (1998), Harashima and Morita (1998), He (1999), Kim (2000) and others.

During the 1990s Japan remained a case that can provide insights in how civil society functions in highly developed mature democracies (see Salamon and Sokolowski 1999 or Florini 2000). Several authors entered the debate to question how much the Western approach to civil society fits the Japanese context (Knight 1996, McVeigh 1998) while others continued expanding our understanding about civil society's role in different spheres. Environmental protection proved to be most popular subject. Broadbent (1999) and Lam (1999) painted a detailed picture of environmental movements in Japan by describing their networks and strategies of interaction with the government. However, other authors (Moore 1997, AMPO-Japan Asia Quarterly Review 1996) looked beyond that and covered a wider variety of social movements.

Compared to the 1980s, civil society research showed both deepening and expansion outwards. Political science approach that previously dominated was supplemented with sociological and anthropological analysis. Although Japanese civil society remained the most researched compared to other East Asian countries, China, Taiwan and Korea began to receive a well-deserved attention. We also see emergence of first comparative studies that allow us to grasp variety of contexts in which civil society must function in East Asia. Thematically, the global and regional context of the 1990s dictated that democratization and environmental protection were most widely covered topics. After all, East Asia proved to be a rich ground for this kind of research. All this growing variety laid good foundation for expansion to other fields, which we will see in the following paragraphs.

Most recent two decades of 21st century continue expanding and deepening civil society research. Analysis done in the previous years gave strength to arguments about the synergy between a strong civil society and a strong state. It is now widely accepted that each side benefits from the other, creating numerous positive effects ranging from safeguarding democracy to proposing progressive ideas to ensuring provision of basic services to the citizens (Weller 2005). This opened the doors for researching what effect civil society has on every niche of public life (for example, see Broadbent and Brockman 2011 or Pekkanen 2006).

Political science approach still seemingly holds the leading position. Numerous books appeared since 2001 to provide new insights how the government interacts with society in East Asian region: Weller (2004), Lele and Quadir (2004), Alagappa (2004), Armstrong et al. (2010) and others. Individual countries also received in-depth coverage: see Ma (2005), Wang (2011), Simon (2013), Tai (2014), Teets (2014) and others for China; Chang (2010), Fell (2017), Šarka (2017) and others for Taiwan; Armstrong (2006), Park (2008), Shin & Chang (2011), Cho et al. (2013), Kim (2016) and others for South Korea; Schwartz and Pharr (2003), Pekkanen (2006), Ogawa (2009), Vinken et al. (2010), Cavaliere (2015) and others for Japan. These authors continue the debate about civil society's

role in democratization, ability of social activists to operate in restrictive environments, and their role in representing silenced or weaker voices of the society.

Outside of this more usual approach to civil society research, new century brought plenty of new perspectives. For example, Hasan & Onyx (2008) provided one of the first detailed comparative analysis of legal regulation of civil society in East Asia, while Douglass et al. (2007) looked at civil society's impact on East Asia's urban spaces. The 2000s also marked the beginning of research on cyber activism and virtual civil society. For China's case there was Tai (2006) and Negro (2017), Ducke (2007) for Japan, and Lee (2017) for South Korea. Meanwhile, Buzan and Zhang (2014) investigated globalization and emergence of "international society" in East Asia. All this shows the ability to find new perspectives to look at civil society and paint a more complex and multi-layered picture. Although there can be few doubts that political science is one of the starting points to approach civil society, anthropological, legal, cultural or sociological research provides a more nuanced understanding. Therefore, the research output at the beginning of 21st century allows to us to indicate growing complexity and variety in this field.

Articles presented in this volume reflect the expansion of thematic subjects rather well. Bruce Grover's article is a good example how the concept of civil society can be used in largely historical research. In this case it helps to unveil new insights about leftist movements in interwar Japan. Jan Niggemeier transfers our focus to more contemporary Japan and provides analysis of labour movements that give voice back to the community and challenge mainstream labour unions. Hao-Tzu Ho provides a nuanced story of Hong Kong where seemingly post-materialistic agriculture movements re-emerge to transform a very much urban landscape. Runya Qiaoan focuses on more classical topic – environmental movements – but in her text we can find new insights how social activists adapt to the difficult conditions dominated by the Chinese Communist Party and invent strategies to use the circumstances for their own benefit. Sunhyuk Kim moves our attention to South Korea and updates much discussed link between civil movements and Korean democratization by adding most recent developments to the overall mix. This allows us not only to review the history but also connect lessons of the past with the ongoing struggles that civil society is facing in South Korea. Yuree Kim keeps us focused on Korea but includes North-South dimension. This allows to explore relatively little discussed question how much and in what ways can civil society contribute to Korean unification.

This overview of qualitative characteristics reveals several gaps and imbalance that exist in research on civil society in East Asia. First, the geographical coverage did not develop uniformly, and the attention given to East Asian countries/territories is still not divided equally. While the knowledge about China's and South Korea's civil society improved greatly in the past 20 years and caught up with the leading country Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong still receive less attention. Due to practical complications, North Korea remains a country where the idea of civil society is either simply dismissed or data about social activism largely relies on guessing and indirect estimations. Hopefully, this situation will change in the future.

If we consider the domestic level of each country, the concentration to urban activism is also noticeable, while the rural social movements remain less explored. This could be explained by the fact that most civil society research is done from political science perspective. This choice shifts focus to interest groups that are most capable to influence politics, and directs research to large and resource-rich city-based organizations and movements. Analysis of municipal-level politics or cultural/anthropological research could enrich the current scholarship by bringing fresh insights and perspectives.

Second, institutionalization and legal regulation of civil society have not been thoroughly addressed in the current research. There are few works written on how administration of civil society sector works in each East Asian country and with what structural problems civic organizations must deal in their daily lives. In addition, this knowledge would be useful to include in political science or even cultural research to better grasp motivations of social activists and options available to them to reach their goals. Until now only Hasan & Onyx (2008) provided an in-depth study of such kind and it needs to be updated, expanded and further connected with civil society research in other fields.

Finally, there is a need to rethink civil society in East Asian terms and to refine country-specific methodologies. This has been done to certain extent in Japan-related scholarship but remains largely unexplored when it comes to remaining East Asian countries. This is not to say that general approaches to civil society that were developed by Western scholars are not working in East Asia. However, a more nuanced approach that is tweaked according to local specifics could lead to further advancements in the future.

Quantitative data

Thematic expansion that was presented in the previous part inspired new kinds of research and resulted in seemingly growing quantity of publications on civil society in East Asia. This impression originates in hundreds of book titles that were published in the past two decades alone and extensive results given by Google Scholar search engine when one searches for academic articles about civil society in China, Japan or Korea. To verify this impression, Google Books and Google Scholar search was performed with keywords mentioning civil society and East Asian countries and the results summarized by grouping them chronologically into decades.

Google Books search revealed almost 20-fold increase in results when comparing the 1990s and 2010s. In the 1990s, 47 items were returned, and the results kept growing to reach 220 items in the 2000s and 816 items in the 2010s. Due to specifics of Google Books search engine and the way how it displays results, it would be inaccurate to say that there were 816 book titles published between 2010 and 2018. However, even without pinpointing exact number of book titles, we can be certain that the field of civil society studies tied with East Asia gained much prominence in the last three decades.

Google Scholar search results showed a steady increase in academic articles published during the last three decades. The increase was not that drastic as in the case of book titles, but it was an impressive one nonetheless. While the search returned 290 items published during the 1990s, the number grew to 783 in the 2000s and stood at 705 in the year 2010-2018. Considering that in the latter case we are comparing a decade with eight years, most likely the 2010s will end up with around 850 academic publications.

Conclusions

This article started with an argument that “research on civil society in East Asia has been attracting increasingly more attention from scholars of various fields that leads to more diverse and complex academic output.” This proved to be largely the case, especially starting with the new millennia when the number and variety of scholarly works jumped to unprecedented heights. This is fuelled not only by the growing importance of East Asia in global affairs but also internationalization of local scholars, general interest and favourable attitude towards civil society after the end of the Cold War which allowed scholars to gravitate towards this field, and democratization processes in East Asian countries.

Since the interest shows no particular signs of slowing down, we can expect that the research output at the beginning of 21st century will allow us to enjoy growing complexity and variety in the field. The progress should soon fill remaining gaps in the English scholarship, considering that internationalization of academia will make more research easily available. Further analysis of research done in vernacular languages could give us a further insight whether the problem lies in the gap of languages, or there is an actual need for new research projects.

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BRUCE GROVER

The Emergence of a Civil Society Movement and its Fragility in post-World War I Era

A STUDY OF INDEPENDENT LABOR EDUCATION

IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

Abstract: In response to severe social problems and the influx of new concepts of society following in the tumultuous wake of the First World War in Japan, a small yet prominent group of social reformers sought to develop an autonomous workers' education movement to extend educational opportunity and provide independence from a bourgeois socio-economic and cultural system they saw as fundamentally exploitative to the working class. This un-centralized movement endeavored to empower the working class through an interconnected network of leftist settlements, labor schools and 'free universities' and was informed by new concepts of how to concretely implement change; namely, empirical analysis of actual social conditions through surveys and the need to discover and address the demands of the people. The ideals of elite progressives converged with the aspirations of many local workers for a more just society through educational opportunity making this social educational movement appear as the potential beginning of a sustainable civil society movement. Economic shocks and geo-political uncertainty in the 1930s, however, prompted many of the same reformist idealists to turn to state power and ethnic nationalism leading to a collapse in the respect for pluralism and the fluid range of subjective values within society necessary for a thriving civil society.

Keywords: labor education, settlement house movement, labor school movement, free university movement, workers' autonomy, student movement, social progress within systemic exploitation, pluralism, ideological conversion (Tenkō), Suehirō Izutarō, Tsuchida Kyōson

Pilietinės visuomenės atsiradimas ir jos trapumas po Pirmojo pasaulinio karo: nepriklausomo tarpukario darbininkų švietimo atvejo studija

Santrauka: Reaguodama į sunkias socialines problemas ir naujų visuomenės sampratų antplūdį, įvykusį po audringo Pirmojo pasaulinio karo Japonijoje, maža, tačiau išskili socialinių reformatorių grupė siekė sukurti autonominį darbininkų švietimo judėjimą. Tuo siekta išplėsti mokymosi galimybes bei suteikti nepriklausomybę nuo buržuazinės socioekonominės ir kultūrinės sistemos, kurią judėjimas vertino kaip iš esmės kenkiančią darbininkų klasei. Šis necentralizuotas judėjimas siekė įgalinti darbininkų klasę, naudodamas tarpusavyje susijusį kairiųjų pažiūrų gyvenviečių tinklą, darbininkų mokyklas ir „laisvuosius universitetus“. Judėjimas buvo susipažinęs su naujausiomis pokyčių įgyvendinimo idėjomis – empirine realių socialinių sąlygų analize, atliekant apklausas, bei būtinybe suprasti ir atsiliiepti į gyventojų poreikius. Progresyviųjų elito narių idealai sutapo su daugumos vietinių darbininkų siekais sukurti teisingesnę visuomenę plėtojant švietimą. Tai lėmė, kad šis judėjimas tapo vertinamas kaip potencialus tvarios pilietinės visuomenės kūrėjas. Ekonominiai sukrėtimai ir geopolitiniai neramumai 4-ajame XX a. dešimt-

metyje daugumą reformacijos idealistų paskatino atsisąjūti į valstybės galią ir etninį nacionalizmą, vedantį prie pagarbos pliuralizmui ir visuomenėje egzistuojančių subjektyvių vertybių, reikalingų pilietinei visuomenei klestėti, žlugimą.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: darbuotojų švietimas, bendruomenės namų judėjimas, darbuotojų mokyklų judėjimas, laisvojo universiteto judėjimas, darbuotojų autonomija, socialinis progresas sisteminio išnaudojimo sąlygomis, pliuralizmas, ideologinis virsmas, Suehirō Izutarō, Tsuchida Kyōson.

Introduction

In 1925, an elite group of Tokyo Imperial University students who served as volunteer lecturers at the Tokyo Imperial University Settlement Labor School accompanied a young factory worker from the slum ward of Honjo named Ashika Kaku to Tokyo Station to board a night train to his home in Tottori. The reticent young Ashika had been among the most avid and committed of their first new crop of students to graduate from the labor school and the Tokyo University student lecturers encouraged him to apply what he had learned by organizing an agrarian labor movement in his home province. On the station platform among the roar of the night locomotives rushing past, the Teidai students surrounded Ashika and began to sing the communist anthem ‘The Red Flag’ in chorus to stoke his enthusiasm as they bid him farewell. To their horror, a policeman on patrol who had been stealthily lurking in the shadows of the dim station suddenly ran to them snapping, “You! You! Don’t you dare sing that song!” Nearly five decades later, the former student activists still wistfully recalled the experience ‘as if it were a dream’. The song had been strictly forbidden by the police with even hand-written lyrics confiscated for investigation and leftist radicals of the time had carefully guarded the lyrics in their rice chests. To their great relief, Ashika Kaku was allowed to board his train to Tottori where he would come to prominence as a labor leader and ultimately be elected to the Diet in both houses for eight terms in the postwar period as a member of the Socialist Party. During his election campaign, Ashika proudly listed the Tokyo University Settlement Labor School as his educational credentials (Hirano et. al 1971: 120).

The environment of Tokyo’s poverty-stricken Honjo industrial district where the Teidai Settlement operated represented in many ways a microcosm of the most severe challenges confronting Japanese society immediately following the upheaval of the Great War. According to surveys undertaken by the settlement, unemployed rural youth had flooded to the neighborhood from every region of Japan to a poorly developed urban space with factory buildings and decrepit housing built in a deep mud with stagnant water collecting after every rain to give off a powerful smell. Residents had limited access to electric light and typically shared a single water faucet with 10-20 households. Recurrent hygiene problems stemmed from waste collected in outhouses and indoor latrines. The working poor of the district were also deprived to an appalling degree of the opportunity to receive the most basic education with many not even finishing elementary school. (Tokyo University Settlement Survey Section 1925: 4-6,18). The war-time economic boom had led to a painful post-war correction and brewing social tensions spurred a sense of urgency from a range of policy makers and social activists to ameliorate conditions with some commentators judging that ‘time was running out’ to make meaningful national reforms to confront deteriorating conditions.

In response to these challenges and inspired by the influx of new social concepts from abroad, there appeared small-scale yet important efforts to organize independent, grass-roots social movements to address these intractable socio-economic problems. These efforts formed what could be viewed as the semblance of an emerging civil society movement. The Teidai Settlement, which was

a physical building constructed to house the social work activities of the university students, was an important representative of this confluence of elite and citizen action. University students such as those volunteering at the Teidai Settlement, were among the most eager to analyze and test concrete solutions from the influx of new, foreign ideological and institutional approaches. Student members of the Gakuren, a national association of university students which organized student activists, sent student tutors to various labor school in order to contribute (Kikukawa 1931, ch.5). Thus, despite some historians' dismissal of students as a genuine social force for the creation of a popular grassroots movement (Smith 1971), it is clear there was in fact considerable energy committed to the support of the labor education movement from the student movement.

Nevertheless, the settlement is also emblematic of the severe challenges which faced activists at the time. Tragically, the vicious enforcement of the Peace Preservation Law led to the arrest of Toyohara Gorō, a factory worker who became a student at the Teidai settlement labor school and who had been an eager student, but died in prison (Hirano et. al. :118). Larger-scale arrests of settlers and other labor activists followed in the late 20's. The settlement's closure in 1937 and the demise of the left-wing labor education ultimately revealed the limits of efforts to challenge the social order during a period wracked with violent nationalism and imperialism.

In many regards the Tōdai Settlement was wholly unique. While many Tōdai settlers were clandestinely exploring and promoting Marxism, the settlement was publicly receiving funding from the Imperial Household, the Home Ministry and the Tokyo city government, (Tōdai Settlement 1926). Yet, despite the fact that the Tōdai Settlement Labor School was the most well-connected and financially secure of all the labor schools and settlements allowing it to maintain operations when others struggled to operate, it was merely one highly publicized representative of a broader effort to develop a movement to extend educational opportunity, and with it, a more equal and just society for the working class.

The origins of the labor school movement in Japan is thought to be found in the Japan Labor School (Nihon Rōdō Gakkō) which opened in 1921 and enjoyed the greatest longevity of all schools during this period. The Japan Labor School grew out of the early educational activities of Suzuki Bunji and the Yūaikai established in 1912 to promote "workers' mutual support," and improvement of status as well as "the development of good judgement, moral cultivation and progress in skills" (Ono 1989: 72). The Yūaikai would ultimately morph into the Nihon Sōdōmei labor union and in 1919, organized lecture series in Tokyo, Osaka and Kobe. Drawing on this experience, Suzuki launched the Labor Education Association under the auspices of the Sōdōmei and set up the Japan Labor School in its headquarters (72). Following the Japan Labor School's lead, over 40 schools devoted to workers' education were founded across the country.

What became a movement which can be described as 'independent labor education' was a non-centralized convergence of a discernable set of institutions and social thought. Institutions were organized in often overlapping networks which worked in tandem or in parallel, and included labor schools, settlement houses which provided educational services and 'free universities' which began to spread throughout Japan under the influence of Kyoto-educated philosopher Tsuchida Kyōson. These institutions were informed not only by trends in liberalism, socialism, and Idealist philosophy popular among Western intellectuals but also new western ideals of education which sought to serve as vehicles to concretely implement social ideals of overcoming inequality in status and opportunity, and empowering the exploited underclasses.

Japan had a long history of mutual aid societies reaching back well before the Meiji period. The Hōtokusha led by the example of Ninomiya Sontoku which promoted thrift and diligence, education

and the revitalization of villages is a classic example of active participation of the non-elite to maintain and improve the social order. Like the governments of other industrializing nations facing conflict, the Japanese state through the Home Ministry sought to harness and control social action during the Meiji period, providing resources to organizations yet restricting the acceptable scope of their activity and ideology. Conservative endeavors ultimately sought to ameliorate social unrest and offset challenges to the status quo.

Given the severity and urgency of the problems emerging from the post-WWI capitalist system however, there was a growing concern among some social reformers that collaborating with state or industry-funded programs which, although sought the improvements in material conditions promoted cooperative harmony between state and society and capital and labor would only reinforce a social system which primarily benefitted the interests of the capitalist class. Thus, it was felt that only movements which were independent of the control of the exploitative paternalism of capitalists and bureaucrats could provide services that were suited for the advancement of both urban and agricultural laborers.

However, the independent labor education movement ultimately sought more than pragmatic concerns of educational opportunity and improved material standard of living. The discourse of labor education activists also reveals a concern for social reforms which considered both the structure of communal interconnectedness and ethics, as well as the internal psychological aspect of self-awareness as a person and an independent person's full development within society. Among those influenced by German Idealism, which had a seminal impact on Japanese social thought during this period, the personal aspect took the form of the development of *jinkaku*, personal self-realization and moral self-cultivation. This self-realization was often articulated through a belief in the need for 'spiritual uplifting.' And among materialists influenced by Marxism, this took the form of class consciousness, awareness of collective belonging to a class exploited by and in conflict with the bourgeoisie. This concern for a holistic ideal of society saw expression in the belief among activists of all stripes including Christian Socialists and Marxist-influenced radicals in the need for the proletariat to free itself from the culture dominated by the bourgeois state and develop a culture conducive to the flourishing of the working class. The creation of a new culture, in fact, became a central aspiration for activists and social thinkers. One of the most important of the labor schools, the Osaka Labor School, idealistically declared in a pamphlet celebrating its ten-year anniversary that, "The labor movement must at the same time be a culture movement... As long as workers, who form the majority of the world's population is left in darkness, world culture cannot progress. Just as we promote the freedom of the workers' industry, we must also advance world culture through labor education" (Osaka Labor School 1931: 11).

However, despite the promising beginnings of the labor education movement which appeared to show a firm commitment to autonomy for the working class outside the state, many central figures in the movement, although by no means all of them, stunningly appeared to reverse course and not only embrace state power in social policy but also actively collaborate with the war-time militarist state in the 1930s and 40s as elite policy makers. This seismic shift in attitudes to state power as well as to society and nation may provide insights into the contours of what is seen as Japan's cooperative, overlapping boundaries between state and society, and the developmentalist interventionism which has historically characterized its effort to shape social thought and political action through policy.

Previous scholarship on state-society relations in Japan and theory on civil society

Pre-war Japanese society has often been perceived as having been thoroughly suppressed by a rigidly hierarchal and interventionist state. Following the Peace Preservation Law in 1925, in particular, which sought to crack down on extremist political thought, the state severely limited the scope of acceptable political beliefs. External pressure from a reactionary state in tandem with the rise of nationalist fervor in the 1930s crushed the fledgling communist movement and coercing many Communist Party members recant. This top-down statist pressure, according to this narrative, also forced the acquiescence of moderates who could have served as a counterbalance to the rise of blind militarism.

However, historical work on the pre-war labor movement most notably by Sheldon Garon has effectively shown that although the state did aggressively seek to mold the minds of its subjects, there was a high degree in which society actively participated in the state's agenda during this period and the way in which calls to limit freedom often came from within society itself (for a synopsis of his work, see: Garon 2003). Future research into state-society relations should further explore the fluidity of the boundary between society and state, as well as the contentious diversity of thought within society and the sensitivity of attitudes to state power based on changing socio-political conditions.

In terms of recent literature on the general theoretical concept of civil society which has steadily grown since the concept experienced a resurgence in Eastern Europe and Latin America since the 1980s, attention has often tended to focus on select politicized elements of organized civil society; namely, advocacy for improved state policy and citizen protest to check state power. This view has been reinforced by the broad influence of Habermas' theory of the 'public sphere.' In his work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* Habermas describes the public sphere as "a realm of social life" which "mediates between society and state, in which the public organizes itself as the bearer of public opinion." The formation of opinion concerning public issues in private settings such as coffee houses and salons and energized through the emergence of print media in the 18th century, Habermas argues that public opinion served to engage in "the tasks of criticism and control which a public body of citizens informally- and in periodic elections, formally as well- practices vis-à-vis the ruling structure organized in the form of a state (Habermas 1989: 136-137)."

The emphasis on advocacy and protest as the primary function of civil society, however, loses sight of other crucial aspects of civil society which impact overall national and cultural trends. Michael Walzer's thought on civil society, on the other hand, provides an often overlooked but crucial insight into the historical roots and the essential underpinnings of a sustainable civil society. Walzer has argued for a more comprehensive view of civil society, defining it as "the space of uncoerced human association and also the set of relational networks-formed for the sake of family, faith, interest, and ideology – that fill this space" (Walzer, 1). Walzer accurately places the concept of civil society within its classical liberal origins and points out that the concept promoted initially by John Locke was the historical product of the acute recognition of the need for tolerance in the face of destabilizing religious conflict in the 17th century. Walzer stresses it is the "non-ideological" aspect of classical liberalism which allows for pluralistic social relations outside of the state. In this view, civil society is a space for socialization and a testing ground where visions of the good are tested and proven, but of course never perfectly satisfactorily settled among competing visions. Thus, given the inherent diversity of values in any society, civil society is "the realm of fragmentation and struggle, but also of concrete and authentic solidarities" (10). Walzer particularly stresses the fundamental role of the mundane and non-political aspects of communal interaction, yet worries that this concept of social betterment is not as compelling and inspiring as other more radical ideologies of social change.

Building on these insights, it also necessarily follows that the maintenance of civil society also calls for the development of skills among citizens to peacefully negotiate differences of values. There is a natural tendency to seek to present subjective values convenient to one's own agenda as objective or universal truth and to justify the use of state power to impose these values on others. This tendency becomes acute and destabilizing during crisis. A pluralistic civil society which can integrate differing worldviews and conceptions of the public good requires groups of differing values and worldviews to accept the legitimacy of others' views and develop strategies within civil society to negotiate subjective differences to peacefully coexist. It is in the interests of social stability, ultimately, for individuals and groups confronted with perceived conflicting interests to respect differences and to refrain from intervening in or coercing the views and social practices of others.

Intellectual undercurrents behind the independent labor education movement

Crucially, this nascent civil society movement which sought to empower the working class by expanding educational opportunity was explicitly opposed to the self-serving paternalism of the bourgeois-controlled state. The starting point for many intellectuals who established educational facilities for the working class was a belief that the entrenched low status of workers excluded them from education and other opportunities.} The emphasis on need for liberation from the "monopoly" of bourgeois control through the spread of knowledge and the extension of education became a central leitmotif among many of these independently established institutions. In the founding statement of purpose Suehiro Izutarō, Tōdai law professor and the pivotal figure of the Tokyo Imperial University Settlement, expounds on the two principles which formed basis of his involvement the Tōdai settlement and his academic legal work: spreading knowledge and informing the creation of new social policy through detailed research of actual conditions on the ground. In the statement, Suehiro asserts that the most tragic flaw in modern society was the complete division of knowledge and labor. Educational opportunity beyond a rudimentary level had not been fully extended to the working class. Though many among the proletariat may have great potential, without education that potential would go to waste. This was in fact a loss for all society. The educated elite, who in fact represent a near monopoly of education, should feel obligated to spread knowledge and work for the benefit of society (Suehiro 1924: 120).

In a later 1932 article, Suehiro projects a more radical tone as his thought on the settlement movement matured. Suehiro argued that public social work was impossible and that social work with any chance of success must be private (Suehiro 1932: 17). Because relief work derived through state initiatives were designed to protect capitalism, no amount of funding thrown at the problem could keep up with poverty (5). Settlement work and the broader education extension movement held the promise to attack the social distortions plaguing the country. Yet, the movement could not be mere charity or simple relief(7). What must distinguish it was the recognition and promotion of the human character of the workers and their self-awareness. Self-awareness of their *jinkaku* would rise up through access to knowledge in a pedagogic system where worker pupils would be treated as peers and friends. Echoing the ethos of many activists during the period, he argued that the labor education movement should be an enlightenment movement, yet one that did not instill bourgeois values. Rather, it should facilitate the spread of the necessary knowledge fight exploitation independently. Suehiro ultimately argued for the creation of a movement which sought to eliminate social flaws through self-initiative. The settlement educational extension movement would provide the proletariat with the knowledge to fight exploitation from the propertied classes themselves (17).

The founding statement of purpose of the Osaka labor school led by Christian socialist Kagawa Toyohiko and which saw participation from members of the Tōdai settlement stated this aspiration for independence more forcefully:

We seek to liberate education from the monopoly of the propertied classes, learning that belongs to the propertied classes is like a castrated horse. Consequently, this is an insult to the god of learning Minerva. We have a right to study. We must take back the universities that the propertied classes have denied us. ... In our labour school we have no red gate like the Tokyo Imperial University, nor do we have a grand lecture hall or men with a special high status. But in this, there is a truth which is like an unsullied pearl: That there are free, unrestrained youthful scholars. Those teaching and learning have impetus and power. Even if the place of learning may not have a deep theoretical underpinning, if we were to ruminate, we know that all of these truths must become our blood and flesh (Osaka Labor School 1922: 7).

Likewise, for philosopher Tsuchida Kyōson whose ideas sparked the ‘free university’ movement largely targeting rural villages, the cause of “the monopolization of society” by the bourgeois state was “the monopolization of education.” To eliminate this monopoly and work towards the ‘autonomous control of education,’ there needed to be an effort to break down the tendency towards centralized authority in education. As local people become involved in education, Tsuchida envisioned a citizen-run program to give the opportunity to freely receive a university education by opening classes primarily during the winter. He hoped that this would promote self-education and, ultimately, a more egalitarian system conducive to the full development of all members of society. In 1924, Tsuchida who believed that Labor education as part of Taisho democracy wrote that: “The Free University is a space where laboring members of society can, in order to individually participate in the cooperative formation of society, independently engage in learning which they can use for the rest of their lives. It is a social education facility where they can engage in social and autonomous learning.” Thus, for Tsuchida education for the basis of democracy and of society. Yet, this demanded that education must “create independent *jinkaku* (Ogawa 1989:85).” A reform of culture itself, for likeminded social theorists, aimed beyond assuaging the material conditions of the working class. They sought a systemic change which would fully meet the complex range of human needs. It was clearly prompted by economic and cultural dislocation, the tearing of the traditional social fabric of interpersonal relationships.

As suggested by these writings, activists strongly felt that independence from a social structure designed to suit the interests of the bourgeois required more than mere improved policy and institutions, or the development of workers’ job skills to ensure a higher material living standards. There was a need to cultivate to their internal development. This holistic view of social independence from capitalist exploitation led to calls for the proletariat to conceive of its own society and culture to transcend the restrictive paternalism and outright exploitation of the uneducated laboring masses. This sentiment is articulated clearly in the writings of Ōbayashi Munetsugu, the head of social bureau of the Ōhara Social Problems Research Institute which influenced the students of the Tōdai settlement. Ōbayashi forcefully rejected the paternalistic efforts to assimilate urban working class or rural villagers into bourgeois society in his work on settlement theory. Articulating his thoughts on centrality of culture for the settlement movement, Ōbayashi wrote in his 1926 *Settlement Research* that, “Culture is not something handed down, but must be created. It cannot be instilled, but must be invented” (Ōbayashi 1926: 7). One expression of this need to create a culture for the exploited masses, was the concept of Prolekult. Prolekult, short for proletarian culture, had a profound impact on various social educators including many in the labor school movement and Tsuchida Kyōson. Prolekult emerged immediately after the Russian revolution and was envisioned as a worker’s education movement to replace antiquated bourgeois culture with a liberated socialist culture designed for a new age. Led by

Alexandr Bodganov and Education Minister Lunacharsky, it sought to return to the 'warm stream' of humanistic Marxism as a corrective to the distortions in what was seen as the 'cold stream' of Engels' rigid rationalism. In soviet Russia, the movement largely became known as an avant-garde artistic movement which saw the participation of influential cultural figures such as the filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein whose later classic films are said to have been indebted to his early experiences with the Proletkult movement (see Mally 1990). However, Japanese exposure to the concepts pursued by Proletkult came through the influence of the available British literature on Proletkult: namely, the work titled *Proletkult* by Cedar and Eden Paul who worked in connection with the British Plebs' League which was absorbed into the National Council of British Labour Schools. Soviet Proletkult saw considerable reinterpretation as it was received by thinkers outside of Russia and radical students influenced by eclectic schools of Marxism in Japan saw Proletkult as a method of realizing Leninism, even though the movement was initially conceived by ideological opponents of Lenin. Communist leader Yamakawa Hitoshi further reflected these sentiments in his response to requests from radical students in Kyoto. In his introduction to a work on Proletkult for the Kyoto Federation of Students (*Gakuren*), Yamakawa explained that the promise of Proletkult as an educational method was "mental liberation from the bourgeois exploitation" through independent education (Yamakawa 1976: 172-173).

On the point of culture, Ōbayashi makes a point that others in the movement saw as paramount. Settlements and other efforts to create a new egalitarian society and culture, he argued, should provide opportunity, not inculcate a set ideology or customs. The ultimate purpose of the social education through settlements was to provide the opportunity to create a culture suitable for the people's own rhythms and needs of life (Ōbayashi 1926: 9). Suehiro endorses this concept and argued that the settlement is a family which should not coerce the values of other members (Suehiro 1932: 15). Tsuchida Kyōson eloquently makes this argument and in fact makes it a center piece of his educational philosophy. A free university should aim to provide education from the perspective of 'laboring members of society.' The goal of this education was the creation of Proletkult, a proletarian culture. Yet, this proletarian culture should be distinguished from Marxian Proletkult. When choosing what kind of culture to accept and what view of life and society to create, the youth should observe which thought system provides spiritual sustenance. Only then, Tsuchida argued, could they grasp the truth of Proletkult. Importantly, Tsuchida Kyōson recognized the importance of not only vague notions of culture but also of traditional religion and incorporated this into his distinctive interpretation of Proletkult into his Free University movement. Tsuchida argued that Soviet Proletkult was a mirror image of a bourgeois culture whose values were molded by coercive propaganda. In his *Theory on Proletkult*, he argued, true Proletkult would not inculcate specific values or encourage the adoption of any particular worldview. The purpose of Proletkult would be to instill in all segments of society the critical faculty to choose one's own values whether they be socialist or bourgeois. This critical faculty would ultimately also provide the ability to critique power (Tsuchida 1924).

Furthermore, Tsuchida sought to identify a universal culture which transcended class conflict through the cultivation of *jinkaku* and he was eloquent in his emphasis of the need to develop the full spiritual potential of those members of society who had no control over the culture that they lived in and were deeply impacted by. In his writings, Tsuchida imagined a movement built through the expansion of free universities and the grassroots emergence of a new inclusive culture through religion; namely, an idealized social Buddhism. Deeply influenced by German Idealist thought, Tsuchida viewed a kind of modernized religion as the ideal instrument of integrating the needs both individual and community. He argued that any religion would suffice, but the Buddhism was the most culturally compatible with Japan (Miyazaka 1968: 471; Ōki 2013:53-53).

This non-ideological legitimization of differing subjective worldviews and the importance of their peaceful co-existence through voluntary cooperation and negotiation of differences is parallel to Walzer's liberal concern for civil society to act as a testing ground for a range of worldviews and perceptions of public and private good. The pitfalls of divisive and intolerant factionalism for the long-term sustainability of a movement can be gleaned from the experience of free university movement as it began to spread and be adopted by different groups. For example, in the case of the Ina Free University in southern Nagano Prefecture, student radicals who formed a splinter group from the organization which had established the free university, perceived Proletkult and worker's education as strictly Leninist. This group was highly critical of the free university's stance on the separation of education and political agitation and ultimately become an oppositional force contributing to the stagnation of the institution (Nakano 1990: 179; Miyazaka: 470-475).

Role of empirical surveys in social action

Autonomy for the working class was the theoretical ideal, yet simultaneously there was a growing influence from important new ideas about the necessary process of undertaking successful social work and about how social ideals could best be concretely implemented. Social education as an autonomous social and even cultural movement, was made possible by crucial new intellectual trends in which those studying society felt compelled to move beyond an older emphasis among professors and intellectuals on armchair abstractions towards a new engagement with systematically discovering the actual conditions of society on the ground. Labor education activists and thinkers had begun to integrate the insights of social science and its emphasis on empirical analysis of actual social conditions as well as the greater socio-economic and historical trends producing them through systematic surveys of living conditions in order to accurately develop a response in both state policy and civilian social work. In Suehiro's statement of purpose for the Tōdai Settlement, he argues that Japanese academia was too often in the thrall of foreign armchair theory. Therefore, an analysis of the actual state of the society was necessary to carry out effective social work. Suehiro's denunciation of armchair theory was a reflection of an important intellectual current at the time. Tokyo Imperial assistant law professor Hirano Yoshitarō, who was central to the Teidai settlement's labor school in its initial years described this ethos of which he imbued as a student himself:

...the young students exclusively strived to find universal principles, and justice and righteousness. These young students recognized that the world was changing and they wanted to grasp the fundamentals of this change... As a student and part of the 'Science and Democracy Movement' we who sought principle and justice and progress, knew that we must devote ourselves to discovering the fundamental laws of social development and the research of the creation of a new future society, and we needed to find a specific field of study to achieve this, we chose the construction of a new law, especially to begin by surveying the actual conditions of the workers and agricultural laborers' intense, close struggles in order to grasp the true reality of it. (Hirano 1977, 74).

The power of both survey analysis to customize social policy and of civil society to act as an auxiliary to the state to accomplish tasks which the state struggled to implement was not lost on many policy makers. Surveys also provided opportunities to engage the proletariat and undertake educational activities. Home Minister Tokonami Takejirō of the Hara cabinet appointed Takano Iwasaburō an economics researcher at Tokyo University to carry out a survey of conditions in a working class of Tokyo. He received help from a number of Shinjinkai members who seized the opportunity to form the Tsukishima Labor Discussion Association and a consumer cooperative, both of which served as

crucial precedents for the Tōdai Settlement. Weekly gatherings led by the student activists providing learning groups on Marxist thought. As Andrew Gordon shows, this interaction between intellectual activists and workers who attended these meetings encouraged workers with interest in the labor movement to devote themselves fully to the movement for social betterment. One example is Saitō Tadatoshi who became leader of the Ishikawajima Shipyard Union (Gordon 1991: 152-3). Furthermore, Takano Iwasaburō was later to be member of the board of the Japan Labor School and a leading researcher at the Ōhara Social Problems Research Institute showing not only the interwoven nature of these endeavors but how the importance of empirical analysis. The liberal Hamaguchi Osachi was even more eager to rely on civil society groups to cooperate in solving housing and other social problems plaguing urban areas. Not surprisingly, Suehiro Izutarō sat on an advisory board to Hamaguchi on social work and which prioritized the application of empirical analysis through surveys. (Jiji Shin-po 1926.7.17)

This attitude toward a greater need for an empirical, research-based understanding of the root cause of social problems coincided with and was reinforced by the pressing importance of recognizing on the Left of the actual needs and aspirations of the people. Activists came to fully grasp that the efficacy and sustainability of social reform efforts had to be tapered to actual demands rooted in the conditions of the target populations. One of the most influential proponents of this idea of speaking to the needs of the people as they saw them, was Yamakawa Hitoshi, the theoretical force behind the Rōnō-ha of the Communist movement in the pre-war period, and one of the leading intellectual lights of the Tōdai Settlement. In contrast to other vanguardist factions among leftists who primarily argued for the creation of a Communist Party founded on a thorough theoretical basis, Yamakawa stressed the importance of ‘entering into the people’ and understanding what they wanted to make practical, incremental gains towards a more just society. (Yamakawa 1922).

Moderate reformers also saw that the lack of direct contact with and mutual understanding of the true needs of the working masses was a blindspot for intellectual elites. Tsuchida Kyōson became increasingly disillusioned with philosophers who showed no interest or capability in integrating the nature of actual society into their worldviews in order realize ideals of progress, lamenting that as long as “academic philosophers fail to take an interest in the concrete and social problems or fail to have any notion of the new demands among the people, they cannot hope to be philosophers for today and tomorrow even with their fine and strictly logical constructions of thought.” (Soviak 1990,92). Tsuchida, who frequently traveled to various regions to lecture, also hoped that “politicians and other notables would try harder to grasp the actual wants of the people.” (Tsuchida 1935:168).

Implementation through institutions

In an effort to implement these ambitious, (even quixotic) goals, left-leaning labor schools, settlements and free universities pursued different strategies. Whereas labor schools sought to independently provide educational empowerment primarily through night classes by educated local volunteers, albeit with an effort to equalize relations between students and teachers, settlement houses provided a more complete, holistic effort at socialization and provision of services. The movement in Britain and America had been initiated by Christian socialists who had sought to provide the opportunity for the socially isolated poor and the middle class to meaningfully interact, and for the poor to be inculcated in middle class values. Between 1917 and 1926, Japan saw the establishment of 43 new settlements founded with a range of affiliations including Christian and Buddhist missions, nation-

al and local bureaucracies, big business, semi-governmental organizations and universities (Kinzley 1991: 89).

The Tōdai Settlement grew out of a response by Tōdai law professor Suehiro Izutarō and his students to the humanitarian crisis following devastating earthquake in 1923. Suehiro cooperated with other activists, notably the Christian socialist reformer Kagawa Toyohiko to help provide basic relief services, yet as the winter drew near leaving many poor residents in Tokyo vulnerable Kagawa urged Suehiro to establish a permanent organization to help the poor. Suehiro and a core group of student volunteers decided to found a settlement house along the lines of Toynbee Hall in Oxford as a base for “university extension” and student social work. Subjects included sciences and humanities and were carried through classroom lectures with follow up sessions with tutors (Hirano 1973: 118-120). This pedagogical approach was common on labor schools at the time and was influenced by the case method system of the Dalton Plan popular among Taisho-period self-learning enthusiasts as well as Prolekult through the work by Eden and Cedar Paul.

Although classes at the Tōdai Labor School were given at night after exhaustive working days which resulted in flagging attendance numbers, student lecturers and tutors claimed that they were pleasantly surprised to find that the factory workers studying at the labor school absorbed complex Marxist theoretical concepts of surplus value and exploitation from their own experience far more rapidly than the Teidai students who struggled to comprehend Marxism from academic texts (Edayoshi Isamu in Hirano:118). The Tōdai Settlement Labor School ultimately came to be considered during this time to have been the largest and most successful of the left-wing labor schools in Tokyo (Smith: 143).

Beyond workers’ education through its labor school, the settlement’s central activities included a consumer cooperative, a continuing education program for adults which became open to male and female students, child care and education for the children of local factory workers, a medical clinic and, alone among settlements in Japan, a legal consultation section for workers which benefitted from the direct participation of Tōdai legal scholars (Tōdai Setsurumento Nenpou 1926). The proletarian orientation of student activity was clear. Members of the settlement, called settlers, included one charismatic and radical leftist student leader of the *Shinjinkai*, Kikuchi Tadao, and Kinoshita Hanji, who was one leader of a faction of students who seceded from the *Shinjinkai* with the belief that the proletariat movement should be led by workers themselves and not directed by intellectual elites (Smith 1971, 103). The settlement also provided rooms for Teidai students to live among the working poor of the Honjo ward (Tōdai Settlement 1926).

Like its British counterparts, the Tōdai Settlement and other settlement houses settlements established in connection with the Christian socialist reformer Kagawa Toyohiko in Kobe, Osaka and Tokyo boasted cooperatives, labor union offices, credit unions, schools, and medical clinics. According to Mark Mullins, “In 1928. . . the Shikanjima Settlement Building in the factory district of Osaka was sponsoring the meeting of the Nurses Mission of the Friends of Jesus, Toyo Spinning Company Trade Union meetings, Metal Workers Union, a Day Nursery for children, a weekend program for adolescent boys, and a trade union meeting for Koreans in the neighborhood” (Mullins 2004: 17).

According to Hirano, who soon took the reins of the labor school from Suehiro, the location in Yanagishima district of the Honjo ward was targeted for its specific demographic profile. Not only was the area among the poorest sections of Tokyo, its population was predominately young and unaffiliated with labor unions. Many of the larger firms at the time had begun to unionize or had developed means to represent workers. Workers of smaller factories, however, were often left with limited opportunities to organize. The Yanagishima district had hosted primarily small to mid-sized companies

which could be organized into mixed industry unions. Hirano relates that some employees of small scale companies had already entered the 'Tokyo Gōdō' a mixed industry union associated with the Hyōgikai, a militant Leninist union supported by Teidei settlers and the Shinjinkai. According to Hirano, it was necessary for these workers who were "searching for guidelines for the fight" to come to the settlement labor school "because it was a time when they needed to know what kind of union to create, how to collectively negotiate, under what circumstances should they strike, how to resist and take precautions against the police when constantly being shadowed by officers while still advancing the labor union movement (Hirano, et al. p.115)." During this early period of the settlement labor school, the Hyogikai enjoyed considerable success doubling its membership to nearly rival its more moderate competitor, the Sōdōmei. However, the Hyōgikai's aggressive striking ultimately proved self-destructive. In 1926 alone, 5,000 of its members were detained and by the late 20s the organization was thoroughly marginalized (Garon 1986: 114-118).

The Teidai Settlement's efforts to encourage this radical labor movement faced debilitating obstacles from increasingly repressive labor laws which restricted the framework in which the settlement could openly operate. Labor laws allowed the formation of unions but gave businesses the right to sue unions for damages incurred during strikes. In 1925, the Peace Preservation Law, the "blatant execution of militarism," which forbid the creation or facilitation of organizations designed to change the national polity or challenge the system of private property and placed the settlement in a permanently precarious position. Living under perpetual fear of a police raid one settler claimed to have burned enough secret documents to have "boiled his bathwater a couple of times (Edayoshi Isamu in Hirano:116)."

Another key area of the settlement's aim to extend knowledge for the benefit of the working class was the human relations legal consultation department. Although assisted by student settlers, the free legal service was predominantly provided by professors Suehiro and Hozumi who alternated eight hour shifts on Tuesdays and Thursdays each week consulted on labor contract disputes. Hirano explains that the emphasis on the term 「人事」 was intended to reflect the reality that providing effective counseling required an attempt to look beyond the mere legal code to the fundamentals of the experienced conflict. Suehiro believed that the written laws of the period did not recognize the needs of the proletariat and could not regulate the kinds of problems that the underprivileged actually faced. Thus, current law could not benefit workers even if legal knowledge was spread to them. Suehiro viewed the settlement as an opportunity to be exposed to real social conditions and grasp the true underlying laws guiding society in order to modify law to better fit the needs of the working class. In the words of Hirano, Suehiro believed "that new laws which ignore the demands and hopes arising from everyday life are totally unacceptable" (Hirano: 118).

Tsuchida Kyōson's movement on the other hand, the free university movement, was by design focused on more rural communities than the Teidai Settlement and grew out of Tsuchida's interactions with locals in an effort to have more interaction with the grassroots. The first free university grew out of an invitation by local and teachers in Ueda, Nagano Prefecture to give lectures on philosophy in 1920. During his lectures, Tsuchida lamented the lack of opportunities for adult education. Tsuchida criticized the state of government controlled education for primarily seeking to weave youths into an ideological system meant to form the young as national citizens where they are told that the highest good achieved as an individual is as a national subject and not the development of their own subjective ideals and aspirations. Apparently deeply moved by Tsuchida's vision for independent education, local education activists sought to realize Tsuchida's plan and establish a school. The first class was held in November of 1921 in an old building owned by a temple. The blackboard was borrowed from a

local company and the desks from a local farmer. Tsuchida invited his academic friends from the University of Kyoto to teach classes on a range of subjects and philosophy classes were even once held by the famous philosopher Miki Kiyoshi. Taught subjects included psychology and natural science, but it appears that literature was consistently the most popular choice with roughly 50 local attending each year. In 1922, two more free universities opened Niigata, and over the course of the next few years began to expand across the country. A central organization to provide structure to the movement, as well as a publication, were established (Miyzaka 1968: 460-463; Ogawa 1989: 85-87).

Tsuchida's free university movement was taken up by local activists who reveal the way that the efforts of social activists such as Tsuchida, Kagawa, and Suehiro themselves were not purely elitist but did in fact deeply reverberate throughout society. One important example of this convergence of reformist aspiration among both the educated classes and the non-elite was Shimonaka Yosaburō. Shimonaka grew up in poverty and was forced to work as he studied. Although he was unable to finish primary school, he was able to become a school teacher and formed Japan's first teacher's union the Keimeikai. Shimonaka is perhaps most remembered as the founder of the publishing firm Heibonsha, but he also established a free university during this period as well as after the war showing the resilience of the free university concept (Lincicome 1999: 349-350).

In describing the founding spirit of the Keimeikai which operated his free university, Shimonaka reveals many elements common to the independent labor education movement: "We hold as our ideal the realization of social life based on true human life. Therefore, we affirm all publicly just needs, and respect all social existences. This association is the called the Keimeikai and, through the students engaged in the extensive work of enlightenment, our enlightenment movement will serve as a catalyst of for the pioneering of a new civilization." (Miyazaka :488).

The issue of ideological conversion and its significance for understanding Japan's cooperative state-society relations

Following the Manchurian Incident in 1931, and the nationalist fervor that it triggered, there was a sea-change even among the far left in attitudes towards state power and the most appropriate method of bettering the lives of vulnerable underclass. Although not all left-wing activists were uniform in the trajectory of their thought in the 30s, many former progressives were in fact swept away in the tide of history and enthusiastically embraced state power and even ethnic nationalism. One example which may provide insights into this at time halting and ambiguous shift is the Marxist influenced writer Murobuse Kōshin. Like other leftist activists and intellectuals in the 1930s who sought real gains for the working class such as Asō Hisashi, Murobuse was struck by the social potential of the military's 1934 pamphlet detailing its ideas for war preparation titled, *The Fundamentals of National Defense*. Produced by the Newspaper Section of the Army and sent out to be printed in newspapers across the country and Manchukuo, the plan advocated for the securing of the livelihoods of the people in order strengthen army and nation. It in part helped change the perception of the military's role in society among some social activists who succumbed to the allure of state power and ethnic nationalism. Murobuse Koshin, who felt himself close intellectual kin to Tsuchida Kyōson with similar philosophical leanings, began a conversion to the right during the time of the '34 publication of the military reform plans. Murobuse noted the plan contained elements of fascism but also promoted a just economic system built on moral principles which could transcend the profiteering and rent-seek-

ing inherent in capitalism. The “time of the political parties had ended, and the era of the military has begun” he ominously concluded (Murobuse 1934.10.10).

Law professor Suehiro was also impacted by these social trends and his students noted with disappointment that he seemed to grow silent on leftist issues following the Manchurian Incident, though it is unclear whether his views changed or he felt it wiser to be more guarded in a more jingoistic atmosphere. Nevertheless, following the outbreak of the war with China in 1937, Suehiro began to show clear changes in his legal and social thought. Although initially concerned that wartime economic mobilization would lead to a decrease in the standard of living for workers, by 1938 Suehiro was convinced of the need for the state to engage in planning the economy. Suehiro wrote that: “As liberal economics has been proven to be unreasonable in the real conditions of our time, only a proper planned economy can conceivably provide proper economic management without obstacles to the social economy. Not only that, but we must abandon the principle of liberty and construct the economy on the principle of stability” (Suehiro in Ishii 2015:121).¹

It is important to note that what brought about Suehiro’s change of heart concerning the role of state power and its benefits for social policy was not only the necessities of war mobilization and its consequences. Suehiro was also reacting to the widespread perception of a ‘deadlock in liberal economics’ [自由経済の行き詰まり] stemming from the worldwide depression. As his 1932 article explicitly shows, Suehiro had been highly critical of the unjust capitalist economic order of the time and argued that it was natural for workers to demand a better system. Yet, Suehiro had advocated autonomy from the culture of the propertied classes and the state that acted in their interests, and he presented the settlement movement as a way of achieving this through the development of an individual worker’s independent sense of *jinkaku*. Suehiro’s embrace of an interventionist role for state power in the late 30s then was a fundamental shift to the belief in the powerlessness of social actors to independently work to improve society. The phenomenal success of Nazi Germany and the influence of their economic and social ideology surely played a role, although Suehiro was critical of the muddy thinking of their legal philosophy and what he saw as the opaque nature of their worldview (Ishii 2015: 118).

Other left-wing activists can to a similar position, yet through different routes. Suehiro’s shift in economic thought was mirrored by former student activists such as Masaki Chifuyu, a Tokyo University student and member of the Shinjinkai who volunteered as a tutor at the Tokyo University settlement labor school but later became a ‘reform bureaucrat’ in the Cabinet Planning Board. Like many economic reformers at the time who had studied progressive economics, Masaki sought to reformulate German corporatist economic thought in an effort to overcome the individualist self-interest of capitalism and build a new system for the sake of the collective public good. As the mayor of Kamakura in the late 1960s, reflected back on his motives for collaborating with the wartime state:

“If this bottom-less war continued, we had sense of anxiety about the lives of the people. So we researched the Nazi social economic structure and called for reforms along the lines of strengthening the control economy. But looking back now, it isn’t really clear to me whether we maintained a leftist critique of war or rather merely felt that a luke-warm capitalism wasn’t good enough [to maintain the living standards of the people] and needed to strengthen war-time controls” (Masaki 1971:18).

Yet, perhaps to a degree that Masaki was not fully conscious of, Masaki’s economic thought ultimately converged closely with the ideals of reformist military and bureaucracy which enabled cooperation.

¹ I thank professor Hans Martin Krämer of Heidelberg University for introducing me to this source.

Many former settlers and other former labor activists not only sought to harness the powers of the state but fully absorbed the romantic nationalism touted by the military. Asano Akira, once an important student leader of the settlement labor school and a Communist party theorist, became a military propagandist in Indonesia under the influence of the Pan-Asianism of Okakura Tenshin. Furthermore, Finance Ministry 'reform bureaucrat' Mōri Hideoto played a pivotal role in establishing the settlement's legal advice department, became one of the leading pan-Asianist technocrats following the outbreak of war with China (Mimura 2011:134). Mōri promoted the idea that hostilities with China were an opportunity to reconstitute the Japanese empire's socio-economic system and reorient it from a profit and conflict-based individualism to an organic communalism. As opposed to liberalism, which Mōri viewed as based on abstract, supposedly universal principles, Japan's new, more concrete conception of the economy would be formed with people as the center, or as the subject of economic activity (134-137). In using the term 'people's economy,' [国民経済] Mōri fit a pattern among other reform bureaucrats like Masaki Chifuyu, progressive economists such as Arisawa Hiromi and even military ideologues who sought to develop a socio-economic blueprint based on the public good rather than private interest. The concept of a 'people's economy' emerging from the protectionist thought of 19th century thinker Friedrich List, and recalibrated from the contemporary corporatist and organicist thought of Othmar Spann and Friedrich von Gottl-Ottlilienfeld appears to have further served as a bridge between the Marxism in which they were deeply steeped in as young intellectuals, and a control economy required to maintain a total war system as the conflict with China descended deeper into quagmire.

During the time he spent as a student settler who lived in a room on the second floor of the settlement house to be closer to the factory-district workers, Mōri had given a speech along with professor Suehiro and others to promote the settlement and recruit for new members at Tokyo Imperial University. Mōri spoke of his experiences teaching at the labor school and the speeches were presented under the banner of not only extending freedom and equality for those that could not enjoy it but also 'entering into the masses' and 'grasping what the masses want.' These slogans had been popularized by Yamakawa Hitoshi and his 1922 treatise *A Change of Course* and had been one of the guiding principles of the early Tōdai Settlement. (Teikokudaigaku Shinbun: 1924.01.03.). The emphasis put on understanding the actual needs of the working masses implies that their immediate needs as well as their personal aspirations were not self-evident. There was a potential range of different possibilities necessitating not only effort to discover these needs, but also respect for their diversity.

Nonetheless, by the 1930s Mōri's nationalist turn led him to completely reject any sense of pluralism. What can be interpreted as the realist views of Yamakawa Hitoshi who had urged the labor movement in his 1922 treatise to target concrete, partial successes to work towards a socialist society may help explain a degree of continuity in thought on reform from the time of Mōri's youth. Whatever the case, it is clear that by the late 1930s Mōri imagined a totalism which "embraces all aspects of the people's livelihood and can be used as the principle of action in one's life" (Mōri, in Mimura: 134). This totalist blueprint for action would weave together all dimensions of national life including economy, thought and society. (134). Mōri further elaborated that, "Division and conflict within an organization inevitably disrupts and fragments a single policy and consequently makes it unscientific and unable to display the total, scientific, planning character of totalism" (Mōri, quoted in Mimura 200). Thus, it was clear that there was no space for pluralistic civil society.

Even Ōbayashi Munetugu, the settlement theorist who had, along with Tsuchida Kyōson, so energetically promoted the separation of education and political propaganda to facilitate subjective difference of values in a pluralistic society, came to reject a degree of pluralist autonomy for ethnic cultural

unity bound by the state for security and stability. And like Suehiro and Mōri, this process was motivated by a search for a guarantee of the people's welfare which led to the adoption of state economic and social planning as well as imperialism.

In his writings on social policy in the war years, Ōbayashi shows important continuity in thought from the Taishō idealism his emphasis on autonomous self-governance and advancement of welfare through education, as well as his rejection of the fractured self-interest of liberalism. Yet, he now argued liberation and development in terms of ethnic nations instead of class. The welfare of the people can only have meaning when connected to the totality of society. For Ōbayashi, this ultimately meant that concrete realization of public welfare for any ethnic nation, its happiness and security, must be seen as ethnic welfare which depends on their nation's tenaciousness and independence (Ōbayashi 1944: 197). According to Ōbayashi, the ethnic nation gives an individual a base, it is a unified spiritual body. Yet, this he believed did not entirely eliminate individuality. For him, "the individual was within the ethnic total, as the ethnic nation preserves internal values, autonomous life, and moral independence, it renews and develops the spiritual life of the ethnic total" (197). Nonetheless, despite nominally accepting individual values the spiritual unity promised by ethnic nationalism necessitated a high degree of uniformity, thus largely negating civil society.

The ideological conversion of Shimonaka Yosaburō in the 1930s from international progressivism to ethnic nationalism and pan-Asianism showed a similar consistency in concern for the downtrodden and in his anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism. Yet, his worldview was now articulated in the exclusivist rhetoric of an essentialized ethnic culture. Despite his earlier advocacy of an anarchist vision reform for the working class, Shimonaka came to view the military and agrarian nationalism as the central buttress for a new society which could supersede capitalism. The military and agrarian nationalism could also, in his view, 'overcome modernity,' or develop a modern system beyond an Western dominated culture of liberal capitalist social relations. In this strategic shift, Shimonaka reformulated his reformist thought on rural self-government and independence in tandem with current intellectual trends. Yet, after 1935, he went farther and appears to have converted to full blown Emperor worship (Usami69). Shimonaka ultimately utilized his accumulated experience in education to develop total war education policy to assist war mobilization in the late 1930s. He became a member of the Imperial Assistance Association and the Koa Dōmei led by general Hayashi Senjūro, who had been War Minister during the army's publication of the Fundamental of Our National Defense.

These examples of former progressive activists turning their backs on the cornerstones of civil society serve as cautionary tales for the abandonment of pluralism and independence from elites. The allure of ethnic nationalism appears the be way it effectively essentializes the nature of members of national groups and expands the realm of what is universal, or general, among the nation allowing greater justification for state power to enforce these values as if they objective, universal truth. Undoubtedly, wartime nationalism was also driven by a visceral egoism. Ōbayashi insisted that the Greater East Asian War not only represented an opportunity for other east Asian ethnic nations to militarily, politically and culturally to form the nucleus of their ethnic welfare and wellbeing, the war "was evidence of the Japanese ethnic nation's invincible strength" (Ōbayashi 1944: 197).

The attractiveness of exclusionary nationalism often tainting more radical reformist ideologies but which provides identity and clarity during crisis recalls the observation by Walzer that, "There was a kind of heroism in these projects-a concentration of energy, a clear sense of direction and an unblinking recognition of friends and enemies (Walzer 10). But that this mentality leads to the demise of civil society and with it, a mechanism for pluralistic integration of a diverse society through voluntary negotiation rather than state coercion.

In the end it was Tsuchida who perhaps was the most consistent in his commitment to the ideals of civil society. Whereas many of his colleagues began to look to the military, or bureaucracy, Tsuchida continued to critique language from the military he thought was dangerously divorced from reality. Singling out War Minister general Araki Sadao known for his militant romanticism, Tsuchida attacked what he saw was the invented mythology of the far-right which would ultimately heighten conflict with other powers (Tsuchida 1933: 200-208). Tragically, Tsuchida Kyōson, who had always been sickly, passed away in 1934. With his death Japan lost an important intellectual and moral compass which could have served a beacon for an alternative solution to the crisis of the 1930s.

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JAN NIGGEMEIER

The Other Labour Movement

COMMUNITY UNIONS AS STRATEGIC FIELD CHALLENGERS

IN JAPANESE LABOUR ACTIVISM

Abstract: Organised labour in Japan is characterised by a dominance of corporatist enterprise unions. Despite a growing casualisation and precariousness of work as well as signs of a legitimacy crisis due to a decreasing unionisation rate, most mainstream trade unions remain hesitant to expand their scope of representation beyond their core constituency of regularly-employed workers. In comparison, locally-based or social group-constituted community unions strategically target these niches in focusing on the organisation of the growing group of irregularly-employed, as the most vulnerable workforce. Often inspired by examples from abroad and with a strong rooting in civil society, these grassroots-level organisations of labour activism develop innovative and much more flexible forms of workers' representation. This research paper elucidates transformations within the broader Japanese labour movement along examples of diverse forms of community unionism. It aims to find out, how factors of decision-making about organisational structures, approached agendas as well as applied tactics vary among different examples of community unions. The strategic role of community unions as *challengers vis-à-vis* mainstream trade unions as *incumbents* within the organisational field of the Japanese labour movement is analysed through the application of the theoretical model of *Strategic Action Fields* by Fligstein and McAdam (2012), which intersects between social movement- and organisation-theory. This research paper argues that Japanese community unionism is not a coherent phenomenon but shows up variation in strategic decision-making and field positionality. As field challengers, they point out imitable alternatives to the established corporatist trade union system and thus can eventually initiate revitalising field transformation of Japanese labour. This paper's analysis is based on in-field research conducted in Japan, including interviews with organisers and members of trade unions and several different community union organisations as well as participant observation within group activism.

Keywords: Labour revitalisation, community unionism, Strategic Action Fields, Japan

Kitas darbo judėjimas: bendruomenių sąjungos kaip strateginiai varžovai Japonijos darbuotojų judėjime

Santrauka: Korporatyvinių įmonių asociacijų dominavimas – būdingas organizuotos Japonijos darbo jėgos bruožas. Mažėjant profesinių sąjungų narių skaičiui, dauguma pagrindinių profesinių sąjungų nesiruošia plėsti savo atstovaujamų sričių ratą plačiau nei jų reguliuojamos pagrindinės nuolatinių darbuotojų rinkėjų apygardos. Tai vyksta nepaisant augančios atskirties ir darbo nestabilumo bei legitimumo krizės požymių. Palyginimui – vietinės arba iš socialinių grupių sudarytos bendruomenės yra strategiškai nukreiptos į šias nišas ir susitelkia į pažeidžiamiausias, nuolatinio darbo neturinčias grupes. Dažnai, įkvėptos užsienio pavyzdžių ir tvirtai įsitraukusios į pilietinę visuomenę, šios organizacijos plėtoja novatoriškas ir daug lankstesnes darbuotojų atstovavimo formas. Atliekant šį tyrimą nustatomos platesnio Japonijos darbo jėgos judėjimo transformacijos, pateikiami įvairūs bendruomeniškumo formų pavyzdžiai. Siekiama išsiaiškinti, kaip sprendimų priėmimo procesas skiriasi tarp įvairių bendruomenės sąjungų ir kokios yra jų sąsajos su organizacinėmis struktūromis, darbotvarkė ir taktiniais sprendimais. Strateginis bendruomenių sąjungų kaip pagrindinių profesinių sąjungų varžovų vaidmuo analizuojamas taikant Fligstein ir McAdam (2012) strateginių veiksmų lauko teorinį modelį. Jis žymi susikirtimą tarp socialinio judėjimo ir organizacijos teorijų. Šiame ty-

rime teigiama, kad Japonijos bendruomenės nėra nuoseklus fenomenas, tačiau atskleidžiama strateginių sprendimo priėmimų ir pozicijų įvairovė. Kaip jau esamos profesinių sąjungų sistemos varžovai, šie judėjimai gali inicijuoti Japonijos darbo rinkos organizavimo pokyčius. Šio tyrimo analizė grindžiama atliktu tyrimu Japonijoje, įskaitant interviu su profesinių sąjungų organizatoriais ir nariais bei keliomis skirtingomis bendruomenių organizacijomis, taip pat remtasi dalyvių stebėjimu grupių veiklose.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: darbo atgaivinimas, bendruomenių sąjunga, strateginiai veiksmai, Japonija.

Introduction

In recent years, enterprise-based trade unions, as the most common form of organised labour in Japan, experience a situation of crisis. As elsewhere in the world, the globalisation of goods, markets and workforces creates new challenges for the established patterns of industrial relations in Japan. Since peaking in size in the 1970s, the unionisation rate of the Japanese workforce has been steadily decreasing and collective bargaining has become surprisingly institutionalised¹. At the same time, there are important transformations on the labour market. The traditional “Japanese model” of stable, life-time employment becomes less relevant even inside larger companies. A steadily rising share of workers find themselves in “irregular”, i.e. temporary and often precarious forms of employment². Terms such as *burakku kigyō* (“black enterprises”) and *wākingu pua* (“working poor”) have become signifiers of worsening working conditions and a growing precariousness, especially among the most vulnerable parts of the workforce in recent years. Cases of severe employment contract violations, workers’ mistreatment and unjust workplace discrimination have found their way in the mass media and reached a shocking climax in several widely-reported cases of death and suicide from overwork (*karōshi*, *karō jisatsu*).

Japan’s mainstream, enterprise-based trade unions are aware of these pressuring issues. Nevertheless, they appear to mostly shy away from taking a strong stance towards tackling these urgencies. Instead, as highly institutionalised entities, they mostly resort to strategically protecting their own constituencies, i.e. “regular” employees’ (*seishain*) interests, while refusing or hesitating to engage in a more inclusive representation of the constantly growing share of “irregular” employees (*hiseishain*). These insufficient efforts to change and revitalise make mainstream trade unions’ legitimacy as an adequate representative of the Japanese labour movement questionable. Contrary and in reaction to these inadequacies and the hesitance or inability of mainstream unions to revitalise, Japan experiences vivid developments of alternative forms of labour activism on the grassroots-level. Locally or regionally based so-called “community unions” flexibly embrace a broader, social movement-type agenda, experiment with new forms of organisation and action repertoires.

The development of Japanese community unions has been the object of several studies in the Japanese and English language literature (Oh, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). Oftentimes, the focus of enquiry has been put on comparative investigations of Japanese grassroots-level forms of labour activism with similar developments in other regional contexts (Suzuki, 2008, 2012; Takasu, 2012) or on the specificities of particular community unions in Japan (Royle & Urano, 2012; Urano & Stewart, 2009). Community unions’ role in the wider context of social movement activism have been analysed for example by Nakajima (2010) and Weathers (2010). The relevance of community unions in the context of labour revitalisation is however still largely unclear. Previous research on Japanese community union-

¹ The unionisation rate reached a record-low of 17.4% in 2014, whereas numbers are considerably higher in larger enterprises and lower than the average in small and medium enterprises. After a peak of strike activity in the mid-1970s (more than 10.000 strikes in 1974), in recent years, strike action is nearly untraceable (425 strikes in 2014) (Oh, 2012b)

² In 2014 record-high of 37.4% of all employees were considered as so-called “irregular employees” (JILPT, 2016)

ism did for example not yet address the question, if these peripheral forms of labour activism provide feasible alternatives to Japan's cathartic mainstream union system and thus challenge the status quo or if through specialisation and niche-filling they serve a mere complementary function in the labour movement. Based on a comparative analysis of three examples of grassroots-level union groups, I argue that Japanese community unionism is not a coherent phenomenon but shows up variation in strategic decision-making and the ways of how the field of Japanese labour activism is challenged. As the first step of a larger analysis on field behaviour and transformation of Japanese labour activism, this article conceptualises community unions as organisational entities and focuses on their strategic decision-making about their initial approach and positionality in the field.

The article is structured in three parts: After a brief contextualisation of the research through a reflection of labour as a social movement, the theoretical framework of *Strategic Action Fields*, which helps to conceptualise trade unions as strategically acting organisational entities, is reviewed and the research's methods are discussed. The second part provides necessary background information about the enterprise unionism's maintained field dominance, despite an experienced crisis of legitimacy. In the third part, the strategic behaviour of different community union organisations as challengers in the field of Japanese labour activism will be analysed and compared along a range of tactical categories before arriving at an evaluative summary and outlook of their impact on the field.

Labour as a social movement

Theoretical perspectives of industrial relations conceptualise trade unions primarily as economic entities with the inert purpose to streamline collective bargaining and to contain most forms of disruptive industrial conflict. It is however striking that historically-speaking, labour represented one of the most visible and influential parts of progressive social movement activism, also in Japan. Moreover, earliest approaches in social movement and particularly collective action theory³ were strongly stimulated and influenced by observations of industrial conflict. Through the institutionalisation of organised labour in most national contexts, the research focus however shifted towards so-called *New Social Movements* (see (Habermas, 1981) and Melucci (1989)), which attempt to re-appropriate the lifeworld from colonising systemic and technocratic pressures, including institutionalised "old labour", as Munck (1999) remarks.

However, according to Munck (1999), the "crisis" experienced in trade unionism should be considered as a crisis only in its specific, narrowly-based form of self-interested "mainstream unions". The labour movement itself is far from redundant or obsolete in today's neo-liberal politico-economic environment, entailing increasingly irregular and exploitative employment conditions. Although the neo-liberal restructuring of economies intensified the hostility towards trade unions and led to serious bargaining asymmetries in line with a rising precariousness of work, unionisation remains as a historic and direct response to labour conditions. As Waterman (1999) remarks, while the structure and organisation of capital have changed considerably, trade unions tend to retain their past-determined forms and characters, resulting in a weakened connection and mismatch between employment relations and worker representation. For labour revitalisation, it is necessary to overcome these established organisational patterns of trade unions and to re-integrate the social movement-aspect of organised labour. With the emergence of other civil society organisations in the peripheral field of

³ Snow, Soule, and Kriesi (2004) define collective action as "any goal-directed activity engaged in jointly by two or more individuals (...) [entailing] the pursuit of a common objective through joint action – that is, people working together in some fashion for a variety of reasons, often including the belief that doing so enhances the prospect of achieving the objective"

labour activism, it thus becomes mandatory to re-engage in the debate about perceiving labour as a social movement. This resonates with a broader conceptualisation by Fantasia and Voss (2007), who understand the labour movement to

comprise both legally recognized and formally sanctioned institutions (like trade unions, political parties, and works councils) as well as less formal groupings of workers and their allies (industrial actions, organizations of strike supporters, dissident movements within unions, cultural forms, etc. (2007, p.2518)

Waterman (1999) terms the concept of *Social Movement Unionism* (SMU) as a new, much more inclusive form of trade union organisation which, within a time of crisis for traditional trade unions, engages in struggles around multiple facets of “labour”. In his definition, SMU furthermore align with political partners or other civil society movements, reject hierarchical and technocratic methods of operation and pursue a democratic and pluralistic transformation of society under a framework of global solidarity. While bringing back the focus on the political aspect of social activism within organised labour, Waterman’s concept of SMU thus provides a useful base to analyse the phenomenon of Japanese community unionism.

Reconstructing theory: *Strategic Action Fields*

Numerous endeavours of fruitful cross-discipline fertilisation between organisation and social movement studies have made it clear that both fields can not only speak towards, but also learn from each other (see for example Campbell (2005)). Whereas the field of organisation studies, through a thorough scrutinisation of the behaviour, mechanisms and organisational repertoires of the involved collective actors, bears important answers to the *how* of movements, approaches from social movement studies allow to gain insights about aspects of strategic agency and the transformation of organisations. Reflecting on this theoretical synthesis, Clemens and Minkoff (2004) describe the either suppressing or facilitating function of “organisation” in social movement activism, while at the same time acknowledging that the extent of this function differs according to a wide diversity for organisational forms. While institutional environments determine opportunity structures for the involved organisations, they themselves can induce change. *Logics of appropriateness* can be broken up through strategic framing, diffusion and recombination processes by organisational entities. Parallel to their structural or normative embeddedness, the involved organisations deliberately cultivate networks and develop strategic leadership. Thus, both theoretical fields have in common an aim to inquire about collective strategic action in the form of actors jockeying about strategic advantages in a meso-level social order.

Building on Bourdieu’s *Field Theory* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), Fligstein and McAdam (2011, 2012) propose the idea of *Strategic Action Fields* (SAFs), which in comparison to other meso-level concepts accounts a greater role of strategic agency of the involved actors in the building of new institutions⁴. SAFs are defined as

⁴ As a critique towards the overly structural focus and neglect of the role of actor mobilisation in previously dominant political process models, McCarthy and Zald (1977) develop an earliest meso-level approach of *Social Movement Industries*, to describe a population of social movement organisations, which address a common social issue and hold relatively similar goals, like business corporations within an industrial sector. Within neo-institutional theory, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) define *Organisational Fields* as “those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products” (1983, p.148). They describe organisations’ homogenising tendency through coercive or normative isomorphic pressures as an explanation for the reproducibility and stability of fields and thus downplay the aspect of transformative agency, even if organisations act in the role of “institutional entrepreneurs”.

"[...] the fundamental units of collective action in a society. A strategic action field is a constructed meso-level social order in which actors (who can be individual or collective) are attuned to and interact with one another on the base of shared (which is not to say consensual) understandings about the purposes of the field, relationships to others in the field (including who has power and why), and the rules of governing legitimate action in the field." (Fligstein & McAdam 2012, p.9)

Thus, comparable to a *Social Movement Industry*, a SAF incorporates a plethora of different social movement organisations in any given issue-area, such as the labour movement. SAFs itself are the product of social construction processes. Field membership is based on subjective criteria, field boundaries can be shifted and shared understandings characterising a field, such as focal issues, hierarchies, rules and interpretative frames are developed by its members. As such, the theoretical approach targets the inter-relations between field actors, which range from competition to co-operation and focus around the struggle for power, influence and legitimacy. In contrast to previous neo-institutional approaches, which focus on the convergence and stability of fields, the approach of SAFs understands them as dynamic arenas of constant change and transformation. Instead of directly confronting other field actors, the involved organisations and actors engage in a constant "jockeying" about the best positions. In accordance with the earlier theorisation on social movement stakeholders by Gamson (1975), Fligstein and McAdam (2011) differentiate two central actors in a SAF:

Incumbents are "actors who wield disproportionate influence within a field and whose interests and views tend to be heavily reflected in the dominant organization of the SAF". Incumbents generally have a preference of preserving or expanding their established roles in the field, their position often becomes "locked-in" and the institutional environment restricts their adoption of alternative perspectives. For challengers on the other hand, such a situation often means a dilemma: While they strive to change the status quo of the field, their peripheral position and their survival in the field in many cases depends on field stability. *Challengers*, on the other hand "occupy less privileged niches within the field and ordinarily wield little influence over its operation. While they recognize the nature of the field and the dominant logic of incumbent actors, they can usually articulate an alternative vision of the field and their position in it". Changing field opportunities open niches for challengers to strategically strengthen their position and thus to transform the field. On the other hand, Walker (2012) emphasises that while disadvantaged social movements apply new and unfamiliar tactics and strategically frame and position their claims, at the same time "targets of social movements have considerable strategic capacity of their own, and utilize their disproportionate resources to their advantage" (2012, p.12) to maintain the status quo in a field.

Lending from Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) and the *sources of strategic capacity*-approach by Ganz (2000, 2009), Fligstein and McAdam (2012) describe *social skills* as the "cognitive capacity for reading people and environments, framing lines of action, and mobilizing people in the service of broader conceptions of the world and of themselves"⁵. Through the tactical application of *social skills*, field actors thus strive to either create, reproduce and maintain social stability or to initiate field transformation through the innovative development of collective identities, political coalitions and specific interests. The creative recombination of the existing organisational repertoire in a society in an attempt to optimise the mobilisation potential around material or moral

⁵ The idea of social skills resonates with the evolutionary concept of organisational entrepreneurship, described by Rao, Morrill, and Zald (2000). Fields are thus not only aggregates of different organisations but as a constitutive framework of institutional opportunities and constraints provide space for emerging organisational actors who as strategic actors "[...] play key roles in framing new practices, mobilizing resources (including constituencies), and garnering legitimacy for new forms" (2000, p.274).

solidarity as well as “grievances that represent a factual, perceived or even manipulated injustice” is summarised by Clemens (1996) as a process of *bricolage*.

To understand the strategic behaviour of community unions as organisational entities on the grassroots level vis-à-vis other, more established labour organisations, the usefulness of a reflection on the totality of different actors in Japanese labour activism as a SAF is apparent. Corporatist enterprise unions and their national federations, as the main representatives and most powerful actors within Japanese organised labour, evolved as field incumbents. Their incumbent status is expressed not only in their dominant role but furthermore in their well-established position within different institutional structures in the economic and political system as well as their wide socio-cultural acknowledgement as leading actors within Japanese industrial relations, which they attempt to defend and maintain. Community unions, on the other hand, question the status quo of corporatist trade unionism since their earliest development and act as in a challenger role from the periphery of the field of Japanese labour activism. Informed about power asymmetries in the SAF of Japanese labour, community union organisations as “socially skilled” actors can be expected to apply innovative tactics of strategic framing and bricolage to make use of their marginalised position. While constantly reconfiguring their strategic orientation, tactical decision-making defines (a) their agenda-setting, (b) their operational repertoire, (c) their organisational format as well as (d) their positionality in the field. This article’s comparative analysis of community unions’ strategic field behaviour focuses on a scrutinisation of these four factors.

Methodological approach

Three community unions, which differ in their origin, their strategies of field approach and positionality towards other field actors have been analysed and compared. While these cases have been selected among a larger population of grassroots-level trade union groups to account for the wide variation in community unionism, the limitations of generalisability on the phenomenon must be kept in mind. The application of a case study allowed for “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” as Yin (2005) describes. A case study research design furthermore opened up the possibility to process multiple-source data. Ayoub, Wallace, and Zepeda-Millán (2014) emphasise the benefits of such methodological triangulation in explaining that “by utilizing multiple methods, data sources, theories and/or observations, scholars can better account for and overcome the limits and biases inherent in studies that employ a single method, theory, data source, or observer” (2014, pp.67-68). Qualitative interviews with different community union groups conducted in Tōkyō during 2016 and 2017, provided valuable insights about the strategic decision-making processes in focus. Della Porta (2014) notes, that “the qualitative interview is [...] particularly useful when we wish to analyze the meaning individuals attribute to the external world and to their own participation in it, the construction of identity, and the development of emotions” (2014, p.230). The extensive immersion within several grassroots-level labour groups not only created the necessary trust with informants to also address also controversial issues and problems in grassroots-level labour activism. It furthermore created opportunities to conduct participant observation within group meetings and public events. Observed trends and findings were furthermore validated through several discussions with knowledgeable experts in the field of Japanese labour and through the qualitative content analysis of written documents, such as pamphlets and other union publica-

tions. Through qualitative content analysis, the collected data was scrutinised along the above-introduced factors of field behaviour.

Japan's depoliticised labour movement: Enterprise unions as field incumbents

Before entering the analysis of the challenger role of community unions, it is necessary to reflect on the incumbent role of established forms of organised labour in Japan. The overly-developed emphasis on enterprise-based labour organisations has been repeatedly emphasised as one of the most striking characteristics of Japanese industrial relations (Carlile (2005); Gottfried (2015); Jeong and Aguilera (2008); Kume (1998); Sako (1997); Williamson (1994)). Throughout the pre-war era, despite severe government repressions, Japanese trade unionists had aimed for the organisation of stronger industry-based, horizontal unions. However, during military rule collective labour front actions under the heading of *Sanpō* defined the enterprise as the unit of workers' organisation and fostered the paved the way for the development of Japan's vertical union model (*kigyōbetsu kumiai*). After turmoil and a brief upsurge of independent trade union activities in the immediate post-war era, the elites' strategy of a de-politicisation of labour through the denial of a horizontal union structure marked a critical juncture for the Japanese labour movement. Jeong and Aguilera (2008) explain that "unlike its Western counterparts, the Japanese state was capable of eradicating the horizontal union movement at the onset of the collective bargaining era because of its late-developer advantages as well as Cold War politics, resulting in an enterprise union system in Japan" (2008, p.99). Although the establishment of national trade union federations such as *Sōhyō*, *Dōmei* and later *Rengō* originally followed the aim of increasing the influence and leverage of centralised union organisations, the characteristic system of enterprise-centred unionism remained largely intact.

Enterprise unionism, based on a hierarchical internal structure, firm-wide solidarity and the strive for consensual over conflicting interactions is seen as one essential part of the "Japanese-style" management system, in line with lifetime employment and seniority wages, which enabled the rapid post-war recovery and high economic growth in the following decades. Kume (1998) describes Japan's enterprise-based trade union system as the "world's most decentralised union structure" and points out several of its peculiarities. On the one hand, most enterprise-based unions strive for an equal representation of white- and blue-collar segments of the workforce and provide effective channels for mediation and communication to avoid conflicts between management and employees. However, on the other hand, enterprise unions remain exclusive for regular employees, whereas part-timers, contract workers and other atypical employees are usually not represented. Furthermore, within Japan's dually-structured economy, union activities are heavily focused on large companies in "modern sectors", whereas only a small fraction of the workers employed in small or medium enterprises were organised in unions. Japan's liberal trade union law allows as few as two people to organise as a trade union⁶. On the one hand, this enables numerous small unions, representing the special interests of particular groups of employees to form in one enterprise. On the other hand, it also opens up the possibility to initiate sympathetic "secondary unions" (*daini kumiai*) by the management itself, to compete with powerful left-wing unions.

Traditionally, Japanese industrial relations are characterised by a combination of confrontational and co-operative interactions, in which management and employees in principle share the basic goals of achieving a stable company growth and an improvement of employment conditions for the core

⁶ The "Labor Standards Act" states that it is mandatory for employers to engage in bargaining with a union even if the union only represents a single worker in an enterprise (Suzuki, 2012; Takasu, 2012)

workforce simultaneously. Sako (1997) explains that their enterprise-base makes Japanese unions comparatively weak in bargaining with the management. However, inside the “firm as community”, union members enjoy rich privileges to actively participate in firm management channels, which makes clear why their prior goal is to protect and preserve the existing employment principles (see also Nakajima (2010)). Through so-called “productivity coalitions”, unionised workers associate their personal interests and wellbeing with the firm’s survival and growth. In a facilitative role as firm-internal economic actors, enterprise union groups thus co-operate with the management and have influence on decision-making about operational and production issues. The 1955-established “Japan Productivity Center” serves as a labour-management consultation system parallel to the regular channels of collective bargaining. Developed out of an agreement between management and employees, it specifies terms of firm-internal consultations about managerial issues between the two parties and is aimed to ensure fairness in the distribution of productivity gains while at the same time facilitating industry-wide technological exchange.

Another specificity of Japanese industrial relations which has been introduced in 1955 is the centralised framework of springtime wage offensive (*shuntō*). In these ritualised rounds of bargaining, enterprise unions and firm management engage in negotiations, which are guide-lined by centralised demands made by the trade union federations. Through near simultaneous collective bargaining, enterprise unions’ negotiation power is strengthened. While first bargaining rounds are settled in large companies, the achieved results serve as benchmarks for consequent negotiations about wage levels and working conditions within small and medium enterprises. The streamlined system of collective bargaining in Japan is an effective tool to render unnecessary almost any confrontational industrial action, such as in the form of strikes. It ensures close collaboration between trade unions and firms’ management through establishment of both-sided dependencies and through the constant exchange of information.

Considering the increasing workforce casualisation, enterprise unions are not only pressured to tackle a deteriorating power base within their companies, as a growing share of employees is not represented in these structures and union groups thus often don’t hold a necessary majority in the workforce to support their bargaining claims. Furthermore, the role of enterprise unionism as a legitimate representative of basic labour rights and as a stakeholder of working class interests in society in general becomes increasingly questioned.

Labour revitalisation at the grassroots level: Community unions as field challengers

Apart from the highly-institutionalised structures of enterprise unionism, community unions developed on the grassroots-level in the periphery of the field of Japanese labour. Despite their relatively small organisational strength⁷, community unions have established a prominent profile in the mass media, as their activism is often associated with headline-making court cases over employment disputes and their representatives are frequently cited as knowledgeable experts in labour issues, as Weathers (2010) describes. In comparison to enterprise union organisations and their industrial and national federations, community unions put a strong emphasis on the tackling of urgent labour issues including the unfair treatment of workers based on employment status, but also numerous other issues of work-related and social justice advocacy. Though legally registered as trade unions, Japanese

⁷ Community unions mobile around 30,000 members, which equals to roughly one per cent of the total trade union membership in Japan (Weathers (2010)).

community unions can be best compared to North American *workers' centers*, as Royle and Urano (2012) explain.

A uniform opinion on how to determine the phenomenon of community unionism in Japan is so far lacking. The actual English-language terminology of *komyuniti yunion* ("community union") has first been used by Japanese trade union organisations which developed on the grassroots level in the 1980s to emphasise the novelty of their approach to organise workers in contrast to the dominant enterprise-based trade unions (*kigyōbetsu rōdō kumiai*). However, the phenomenon of organised labour groups apart from Japan's characteristic corporatist enterprise unions encompasses a wider range of organisations, several of which originated even in the 1960s. In spite of the early focus on mobilising employees in trade union groups on the enterprise level, tendencies to organise workers on a regional or industrial base have already existed in the post-war consolidation phase of Japanese industrial relations. Oh (2012a) describes that as part of a strategy to overcome the dominant role of enterprise unions and to increase the relevance of centralised union structures, the left-leaning national union federation *Sōhyō* started to engage in the establishment of so-called "general unions" (*gōdō rōso*) in the 1960s. Through the setup of regional labour councils (*chikurō*), and a large-scale dispatch of professional union recruiters on the local level, *Sōhyō* strived to organise employees of different enterprises within specific industries or regions. At the beginning of the 1980s, the nationwide number of general unions had reached about 1,300 (Suzuki, 2008). The admission of already existing enterprise-based union entities into "general unions" was not restricted in general, as Takasu (2012) emphasises. Endeavours of the *chikurō* movement in the first place however targeted the mobilisation of previously unorganised workers in small and medium enterprises and specifically in irregular forms of employment. Although *Sōhyō* played an important role in the initiation and professional as well as financial support of the development of a local union infrastructure, the union groups themselves acted as relatively autonomous organisations, employing their own staff (Suzuki, 2008). With the unification of *Sōhyō*'s trade union activities under the framework of the newly-founded national federation *Rengō* in 1989 however, the development of regionally-based trade unions experienced a strong backlash. *Rengō* prioritised the strengthening of an industry-based system of labour organisation. In effect, most of *Sōhyō*'s regional labour councils were dissolved or transformed into new types of regional organisations, which were however much smaller in size and did not enjoy the same degree of autonomy as under *Sōhyō*. Neither the personnel nor the financial situation of regional union structures could be sustained and eventually the support from the national level for the regional labour councils was disbanded. This imposed the existing union structures on the regional level with the necessary decision about their future status. Whereas several general unions decided to continue their activities independently in an altered format, others strived for a stronger affiliation with the new regional union infrastructure in the *Rengō* network.

The history of "community unions" in the actual, narrower sense can be traced back to the 1980s, when apart from enterprise-based union groups, trade union organisations with individual membership (*kojin kamei*)⁸, irrespective of the employees' home-company, emerged in several localities throughout Japan. The grassroots-level organisation model gained popularity especially since the formation of *Rengō* in 1989. Whereas the earliest community unions of this kind developed out of the legacy of previous *Sōhyō*-initiated regional labour councils (*chikurō*), many of the later followers of this organisational pattern were built on strong coalitions with civil society organisations. In 1990, *Komyuniti Yunion Zenkoku Nettowaku* ("Community Union National Network", CUNN) evolved as

⁸ On their website CUNN defines the concept of community unions as "trade unions, rooted in regional society, in which part-time workers, contract workers, foreigners, anyone as an individual can become a member".

an umbrella structure on the national level representing 74 independent community unions with about 15,000 affiliated members and serving as a platform to communicate and coordinate the actions of the often very small union groups. Many of the remaining *chikurō*-organised union groups also gathered under the framework of CUNN and thus, in name transformed into community unions.

Mapping the field of community unionism in Japan

After an exemplary portrayal of three cases of Japanese community unions, empirical findings out of a comparative enquiry along the different, above-introduced aspects of strategic behaviour (agenda-setting, action repertoires, organisational structures and field positionality) are presented and discussed. This leads way to an evaluation of community unions' role as challengers in the field of Japanese labour activism and an outlook towards further research.

The Tōkyō-based *Shitamachi Union* ("Downtown Union") does not refer to a single union group but is the name of a network of three independent community unions (*Edogawa Union*, *Kōtō Union* and *Sumida Union*). Founded in 1984, *Edogawa Union* attempted to continue the regional organising patterns which were pursued in the *chikurō* (regional union council) movement and developed a new model of labour organisation based on individual instead of enterprise-based union affiliation of union members. Perceived as a wayfarer of grassroots-level labour organisation and as a positive example of successfully bridging civil society and labour activism, *Edogawa Union's* novel community organising model was adopted by more and more local organisations throughout Japan in the following years. While rejecting any affiliations to mainstream trade union national centres, *Shitamachi Union* acts as one of the initiators of CUNN and through these channels engages in frequent exchange with other community unions. Locally based trade union groups like *Shitamachi Union* have not only been able to achieve local recognition as both labour advocates and community activists, but in coordination with other community union groups furthermore developed a system of different specialisations. For example, as one organisation within the *Shitamachi Union* network, *Kōtō Union* for example emerged out of advocacy initiatives for Chinese *Nikkeijin* returnee workers and still focuses on activism in this area.

Shutoken Seinen Union ("Metropolitan Youth Union", hereafter *Seinen Union*) has been formed in 2000 in the attempt to mobilise young precarious workers in the Tōkyō area. *Seinen Union* originates as a subsidiary union group of *Tōkyō Jichirōren* ("Tōkyō Federation of Prefectural and Municipal Workers' Union"), a trade union organisation focusing on irregular employees in the public sector, which is affiliated with the left-leaning national trade union federation *Zenrōren*. Nevertheless, most union members of *Seinen Union* are employed in the private sector, among others in fields such as fast food, small retail, service and publishing business. The union group received media attention through their successful engagement in several unfair dismissal cases against major fast food chains in Japan. Due to the large share of contingent workers among the union members, who often are not able to regularly pay their membership fees, *Seinen Union* faces constant financial struggle. To secure its operation, the union set up a network of external supporters as fund-raisers.

The Tokyo-based *Purekariāto Union* ("Precariat Union") has been formed as an independent organisation in 2012 and engages in the mobilisation of young and part-time workers. Nevertheless, their definition of "precariat" is not exclusive to certain income groups but encompasses all forms of insecure and instable work relations in contrast to "traditional" employment forms. In comparison to other community unions, *Purekariāto Union* puts an emphasis on engaging not only in counselling activities of individual labour disputes but furthermore strives to achieve the active organisation of a

functional union structure of precarious workers as long-term members to increase the group's political leverage. Recently, *Purekariāto Yunion* raised attention with their successful support in one extreme case of workers' mistreatment (*Arisan Māku Hikkoshisha*). Apart from the union's engagement in traditional labour issues, the group also advocates several more specific issues and for example puts a lot of effort in awareness-raising about workplace discrimination of LGBT / sexual minority workers.

Strategic agenda-setting: Targeting niche issues

Whereas Japanese enterprise unions act as core employees' delegates in institutionalised collective wage bargaining processes with the company's management, they usually don't address individual wage-related struggles or other forms of employment disputes. Community unions, in contrast, explicitly target the resolution of individual labour disputes, such as violations of employment contracts, unpaid overwork hours, severe working conditions, unjustified layoffs and harassment at the workplace. It is in these predominantly small-scale counselling activities where community unionism's particular strength lies, as Oh (2012b) argues. Community union organisations however don't want to be perceived as simple "service providers" or a *kakekomi dera* ("temple refuge") for struggling employees. In their attempt to not only resolve individual disputes but at the same time to raise societal awareness of these issues and to improve precarious workers' perspectives in the long term, *Purekariāto Yunion* for example applies the catchphrase *kakekomi dera kara toride e* ("from temple refuge to fortress"). This highlights their focused efforts in workers' empowerment "to avoid a *whack-a-mole* game situation" of prolonged precarity through the mobilisation of larger numbers of affiliated workers and the achievement of organisational strength. Many of the community unions under observation do not perceive of their activism as a struggle which is confined solely to the field of labour, but strategically link their claim-making around employment problems to a wider range of societal issues. While taking a general sympathetic stance towards "progressive" topics of gender equality, anti-discrimination, environmentalism, pacifism and human rights, it is interesting to note that several community unions appear to develop a specific thematic emphasis on a single issue. Through frequent exchange and in many cases also personnel overlaps with social movement or NPO advocacy groups, community union activists thus often act as experts on work-related issues such as gender wage equality, precarity of youth employment or migrant workers' rights. This specialisation on single issues can on the one hand be explained by community unions' limited resources and personnel, which make a focused target of key struggles more feasible than setting up a broad agenda on a wider range of topics. On the other hand, it reflects a strategic decision to avoid competing responsibilities with other community unions as challengers in the field.

Diversified action repertoires: Professionalising labour advocacy

Community unions' specialisation on labour counselling activities makes them professionals in this form of advocacy work. Many of the observed union groups develop impressively elaborate step-by-step guidelines of individual labour dispute resolution and through networking with other union groups exchange best-practice information to refine their strategies. Only after individual disputes were not able to be solved through dialogue with existing enterprise-union structures, community unions as intermediaries assist employees in claim-making to the respective labour councils. If even this does not solve the dispute, community unions provide encompassing legal

assistance and representative functions in law-filing towards labour courts. In these steps, many community unions consult with affiliated professional labour lawyers or maintain their own legal experts as staff. Oh (2012b) describes, that the high success-rate of around eighty per cent of supported dispute resolutions by community unions and the oftentimes wide media coverage of striking cases serve as effective publicity to organise new union members and furthermore positively influence the overall working conditions. Another typical example of how community unions directly address the improvement of working conditions is the targeted advocacy for the enactment of so-called “*kōkeiyaku jōrei hō*” (“public contract laws”).⁹ These local or regional legal frameworks mandate public sector entities, such as municipal governments, to ensure wage levels on a certain level higher than the minimum wage for employees of contracted companies. This diversification of action repertoires shows not only their degree of high flexibility to deal with many different employment-related problems, it furthermore stands exemplary for the underlying aim of Japanese community unions to take the strong role of an effective advocate for workers’ actual needs and demands.

New union structures: Redefining “organised labour”

Many community union representatives regard it as a fundamental task to reshape the overall model of organised labour. In pointing out the inadequacy of the dominant enterprise-based union system to deal with today’s problems in the employment system, they advocate towards the development of a solidarity system focusing on individual union member recruitment¹⁰. This limits the possibilities of organisational expansion to an average membership count of about 250 union members. Nevertheless, different community unions’ strategies in organisational structuring show some degree of variation, as the comparison of two cases shows. Whereas on the one hand *Purekariāto Yunion* puts a strong focus on the organisation of members in the form of company-based union entities (*shibu*) and in this regard, re-emphasises established patterns of mobilisation, *Seinen Yunion* on the other hand rejects company-based subgroups and instead emphasises the necessity of industry-wide mobilisation. As providers of ad-hoc counselling services, community unions face the problem of a high membership turnover, because individual members whose dispute cases have been solved, often don’t remain in the union structure afterwards. Through engagement in activities to strengthen union solidarity among its members, *Purekariāto Yunion* tries to overcome this mere service-provider role and to foster as an established union entity. Key figures in the leadership of community unions often have a long experience in labour activism and are able to guide group decisions as experts in their field, as Oh (2012a) explains. Community unions however also emphasise the necessity to overcome hierarchies through horizontal organising and the inclusion of rank-and-file activists in decision-making processes and through this attempt to redefine the meaning of “organised labour” in Japan.

⁹ ILO Article 94, which demands fair payment for public sector contracts is ratified only in certain communes and prefectures but so far not on the national level in Japan.

¹⁰ Japanese trade union law includes several peculiarities, which to a large degree serve as beneficial conditions for the development of community unions. Article 28 of the Japanese Constitution guarantees fundamental labour rights, such as workers’ right to organise and to engage in collective bargaining as well as to conduct strike actions. Building on these rights, Japan’s Trade Union Law (*rōdō kumiai hō*), enacted in 1945, makes it mandatory for employers to engage in wage negotiations if claimed even by a single worker and officially recognises labour unions with as little as two members as legitimate agents of collective bargaining in employment negotiations.

Field positionality: Critique of enterprise unionism

In the role of challengers, community unions approach the established field of Japanese labour activism from its periphery and tactically take a specific position within the field. In this process, newly-forming community union organisations devise different strategies of claim-making and thus construct their collective identity as a critical “alternative” to the status quo. The analysis of different framing patterns of critiques, standpoints, goals and intentions reveals strategies of field positionality. Interviews with representatives and active members of different community union organisations showed strong ideological references to the (international) labour movement’s original standpoints of inclusive solidarity, equality and workers’ individual dignity. Community unions share the common view that generally, these issues are left open by the existing structures of mainstream unionism, which as a part of the established exploitative neoliberal economic framework serves in a complicit role to companies’ management. The degree of severity, with which the status quo of dominant corporatist enterprise unions in Japan is criticised, however varies among different community union groups. Activists in *Shitamachi Union* for example frequently point out the inadequacy of the work-force’s majority representation through enterprise-based trade union organisations and the necessity to (re-)develop alternative structures of organised labour in the near future. In comparison however, *Purekariāto Union* takes a less critical stance and emphasises the potentials of collaborations and connections with the established structures of mainstream unions. Through the formation of Japan Community Union Federation (JCUF) as a separate national network next to CUNN in 2003, several community unions decided to affiliate with the mainstream national federation *Rengō*. This affiliation is motivated by the possibility to gain access to national labour related policymaking, where only *Rengō* is recognised as a legitimate representative of organised labour.

Conclusion

Established patterns of organised labour in Japan are facing a situation of weakened structural power and increasingly questioned legitimacy. As a grassroots-level form of organised labour, community unions aim to overcome the strict enterprise-base of Japanese mainstream unions’ activism. They specifically to represent the demands of precarious workers, such as irregular employees, *freeters* and migrants, who are usually marginalised by the Japanese mainstream unions. Community unions’ flexibility opens up the possibility to approach also rather “controversial” issues, which are not dealt with in other parts of the Japanese labour movement, such as for example, the rights of migrant workers, gender equality at the workplace and inside union organisations, but even less-closely related topics such as environmental protection. Their repertoires of activism focus on the resolution of individual labour disputes but also includes several other forms of advocacy and collective action to raise societal awareness about labour-related problems. In criticising the hierarchical structures in mainstream trade unionism, community unions’ stress on democratic membership participation provides an alternative to established patterns of organised labour. Through their engagement in labour issues left out by the mainstream unions, they position themselves mainly in peripheral niches of the field. Nevertheless, despite these common features, empirical observations revealed that the concept of community unionism is far from coherent. Different community union organisations, though originally established under a similar motivation, show variation in their strategic alignment and positionality within the field of Japanese labour activism. Some community unions maintain their independent stance as a clear alternative to the delegitimised mainstream trade unions. On the

other hand, there are also a number of community unions which strategically choose to affiliate with established mainstream union structures to secure or expand their position and influence in the field.

Building on this initial stage of analysis, in further research it becomes necessary to look at the interaction between the involved organisations in the field. In this “jockeying” process, both incumbent and challengers engage in tactical moves to preserve or expand their position in the SAF. Through reciprocal processes of organisational learning and imitation, actors on both sides constantly adjust and incrementally transform their roles in the field, ultimately resulting in a change of the field itself, possibly in the form of labour revitalisation.

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HAO-TZU HO

Growing Food in a Post-colonial Chinese Metropolis

HONG KONG'S DOWN-TO-EARTH CIVIL SOCIETY

Abstract: Since Hong Kong is stereotyped as a financial centre with high land prices and population density, the absence of local agriculture and dependence on food imports are seemingly taken for granted. Decades ago, agriculture was an important economic activity. However, after signing the Sino-British Joint Declaration which determined Hong Kong's reversion to Chinese sovereignty, the British Hong Kong Government shifted attention away from local food supply to urbanisation and modernisation, opening the door to imports from mainland China and the rest of the world. Today, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government continues with this policy orientation.

Despite limited agricultural infrastructure, policy support or training opportunities, interest in local food has been rekindled in recent years. The enthusiasm for alternative food networks resonates with global trends towards sustainable agriculture and food movement. It has arisen alongside controversial events and social movements regarding food safety, land development, and cultural heritage conservation. Some urban dwellers, many under the age of forty, voluntarily join the ranks of farmers, as new farms have mushroomed all over both sides of Victoria Harbour and the New Territories. Low wages and difficulties in finding a sizable piece of land remain an issue, but more and more customers support farm products from farmers' markets, organic food shops, or 'wet market' vendors specialising in locally grown vegetables. Farm activities, courses on agriculture, and relevant events organised by the informal sector or NGOs integrate people from diverse backgrounds, building a community of like-minded residents of the city.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted with the community since 2016, this paper attempts to furnish some observations on the bottom-up resurgence of agriculture fuelled by civil society in Hong Kong.

Keywords: Food movement, urban agriculture, urban anthropology, community, civil society

Maisto produktų auginimas pokolonijiniame Kinijos didmiestyje: praktiška pilietinė Honkongo visuomenė

Santrauka: Honkongas stereotipiškai laikomas finansų centru, kuriame žemės kainos ir gyventojų tankis yra dideli, todėl neišplėtotas vietinis žemės ūkis ir priklausomybė nuo maisto importo yra laikomi savaime suprantamu dalyku. Mažiau žinoma, kad prieš kelis dešimtmečius Honkonge žemės ūkis užėmė svarbią vietą. Situacija pasikeitė Kinijai ir Didžiajai Britanijai pasirašius deklaraciją, kuria remiantis Honkongas grąžintas Kinijai. Tai paskatino Honkongo Vyriausybę dėmesį perkelti nuo vietinio maisto tiekimo problemos į urbanizaciją ir modernizaciją, atverti kelius importui iš žemyninės Kinijos ir viso pasaulio. Šiandien Honkongo specialiojo administracinio regiono vyriausybė tęsia šią politiką.

Nepaisant ribotos žemdirbystės infrastruktūros, politinės paramos ar mokymo galimybių, pastaraisiais metais susidomėjimas vietiniais maisto produktais sustiprėjo. Alternatyvių maisto tinklų plitimas sutampa su globaliomis tvarios žemdirbystės ir maisto judėjimo tendencijomis. Šie dalykai iškilo kartu su prieštariniais įvykiais ir socialiniais judėjimais, susijusiais su maisto sauga, žemės ūkio vystymu ir kultūrinio paveldo išsaugojimu. Kai kurie miesto gyventojai, daugiausia jaunesni nei keturiasdešimties metų, savanoriškai tampa ūkininkais, naujoms fermoms išdygus abiejuose Viktorijos uosto ir Naujųjų teritorijų pusėse. Maži atlyginimai ir sunkumai rasti didelį žemės sklypą išlieka problema, tačiau vis daugiau vartotojų įsigyja žemės ūkio produktų

ūkininkų turguose, ekologiško maisto parduotuvėse ar iš vietinių daržovių ūkių. Ūkių veikla, žemdirbystės kursai ir su tuo susiję renginiai, organizuojami neformalaus sektoriaus arba nevyriausybinių organizacijų, suburia skirtingos aplinkos žmones, kuria panašiai mąstančių miesto gyventojų bendruomenę.

Remiantis etnografiniu tyrimu, vykdytu su bendruomene nuo 2016 metų, šiame darbe pateikta keletas pastabų apie žemės ūkio gaivinimą „iš apačios į viršų“, palaikomą pilietinės Honkongo visuomenės.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: maisto judėjimas, urbanistinis žemės ūkis, urbanistinė antropologija, bendruomenė, pilietinė visuomenė.

Introduction

This paper will address the food and agriculture movement among the younger generation in Hong Kong in recent decades based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted during 2016 and 2017 with more than one hundred interlocutors. The original research plan attempted to focus either on a village, an organisation, or a district. However, pre-fieldwork investigations at farms in the New Territories as well as at farmers' markets in the downtown manifested the arbitrariness of drawing lines within a movement which is connected by an organic solidarity that transcends geographical or administrative boundaries. Therefore, this research is designed as multi-sited: following farmers, farm workers, farm lovers, activists and their supporters to visit different corners of the city and attend various occasions. Being a non-local researcher who speaks the local language (Cantonese), people were interested in having conversations with me. Benefiting from this, different groups from farms, non-governmental organisations, schools, farmers' markets or informal sectors spread all over the city became accessible. It was this mobility that enabled me to notice the existence of a public sphere in which like-minded strangers found each other and shared about common concerns. At the same time, long term stay in this city widened the scope of my exploration from agriculture movement to many aspects of everyday life. This holistic view reveals a structural correlation between the initiative of local agriculture and other aspects of this society. The social fabric that underlies the current resurgence of an interest in agriculture will be the aim of this paper.

Food growing in an urban setting has become a global agenda. In countries affected by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the risk of food shortage led to the development of local agricultural production and urban farming. Urban farming in Cuba ensured its food sufficiency during the Special Period from 1991 during which time oil and food imports were cut off; in London and Berlin, farming activities have also increased to solve food insecurity (Cockrall-King, 2012). A United Nations Development Programme report (Cheema et al., 1996) proposes that in many cities—including larger ones in China, Jakarta in Indonesia, Singapore, Kampala in Uganda, and Lusaka in Zambia—a considerable percentage of food consumed by city dwellers are grown within the city. However, this seemingly promising solution to food supply in the city is challenged by a phenomenon that farmland, water, and fertiliser become profitable commodities under the neoliberal structure (Nonini, 2014). It has been found out that low-income groups in Mwanza, Tanzania, are unable to become urban farmers because land is unaffordable (Flynn, 2005). Nevertheless, the fact that land is unaffordable, as this paper will point out, contributes to the emergence of food and agriculture movement in Hong Kong.

As one of the most densely populated and expansive cities in the world (Carroll, 2007), land issue has always been a challenging topic. This paper will demonstrate how this issue is entangled with urban food growing, arguing that rather than making political statement or pursuing middle class lifestyle, farming practitioners and supporters in the contexts of this capitalist city are reacting to practical struggles resulted from land issue. Land ownership guarantees political voice, as demonstrated in Wittman's (2009) study in Brazil, where over half of the country's arable land is controlled by 3.5

per cent of landlords whose access to land grants them controls over labour and natural resources. As a result, agricultural movements were launched as a reaction to this power relation. Such struggles parallel Habermas' (1989) concept of civil society.

Civil society is depicted by Habermas as groups of people who spontaneously organise discussions or even movements to react to societal problems. Habermas (1996) positions civil society at the interface of public spheres and private spheres. Public sphere emerged in Europe in the eighteenth century as a buffer as well as a bridge between the state and society (Habermas, 1989). According to him, from their readings in the private spheres (households), the 'educated classes' among the bourgeoisie, such as judges, doctors, pastors and scholars, were influenced by political liberalism. From critiques on art and literature to reflections on the feudal state controlled by small number of individuals, a public sphere was created as a domain in which the educated classes rationally and critically debated public issues and state policies in salons, coffee houses, dining rooms, or on newspapers to contend with a feudalistic social order. According to Habermas' account, the emergence of civil society and public sphere has two factors. One is people who are literate and more or less influenced by liberal thoughts. The other is a structure of power which has societal consequences. This paper will compare the case of Hong Kong to this framework. Although Habermas' theory were proposed decades ago, new research reproduces this approach, regarding social class divisions as inherent in civil society, and affirming that the 'middle class' are the primary resource for such movements (cf. Ellis and Sumberg, 1998; Lee and Chan, 2008; Pilgeram, 2011; Shi et al., 2011; Zhang, 2017). This paper will illustrate that social elites are not the only players of the game. Thompson (1993) already points out that Habermas overlooks the social activities of the 'plebeian society' who usually stand on the opposite side from the bourgeoisie. This paper will also argue that people who are less politically and economically privileged or disadvantaged might exert agency through 'cultural resistance' (Duncombe, 2007), envisioning alternative social forms and challenging the existing structure to create 'counter-hegemonic' cultures; during this process, people acquire the ability to build a community and act as citizens.

Earlier theories summarize citizenship as the membership of a state (Locke 1689, noted in Lazar 2013; Marshall, 1950). However, citizenship has been developed to a multifaceted concept comprising economic, political, and cultural elements. It refers to a status that allows individuals to pursue their ideal life (Lazar, 2013) and claim a space where they 'feel safe' and enjoy a sense of identity (Flores and Benmayor, 1997, p.15). Citizenship is also regarded as a guarantee of social welfare and political rights (Solinger, 1999). Having said this, the guarantee might be at risk when it contradicts other considerations. During the planning of the Alexanderplatz in Berlin, to respond to moral consideration of an inclusive development project, citizens were invited to take a part in the process (Weszkalnys, 2010). However, Weszkalnys (p.133) quotes her interlocutors who criticised that 'in the end, everything is being weighed', and the balance will lean to economic considerations. Therefore, rather than being a given status, citizenship is the outcome of a processual construction through negotiation with state power and other forms of regulation Ong et al. (1996). This paper will further elaborate that citizenship, and another closely linked notion—sense of belonging—are brewed by engaging in actions and discussions in the public sphere about issues that also concern other members of the society. This paper will focus on the public sphere created by recent campaigns for local agriculture in Hong Kong.

Uneasy urban living and the low-income middle class

As Hong Kong is largely covered by high-rise buildings, only in the New Territories is it possible to farm on real land; on Hong Kong Island and the Kowloon Peninsula, except for little plots of gar-

dens between the concrete jungle, food is planted up in the air on rooftop farms. Currently, there are around fifty rooftop farms (Pryor, 2016) and 139 farms in the New Territories (Vegetable Marketing Organization, 2017), excluding farms which are not recognised by the Hong Kong SAR government. During the course of my fieldwork, it became evident that 'farmer' was becoming a chic identity for urban office workers. Some farmers are retired people, now amateur farmers. Some farmers are 'holiday' farmers who engage in farming as a hobby and see it as an effective way of de-stressing, sharing food grown by themselves to friends and families, feeling the joy of watching things grow, or appreciating the beauty of nature. They prefer to consume organic food even paying much higher prices. Many of them support organic food not only due to the concern of food safety but also the consideration for discourses of sustainable development such as environment protection. This is a typical image that studies on urban farming and organic food movement have been presenting.

As mentioned earlier, farming activities in urban settings are often associated with the 'middle class'. Pilgeram (2011) studies American farmers who conduct sustainable farming and concludes that only people from the privileged class can afford to be sustainable farmers. Paarlberg (2009) also argues that the vision of people growing their own food at home or purchasing from local farmers is a fantasy of elite circles in the US. The interlocutors in his research are middle-aged to elderly members of the middle class who received fairly good education and can afford to buy farmland. However, the demographics of sustainable farmers are actually diverse. Even between sustainable agriculture activists and food-security activists, there might be differences (Nonini, 2013). Nonini's study focuses on local food movement also in the US, pointing out that food-security activists are from multiethnic backgrounds and some from the underprivileged groups. They are concerned about food accessibility to low-income groups and racial minorities, as well as the allocation of national wealth. They pay more attention to social injustice. Compared to food-security activists, 'sustainable agriculture activists' tend to be the 'cosmopolitan globalizing elites committed to hybridity and consumer-oriented multiculturalism' (Nonini, 2013, p. 270); they distrust the global food system and the government, but believe in local community and farmers. Nonini emphasises that they are usually white middle-class people who can afford their own farm. The case of Hong Kong, however, suggests that 'middle class' might have many variations. A casual relation between education and wealth might be true in the eighteenth century Europe, as implied in Habermas' theories of civil society and public sphere, but not necessarily valid for the twenty-first century Hong Kong and East Asia in general.

The emergence of low-income 'middle class', or the disappearance of the 'middle class', is conceptualised as downward social mobility associated with an increasing gap between the rich and the poor in Japan, China and the US (cf. Newman, 1988; Atsushi, 2005; Ohmae, 2006; Chan, Ku and Chu, 2009; Fujita, 2016). In Hong Kong, the gap has also been identified and may be traced back to colonial times (Goodstadt, 2005, 2014; Carroll, 2007). A depiction of pre-handover Hong Kong might be mistaken as a report of today's Hong Kong:

[M]odern, high-tech, high-rise buildings juxtaposed to shanty towns, intensely developed areas adjacent to unused and desolate land and well-maintained estates surrounded by dilapidated neighbourhoods (Kwok, 1993, p.111).

This comment underlines significant differences between two worlds in one city. Tension between the two worlds has been scrutinised by analysing the underlying political-economic structure which is identified as the monopoly of land and estate markets by real estate tycoons (Poon, 2011). The author argues that this 'ruling class' forms a good partnership with the government; the grassroots majority is subordinated to the elite minority who have control over land and thus over every aspect of daily life. According to a Hong Kong sociologist Lui Tai-Lok's (2007) widely cited theory of gener-

ations of Hongkongers, the generation born after the 1980s—those under forty years old—are now struggling with skyrocketing housing costs and fewer positions in the job market; higher degrees of education do not ensure better salaries. My interlocutors in this age bracket confirmed this diagnosis and expanded their view of this situation: their cohort were less interested in working for a salary because they would never be able to afford to buy their own places, no matter how hard they worked. Having a college degree is not reflected in one's salary and property ownership. As a consequence, many of my interlocutors in their twenties and thirties move every two years on average because landlords usually raise rents after the two-year fixed price contract on their rental ends. As a result, every time someone mentions moving, people guess immediately that the landlord has increased the rent. A majority of interlocutors of my fieldwork are graduates from good universities, and some even receive postgraduate education. However, when being asked whether they classified themselves as middle class, most answers were negative. Some even described themselves as 'extremely poor'.

In recent years, the emergence of young farmers has drastically changed the landscape of urban farming of Hong Kong. In a city with high costs of living and where farmland is scarce and expensive, not to mention the low financial rewards, farming seems to be a counterintuitive career choice. Most of them are obligated to share household expenses. They often feel strong pressure from parents for not doing a 'stable, financially reliable, and decent' job. Therefore, there is another group of people who are enthusiastic about farming but dare not be a farmer. Young farmers are frequently asked, 'Why do you want to be farmer?' They were usually quite articulate and mentioned globally circulating initiatives including environment and ecosystem protection, education, social justice, and food safety and security. Having said this, it is worth noting that many showed their reflections on neoliberalism and consumerism, and regarded farming as an experiment and campaign to figure out and demonstrate alternative ways of living outside the frame of the ideology of developmentalism and the game of free market in which daily necessities must be exchanged with cash. They wish to learn, in their words, 'the art of growing food', 'to know the basis of everyday life' and to reconnect with nature. According to them, the process saves them from living in innocence, confusion, and without control over their own lives. Many of them expressed their dislike of urban living and a working style that is shaped by neoliberal reasoning, developmental discourse, and a lack of environmental awareness.

Habermas associates the emergence of civil society with the rise of capitalism and the bourgeoisie. However, it has also been pointed out that once capitalistic forces take over the public sphere, its cultural hegemony will homogenize social forms, and prevent the development of alternatives (Chatterjee, 1993). Several young farmers expressed that they feel trapped in a multilayered vicious loop: cooking at home is much cheaper, but it is expensive to buy or rent an apartment with proper kitchen equipment. What is worse, people are too busy earning money to cook for themselves. Dining out seems to be an obvious alternative, but the costs of dining in restaurants are escalating due to rent rates, and the food served is often unhealthy. To repair their health, people spend generously on dietary supplements, or medical expenses. Consequently, the financial rewards for hard work are spent on housing and eating. More money is spent on taking on trips abroad as a popular holiday activity: 'we need to leave to heal ourselves', said a young farmer who used to work in a bank. Also, people spend money on various de-stressing arrangements such as buying gym membership and shopping to recover from work pressures. These activities are all expensive, leaving people no choice but to work harder to sustain themselves.

However, this is not saying that current food and agriculture movement is solely created by frustrated young people who find their future dimming and decide to give up. Rather, the issues and visions that young farmers propose are shared by other members of society from diverse backgrounds,

wide range of age group, and doing various jobs. Practitioners or supporters could be farmers, farm lovers, farmers' market customers, farm visitors, activists, NGO workers or academics. People from different corners and circles gathered together for similar concerns and visions. They met on occasions including farmers' markets and handicraft markets, farm tours, agriculture courses and forums, food-processing and handicraft workshops, film screening, food sharing parties, and local food home cuisine restaurants. Some strangers who met during these events became close friends and even co-established farms and organised more activities. It is believed that the organic market provides space for social movement activities and thereby might strengthen civil society (Allen and Kovach, 2000). In the case of Hong Kong, the 'cultural resistance' (Duncombe, 2007) of groups other than the ruling class is embodied in an exceptional emphasis on the value of local food.

The rhetoric of local food and self-sufficiency

Construction of good food

Food safety has always been the central issue of the agriculture and food movement in Hong Kong (Bai, Wang and Chow, 2015; Chan, 2016). During the 1990s, thousands of Hong Kong residents were impacted by an array of toxic vegetable accidents: to reduce the cost of production and increase marketability, imported vegetables were cultivated with poisonous amounts of pesticides and irrigated with industrial waste water polluted with heavy metals (Siu, 1993). Today, interlocutors of this research always put food safety first when asked about their motivation for growing food by themselves. Even people who do not intend to grow food prefer to shop at farmers' markets or choose organic food from supermarkets. Many of them reflexively told me that this might be the consequence of food scandals reported via mass media every now and then, including imported vegetables overly dosed with pesticides, or 'fake food' made or supplemented with chemical ingredients. This haunting concern creates a 'risk society' in which the loss of security invokes a reintegration into social relations (Beck, 1992). There have been numerous pieces of research justifying an emerging market of quality food in China (cf. Shi et al., 2011; Sirieix, Kledal and Sulitang, 2011). A research project focused on the 'Good Food Movement' in Chinese cities Beijing, Xi'an and Wuhan finds that the exploration of a reliable food system is an initiative to establish new social relations and community resilience in reaction to profit-driven food production (Zhang, 2017).

In the long history of agriculture, there were no such thing as 'inorganic' farming. Methods and principles that fit into organic standards including fertilisation, tillage, and irrigation system are easily found in traditional East Asian societies such as China, Japan and Korea (cf. Bray, 1986; Netting, 1993; King, 1911; Gonçalo, 2011). The terminology 'organic' was not invented until the twentieth century. The term 'organic farming' was coined by an English agriculturist Lord Northbourn in his wartime book *Look to the Land*, in which farm and the farming system are described as a dynamic and balanced living whole (Paull, 2006). Since the beginning of the twentieth century, features of modern agriculture such as mechanisation and the spread of hybrid plants, or the use of synthesised fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides have continued to kindle all kinds of organic movement (Scofield, 1986; Paarlberg, 2009). After two World Wars, chemicals for warfare were repurposed for agricultural use (Fedigan, 2015), scientific research among the international Green Revolution campaign advanced modern agricultural technologies as a respond to concerns of global population growth and the consequent issues of food security (Shiva, 1991; Ross, 2003; Soby, 2013).

During the 1960s and 1970s, organic agriculture was associated with the worldwide environmental movement; at the same time, organic agriculture was popularised by the counterculture and a back-to-the-land movement, primarily initiated in Europe and the US (Kuepper, 2010). Before long, a more integrated expression, sustainable agriculture, was published in the US in 1980 (Jackson, 1985). It not only focused on reducing damage to the natural environment, but also considered the efficient use of non-renewable resources and the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole. Since the 1990s, in the retail market for organic food, consumer demand has been increased by concerns for food quality and safety, and also environmental damage caused by conventional agriculture. There is no consensus on whether organic farming and sustainable agriculture are synonymous or separate notions; organic farming is sometimes regarded as the transitional stage from conventional farming to sustainable agriculture (Rigby and Cáceres, 2001). Both terms are used as core concepts of current local agriculture initiatives in Hong Kong.

From the Hong Kong government's point of view, reliable food means that the production procedures, pesticide and herbicides management, quality of soil and irrigation water are monitored and certificated by governmental or organic certification sectors (Vegetable Marketing Organization, 2008). The government launched the Accredited Farm Scheme in 1994 to encourage farmers to adopt more environmentally friendly techniques and produce safer vegetables. In 2017, the scheme has certified 276 farms in the New Territories and 35 farms which supply the Hong Kong market from Guangdong and Ningxia Provinces. The designation 'accredited vegetable' falls between organic and conventional vegetables. They may be sold at a price 10 per cent higher than regular vegetables (Sit, 2015), but cheaper than vegetables certificated as organic.

According to some young farmers, although 'organic' is a selling point for ordinary consumers, when compared to food that is locally grown, young farmers care less about organic labels. For them, sustainable farming is not equal to organic farming. Organic farming is bonded with organic certificate systems, while although sustainable farming shares some values with organic farming, including avoiding pesticides, plant seasonal food and keep the original taste of food, sustainable farming further reflects upon industrial production of food and global food system that transport food to distant places. Interlocutors of this research—farmers, farm workers, frequent farm visitors and farmers' market customers—stressed that sustainable farming implies less profit-driven and more awareness of environmental and human costs. Based on the same philosophies, their perceptions of good food have the following features.

On the one hand, good food is 'tasty', which means that the food has its original taste. It might appear straightforward, but in the opinion of my interlocutors, it is now rare that 'food tastes like it should'. Farmers argue that most agri-food that can be easily purchased on the market is tasteless due to commercialisation and the industrial process of production. For example, one young farmer explained that the smell of crown daisy is generated to repel pests. If farmers use pesticides, the crown daisy will not have to protect itself, so will not produce its natural scent, and will be tasteless. Moreover, overusing fertilisers to boost plant growth will increase efficiency at the cost of taste of food. On the other hand, food must be grown naturally and environmentally friendly in the right season. For instance, vegetables that only grow in lower temperatures cannot be grown in Hong Kong during the summer. The only option for having these vegetables in hotter seasons is to import from northern provinces in mainland China. To ensure the supply of certain foods out of season, food is grown in a faraway place overly dosed with pesticide and then transported to Hong Kong. It will raise concerns about mistrust of food imported from mainland China. As a result, local and seasonal food, and ideally food grown by themselves or farmers they know, soothes their anxiety about unsafe food. More

radically, some people even refuse to dine in restaurants because they are convinced that food served there is always cheaper food which is imported and grown with chemical and synthetic fertilisers and pesticides.

Only a handful of Hong Kong's food supply is local. According to government statistics, 90 per cent of the total food supply is imported; in 2010, 92 per cent of vegetables come from mainland China, while major sources of fresh fruits are the US, followed by mainland China and then Thailand (Food and Health Bureau (HKSAR), 2017). In 2017, Hong Kong is the fourth largest market for US consumer-oriented agricultural exports (Li, Lai and Yuen, 2017). My observation at a local fruit wholesale market suggests that hardly any fruits grown locally. It is also the case for vegetables. Only specific wet market stalls, street vendors, greengrocers, farmers' markets, or high-end supermarket chains provide a small quantity of locally grown vegetables.

It is argued that imported food displayed on the market in China has the symbolic value of modernity and a Western lifestyle which are the motifs of consumers' preference for purchasing food of non-local origin (Zhou and Hui, 2003). However, in the case of today's Hong Kong, local food is imbued with symbolic meanings and thus has transcendental status compared to other categories of food. This 'localness' of food is more than a geographical concept. Many farmers emphasised to me that soil in different places will generate unique tastes of food. At farmers' markets, farmers believe that the taste of their product is different from the same product displayed on other stalls because they are grown at different farms. Many young farmers believe that the human being is inseparable from the environment, so local food that is cultivated locally is the most suitable for people to consume. Furthermore, local food is the effort of local smallholder farmers. Some farmers put much effort in cultivating the quality of soil because they believe that, compared to fertilisers, soil is the essential element of good food. 'Food is the product of soil, water, air and farmers' endeavours', said a young farmer. Food is therefore personalised and locally embedded. Some farmers even elaborated that 'food is the carrier of local culture and history'.

Implications of food self-sufficiency

Local food has gained a supreme status in Hong Kong society as the outcome of being associated with smallholder farmers, sustainable agriculture and food self-sufficiency. However, it is over-simplified to argue that local food is merely a political statement for a defensive localism. Zhang (2017) compares the food movement in China with Ulrich Beck's concept of 'cosmopolitan risk community' resulting from the industrialisation and globalisation of food production, pointing out that rather than being influenced by a homogenised global community, people are motivated by personal encounters with food crises. Meanwhile, global agenda is taken in reflexively and pragmatically to deal with local circumstances. Likewise, although there are global initiatives such as Community Supported Agriculture (North America), permaculture (Australia), natural farming (Japan) and eco-villages (Europe) circulating in the agricultural movement in Hong Kong, farmers related themselves to these global agenda by emphasising the philosophy of 'think globally, act locally'. Indeed, the philosophy behind promoting local food is rather 'cosmopolitan'. According to young farmers, local food is regarded as good food not only because of the reasons mentioned in previous paragraphs, but also that the production of local food reduces carbon footprints created by long-distance transportation of food; it also pays attention to exploitations of smallholder farmers and environmental consequences imposed on residents at areas polluted by industrial production of agri-food. At the same time, When I asked whether it is necessary for a place like Hong Kong which struggles with land resources to have its own agricultural industry, my interlocutors always answered yes. They emphasised that consuming

good food is crucial for quality of life. I heard many times that young farmers prefer to eat proper food rather than taking medicine if they are ill. Good food is entangled with local food. Therefore, it worries them that Hong Kong city dwellers may have various choices of restaurants providing international cuisines, but due to a complete dependence on food import, people lack the choice of locally grown food. They further elaborate that relying on other places for food means lack of choice and autonomy not only regarding food supply and food quality, but also multiple aspects of everyday life.

This statement of 'food sovereignty' (Edelman, 2014) resonates with the policy orientation of the British-Hong Kong government during colonial times. Before the signing in 1984 of the Sino-British Joint Declaration which settled the future of Hong Kong, the colonial government regarded the development of local agriculture as an important issue for the administration of Hong Kong because sufficient food supply and stable livelihoods for farmers would prevent the influence of communism and ensure the city's independence from mainland China (Potter, 1968; Bai, Wang and Chow, 2015). Water supply was another challenge for the colonial government. From the 1920s to 1970s, one reservoir construction scheme following another was launched to increase the water self-sufficiency of Hong Kong (Hayes, 2012). The 'Bamboo Curtain' between the communist People's Republic of China (PRC) and the British-ruled capitalist Hong Kong paralleled the 'Iron Curtain' of Europe during the Cold War period (Mizuoka, 2017).

The 'Bamboo Curtain' was removed in the 1980s, but nowadays local food production in Hong Kong is somehow still associated with the independence of the city. On a farmers' market organised by a farm, there were not only locally grown fresh vegetables but also mainland imported processed food from farms or factories known personally by the farm workers, who could thus guarantee the quality. However, I was told by the salesperson that mainland imported products were harder to sell because customers might refuse to buy them once they realised the origin. It is true that many farmers and food movement activists are making arguments from the perspective of the city's food self-sufficiency. After the handover in 1997, tension between Hong Kong and mainland China has been noticeable (Lee and Chan, 2008; Tse, 2014). Farmers' and activists' arguments are, somehow, immediately politicised and associated with this tension. It has been argued that local food discourse is part of the resistance to China's influence since the turn of this century (Chan, 2016). As a result, food issues are lifted to the level of nationalism. Nevertheless, jumping from the concept of self-sufficiency to nationalism might be a misinterpretation caused by concentrating on contradictions between Hong Kong and mainland China, and failing to consider other factors resulted from everyday struggles in this city. Externalising reasons behind the current resurgence of interest in agriculture among the younger generation risks neglecting more profound and long-existing issues inside the society. Food self-sufficiency is a metaphor for independent living, but does not necessarily have anything to do with political independence.

The pursuit of independent living is manifested in the emphasis on where to purchase food and daily necessities. Although it is believed that the domination of supermarket sales over wet markets is the outcome of customers' pursuit of high quality food (Li, Lai and Yuen, 2017), interlocutors in this research project expressed that shopping in supermarkets is a compromise to convenience because supermarkets are more widespread, open longer and more frequently. Some consumers will purposefully make a trip for purchasing local food at farmers' markets which only open at weekends. Moreover, young farmers are prone to shop in traditional wet markets or at street vendors rather than supermarket chains, no matter whether the product is labelled organic or not. Many interlocutors told me that they try not to shop in supermarket chains and would rather buy the same product from wet markets or farmers' markets even at a higher price. They explained that this is resistance to the big companies

behind supermarket chains, usually real estate tycoons, which monopolize food and estate markets and thus take control of ordinary people's everyday life in this city. In recent years, there has been extensive backing for a movement called 'Go beyond the mall' (ngh bōng chan dei h chāan sēung), meaning 'do not patronize the business of real estate companies'. The movement aims to promote local grown and home-made food or handicrafts. In one *hēui* (street market) festival at the end of 2016, the slogan was 'Constructing life through *hēui*: economic and space autonomy'. The festival was held at the most well-known shopping area of Hong Kong, Causeway Bay, which has the world's most expensive retail unit rent. In the event, there were dozens of vendors selling local agri-food, homemade pickles, second-hand groceries and handicrafts made by local artists. There were also stalls displaying flyers and pamphlets concerning the planning and ownership of urban space.

Reflections on the food system and consumption are eventually associated with hands-on food production and self-sufficient forms of life. Young farmers believe that agriculture is a comprehensive system and thus is the answer to all the enquiries. After becoming farmers, several young farmers not only started to grow and process their own food, they even learned to produce daily necessities such as furnitures and farm equipments with their own hands. They emphasised to me that elder farmers are capable to do this, while themselves, as urban dwellers, used to be heavily dependent on exchanging daily necessities with cash. They are doing things rather differently now. They recycle used materials and upcycle them into household goods. Sometimes they exchange for meals at friends' houses or yoga and handicraft classes organised by other farmers with labour or vegetables grown by themselves. They also collect food leftovers from restaurants or food factories to make compost, using it to nurture the soil and then to grow food. They no longer need to rent expensive apartments in the downtown because they do not have to rush to the office. It is not saying that they are already completely independent from the existing social system. Actually, most of them do not take such an extreme approach. By contrast, they seek to move from the extreme of a loop in which they have little choice but to take well-paying jobs, exhaust the earnings for making a living not necessarily with good quality, spend more on repairing mental and physical health, and then go back to the job in order to sustain themselves. Food growing empowers them to have more control over their own lives and thus becomes a mean of materialising alternative forms of life: people can achieve the ultimate goal—sustaining one's self and living a decent life—without going through the above mentioned 'social sufferings' (Kleinman, Das and Lock, 1997). As young farmers explained: some people work for high salaries so that they could afford safe and tasty vegetables. We work for quality food straightaway.

Some young farmers were explicit about their critical attitudes toward capitalism and neoliberalism. The system of neoliberalism or capitalism in Hong Kong is by no means a new thing invented after the handover. On the other side of the Bamboo Curtain, Hong Kong has been developed as a capitalist city since the colonial period. Since then, Hong Kong identity was rooted in economics because there was no room in the governmental administration structure (Carroll, 2007). As Abbas (1997, p.5) comments: 'The more frustrated or blocked the aspirations to 'democracy' are, the more the market booms.' People in this city used to be proud of their economic achievement, celebrating the Lion Rock Spirit, the Hong Kong version of the American Dream, and establishing confidence based on the identity of economic advancement compared with other parts of Chinese society (cf. Turner, 1995; Tam and Evans, 1997; Lee, 2010; Ren, 2010). Rather than transformations after 1997, what is subject to critique is the basis on which people have built their identity for decades. Having said this, destruction is followed by construction.

A magazine launched in 2016 by some key figures in the current agriculture movement mentions not a single word about 'nationalism' or 'Hong Kong independence'. Instead, they discuss a lot about

the concept and value of 'community'. 'Methodological individualism' suggests that group identity is oriented by social individuals' subjective intentionality (Weber, 1968; as reviewed in Camic, Gorski and Trubek, 2005). Weber stresses that social groups are consisted of individuals; collective actions of such groups are the product of individual intentionality and action. Participants in the food and agriculture movement in Hong Kong form a new community, or in their own words, a '*hyūn ji*' (circle). Through various events and occasions, such as workshops, farming courses, forums, film screenings, farm tours, food-sharing parties, farmers' markets or interpersonal networking, the insiders of this circle including farmers, farm lovers, farm workers, customers and activists are able to get to know each other. The more I carried out participant observation on various occasions at different places and talked to participators from diverse backgrounds, the more a sociality became evident for me. Participators did not act nor expect to act as complete self-sufficient individuals who are isolated from other people. Alternative thoughts and actions are taking shape when existing values and norms are confronted.

Bottom-up renaissance of local agriculture

This paper addresses a resurgence of interest in local agriculture, which was the most important economic activity during the middle of the last century but now regarded as an unlikely topic in highly urbanised Hong Kong. From the perspective of the younger farmers who have no agricultural family background and are not expected to become farmers given the education they receive, this study analyses the social and economic structure which the movement is cultivated in, and demonstrates how reflections on the food system transformed into hands-on food growing. Meanwhile, not limiting the scope of this research only to food and agriculture, this paper attempts to show how a community (or communities) are forming due to the change of perception of food, land, life forms and thus the reset of social relations between food producers and consumers.

People who were born during the era of economic boom in Hong Kong were promised that good education would guarantee decent, well-paying jobs, and good quality of life. But when they are nearly there after years of commitment to the goal, they suddenly realise that the world has changed. Today, disillusioned young people have learned that due to downward social mobility, the myth of the Lion Rock Spirit which once enabled the hardworking to make good, is now an unattainable dream because of dimming prosperity and the soaring costs of living. This paper therefore argues that although there are many other qualities which attract people to be urban farmers, daily struggles and the pursuit of alternative lifestyles are essential factors of the current agriculture movement among the young generation. Being completely urban dwellers, almost all interlocutors of this research lacked for agricultural knowledge and had absolutely no farming experience. They had no choice but to accept stable and well-paying jobs to pay for their food and other living costs. However, even paying lots of money does not guarantee the quality of food. The doctrine of *laissez-faire* is highly respected in this city (Ngo, 1999). As a result, soaring land rates extinguish small capital businesses, and old, independent stores are replaced by supermarket and restaurant chains which are backed by powerful companies and thus able to afford high rents. The monopoly of food chains means few alternative choices. As long as there is no competition, commodities with poor quality but high prices become an inevitable outcome. Therefore, young farmers argued that only if city dwellers can grow and process their own food, are they free from the loop. Growing food becomes a means of empowerment to materialise alternative lifestyles.

This paper has argued that political discourses of nationalism should not be forced on the initiatives of local agriculture and food self-sufficiency. Food movement is often associated with food imports from mainland China and exaggerated to an assertion that influences from China since the handover in 1997 have 'made Hong Kong no longer the Hong Kong we have known'. Although discrimination against 'China' is expressed clearly, there is no clear acknowledgment of the complexity and fluidity of the concept of 'China'. An appeal for local products and local food is often arbitrarily attributed to a defensive localism and xenophobia. However, this paper has pointed out that compared to such political statement, daily life struggles play a more important role. An oversimplified interpretation will cause a misdiagnosis of inherent issues within the society. Food self-sufficiency is often over-interpreted as an appeal for political independence. Nevertheless, self-sufficiency has neglected but fundamental meanings. From the individual perspective, self-sufficiency refers to a sense of security and confidence in being an independent human who has the freedom to determine how to use natural resources, what food to grow and eat, what job to take, where to live, and what life goals to pursue. From the social perspective, the whole food and agriculture movement roots in practical struggles, including reliable food supply, variety of options, reasonable price of housing and dining in restaurants, healthy work-life balance and opportunities for career development.

Many researchers believe that urban agriculture participants are economically and politically privileged middle-class residents instead of the grassroots. However, this paper points out that urban farmers in Hong Kong are from diverse social stratifications. Although economic and social capital have impacts on whether being a farmer is feasible and sustainable, the developing civil society plays a supportive role to make the circle of urban farming inclusive and accessible for the grassroots. Resonating with the 'positive side effects' of the cosmopolitan risk society (Beck et al., 2013), this study finds that city dwellers' dissatisfaction with quality of life leads to new paradigms of food system based on sustainable agriculture and local food. The global 'farm to table' agenda has been taken into Hong Kong society as a narrative about food freshness and ethical consumption. This atmosphere creates new public spheres for envisioning healthy and ethical eating and civilised use of urban space. Meanwhile, it also forms communities consisted of like-minded people.

Endnotes

Conversations and quotations were in Cantonese. The translations are mine. The Chinese words are romanised in Cantonese, using the Yale system.

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RUNYA QIAOAN

Harmony at Play

ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS' POLICY ADVOCACY IN CHINA

Abstract: The general assumption of civil society in China is that it is insignificant or almost non-existent. However, the recent development of the Chinese civil society might challenge this conventional view. In 2015, environmental NGOs achieved their agenda of incorporating environmental public interest litigation into the new Environment Protection Law. Why small civil society organizations can achieve such a significant policy influence? In this research, I draw insights from the cultural pragmatic theory of social performance and social movement theory of framing to advance our knowledge of the communicative power of civil society in China. I argue that it is these environmental NGOs' skillful transplant of the symbols which Chinese government agrees with, such as harmony, into their framing strategies and action tactics that made their success. Their stability-concern proposals and pro-dialogue actions correspond well with the value of the Chinese government. Through performing this symbols in their policy advocacy process, these civil society agents achieved cultural resonance from the state. While former studies on Chinese civil society tended to explain the success or failure of cases through an institutional perspective, this research includes the elements of culture and meaning into the analysis.

Keywords: NGOs, Policy advocacy, Cultural resonance, China, Harmony.

Gyvenimas harmonijoje: Kinijos aplinkosaugos organizacijų įtaka politikai

Santrauka: Bendra prielaida apie pilietinę visuomenę Kinijoje yra ta, kad ji nesvarbi arba beveik neegzistuoja. Tačiau pastarųjų metų Kinijos pilietinės visuomenės vystymasis gali pakeisti šį tradicinį požiūrį. 2015 m. aplinkosaugos NVO pasiekė savo tikslą įtraukti aplinkosaugos viešųjų interesų gynimą į naująjį Aplinkos apsaugos įstatymą. Kodėl mažos pilietinės visuomenės organizacijos gali taip stipriai paveikti politiką? Į šį klausimą atsakoma remiantis socialinės veiklos kultūrinio pragmatškumo teorija ir socialinio judėjimo teorija. Taip siekiama geriau suprasti, kokią informacijos sklaidimo galią turi Kinijos pilietinė visuomenė. Tyrimė teigiama, kad NVO įgyvendina sumanią ir sėkmingą strategiją, grindžiamą simboliais, kuriems pritaria Kinijos Vyriausybė, pvz., harmonijos. Tarsi palaikydama Kinijos Vyriausybės vertybes, pilietinė visuomenė remia stabilumą ir dialogą, tokiu būdu pasiekdama kultūrinį rezonansą su valstybe. Nors ankstesni Kinijos pilietinės visuomenės tyrimai jų sėkmę arba nesėkmę aiškino remdamiesi institucine perspektyva, šis tyrimas įtraukia kultūrinius ir reikšmių elementus į analizę.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: NVO, poveikis politikai, kultūrinis rezonansas, Kinija, harmonija.

Introduction

“Judicial Interpretation on Environmental Public Interest Litigation, which is a powerful sword, has been made. We hope this sword can cut through the dirty stream and clean the grey smog air. It will be like a sword of Damocles that hangs above the polluters.”(Lin & Tuholske 2015) This a famous quote from Justice Zheng Xuelin, who is also the director of Environment and Resources Law Tribunal from the Supreme People's Court in China. The Environmental Public Interest Litigation

(EPIL) Zheng refers to is a new legal system which allows the environmental NGOs (ENGOS) in China to prosecute the polluters. Before the year 2015, Chinese ENGOS did not have the rights to file environmental public interest lawsuit, even though ENGOS in the West have been practicing this for decades. Chinese ENGOS did not get their rights to EPIL easily. They have handed in numerous policy proposals on various levels in the past decade to fight for it. Finally, in the 2015 Environment Protection Law, ENGOS are allowed to file claims against the polluters in the People's Court as long as the ENGO (1) is registered with the civil affairs department at or above the municipal level and (2) has been focused on environment-related public interest activities for five consecutive years or more (Xinhua 2015). This substantial progress in Chinese Environment Protection Law can be interpreted as a successful case of ENGOS' policy advocacy.

While Chinese civil society is known for being weak, why was the policy advocacy of Chinese ENGOS on EPIL particularly effective? Conventional research on Chinese civil society has focused mainly on the institutional factors to explain the success or failure of NGOs. Some say NGOs are effective because they are able to adapt themselves to the political opportunities, economic opportunities, and personal opportunities presented to them (Hildebrandt 2013), or their leaders are able to mobilize resources through networking strategies to establish cooperative relations (Fulda, Li and Song 2012; Tai 2015). Others say some NGOs are ineffective because of the lack of meaningful engagement between the state and NGOs attributed to isomorphic pressures within state-NGO relations (Hasmath & Hsu 2014). Such research made a meaningful contribution to our understanding of Chinese civil society, but the effectiveness of NGOs' interaction with the state cannot be explained by institutional factors alone. Instead, the seemingly insignificant cultural background has to be included in the analysis.

This research brings culture into the analysis of Chinese civil society. It answers the call of Saxenberg and Jacobsson (2016) on doing systematic comparisons between different movements in one cultural context to see how factors such as cultural resonance influence the outcomes of social movements. Drawing on Alexander's cultural pragmatic theory of social performance and Snow and Benford's social movement theory of framing, I introduce a new framework to look at the interactions between Chinese NGOs and the Chinese government. I argue that culture creates a rational and emotional context for both NGOs and the state. Whether the NGOs can incorporate the cultural symbols in their action tactics and framing strategies explains whether they can achieve cultural resonance from the policymakers.

In the sections below, I first review the literature on Chinese civil society and explain how a new theoretical framework can fill in the lacuna in current studies. I then turn to my methodology, elaborating how I collect the data and conduct the data analysis. The methodology section is followed by my analysis of Chinese ENGOS' framings and actions in the case of EPIL. I conclude with putting this case in my theoretical framework of cultural resonance and illustrating how this new framework can explain the aspects of Chinese civil society the others have neglected.

NGOs' Policy advocacy in China

NGOs' Policy advocacy is the attempt by NGOs as "policy entrepreneurs" to "prod the government to do the right thing" (Najam 2000). Although most NGOs in China lack the capacity for substantial policy participation and Chinese political environment is still relatively hostile to advocacy activities (Kang and Feng 2011), some Chinese NGOs have ventured to participate in policy process at various levels. For example, Friends of Nature, the oldest environmental NGOs (ENGOS) in China, has

participated in more than 30 national level policymaking in the past 20 years. Some other NGOs also found their way to policy advocacy, though on a smaller scale.

This new role of Chinese NGOs in policy participation attracted scholarly attention. Jessica Teets (2013; 2014) has noticed this change in the recent decade and, she termed it “consultative authoritarianism” to refer to the positive interaction between NGOs and officials at the local level. Andrew Mertha (2008, 2009) argues that NGOs’ participation in the policy process is due to the fragmented nature of the Chinese state. The fragmented authoritarianism lowered the threshold for political participation, which allowed Chinese NGOs to participate in policymaking. But Mertha (2009) points out that even though such a structural space is there, a policy advocacy would not have been successful without effective framing. For example, Mertha (2009) noticed that in three similar cases of ENGOS’ policy advocacy against dam building, the result could be different and he attributes the difference to NGOs’ choice of frames. Tony Saich (2000) also agrees with the importance of framing, but he puts it in different terms. Saich (2000) says that it is the Chinese social organizations’ ability to reconfigure their relationship with the state in more beneficial terms that allow for policy input of these social organizations. Saich points to the content of the framing — mutual interests instead of antagonism. Likewise, Fürst and Holdaway (2015) noticed the ENGO’s relationship with local enterprises and the government has shifted from one of tension to the form of dialogue in the recent decade. Dialogue, instead of confrontation, creates more space for Chinese NGOs. This corresponds to the finding of Schroeder (2015), who suggests that Chinese ENGOS working on climate change exclusively use “soft” approaches in their local activism and policy advocacy. Schroeder (2015) further explains that in comparison with their Western counterparts, Chinese ENGOS draw on a different repertoire of cultural resources and strategies in entering policy process. Whereas the West tends to be confrontational, Chinese ENGOS apply a cooperative approach to amplify their influence (Schroeder 2015). Three major informal rules are emphasized by Schroeder (2015), which are respecting authority and status, building social connections, and maintaining or gaining “face” for the authorities.

Above studies have agreed on two things: firstly, Chinese NGOs are participating in the policy process; secondly, Chinese NGOs have to draw on a “soft” repertoire in their interactions with the state, such as creating cooperative dialogue instead of confrontations. However, none of them look into the dialogue to see how the persuasion has happened. Also, the strategies, such as building social connections, seem general and vague. The readers are left to ask “how” and “why” after reading these case analysis. Therefore, even though we have a number of studies claiming that Chinese NGOs can participate in the policy process, the mechanism behind is still unclear. How has the persuasion happened? What differentiates a successful policy advocacy from a failed one? Where is civil society’s communicative power from? Dialogue works, framing matters, cultural repertoire helps. But most importantly, cultural resonance is what all these strategies and tools aim at, and the mechanism of cultural resonance explains whether an advocacy succeeds or fails.

Theoretical Framework

Why are some policy advocacies more successful than the others? Now I will present my theoretical framework to explain the mechanism behind a successful policy advocacy (Figure 1). This framework builds on the cultural pragmatic theory of social performance and social movement theory of framing. The cultural pragmatic theory of social performance perceives a social interaction as a theatrical drama. In the drama of ENGOS’ policy advocacy in China, the actors are ENGOS and the audiences are policymakers. The ENGOS’ performance includes both their advocacy actions and their

policy proposals. These two aspects can be interpreted as what the actors did and said on the stage. Just like a performance cannot be carried out without a script that directs what the actors should do and say at any particular moment, a policy advocacy also needs such a script to direct their performance. To refine the concept of scripting, I divide it into framing strategies and action tactics. Framing strategies are constituted by framing tasks and utilizing of master frames. Three core framing tasks are “diagnostic framing,” “prognostic framing,” and “motivational framing” (Snow & Benford 1988). “Diagnostic framing” is when social movement actors seek to remedy or alter some problematic issue by identifying causality, blame, and/or culpable agents (2000:616). “Diagnostic framing” is often paired with adversarial framing, which delineates the boundary between “us” and “them”. “Prognostic framing” involves the articulation of a proposed strategy to solve a problem (2000:616). “Motivational framing” calls for collective action, including the construction of motivative vocabularies pointing out the severity and urgency of the issue (2000:616). In addition to framing tasks, another concept which is key to the content of framing is “master frames”. Master frames most often refer to those collective action frames that are “broad in terms of scope, functioning as a kind of master algorithm that colors and constrains the orientations and activities of other movements” (Snow and Benford 2000:618). But as one of the inventors of this concept has noticed, this term has been used in different ways in different empirical studies (Benford 1997). In my understanding, master frames refer to the frames which are broader and more generic. Movement participants draw on master frames to portray their perceived social problems in ways that suit the tenor of the times and thus often parallels other social movements. Action tactics are usually how the framing tasks and master frames are reflected in actions, with more details to direct the deeds.

Different from Alexander’s theory of social performance, which focuses only on the scripts of actors, I reckon not only actors have a script, also audiences’ obtain their script. Audiences’ script directs audiences’ actions and reactions towards the actors. Scripts are not random. They have derived from the socio-cultural context the actors and the audiences living in. The long-term and general context is the background representations; the short-term and concrete background is *mis-en-scene*. However powerful background representation and *mis-en-scene* seem, they only constrain and enable but do not determine. The actors’ and audiences’ interpretation of the socio-cultural background shows the agency in them.

Whether a performance is successful or not is reflected in audiences’ reaction. A successful performance is when audiences identify with actors and applaud the actors’ performance. By analogy, a successful policy advocacy is when policymakers identify with the ENGOs and incorporate their proposal into policy or lawmaking. Whether policymakers react positively or negatively depends on the level of cultural resonance. When the cultural resonance level is high, audiences are more likely to react positively; when the resonance level is low, audiences react indifferently or even negatively to the actors’ performance. The level of resonance depends on two things. Firstly, the level of congruence: whether the script embodied in actors’ performance is in alignment with audiences’ script. Secondly, the level of usefulness: whether the scripts can help audiences to solve their problem or not (Mc Donnell et al. 2017). This double-decker approach admits that there can be an objective level of congruence in cultural symbols at the first place, but this basic familiarity does not directly lead to resonance. To reach cultural resonance, actors also have to engage with the challenges their audiences are facing.

Similar to the cultural pragmatic theory of social performance, my theoretical framework downplays the organizational and instrumental factors. Even though I acknowledge that these factors influence civil society actors’ performances, I do not put them in the central place. The first reason is that although organizations and resources remain crucial, in the process of policy advocacy, their value

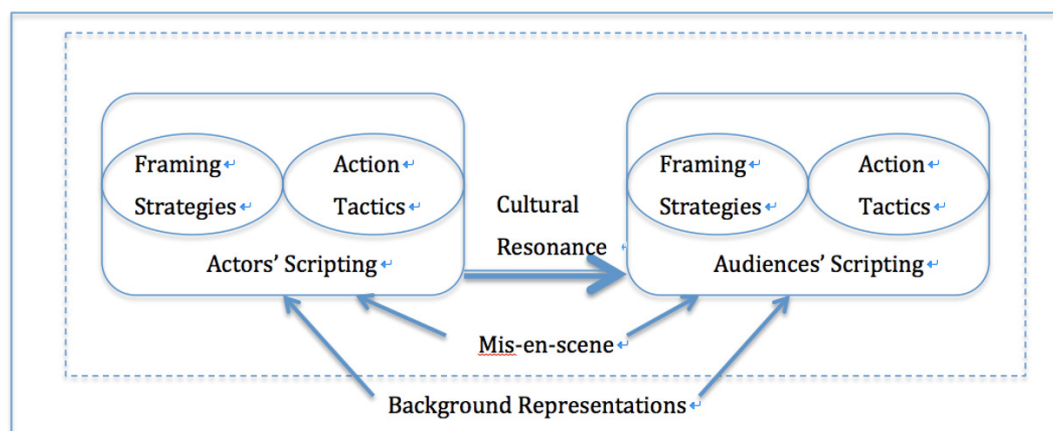


Figure 1. The mechanism of cultural resonance in social performance

is to provide access to the “means of persuasion” (Alexander 2011:148). Such structural-institutional factors make the policy advocacy possible, but they do not determine the result. The second reason is that numerous studies on Chinese civil society have focused on these instrumental and organizational factors already. They have analyzed how the abysmal political, economic, and social situations of Chinese NGOs have influenced the actors’ behaviors and what NGOs do to survive such objective difficulties (see Tai 2015, Hildebrandt 2013, Spires 2011 et al.). On the contrary, what is crucially important, the process of communicative mobilization itself, remained understudied. In my research, I centralize the symbolic communication and marginalize the instrumental factors, which is based on both an ontological understanding and an analytical strategy.

Methodology

To ascertain how ENGOS carry out policy advocacy in China, I use the method of process-tracing. Process-tracing methods are “tools to study causal mechanism” (Beach & Pedersen 2013: 2). It is normally used in single research design. Beach & Pedersen (2013) distinguished three types of process-tracing: theory-testing process-tracing, theory-building process tracing and explaining-outcome process tracing. In this research, since the goal is to find out the causal mechanisms of two specific cases, the method is the closest to explaining outcome process-tracing. Causal mechanism in explaining-outcome process-tracing is defined in a broader term (Beach & Pedersen 2013:19). Causal mechanism here means to craft a “minimally sufficient explanation of particular outcome” (Beach & Pedersen 2013:19). From an interpretivist perspective, the restraint of causal explanation is even further loosened. A search for “forcing causes” in traditionally understood process-tracing method is transferred into looking for “forming causes”, which means take the less tangible but no less powerful networks of meaning into consideration (Reed 2011).

To collect data regarding the EPIL case, I carried out extensive fieldworks in China in 2015 and 2016. During the first phase of data collection in 2015, covering a period of two months, I interviewed five ENGOS in Beijing. During the second phase of my research, I did a three-month participatory observation at an ENGO in Beijing and conducted additional interviews. As the capital of China, Beijing

attracts the majority of ENGOs that are interested in state policy advocacy. But during the participatory-observation, I also traveled to other cities with the ENGO I worked at. Thus, the data are centered around Beijing NGOs, but not limited to Beijing NGOs. In total, 20 semi-structured interviews with ENGO leaders were conducted so far. Besides of doing interviews and participatory-observation, I also utilize documentations provided by ENGOs and independent information as supplementary. Among these, the actual proposals ENGOs handed in during the National People's Congress (NPC) are especially valuable.

With the assist of Atlas.Ti software, I analyzed my interview transcripts together with other documentation. I began with an initial round of "pre-coding" (Layder 1998). After patterns of NGOs' frames in proposal appeared, I moved on to "provisional coding" (Layder 1998), guided by the theories and theoretical framework I mentioned above.

Actors' scripting: ENGOs' framing strategies and action tactics in EPIL

Framing strategies: what ENGOs wrote

Drafting policy proposals and delivering them to the legislators are how NGOs influence the political core; thus, the framing of NGOs' policy proposal is critical. Good frames ring a bell with the lawmakers, which opens the door for further discussions; bad frames immediately block the tunnel for negotiations. In the EPIL case, ENGOs framed their policy proposals around the concept of harmony. The core of harmony is to devalue antagonisms and appreciate peace. In recent years, harmony has been emphasized even more by the party-state because this concept helps the party-state with stability maintenance. Scholars have noticed how harmony is widely used as a frame in Chinese discourse (Shi 2014: 97). Therefore, harmony is a master frame in the sense that it is broad in terms of scope and can function as a kind of master algorithm in different social movements and advocacies.

In this part, I will analyze the EPIL policy proposals of ENGOs from the year 2005, 2009 and 2014 to show how ENGOs internalized the master frame harmony in their proposals. The analysis shows that the harmony-related frames, such as "order", "stability", "national interests" are both increasing and becoming more explicit with the time going. Frames against harmony, such as "right frames", are decreasing.

Order and Stability

In the proposal of 2005, the ENGOs tried to justify the EPIL by referring to its role of stability maintenance. Using "prognostic framing", the ENGOs proposed strengthening the punishment of environmental pollution to expand the scope of the subject of environmental litigation. The ENGOs claim that expanding the scope of the subject of environmental litigation can bring the growing environmental requirements of the public into a "standardized and orderly management". "Order" is opposite to social mess, so it contributes to social stability. In other words, allowing ENGOs to file EPIL helps to maintain a harmonious society.

In the proposal of 2014, this role of ENGOs in maintaining order is expressed more explicitly:

Nowadays the public pays more and more attention to environmental issues. Mass incidents caused by environmental issues happen often, and the environmental administration is too busy to tackle all the environmental violations. In such a social context, we should include more social forces in the environmental protection through legal means in an orderly way. Environmental public interest litigation system is such an effective legal approach.

This paragraph starts with a “diagnostic framing” — environmental administration is too busy to tackle all the environmental violations and moves to “prognostic framing” — to include more social forces in the environmental protection through legal means in an orderly way. The ENGOs explain that EPIL helps the environmental administrations to punish environmental violations and this is to avoid mass incidents. EPIL is interpreted as a system contributing to social stability and relieve the burden of social welfare.

Above text follows the logic of the proposal of 2005 to emphasize “order”, but the next paragraph from 2014 is even more vocal in expressing the stability-concern:

If we block the judicial channels, more and more people will turn to non-institutionalized ways to solve the problem. At present, less than one percent of all environmental disputes have entered the legal system. The remaining ninety-nine percent of the disputes are unstable social factors. Such restrictive provisions (on the subject of environmental litigation) will push more environmental disputes away from institutionalized solutions and creates potential oppositions. Only by letting the social forces participate effectively in environmental protection through lawful channels can environmental problems gradually be alleviated and social conflicts be solved.

This text is a combination of “diagnostic frame”, “motivational frame” and “prognostic frame”. It diagnoses that environmental disputes which are not solved properly are unstable social factors. It motivates the audience to act immediately by pointing out the urgency. In the end, it articulates the strategy to solve the problem through the prognostic frame: if ENGOs are allowed to file EPIL, then these environmental disputes can be better solved, and the potential unstable social factors might be decreased.

If the last paragraph has already made it clear that the accumulated grudges are becoming a threat to stability, the next paragraph elaborates even more thoroughly why the government has to change the situation:

The polluters are not taking the responsibilities. The greater the environmental damage, the more likely the damage was made up by the government and the taxpayers.

In this “boundary framing” or “adversarial framing”, the ENGOs draw a clear boundary between polluting industries and the government plus taxpayers. The polluters are the evil; the government and taxpayers are the innocent. The evil gets the profit, but the innocent pay the bill. That is why this situation has to be changed. Otherwise, the public grudges are all towards the government, who becomes the scapegoat of the polluting industries. Involving ENGOs in the EPIL can bring the polluting industries to the spotlight. This is, to some extent, to help the government.

Comrade In The Same Trench

So far I have shown that in the EPIL case, the ENGOs have incorporated the symbol of “order” and “stability”, which is the core of harmony. In the following parts, I will show that the ENGOs also delivered the message that they are fighting in the same trench with the government. Thus, there is no conflict between NGOs and the government, which is another embodiment of harmony.

One illustration of their comradeship is that in the proposals of all three years, it is common to see that ENGOs justify their agenda by quoting state policies or legislation. For example, in 2005, the ENGOs stated that “in accordance with the provisions of the sixth article of the Environmental Law of the People’s Republic of China, all units and individuals have the obligation to protect the environment and have the right to report environmental pollutions and damages”. In 2009, the ENGOs also started their proposal by quoting state policies:

On December 3, 2005, the State Council announced the creation of the “State Council on the Implementation of the Scientific Concept of Development to Enhance Environmental Protection Decision.” [...] The decision put forward: “encourage the social organizations to play a role in prosecuting and exposing environmental violations. It also mentioned that “environmental public interest litigation should be promoted.” Therefore, the Chinese government has made it clear that it wants to establish the environmental public interest litigation system. The urgent need is to find the practical program that fits our social condition.

This time it is even clearer that the ENGOs are working in line with the government. As the proposal claimed, the State Council has already decided to encourage the ENGOs to play a role in EPIL. This announcement from the State Council is the “gate pass” for ENGOs. Therefore, the ENGOs can claim that they are working on the same agenda with the government. More specifically, they are helping the government to materialize its policy.

What the ENGOs are doing is not only in line with the state, it also contributes to the interest of the state. This is another statement the ENGOs are trying to make in their proposals. This strengthens NGOs’ position that they are on the same side of the state, at least standing together with the politicians who sincerely care about the national interest. This mission created an imagined community between the NGOs and the state. For example, in 2005, the ENGOs lobbied to establish the environmental public interest litigation system based on the argument that this system can “more effectively protect the public’s environmental rights, public interests, and national interests”. To argue for an unlimited period of litigation, the “national interest” frame is stressed again:

The EPIL is to protect the national interests and the public interest. It should not be restricted by the prescribed period for litigation, so the crimes violating national interests and public interests can be prosecuted at any time.

Besides, when it comes to the calculation of damage, the ENGOs also strengthen that this damage is “national and public”. Therefore, to punish the offender is to protect the national and public interest: [...]the national and public interest damage is still difficult to calculate. There are many legal and technical barriers. However, the offender shall bear the liability for compensation for the damage confirmed by the legal principle.

Since the damage is on the national level, to establish the EPIL system is to help to decrease the damage and build a better China. In the proposal of 2014, the ENGOs call for action on “beautiful China” through a motivational frame:

After many years of accumulation of environmental pollution and ecological destruction, China today faces growing pollution and ecological crisis. “The beautiful China” task is arduous. It needs more social and institutional participation.

No go: rights frame and international norms

It is worth mentioning that while the order, stability and national interest frames are increasing with the time going, two types of frames are appearing less and less these years. One is the “rights frame”, which is a popular frame when it comes to social movements in the West (Snow and Benford 2000). The Chinese ENGOs have noticed that rights-based liberalism does not ring a bell with the Chinese government.

The rights-oriented liberal argument only appeared in the 2005 proposal -- “litigation right is a fundamental right of citizens, so ENGOs’ right to environment public interest litigation should be affirmed by the environmental law.” As explained above, the 2005 proposal did not succeed in gaining support among policymakers. The Chinese government apparently prepares to talk about “duties” to “rights”. Therefore, in the following years, the ENGOs cut down the right-based liberal argument and

added more framings around the concept of stability and national interest, which turned out to be better received by the political core.

Another frame appeared less these years is “international norms frame”. In 2005, an underlying logic of the proposal was that the environmental public interest litigation system is widely adopted in the European and American countries, so we should also have it. In 2009, an underlying logic was that many developing countries have established environmental courts, including our neighbors Philippines, Thailand and other Asian countries, so we should hurry up to establish it. Among policymakers, these international norms argument did not gain resonance. The reason might be that the Chinese government is getting more interested in setting its own order, instead of copying the international rules. As Lee Kuan Yew, the former president of Singapore put it “It is China’s intention to become the greatest power in the world and to be accepted as China, not as an honorary member of the west” (Allison&Blackwill 2013). The “international norms frame” does not fit the party-state’s agenda of setting a new world order and start a new China-led paradigm; therefore, it is not well received by the policymakers.

Action tactics: what ENGOs did

ENGOS’ action strategies play a big role in either they can achieve success in their policy advocacy or not. The ways of conducting advocacies are various and some appear to be better than the others. The following case shows that in the process of fighting for ENGOS’ right to environmental public interest litigation (EPIL), the ENGOS have managed to use the tactics which show their non-conflicting tendency.

The ENGOS had a long journey to incorporate their right of EPIL into the Environment Protection Law. As early as 2005, the founder of Friends of Nature, Liang Congjie, submitted a proposal claiming that the ENGOS should be the subject of the environmental public interest litigation. Although Liang’s proposal was rejected by the National People’s Congress (NPC), the ENGOS began to fight for this right of EPIL since then. Therefore, in 2015 when the ENGOS’ right of EPIL was finally confirmed in the Environment Protection Law, it has been already ten year’s effort from the side of ENGOS. The process of incorporating EPIL into the new Environment Protection Law is an example of how NGOs can participate in the policy-making process and make substantial changes. The final success did not come quickly. The grassroots NGOs have to be very strategic in their negotiations. Three crucial tactics emerged from this specific case.

We never wait. It seldom happens that the government would come to you to ask what you want, so most of the time it is us who initiates the interaction.

This quote reveals the first tactic of NGOs’ policy advocacy - be proactive. Incorporating EPIL into the new law was never on the agenda nor in the interest of the legislature. It is likely that the EPIL would never have been added into the new law had not Liang put it forward in 2005 and had not ENGOS worked sturdily on it afterward. Moreover, in this process of revision, it is ENGOS who acted proactively to stop the approval of the ill-regulated second draft and substantially enlarged the subject of EPIL in the fourth draft. Had ENGOS not acted, the second draft would probably have been passed as it was.

The second action tactic is to get access to political entrepreneurs. Friends of Natures understands the influence of political entrepreneurs in the process of policymaking:

Representatives of NPC (National People’s Congress) and CPPCC (Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference) have big influence. When revising the second draft, we united mainly media, NGOs, big Vs, but

the result was not ideal. It shows that the force from outside has only limited influence. But when making the fourth draft, we found supporters from inside. The positive result shows that the insiders' influence is bigger.

Friends of Nature tends to keep a positive relationship with the political entrepreneurs who are interested in the environmental issues. The process of Environment Protection Law-making offered Friends of Nature a good precedent: to deliver their proposal to the political core, Friends of Nature looked for representatives of NPC and CPPCC openly online before the two sessions in 2014, and got positive responses from several representatives. In the future, Friends of Nature plan to work even harder to look for supporters from the decision-making level.

The third tactic, which is closely related to the second point, is to create a dialogue with the state. As stated by Zhang Boju, the General Director of Friends of Nature: "We are not too radical. We are reasonable. Therefore, the state is often willing to join the dialogue we created." In the Environment Protection Law case, Friends of Nature managed to communicate with the legislators from the beginning to the end in a very rational and professional manner. The reaction of Ge and her colleagues on the second draft further illustrates their position:

We were quite shocked. As law school graduates, we found the legislative technique very problematic. My colleges and I felt we must issue our voice in a strong way. We drafted a proposal and posted a short version of it online. At the same time, we sent our proposal to the NPC legislature and a few influential media.

Although being shocked by the faultiness of the second draft, Ge and her colleagues reacted to this problematic draft in a professional manner. "Issuing their voices in a strong way" did not mean deciding to go to the street or writing hateful comments; instead, these law school graduates decided to deliver their amendments. In the following process, Friends of Nature conducted their dialogue in a similar manner: seminars, discussion, and roundtable talks are always the preferred forms. "We are neither a collaborator nor an opponent (to the government). We maintain a proactive dialogue relation with the government", as Zhang explains.

This typical case in environmental legal advocacy and policy advocacy shows that proactively creating dialogues with political entrepreneurs is an effective way for ENGOs to achieve their specific policy agenda. This pro-dialogue attitude corresponds well with the harmonious culture deeply rooted in the Confucius and Daoist culture. Treating political entrepreneurs as a partner to talk with, instead of an enemy to fight with, shows the kind-will of the ENGOs. This kind-will is a pre-condition of successful advocacy.

What ENGOs' action tactics and framing strategies have in common is a tendency to promote the non-conflict or harmonious features. During the process of promoting their views to the policymakers, aka policy advocacy process, ENGOs acted in an extremely rational and friendly manner. They neither went to the street themselves, nor did they mobilize the masses to put pressure on the policymakers. Instead, they chose to proactively create dialogues with political entrepreneurs to deliver their message to the political core. Dialogue is the opposite of conflicts and cooperation is the opposite of antagonism. Therefore, dialogue and cooperation with policy entrepreneurs are the best illustrations of ENGOs' pro-harmony intention. In the frames of ENGOs' policy advocacy, this pro-harmony intention is even more obvious. Even though the term "harmony (harmonious society)" was mentioned openly only once in the ENGOs' policy proposal, this concept is the underlying logic of most of their proposals. When ENGOs claim that EPIL can contribute to stability and decrease social grudges, they mean that EPIL system can help to build a harmonious society; when ENGOs say that EPIL is in line with the state policy and it protects the national interest, they mean that ENGOs and the government are in a harmonious relation.

Audience's scripting: Chinese official discourse on civil society and state-control strategy regarding civil society

Why the framing strategies and the actions tactics above could ring a bell with the Chinese government? In the following parts, I will present the framings and actions of the state on Chinese civil society. According to my theoretical framework, if the actors' framing and actions 1) achieve alignment 2) seems useful to the audience, then cultural resonance is likely to happen.

Chinese official framing strategies on civil society

Official discourse on civil society weaves a "web of significance" (Geertz 1973:5) for NGOs' policy advocacy. If NGOs want their advocacy practice to be accepted by the state, their actions have to conform to the value system or the meaning structure of the policy-makers. Meanwhile, NGOs' logic of action, no matter they want or not, is also influenced by this meaning structure. But the meaning structure is a fluid and almost intangible thing. Thus, the contemporary cultural analysts often turn to discourse to trace the clues of the cultural environment (Wuthnow 1989; Swidler 1995). Similarly, I turn to the discourse of Chinese official media on "civil society" to find out the cultural-meaning web surrounding Chinese NGOs, especially those involved in policy advocacy. In the following part, I will analyze the iconic text "Why People's Society is Better Than Civil Society" that appeared both in People's Daily and Xinhua. People's Daily and Xinhua are the undisputed most important official news outlets in today's China. If an article appears on both platforms, it signals the importance of this article. Because of the authoritative feature of the platforms, and also because "Why People's Society is Better Than Civil Society" was published in 2013, it is fair to say that this article represents the Chinese authoritative understanding of civil society in the recent years.

In "Why People's Society is Better Than Civil Society", the author argues that "people's society" is a superior Chinese substitute to the Western "civil society". One way the author tries to support his standpoint is by linking the Chinese cultural symbols with people's society. The first and most obvious symbol or frame is the concept of harmony. The following excerpt is just one example:

The fundamental characteristic of the people's society is the harmonious society [...] Unlike civil society theory, the government and the masses in the people's society are integrated, not antagonistic. Social organizations and the government are not in conflict with each other, but in a harmonious and unified relationship.

Harmony is rooted in the traditional Daoist philosophy: living harmoniously with the Dao to achieve a balance between Yin and Yang (Chan 2008). The ultimate Harmony transcends dichotomy. People and the government are therefore two in one; NGOs and the government are not in conflict. The harmonious status is achieved through a cooperative attitude and a focus on inclusivity and tolerance in the society. These statements explain why civil society, which involves autonomous NGOs opposed to the government, is not so welcomed in the Chinese context.

Another frame the author draws on is the Chinese Dream. Chinese President Xi Jinping has been promoting the Chinese Dream since 2012. The author elaborates the importance of the Chinese Dream as such:

"Chinese Dream" is different from the "American Dream" or "European Dream". Their social bases are also essentially different. Therefore, Chinese people's society is different from the Western civil society. The people's society built and shared by 1.3 billion people is the base to achieve the great (national) rejuvenation. It is the biggest driving force to unite the people of all ethnic forces and to achieve "Chinese Dream".

In contrast to the American Dream, the Chinese Dream is not only about personal achievement, but also, and even more, about national rejuvenation. In this way, the article linked nationalism and

patriotism with people's society instead of civil society. Chinese remember their history of the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century as "one hundred years of humiliation" (Wang 2014). This part of the history left a deep trauma on the Chinese population. The Chinese collective memory of last century is a good base for nationalism to sprout and thrive. Therefore, it is not surprising that nationalism and patriotism play big roles in the current Chinese public discourse. Exactly because of this, the frames of Chinese Dream and "national rejuvenation" ring a bell among the Chinese public.

As shown before, in "Why People's Society is Better Than Civil Society", "civil society" is presented as a binary opposition of 'people's society'. Civil society is described in a negative tone and understood as inferior to people's society. For example, this article starts with the following line:

People's society is a major theoretical and practical innovation in China. Compared with Western civil society, people's society is more superior.

The superiority of people's society to civil society is further explained by two sub-binary codes. The first one is Chinese vs. foreign and the second one is public vs. private.

The Chinese vs. foreign binary is the most prominent one in this text. This binary draws a line between insiders and outsiders. People's society is built and belonged to the first group and civil society the second. This Chinese vs. foreign binary is elaborated in the following excerpt:

The people's society is different from the civil society of Western countries. It is from the Chinese culture, in line with China's social conditions, with the Chinese characteristics and it is a socialist society constituted by all the Chinese people[...]People's society is the most basic social condition in China. The concept of the people's society is not imported, but a Chinese innovation; the idea of the people's society is not copying foreign civil society, but all Chinese people's society.

This excerpt shows that people's society is an original home-grown Chinese concept. In contrast, civil society is an imported western concept that does not fit the Chinese reality. The words "import" and "copy" give readers a negative impression. It signals that the civil society is neither original nor authentic. This Chinese vs. foreign binary is not random. Instead, it is closely linked with Chinese history and socio-cultural context. As explained before, the Chinese collective memory of 20th century is marked by Western invasion and humiliation. Thus, this concept of being "foreign" invokes the Chinese memory of being invaded and colonized by the foreign powers.

The second binary is public vs. private. While people's society is about the whole population, civil society is only about citizens or those with properties; while people's society is socialism, civil society is capitalism; while people's society focuses on the public, civil society focuses on the private. Following excerpt discussed this position openly:

Compared with the civil society in the West, the people's society is composed of basic principles such as public ownership, public welfare, fairness and justice. The "public" is opposite to "private" and people is opposite to "citizens". "Citizens" highlights private right/selfishness; "people" highlights public interest and public welfare.

In the west, the idea of civil society is a synthesis of two traditions. One is the rights-oriented liberalism and another one is public-oriented communitarianism (Cohen and Arato 1994). But the Chinese counterpart tends to be reduced to only the public-oriented communitarianism, which is "people's society" in the Chinese official discourse. The Chinese non-governmental organizations are often being called public-welfare/public interest organizations. This shows how much the public-oriented communitarianism has prevailed in the Chinese context.

So far I have presented Chinese official discourse on civil society. In the next part, I will present Chinese state's actions on NGOs in recent years to trace the scripts of the audience. This analysis is

important because without knowing the scripts of the demand side, we cannot evaluate the performance of the supply side.

Chinese official action tactics on civil society

The Chinese official discourse shows what kind of state-society relations the state prefer. But how the state acts towards NGOs in reality? Based on their research, scholars have come up with complicated models that explain the state's action tactics when it comes to dealing with NGOs. They claim that on one hand, NGOs' positive role in social management is gaining recognition from the government, but on the other, the NGOs are distrusted as a potentially disruptive force and therefore are controlled by the state (Liu 2016:11; Wang; Yu; Kang and Han 2008; Chan 2010). Kang and Han (2008) provided a graduated control model to explain the various levels of state control imposed on various types of social organizations. This system categorized social organizations into five levels according to their capacities to deliver public goods and their potential to pose a threat to the state. Kang and Han believe that this graduated control system is different from "both the old model of totalitarianism before reform, civil-society-against-the-state in Eastern Europe, and corporatism and civil society in the West" (2011:51). Chan (2010), similarly, agrees that instead of talking about NGO-state relations as a whole, we should realize there are different levels of control upon different organizations. Chan (2010) proposed another graduated control model, which emphasizes the influence of business nature (service/advocacy), funding sources (government/private/foreign) and scale (small/large) on the level of government control. Chan also concludes that the less risky the NGOs seem, which means service-oriented, government/domestically funded and small scale, the less likely the state will take harsh action towards it.

These action tactics correspond well with the Chinese official discourse on civil society. In summary, the Chinese state would like to see the NGOs being non-confrontational. If these NGOs can both be non-confrontational and relieve some social burdens of the state at the same time, then this would be the best case.

Cultural resonance in social performance

According to my framework, the level of cultural resonance depends on two things. Firstly, the level of congruence — whether the script embodied in actors' performance is in alignment with audiences' script. Secondly, the level of usefulness — whether the scripts can help audiences to solve their problem or not. In the ENGOS' EPIL policy proposal, they managed to meet both this two standard. First of all, the non-confrontational tendency showed in ENGOS' framing strategies and action tactics is well in alignment with the understanding of good society-state relations reflected in the official discourse of civil society. Second, the problem-solving instead of trouble-making attitude reflected in both ENGOS' framing strategies and action tactics, such as the diagnostic and prognostic framings, assured the state that the EPIL the ENGOS are proposing could solve the problems the state are facing, instead of adding more troubles.

ENGOS and the state's scripts do not come from a vacuum. I argue that culture creates a rational and emotional context for both NGOs and the state. Whether the NGOs can incorporate the cultural symbols in their action tactics and framing strategies explains whether they can achieve cultural resonance from the policymakers. The background representations I have presented earlier have to be taken into account to explain this process. If we roughly divide the Chinese society into civil society and the party-state, then ENGOS are apparently on the side of civil society and policymakers are on

the side of the party-state. These two sides have one thing in common — they are immersed in same cultural context, in other words, they share the background representations. These background representations, in the current Chinese context, are very complex. It includes the traditional Confucianist and Daoist culture, the Communist and Socialist legacy, the Western influence after Reform and Opening up, and the recent nationalist upsurge. Different social groups might focus on the different stream of thought. From the official discourse on civil society presented earlier, we can see the official scripts and the background representations behind it. In the official discourse, people's society is sacred and civil society is profane. This is because people's society is Chinese, civil society is foreign; people's society is public, civil society is private; people's society contribute to harmony, civil society contribute to conflicts; people's society helps to realize Chinese dream, civil society ruins this national rejuvenation. Therefore, when ENGOs present the EPIL system as a contribution to stability and order, it links well with the harmony frame in official scripts, which leads to the cultural resonance.

While harmony frame causes the key resonance here, reverberations also come from other frames. "National interest" not only resonates with the harmony frame, it also rings a bell with the Chinese Dream frame in the official scripts. On the contrary, because right frames, which follows the individual right-based liberalism, emphasize the private side of civil society instead of the public side of communism, this right frames had to be deleted in the 2009 and 2014 proposals to avoid a negative connotation. Similarly, since international norms, which is on the binary side of "foreign" instead of "Chinese", are not compatible with the official scripts, this frame was also taken out in the 2014 proposal. Social movements in the Western world especially prefer the human right frame among the right frames and democracy frames among international ideals, but the Chinese ENGOs dodged "human right" and "democracy" completely in their proposals, because they know that these floating signifiers either cannot be used in its original meaning in the Chinese context, or they will be interpreted as dangerous ideology which causes troubles.

The element of mis-en-scene, which is another essential factor in the social performance framework, has to be included in the analysis also. Mis-en-scene stands for a specific historical juncture in Chinese society. In the past 40 years, China has experienced tremendous economic development, but at the same time, also paid a heavy price. Environmental degradation is one of them. According to a report by the Ministry of Environment Protection, in 2014, only eight out of 74 big cities of China met the national air quality standard (BBC 2016; Ministry of Environmental Protection 2016). This is already much better than the previous year, where only three cities met the standard. Not only air, the river and soil pollution are also ringing alarms. The environmental degradation is bringing in a consensus crisis in China. This crisis started to challenge people's belief in the managerial capacity of the party-state. The party-state needs to build an open image in responding the general public who are united with a common goal and priority of environment protection. Therefore, showing an attitude of standing together with the government in front of this crisis to solve the social crisis is especially effective for Chinese ENGOs at this moment.

It is necessary to clarify that even though I use the term "strategy" or "tactic" when referring to ENGOs framings and actions, I do not mean that the ENGOs have full agency towards their actions. A lot of research has explained NGOs' limitation from the institutional perspective. Even though I acknowledge the restraint of social power, this is not the focus of my study. The limitation here refers to the influence of another dimension of the structure, namely culture. Culture has the same influence on ENGOs as on the policymakers. When ENGOs choose what actions to take, they neither invent their scripts nor do they create their background representations, at least not in the short run. Instead, they choose from the scripts available to them and the background representations they live in. Even

though the civil society might have a different emphasis from the party-state, none of them can escape the four major sociocultural streams I mentioned before: traditional Chinese culture, the Communist and Socialist legacy, the Western influence, and the recent nationalist upsurge. Therefore, the ENGOs are not so much pleasing the policymakers in a clever way than they are persuading the policymakers in a right way.

Conclusion

In this research, I have used the cultural pragmatic theory of social performance to advance our knowledge of the communicative power of civil society in China. I showed that ENGOs' incorporation of the cultural symbols that Chinese government can resonate with, such as harmony, into their action tactics and framing strategies is the key to their success. Their pro-dialogue attitude and their stability-concern proposals correspond well with the scripting of the Chinese government. Through performing this cultural symbols in their actions and frames, these civil society agents successfully triggered cultural resonance from the policymakers, which resulted in a successful policy advocacy.

This research has two major contributions. Empirically, it is fundamentally different from conventional research on Chinese civil society. While former studies on Chinese civil society tended to explain the success or failure of NGOs' activities through an institutional perspective, this research includes the crucial elements of culture and meaning into the analysis. Although social power and institutional factors are important, I believe that they only facilitate the ground game, but do not determine it. The cultural meaning system is a crucial factor that often misses being discussed. Theoretically, on the one hand, it completed the cultural resonance mechanism in the social movement theory. I have demonstrated that the credibility and salience of frames are not enough to explain the whole resonance process. To explain the cultural resonance, we have to turn back to culture. Adding the element of background representations and scripts into this framework, we see a fuller picture of the overall mechanism of cultural resonance. On the other hand, my research also enriched the cultural pragmatic theory of social performance. Social performance theory was criticised for not focusing on the hermeneutic side of the background representations enough (Binder 2017). My case study confirmed that a general structural analysis, which features only binaries, is not enough to account for the complexity of the cultural norms and value systems in different societies. By presenting how the framework can be applied in a social context different from the Anglo-Saxon context (where this framework was often applied), I have illustrated how a deeper analysis which goes back to the history to dig for the cultural streams can be fruitful.

Being a single case study, this research has its limitations. Even though it explains well how the framework works in an effective policy advocacy case, it is not tested when the advocacy is less effective. Further study on the ineffective advocacy needs to be done to test the validity of this framework on social performance and cultural resonance.

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SUNHYUK KIM

Civil Society in South Korea

CONTRIBUTIONS TO DEMOCRACY AND FUTURE CHALLENGES¹

Abstract: In this paper, I trace and examine the history of civil society activism in the post-transitional period in South Korea. I first contextualize the South Korean case in the relevant theoretical discussions and debates on the relationship between civil society and democracy/democratization. Next I provide a detailed description of how civil society has continued to remain highly relevant in the post-transitional politics of democratic consolidation, surveying successive governments in South Korea since 1987. I conclude the paper with preliminary thoughts on the necessary and desirable change South Korean civil society needs to make in order to continue to contribute to the furtherance and deepening of South Korean democracy.

Keywords: South Korea, civil society, democracy, democratization

Pilietinė visuomenė Pietų Korėjoje: indėlis į demokratiją ir ateities iššūkiai

Santrauka: Šiame darbe analizuojama pilietinės visuomenės aktyvizmo istorija po Pietų Korėjos pereinamo laikotarpio. Pirmiausia pristatomas Pietų Korėjos atvejis bendrame teorinių diskusijų apie pilietinės visuomenės ir demokratijos arba demokratizacijos santykį kontekste. Toliau detalai aprašoma, kaip pilietinė visuomenė sugebėjo išlikti svarbi pereinamojo laikotarpio demokratijos konsolidavimo politikoje. Tai atliekama tiriant Pietų Korėjos vyriausybes nuo 1987 metų. Darbas baigiamas mintimis apie būtinus ir pageidaujamus pokyčius, kuriuos Pietų Korėjos pilietinė visuomenė turi įgyvendinti siekdama tęsti savo indėlį į Pietų Korėjos demokratijos skatinimą ir gilinimą.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Pietų Korėja, pilietinė visuomenė, demokratija, demokratizacija.

Democratic transition and civil society in South Korea

South Korea holds a special place in the literature on democratic transition, known as “transitology.” When Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter inspired and spearheaded a wave of theoretical and empirical works on democratic transition in the 1980s (and later on democratic consolidation too), the then dominant theoretical paradigm put exclusive focus on elite—its composition, calculations, strategies, behaviors, interactions, negotiations, and so forth (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Higley and Gunther 1992). The “founding fathers” of “transitology” (and later “consolidology”) paid utmost attention to the highly strategic interactive dynamics between *duros* (hard-liners) and *blandos* (soft-liners) in the ruling bloc, which often precipitated incremental undermining and fateful dismantlement of the incumbent authoritarian regime (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986). They were so confident of the centrality of the political elite to assert that “there [was] no transition whose beginning [was] not the consequence—direct or indirect—of important divisions within the authoritarian

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regime itself, principally along the fluctuating cleavage between hard-liners and soft-liners” (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986, p.19).

South Korea, as most analysts now concur without much hesitation, stands as an outstanding exception to the mainstream elite-centered paradigm of the 1980s. A few scholars, immediately following the 1987 transition, mechanically—and thus erroneously in retrospect—applied the elite paradigm to South Korea and claimed that there was in fact an elite split in South Korea too—between President Chun Doo Hwan and ruling party chairman Roh Tae Woo—and that this was the main cause of the 1987 democratization. To their embarrassment, later works confirmed and reconfirmed that the two authoritarian leaders were in neither disagreement nor conflict with each other. Rather, they meticulously designed and collectively orchestrated a scheme starting with the unexpected acceptance of all the demands of the opposition and ending with Roh Tae Woo’s triumph in the presidential elections in December 1987.

Instead of elite splits that had brought about democratic transitions earlier in Southern Europe and Latin America, what prompted the authoritarian breakdown and democratic transition in South Korea was civil society’s protracted and strenuous struggle for democracy—its mass mobilization and persistent anti-government protest throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. The growth and expansion of civil society’s scope and capacity from a largely intellectual/student movement in the early 1960s to a student-labor-church (“triple solidarity”) plus the main opposition party alliance in the 1970s and to a student-labor-church-opposition party plus middle class “grand coalition” in the 1980s was what forcefully pressured the ruling authoritarian bloc to accept and accommodate the opposition’s demands for democratic reform (Kim 2000).

In short, South Korea constitutes a crucial counterexample and challenge to the existing elite-centered paradigm of the 1980s. South Korea in essence showcased a new paradigm of mass-ascendant transition. After South Korea, a series of Asian, African, and eventually Central and East European countries again and again featured bottom-up civil society-led transitions, although the pace, scope, nature, and specific characteristics of these transitions certainly varied from case to case.

Naturally, in any account of South Korea’s transition to democracy, civil society, social movement, and mass mobilization figure prominently. Yet, there is a poignantly anticlimactic element in South Korea’s otherwise dramatic and triumphal story of mass-ascendant, civil society-led transition to democracy, which in turn explains why South Korean civil society continued to be very active after the transition, well into the consolidational phase. South Korea’s transition to democracy was by no means a revolution, a rupture, or a cataclysmic breakdown of the *ancien régime*. Continuity rather than discontinuity, stability rather than rupture, conservatism rather than radicalism characterized the relationship between the pre-transitional and the post-transitional political orders. Who was elected in the first (“founding”) democratic presidential elections held in December 1987 was none other than the authoritarian ruling party candidate, Roh Tae Woo, who was destined to be the next president of South Korea according to the existing authoritarian rule of the game, without any help of the democratic constitution and elections.

Such unbelievable (even surreal) equifinality—i.e., whether democratization took place or not, the election result would remain the same, with Roh fated to be the next president of South Korea—was chiefly due to the opposition split between Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung. At the same time, it was also due to the “premature delegation” by civil society of all the work associated with the “politics of transition” to political society in the second half of 1987, extremely important months during which the basic structure and matrix of the post-transitional South Korean politics were to be molded. Civil society was virtually excluded from the important discussion on making a new democratic

constitution, a new electoral system, and a new political party configuration. Its voice and pressure did not work effectively when it tried to make the two opposition candidates agree on and field a unified candidate in the upcoming presidential elections. In this regard, civil society's reaction to Roh's election and inauguration was quite predictable. Civil society groups in South Korea had no choice but to continue their "democracy" movement under Roh's *"dictablanda."* They concluded that their historic mission was not accomplished, and their struggle for democracy had been largely nullified by the election of one of the main architects and beneficiaries of the old authoritarian order. This had civil society in South Korea continue to be highly relevant in the post-transitional politics of democratic consolidation.

Against this backdrop, this paper traces and examines the history of civil society activism in the post-transitional period in South Korea. It probes the "rise," "fall," and "re-rise" of civil society—the "rise" in the first twenty years after the 1987 transition, the "fall" during the conservative governments of nine years, and the very recent "re-rise." I first contextualize the South Korean case in the relevant theoretical discussions and debates on the relationship between civil society and democracy/democratization. Next I provide a detailed description of how civil society has continued to be highly relevant in the post-transitional politics of democratic consolidation, surveying successive governments in South Korea since 1987. I then provide a few hypothetical reflections that may help explain the rise and fall of civil society. I conclude the paper with preliminary thoughts on the necessary and desirable change South Korean civil society needs to make to continue to contribute to the furtherance and deepening of South Korean democracy.

Theoretical reflections

In the literature, civil society is generally considered to positively correlate with democracy. Alexis de Tocqueville, a French aristocrat, visited America in 1831 and authored *Democracy in America*. In the book, he argued that the real secret of a vibrant democracy in America was its unusually active and rich associational life. Profusion of voluntary public associations, according to Tocqueville, underpinned America's democracy, by protecting individual liberty, preventing tyranny of the majority, decentralizing power and authority, and fostering active engagement of citizens in politics and governance. The viability and durability of a democracy would therefore largely depend on the robustness of its associational life. This observation was later developed into the Tocquevillean thesis: civil society, composed of diverse voluntary associations cooperating for collective and public purposes, meeting unmet social needs, preventing the tyranny of the majority, and limiting state power, makes significant contributions to democracy.

Elaborating on Tocqueville's original thesis on the positive correlation between civil society and democracy, neo-Tocquevillean scholars subsequently demonstrated that a vibrant civil society is not only a facilitator of democracy but even a prerequisite for effective democracy. Civil society is what democratizes, supports, and complements the state. Associational life is postulated to provide the social infrastructure for liberal democracy; supply the means to limit, resist, and curb the excesses of the state and market; present alternatives when the state or market fails; facilitate service delivery at the local level; assist in conflict management; and deepen democracy (Edwards 2004; Shils 1991; Alagappa 2004).

Civil society plays various positive roles not only in supporting and maintaining existing democracies but also in promoting the dynamic process leading to democracy, namely democratization. As soon as the first steps toward political liberalization had been made, civil society is "resurrected,"

and the subsequent “popular upsurge” precipitates the demise of authoritarian rule, “pushing the transition further than it would otherwise have gone” (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986, pp.48-56). The independent and “reconstituted” civil society serves as a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for transition (Bernhard 1993, p.326).

It is further envisioned that civil society will play equally significant roles in consolidating and institutionalizing the fledgling democracies that have just completed transition. For example, civil society will inculcate conceptions of interest and civic norms of behavior; disseminate information and empower citizens in the collective pursuit and defense of their interests and values; stabilize expectations within social groups; structure and provide multiple channels for the identification, articulation, expression, and representation of interests; serve to govern the behavior of its members with regard to collective commitments; reduce the burden of governance for both public authorities and private producers; supplement the role of political parties; recruit and train new political leaders; give the citizens respect for the state and positive engagement with it; and contain the power of democratic governments by providing important reservoirs of potential resistance to arbitrary or tyrannical action by rulers (Schmitter 1997).

With such abundant and solid confirmations of positive linkage between democracy and civil society, Tocquevilleans and neo-Tocquevilleans have recently made efforts to find the specific mechanisms that causally connect civil society and democracy—those mechanisms through which civil society actually helps, promotes, and reinforces democracy. The most recent such efforts focus on “social capital.” According to its proponents, voluntary associations produce “social capital” that includes features of social organizations such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation among individuals and organizations. Quality of life, quality of representative government, and eventually quality of democracy are generally better in a community with a high stock of social capital. In contrast, a decline in voluntary associations leads to a reduction in social capital that also eventually erodes the vitality of democracy.

One of the most important works on social capital is Robert D. Putnam’s *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (1993). In this book, Putnam observes that Northern and Southern Italy differ in terms of four dimensions: 1) civic engagement: citizens’ interest in public affairs and willingness to participate in politics; 2) political equality: treating each other as equals—ability to relate each other on the basis of reciprocity and cooperation rather than hierarchy and authority; 3) solidarity, trust, and tolerance: mutual respect, acceptance of different life-styles; and 4) social structures of cooperation: willingness to join clubs, organizations, and political associations and to learn the habits of trust and tolerance. Northern Italy manifests a greater measure of civic virtue measured in civic engagement; political equality; solidarity, trust, and tolerance; and cooperation. The reason why the two different regions of Italy had differing levels of democratic institutional effectiveness was largely because they had different levels of civil society or civic community (Putnam 1993).

Later, Putnam analyzed the American case in *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000). In this book, Putnam surveys the decline of social capital in the U.S. since 1950. He describes the reduction in all the forms of in-person social interaction upon which Americans used to found, educate, and enrich the fabric of their social lives. He believes that this undermines the active civic engagement that a strong democracy requires from its citizens. Putnam notes the aggregate loss in membership of many existing civic organizations and points out that the act of individual membership has not migrated to other, succeeding organizations. To illustrate why the decline in Americans’ membership in social organizations is problematic to democracy, Putnam uses bowling as an example. Although the number of people who bowl has increased in the last 20 years, the number

of people who bowl in leagues has decreased. If people bowl alone, they do not participate in social interaction and civic discussions that might occur in a league environment (Putnam 2000).

Putnam's analyses of Italy and the U.S. have caused a series of interesting debates on civil society and democracy (Edwards 2004). Theda Skocpol, in her book *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life* (2003), agrees with Putnam that there has been an important change in American civil society over the past decades, and it seriously threatens the survival and prosperity of American democracy. But she disagrees with Putnam and argues that what has transpired is not in fact a "decline" of American civil society but rather its transformation from membership organizations to managed organizations. According to Skocpol, "Where once cross-class voluntary federations held sway, national public life is now dominated by professionally managed advocacy groups without chapters or members. And at the state and local levels 'voluntary groups' are, more often than not, nonprofit institutions through which paid employees deliver services and coordinate occasional volunteer projects" (Skocpol 2003, p.7).

According to Skocpol, therefore, what should be deplored is not that the American civil society *generally* declined but that it changed from a very political nationwide advocacy movement to a de-politicized, professionally managed campaign. The professionally managed organizations in America today are less democratic and participatory than the pre-1960s membership federations they displaced (p.13). What American conservatives, including Putnam, miss is the essentially *political* nature of civil society organizations. To Tocqueville, civic associations were "great free schools to which all citizens come to be taught the general theory of association." From Skocpol's point of view, Putnam's idealized civil society in the 1950s—local and voluntary associations isolated from national government and politics and involving friends and neighbors to solve *local* problems—is an idyllic myth. The net result of such transformation of American civil society is "diminished democracy." A diminished democracy is a stunted democracy that is far worse than the old "civic democracy" where membership-based voluntary associations operated in close symbiosis with representative government and democratic politics.

Whether what happened in the United States in the past few decades is a general decline of civil society or a change in the composition and nature of civil society will be subject to debate for long. Participants in the debate have presented different positions on the issue. However, what the two opposing sides of the debate share in common is that there is very close linkage between civil society—its composition, structure, activities—and the quality of democracy. Transformation of civil society often brings about a significant change in the quality and status of democracy. The American debate between Putnam and Skocpol also demonstrates that civil society's Tocquevillean, democracy-promoting roles are never static: civil society's contributions (or lack thereof) to democratic development change over time, especially according to the change in the quality and nature of democracy itself. In short, different civil societies support different democracies, whereas different democracies necessitate the emergence and development of different civil societies.

Civil society in post-transitional South Korea²

South Korea's 30-year old democracy has had seven governments so far—Roh Tae Woo (1988-93), Kim Young Sam (1993-98), Kim Dae Jung (1998-2003), Roh Moo Hyun (2003-08), Lee Myung Bak (2008-13), Park Geun Hye (2013-17), and Moon Jae In (2017-present) governments. Over these

² This section is drawn in parts from Kim & Jeong (2017), pp. 4-8.

successive governments, developments in procedural democracy have been substantial: a democratic constitution, free and fair elections, multiple political parties, civil liberties, solid civilian control of the military (i.e., absence of military coups), non-violent horizontal power transfers between conflicting political forces, increased check and balance between state institutions, and so on.

During the pre-1987 authoritarian period, the political sphere in South Korea was sharply dichotomized between the authoritarian state and its state-corporatist apparatuses (i.e., “official,” state-sponsored labor organizations, interest groups, youth organizations, women’s associations, etc.) on the one hand and underground, mostly outlawed dissident organizations that fought against authoritarianism. The South Korean civil society at the time—underground and illegal, variegated in terms of ideological inclinations but united in terms of their pursuit of an authoritarian breakdown—played crucial roles in various stages of democratization, compelling the authoritarian government to yield to the popular pressure for reform, supplying an alternative reservoir of elite politicians, and mobilizing people in nationwide campaigns for democracy.

Civil society has undergone a fundamental transformation since 1987. Above all, the previously state-corporatist groups, such as FKTU (Federation of Korean Trade Unions, *Hanguk nochong*), were released from the control and management of the authoritarian regime and became gradually autonomous from the state. On the other hand, many formerly outlawed organizations were officially acknowledged by the state and openly participated in the policymaking process. In particular, the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU, *Minju nochong*), which had been formed to represent the interests of democratic unions opposed to state-corporatist FKTU, emerged as a significant force to pressure the democratic governments after 1987.

Meanwhile, new social groups, called “citizens’ movement groups (*simin undong danche*),” emerged in distinction from the existing “people’s movement groups (*minjung undong danche*).” While the “people’s movement groups,” consisting of seasoned movement activists who had participated in the previous pro-democracy struggles, did not shun violent movement methods and preferred to concentrate on political issues, the “citizens’ movement groups,” composed of professionals and middle class citizens, used non-violent methods to identify and raise new issues such as economic justice, environmental protection, and gender equality.

During the Roh Tae Woo government (1988-93), social groups, particularly the radical “people’s movement groups,” had profound skepticism about the nature of the newly installed “democratic” government. They regarded the Roh regime as soft authoritarianism (*dictablanda*) rather than a genuine democracy, especially because Roh himself was a general-turned-president who had been directly involved in the military coup of 1979-80. The most important task of movement groups naturally was to “democratize” Roh’s pseudo-democratic regime. Especially alarmed by the continued state suppression on social movements and the grand conservative party merger in January 1990, people’s movement groups focused their efforts on achieving “unfinished democratization.” A number of important national umbrella associations of people’s movement groups, such as the National Council of University Student Representatives (NCUSR, *Jeondaehyeop*), the Korea Coalition for National Democracy Movement (KCNDM, *Jeonminryeon*), the Korean Peasant Movement Coalition (KPMC, *Jeonmong*) and the Korean Teachers’ and Educational Workers’ Union (KTEWU, *Jeongyojo*), emerged and actively led anti-government pro-democracy campaigns.

Newly created citizens’ movement groups rapidly increased their influence during the Roh Tae Woo government too. The Citizens’ Coalition for Economic Justice (CCEJ, *Gyeongsillyeon*) was founded on July 7, 1989 by 1,000 or so scholars, lawyers, religious leaders, and others to achieve economic justice through citizen power. CCEJ effectively waged a series of civic movements aimed at

economic justice, supporting augmented state regulation of real estate speculation, expanding supplies of public housing on long-term loans, increasing property taxes and tax exemptions for the poor, and ensuring the independence of the Bank of Korea from the government. Many of these issues and campaigns were very well received by the South Korean public, and the Roh government accepted and implemented some of CCEJ's policy proposals.

During the Kim Young Sam government (1993-98), public doubts about the legitimacy of the regime considerably subsided. The Kim Young Sam government was the first civilian government in South Korea since the early 1960s. Although Kim Young Sam joined the ruling authoritarian bloc through the grand conservative party merger in early 1990 and hence lost much of his credibility as a pro-democracy fighter, it was no longer easy for the dissident social groups to characterize the ruling regime as "authoritarian." People's movement groups, with their focus on "pro-democracy struggles," rapidly lost their appeal and underwent a crisis. Their crisis became particularly profound when the Kim government aggressively designed and carried out various reforms such as the disclosure of private assets of the public officeholders, expulsion of corrupt officials, enactment of a law on officeholders' ethics, removal of high ranking military personnel identified with the past regimes, reduction in the size and role of the Agency for National Security Planning and the Defense Intelligence Command, and the introduction of a "real name banking account system" to break the intimate relations between business and politics.

By contrast, new citizens' movement groups incrementally enlarged their influence. They began exploring new social issues, thereby rendering the "pro-democracy struggles" of the people's movement groups obsolete, if not anachronistic. CCEJ was particularly prominent during the Kim government. CCEJ emerged to be the ideal partner in the government's overall plan to build a symbiotic and collaborative state-civil society relations, which greatly favored the involvement of particular groups into the policy process. CCEJ became quite instrumental in Kim Young Sam's campaign to clean up nepotism and influence peddling.

Meanwhile, as a result of the people's movement groups' serious soul searching, People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD, *Chamyeo yeondae*) was created in 1994. From the very beginning, PSPD intended to marry the "people's movement" with the "citizens' movement," retaining its focus on democratic institutional reforms but at the same time identifying and addressing new social issues, and eschewing violent and illegal movement tactics. PSPD organized and waged movements, for example, to monitor and evaluate the performance of government ministries and national assemblypersons, to file lawsuits against corrupt public officials, and to support "whistle blowers" embroiled in public scandals.

During the Kim Dae Jung government (1998-2003), competition among citizens' movement groups intensified further: PSPD emerged as the most influential NGO in South Korea, overshadowing CCEJ. This was mainly thanks to PSPD's effective response to the economic crisis in 1997-98 and the subsequent economic restructuring and reform. PSPD waged movements to pressure the Kim government to accelerate corporate restructuring, focusing on the governance structure of big business conglomerates. This movement, known as the "Minority Shareholders' Rights Movement (*soaek juju undong*)," was so well received by South Korean citizens, experts, and the mass media that the government responded warmly to PSPD's movement, endorsing and enforcing many of the reform policies PSPD proposed and supported.

PSPD successfully led a movement for political reform too, the *Nakcheon/Nakseon* movement. Along with many other citizens' groups, PSPD organized Citizens' Solidarity for the General Elections (CSGE, *Chongseon yeondae*) on January 13, 2000, about three months before the National As-

sembly elections. CSGE designed and envisioned two different stages for the movement. The first was to create a list of politicians who should not be nominated by political parties to run for the upcoming National Assembly elections and then to campaign against their nominations (*Nakcheon* movement). Second, if those “blacklisted” candidates were nominated anyways, the next step was to campaign against their actual elections (*Nakseon* movement). CSGE disclosed on January 24 a list of sixty-six politicians who should not be nominated and on April 3 a list eighty-six candidates who should not be elected. The selection criteria for both lists included involvement in previous bribery and corruption scandals, violation of the election laws, dearth of legislative activities (e.g., too many absences in National Assembly sessions), destruction of the constitutional order (e.g., direct involvement in previous military coups and/or active cooperation with the Chun Doo Hwan’s authoritarian regime), failure or refusal to endorse anti-corruption laws, instigation of regionalism, tax evasion, inappropriate remarks and behaviors during the National Assembly sessions, and so forth. In the national assembly elections held on April 13, 2000, fifty-nine out of eighty-six candidates on CSGE’s list failed to be elected.

The third significant contribution PSPD made during the Kim Dae Jung government was its role as a policy entrepreneur for the legislation of the National Basic Livelihood Security (NBLS) Act in 1999. Since its establishment in 1994, PSPD had raised public awareness of the need for a complete revision of the social assistance program. After the onset of the economic crisis, PSPD, in 1998, assisted by numerous other social organizations and professionals, tried to increase public interest and to sensitize the National Assembly members to the necessity of enacting the NBLS Act. Initially, the general indifference to the introduction of the bill by politicians and bureaucrats in the Ministry of Health and Welfare undermined the efforts of civil society groups. The economic ministries were particularly resistant, arguing that the bill would be financially unsustainable. PSPD did not give up but rather established a new organization, the Solidarity for the Enactment of NBLS Act, and launched a nationwide movement for enacting the bill (Fiori and Kim 2011, p.72). The Kim Dae Jung government, in an attempt to achieve a more solid legislative majority in the upcoming General Elections in April 2000, was interested in reinforcing support for the low income class and in helping social movements for enacting the NBLS Act. In June 1999, Kim Dae Jung—despite the diffidence shown by the Ministry of Finance and Economy and the Ministry of Health and Welfare—made clear his intention to introduce the NBLS Act. The bill passed the National Assembly in August 1999 and was enacted in October 2000, representing a watershed in the way South Koreans conceptualized and understood social assistance.

The influence of the citizens’ movement groups continually increased during the Roh Moo Hyun government (2003-08). Most of all, the movement against the Saemangeum Reclamation Project organized by a coalition of environmental groups ultimately convinced the Local Court to rule that the project should be discontinued. Although this decision was later reversed at the Higher Court and the Supreme Court, this movement vividly demonstrated to South Korean citizens and the government the essentialness of obtaining citizens’ consent to pursue large-scale construction projects.

Civic groups also played an important role in waging campaigns against the Korea-US Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA). Pointing to a gamut of negative effects of the KORUS FTA on the South Korean economy, civic groups collaborated with labor unions, peasant organizations, the Korea Democratic Labor Party, and other social movement groups to organize and wage nationwide demonstrations against the KORUS FTA.

On the other hand, “conservative” social groups emerged prominent during the Roh government. For example, social groups such as the Free Citizens’ Alliance of Korea (FCAK, *Jayu simin yeondae*) and the Korea Forum for Progress (KFP, *Hanguk seonjinhwa forum*) have come into play to influence

the policymaking process. For most of the post-transitional period since 1987, the civil society arena in South Korea has long been dominated by “progressive” social groups that share ideological commonalities in believing in democratic reforms, economic equality, and engagement with North Korea. By contrast, new “conservative” social groups or “New Right” organizations have different ideological traits, decrying too much democracy (“populism”), lamenting the loss of global competitiveness due to the overemphasis on welfare and redistribution, and supporting a more hard-line policy toward the North.

The election of Lee Myung Bak in the 2007 presidential election was greatly aided by the rise and crystallization of conservative social groups during the preceding Roh government. Since its inauguration in February 2008, the Lee government (2008-13) has designed and carried out policies to weaken progressive social groups and to strengthen conservative ones. For example, it dispensed with most of the deliberative committees and advisory commissions introduced during the previous “participatory” government, because those forums had mostly been dominated by progressive groups. Instead, the government created alternative forums, now heavily influenced by conservative “New Right” groups that played pivotal roles in Lee’s election in 2007. The staff position that dealt with civil society affairs in the presidential office (i.e., “Senior Presidential Secretary on Civil Society Affairs”) was downgraded to a junior secretary position under the Senior Presidential Secretary on Political Affairs.

The most decisive incident in the civil society-state relations during the Lee government is a series of popular protests and candlelight demonstrations in May-July 2008. The apparent motive for the civic mobilization was citizens’ concern with the safety of the beef imported from the U.S. But the mobilization was not only about food safety or “food sovereignty.” The protests subsequently expanded to address other issues such as the secretistic and non-transparent ways in which foreign policies of the country were made; the extremely controversial “Korean Grand Canal” construction project; the government’s educational reform; and privatization of public corporations.

In early January of 2009, a group of Yongsan tenants who had been opposed to the redevelopment project and compensation policies of the Lee government occupied a building and waged sit-in protests there, demanding just compensation. A SWAT team stormed the building to remove the protesting tenants. Police began the eviction operation at 6:42am by using a crane to lift a container to the rooftop of the occupied building, with fifty SWAT officers inside. Fire broke out in the middle of the violent confrontation between the protesting tenants and the police. Six people died—five tenants and one policeman. Distrusting the prosecutorial investigation’s conclusion that the fire was caused by Molotov cocktails the protesting tenants prepared to use and the police operation was a perfectly legitimate implementation of the relevant laws, civil society groups demanded full investigation, appropriate government response, and promise that similar tragedies will never recur. In early August of the same year, hundreds of sit-in labor strikers at Ssangyong Motor Company’s Plant in Pyeongtaek were violently raided by the police also. The sit-in strikes were a response to the lay-off of thousands of laborers at the plant. There was civil society mobilization criticizing the violent suppression and supporting the strikers.

Overall, however, civil society mobilization during the Lee government was inconspicuous. The Lee government was a very tough opponent to civil society. The government looked repentant and seemed to change its course of policy—this never happened in fact. The government continued to apply the “law and order” unilateralism, turn deaf ears to the persistent popular demand for participation and communication, and engage itself in questionable activities such as the monitoring and surveillance of civilians. The erosion of democracy during the Lee years was so gradual, intangible,

subtle, and imperceptible that it was simply very difficult to mobilize the mass against the government's violations of democratic principles.

Park Geun Hye was elected in the 2012 presidential elections, and her new government was inaugurated in February 2013. In terms of its policies vis-à-vis civil society, the new government does not seem very different from the previous Lee government. The government implemented a hard-line policy toward illegal anti-government demonstrations, keeping wary eyes on the "progressive" civil society groups and their possible alliance with opposition parties, and maintaining close relationship with "conservative" social groups. The Park government continued to apply a "law and order" stance on candlelight protestors, labor strikers, and anti-government activists. The civil society-party alliance of the progressive nature became far more problematic, after the prosecution of the leader of the United Progressive Party on the charge of plotting an armed rebellion against the South Korean government. Meanwhile, both the Chief Presidential Secretary and the Intelligence Chief met with and consulted the leaders of major conservative groups (*The Chosun Daily*, 17 October 2013).

There were several upsurges of mass mobilization and protest against the Park government (2013-17). Immediately after Park's inauguration, a series of mass demonstrations, signature collection campaigns, declarations of anti-government statements ensued to protest against the intelligence agency's intervention into the 2012 presidential election. Throughout the first year of Park's government, i.e., 2013, South Koreans from all walks of life—civil society activists, university and high school students, religious organizations, labor unions, professors and teachers—participated in the nationwide movement to reprimand the anachronistic, illegal election-meddling of the intelligence agency.

Another important incident that provided a strong rallying point for civil society's politics of protest was the tragic sinking of *Sewol* ferry on April 16, 2014. More than 300 people, mostly young high school students from Ansan, were killed in the accident. South Koreans were outraged by the ineptitude of the president and top government officials as well as the irresponsibility and evasiveness of relevant ministries and agencies. They were particularly frustrated by the slow pace and incomplete nature of the police and prosecutorial investigation into the accident, the increasing indifference and inability of the president in handling the incident, and the systematic attempts of the ruling party lawmakers to discredit and delegitimize the popular protest as politically motivated and partisan, instigated by the opposition politicians and anti-government elements.

The most prominent re-ascendance of civil society's mass mobilization in South Korea took place in late 2016, with the revelation that Park Geun Hye was influenced by a friend who had no public position. The fact that she was masterminded by an unelected civilian to wring money from *chaebol* tycoons, order appointment and dismissal of certain public officials, interfere with the policymaking process, and so on, greatly outraged South Koreans who thought that the South Korean democracy had been solidly institutionalized. The various irregularities that marred the Park government clearly demonstrated that the South Korean democracy had been in fact slipping back to authoritarianism, with the president privatizing the state apparatus to engage in organized corruption and illegal influence-peddling and state agencies blacklisting and monitoring citizens. After several months of huge weekend mass mobilization in downtown Seoul and an unprecedented constitutional crisis, Park was finally impeached in March 2017. Civil society, again, came to the foreground of South Korea's democratization drama and played crucial role in recovering democracy and demanding institutional and policy reform.

The new government of Moon Jae In (2017-present) encapsulates the comeback of a government that is, after a nine-year-long hiatus of the two preceding conservative governments, friendly to civil society. The Moon government openly confesses that it is undeniably a direct outcome of the "Citi-

zens' Candlelight Revolution of 2016-17" that ousted the Park government. It introduced the senior officer position in the Presidential Office ("Blue House"), called "Social Innovation Senior Officer," that deals with civil society, social innovation, and institutional reform. This is an expanded and more sophisticated version of "Civil Society Senior Officer," during the Roh Moo Hyun government. Moon himself was the Civil Society Senior Officer between 2004 and 2005. Keenly aware of the power and centrality of civil society in South Korean politics, the Moon government is expected to be much more participatory and accessible to civil society, involving citizens and civil society organizations into the policy making process. The main challenge is how to institutionalize civic participation so as to make it more sustainable and thus irreversible.

Explaining the change

The South Korean case confirms that civil society does not simply vanish after the transition. South Korean civil society played an important role in the democratic transition, and its activism did not stop after the transition. It continued to play important roles even in the phases of democratic consolidation and deepening, by waging a campaign to remove authoritarian legacies, calling for more democratic reforms, exploring post-democratic and post-modern new social movement issues, to name but a few. Overall, South Korean civil society emerged an arena of effective political advocacy and significantly contributed to democratic institutional and policy reforms during the first two decades after the 1987 transition to democracy.

After the Roh Moo Hyun government, however, the South Korean civil society experienced a downturn. Civil society groups were not as influential as they had been; their campaigns were not as popular as they had used to be; and their policy influence was not as powerful as it had used to be. According to serial data compiled by East Asia Institute, a South Korean private think-tank, civil society groups—both "progressive" and "conservative"—went down in terms of their rankings in both "influence" and "public trust." In terms of "influence," PSPD went down from 12 to 19 to 21 in 2005, 2009, 2013 respectively. CCEJ went down from 13 to 18 to 19. "New Right" went down from 19 to 20 to 22. In terms of "public trust," PSPD went down from 8 to 15 to 17; CCEJ recorded 11, 18, and 18; "New Right" from 12 to 21 to 22. As compared with ten years ago, the influence, popularity, and public trust civil society groups enjoy in South Korean society have substantially dwindled (East Asian Institute 2013).

It is true that civil society's mobilization and protest played crucial role in the latest impeachment and ouster of Park Geun Hye. However, this return of a formidable civil society is only exceptional. The mass mobilization of 2016-17 was not organized by civil society organizations. It was joined by millions of unorganized and uncoordinated individual citizens who were enraged by irregularities and abuses of the Park regime. Neither civil society groups nor political parties were in control or in charge of organizing and leading the recent popular mobilization for democracy: the movement was spontaneous and acephalous.

A few tentative and hypothetical explanations are possible for the current change in South Korean civil society. First of all, the South Korean people themselves are changing. South Koreans today are becoming more and more difficult to mobilize. As compared with ten years ago, they are far less interested in and sympathetic to the vague cause of "democracy," unless the erosion of democracy was so blatant to warrant a constitutional crisis and presidential impeachment. Also, they have become far more individualistic. As a result, protests and demonstrations have become more amorphous and acephalous, without clear organizations that spearhead or coordinate diverse elements of the move-

ment. Furthermore, the media, with progressive outlets weakened and conservative ones proliferating since the Lee Myung Bak government, simply do not report much on protests and demonstrations. What is not reported, to the general public, is what does not exist.

Lastly and most importantly, the current change in civil society in South Korea is also a result of over-politicization of civil society. Over-politicization has two different dimensions. On the one hand, a lot of civil society activists have joined political society over the years—movement activists became career politicians and left the civil society arena. This physical migration of leaders from civil society to political society has demoralized and undermined the civil society arena as a whole, rather than reforming or changing political society. The other dimension of the over-politicization is the polarization of civil society between “progressive” groups and “conservative” groups. Unlike during the immediate aftermath of the democratic transition, now if “progressive” groups in civil society mobilize themselves, “conservative” groups counter-mobilize themselves against “progressive” groups’ mobilization, as we witnessed during Park’s impeachment.

This mobilization vs. counter-mobilization pattern constantly dilutes the previously clear-cut battle-line between civil society and the state and raises public doubts that civil society groups are not neutral, not impartial, not non-partisan, and thus not publicly-minded. The repeated conflict between ideologically different and clashing civil society groups has made the civil society arena, to the public eyes, no different from the political society where partisan and factional—incompetent and corrupt to boot—politicians bicker for petty and egocentric interests. In this sense, the current change South Korean civil society is experiencing has the danger of making the traditional public apathy and distrust about political society flow over to civil society as well.

Different democracies, different civil societies

Unlike many new democracies where civil society played little significant role, played a role only in the transitional phase, or stopped playing any role in the consolidational stage, South Korea is unique in that civil society substantially contributed to *both* the transition *and* the consolidation of democracy. Yet, upon a closer look, we notice that there has been important change in civil society and its engagement with the state over different governments in the past thirty years. For the first three governments after the 1987 democratization, there was a discernable pattern of increased and deepened cooperation between civil society and the incumbent government. Civil society groups were engaged in various movements and campaigns, and the democratic governments were relatively accommodative and cooperative toward civil society’s advances. The general social atmosphere was supportive of democracy and democratization, and South Koreans remained largely sympathetic to and patient about those civil society activists who had often been former democracy fighters. However, during the Roh Moo Hyun government, a new pattern of mobilization (by progressive elements in civil society) vs. countermobilization (by conservative elements) became evident and continued into the Lee Myung Bak and Park Geun Hye governments. Now, the main schism in civil society is not between people’s movement and citizens’ movement within the progressive camp, but between the progressive camp and the conservative camp.

The origin of this new, ideological bifurcation of civil society could be traced back to the clash between pro-Sunshiners and anti-Sunshiners with respect to Kim Dae Jung’s engagement policy toward North Korea. Whatever the origins are, civil society in South Korea today is clearly divided and embattled, which has considerably diminished the unity, influence, credibility, and legitimacy of civil society vis-à-vis the state, political society, or market. As well, civil society in South Korea is often

confronted with prominent challenges, such as a largely unfriendly government that is not interested in communicating or collaborating with it (although this may not be the case with the current Moon government, it was certainly the case with the Lee and Park governments), a public that is much more skeptical about democracy and has little confidence in civil society's positive role in furthering political development, citizens who are far more worried about their jobs and welfare than the health of their country's democracy, governmental and market organizations that are much more resourceful and influential than civil society organizations, to name but a few.

South Korea seems to have arrived at a crossroads where the nexus between civil society and democracy must be problematized, reviewed, and reassessed to figure out the conditions and strategies that help recover the positive effects of civil society on democracy. To do this, it appears crucial to *diversify* the roles of civil society in democracy. South Korean civil society has most of the time focused on the contestatory and advocacy functions. During the pre-transitional period, civil society challenged and resisted the authoritarian state. During the post-transitional period, it identified reform issues and mobilized the mass for public causes. However important these contestatory and advocacy functions, they constitute only part of the many functions civil society can and should play to enrich, deepen, and sophisticate democracy. Many of the functions civil society is supposed to play in democratic consolidation have not been considered or explored seriously in South Korea, such as inculcating in citizens conceptions of "interest"; structure and provide multiple channels for the identification, articulation, expression, and representation of interests; serve to govern the behavior of its members with regard to collective commitments; and reduce the burden of governance for both public authorities and private producers (Schmitter 1997).

In this regard, it is now time to explore other roles of civil society, particularly roles that can deliver tangible goods and services to citizens and can generate practical policy alternatives. South Korean civil society has always been crowded with those movement groups advocating a number of causes ranging from the environment to national reunification. Now we need to see more and more groups that work to promote and enhance people's *interests*, thereby increasing the quality of citizens' daily life and the quality of democracy. As well, criticizing the government for poor performance is no longer enough: civil society groups should become effective non-governmental think-tanks that can ably develop and produce competitive policy alternatives. Only via diversifying the functions of civil society groups to meet citizens' increasingly various interests and demands, civil society in South Korea will be able to regain public trust, popularity, and influence.

Massive and intensive popular mobilization is no doubt one impressive measure of civil society's power. Yet, it can never be the only (or best) measure. An equally important—or perhaps more important—indicator of civil society's power is the degree of its organizational diversity and functional richness and the level of effectiveness of its practical problem-solving capacity. If the positive relationship between civil society and democracy cannot be re-postulated in South Korea, the once-potent civil society and its multiple and significant contributions to democratic transition and consolidation will fade away as an ancient episode that happened long time ago and therefore has no present relevance.

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YU-REE KIM

The Role of South Korean Civil Society in the North-South Korea Relations

Abstract: Since the end of 1980s, South Korea witnessed rapid growth of civil society: social movements, networks, and NGOs. To promote global agendas such as human rights or humanitarian aids, transnational and domestic civil society groups try to expand cooperation with governments and other civil society groups. This paper reviews the role of civil society groups and NGOs in inter-Korean relations, focusing on their influence on government policies on inter-Korean relations. South Korean civil society groups and NGOs started their activities toward North Korea from the mid-1990s, after North Korea made an official request for humanitarian aid in 1995. The role of civil society has been expanded as a pillar of state policy toward the North, to change North Korean society in a long-term perspective. Civil society activities contributed to increase inter-Korean exchange and cooperation, which was critical for peace and security in the Korean Peninsula.

South Korean civil society, however, could not expect any partnership with North Korean social groups due to the lack of civil society in North Korea. NGOs had to deal with North Korean government to continue their work. Moreover, there has been split between the civil society groups on the policy toward North Korea. Divided between the progressives and conservatives, NGOs were also involved in social split and separately pursued their goals. These conditions made the role of civil society complicated and limited in policy decisions toward the North. Still, the growing capability of civil society is positive for the future of North-South relations. Despite the lack of civil society counterpart in North Korea, NGOs and groups can expand their influence over both governments, continue the discussion for more effective policies toward North Korea, and would eventually help the emergence of North Korean civil society.

Keywords: North Korea, South Korea, Inter-Korean relations, Korean Civil Society, Humanitarian NGOs, Human Rights NGOs, South-South conflict.

Pietų Korėjos pilietinės visuomenės vaidmuo Šiaurės ir Pietų Korėjos santykiuose

Santrauka: Nuo XX a. 9-ojo dešimtmečio pabaigos Pietų Korėja išgyveno greitą pilietinės visuomenės augimą – ėmė plėstis socialiniai judėjimai, sąjungos, nevyriausybinių organizacijos (NVO). Siekdamos atkreipti dėmesį į globalias problemas, tokias kaip žmogaus teisės, humanitarinė krizė ir kt., tarptautinio ir valstybinio lygio pilietinės visuomenės grupės siekia išplėsti bendradarbiavimą su vyriausybėmis ir kitomis pilietinės visuomenės grupėmis. Šiame darbe apžvelgiamas pilietinės visuomenės grupių ir NVO vaidmuo abiejų Korėjų santykiuose, ypač darant poveikį vyriausybės politikai.

Pietų Korėjos pilietinės visuomenės grupės ir NVO savo veiklą Šiaurės Korėjos atžvilgiu pradėjo XX a. 10-ojo dešimtmečio viduryje, po to, kai 1995 m. Šiaurės Korėja oficialiai paprašė humanitarinės pagalbos. Pilietinės visuomenės vaidmuo tapo vienu iš valstybinės politikos Šiaurės Korėjos atžvilgiu ramsčių, kuriuo siekiama pakeisti Šiaurės Korėjos visuomenę. Pilietinės visuomenės veiksmas prisidėjo prie taiką ir saugumą užtikrinančių mainų didinimo ir bendradarbiavimo tarp Korėjų stiprinimo.

Pietų Korėjos pilietinė visuomenė nesitiki partnerystės su Šiaurės Korėjos socialinėmis grupėmis, nes šioje šalyje tiesiog nėra pilietinės visuomenės, ir privalo bendradarbiauti su Šiaurės Korėjos Vyriausybe. Be to, pilietinės visuomenės grupės yra pasidali-

jusios Šiaurės Korėjos politikos atžvilgiu, paveiktos bendro visuomenės pasidalijimo į progresyviųjų ir konservatorių stovyklas. Tai apskunkino ir apribojo pilietinės visuomenės vaidmenį, paveikiant politinius sprendimus Šiaurės Korėjos atžvilgiu. Nepaisant pilietinės visuomenės Šiaurės Korėjoje nebuvimo, NVO turi potencialą išplėsti savo įtaką abiem vyriausybėms ir lemti tolesnes diskusijas dėl efektyvesnės Šiaurės Korėjos politikos. Tai galiausiai gali prisidėti prie pilietinės visuomenės atsiradimo Šiaurės Korėjoje.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Pietų Korėja, santykiai tarp Korėjų, Korėjos pilietinė visuomenė, humanitarinės NVO, žmogaus teisės, Pietų–Pietų konfliktas.

Introduction

Since the end of Korean War in the 1950s, South Korea has achieved rapid growth of economy and democratization of politics until the 1980s which finally allowed rapid growth of civil society since 1990s. Civil society groups and organizations in South Korea grew fast in numbers and capacity, with people enjoying more access to various social movements, networks, and organizations. To promote their own political and social goals, these civil society groups make close relationship with government or political parties. When having certain goal to achieve through policy changes, they seeking ways to put influence or directly participate in the policy making processes.

For easier access to policy making with more influence, civil society groups also try to make domestic or transnational networks for more support and cooperation. Actors in transnational networks would include NGOs, research institutes, advocacy organizations, local associations, the media, religious organizations, trade unions, intellectuals, etc. In many cases, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a central role to initiate and expand networks to gain supports from powerful actors for policy changes (Keck and Sikkink 1999, p.92). In case of South Korea, many members of those NGO have inherited former democratization movement organizations as their backgrounds. Former activists who worked as student leaders and underground activists in the 1970s and 1980s gained skill and strategies to establish networks and expand campaigns to criticize authoritarian government policies. Having specialty in dealing with government policies, they continued to work on agenda setting, public debates, and evaluation of policies.

Civil society groups in South Korea rapidly expanded their role in various fields, and North-South relations has not been an exception. South Korean civil society groups and NGOs started their activities toward North Korea from the mid-1990s. Some NGOs have achieved influential positions with growing capability and networks. Although the history of civil society has been only two decades, many NGOs of South Korea established their role of agenda-setting and supporting policymaking process.

This paper reviews the role of civil society, mainly NGOs, in inter-Korean relations focusing on their influence on government and society. In Part II, theoretical frame will be explained using the concept of transnational networks. NGOs and civil society actors organize networks to pursue their goals to change government policies. South Korean NGOs in this frame turned out to be experiencing the lack of civil society counterpart in North Korea. They had to make relationship only with governments, both in South and North Korea, to pursue their goals such as humanitarian aids. Part III will briefly review the history of NGO activities in North-South Korean relations since the mid-1990s and explain the main focus of NGOs on either humanitarian or human right issues, within the changing environment and relations.

More analysis on NGOs activities follows in Part IV. While NGO activities on North Korea-related issues were generally evaluated as positive to promote mutual understanding, there have been many

problems to limit their influence on policies. Due to the lack of civil society in North Korea, the South Korean NGOs found it difficult to establish sustainable civilian relations. In South Korean society, the divided campaigns between NGOs overlapped with the split of civil society on North Korea issues, which became the so-called "South-South conflicts." Humanitarian NGOs continued to put priority on economic aids to North Korea, largely supported by progressive groups. Human rights NGOs emphasized the human rights abuses and refugee issues in North Korea, which were largely supported by conservative groups. This split in civil society and NGOs diverted their goals, made them difficult to cooperate, and frequently offset each other's policy influence. The conclusion will wrap up these trends and problems, still with some positive prospects on the potential of civil society in the future of inter-Korean relations.

Civil Society Groups and Transnational Networks on Policies

Since the late 21st Century, civil society groups and organizations started to make transnational networks to promote agenda effectively in the process of globalization. The democratized states have recognized how important and necessary to have active civil society actors to achieve certain policy goals. Activities of NGOs and civil society groups have been particularly active on the issues such as human rights, environment, humanitarian aids, economic development, gender equality, and so on. NGOs have clearly realized the usefulness of international connections to gain support, information, resources, and sometimes pressure from outside to change domestic policy. The on-line networks strengthened the links to make civil society partners in different countries.

By making transnational networks, NGOs and civil society groups can exchange information and respond to domestic challenges with more emphasis on their agenda. Civil society groups under dictatorship or authoritarian system can get outside information and support for their domestic activity. The power of civil society vary by state and region, and the civil society under an oppressive regime or underdeveloped economy usually face much difficulty to overcome. To put their agenda in the government policy-making process, civil society groups choose variety of activities from militarized struggles to collaborative partnership with governments (Appadurai 2002, p.2). Even in the countries full of political freedom, the activity also varies: lobbying, advocacy groups, research projects, campaigns, and street demonstrations. Whatever kinds of activity they choose, all the civil society groups recognize the importance of transnational network and tend to utilize the networks (Batliwala 2002, pp.394-395).

While the civil society groups recognize the necessity of transnational networks, it still depends on the situation of each state whether these groups would be possible to participate the transnational networks or not. Smith and Wiest (2005) analyzed the factors on the possibility of transnational participation of NGOs. Political integration of the state to the global society matters more than economic integration on the NGO participation to the transnational networks. If a state tended to participate actively in intergovernmental organizations and in regional cooperation bodies, it would be easier for the civil society to engage in transnational networks and improve their activities (Smith and Wiest 2005, pp.637-639). In case of non-democratic states, this process would encourage political democratization and economic marketization with the spillover of norms from outside.

The effectiveness of civil society's activity on government policy makings will be largely determined by their relationship with the government. The NGOs are most active at the stage of agenda-setting. At this stage, NGOs present campaigns and public discussions on issues such as the environment, human rights, and humanitarian aids to increase awareness. NGOs are usually established

for a single, issue-specific purpose and naturally are highly expertized on the issue. Some NGOs might have connections with the top-level of government bureaucracy to put their argument more directly in the policy-making process (Moon 2016, pp.273-274). Partnerships and regular meetings with government officials or national assembly would be helpful for this purpose. After they successfully achieved the policy change, NGOs and civil society groups turn to deliver the policy and assist application of the policy in society.

Civil society groups also can change the priority of policies on inter-state relations through their participation in the transnational networks. With active participation in transnational networks, some NGOs contribute to set agenda in the state-to-state negotiation, and even change the relationship between state entities. Keck and Sikkink (1999) analyzed the mechanisms of transnational advocacy networks in international politics. Transnational networks were able to support certain issues in the international cooperation or regional integration. They could build links between civil society and governments for information and communication. NGOs can forge a transnational advocacy network to accumulate information on issues, create policy agenda, and put pressure on governments. Some expertized advocacy networks can advocate even fundamental changes in institutional bases of state interactions (Keck and Sikkink 1999, pp.89-92). They frame issues to attract states and civil society and encourage policy changes. When dealing with globally recognized issues like human rights, it is easier for transnational advocacy networks to expand partnership and put more pressure on the targeted government.

When an NGO pushes forward its agenda through transnational networks, it starts with narrowing down the focus and disseminating information. If the issue was the humanitarian aids for certain region with famine, the NGO can make an agenda, for example "the food for children", to attract audiences and share the information. Then the NGO would establish a network with other civil society groups or governments to gain more support within and across states. If the networking was to create a new norm or principle, it is more important to make their new norm persuasive and supportive as possible. When they successfully achieved support from governments and civil society through the transnational networks, now they can demand the target government to recognize the new norm to change its policy (Price 1998, p.617). The target government might not hear the voice if it comes only from its domestic civil society, but it is difficult to ignore when the voice was echoed through transnational network and comes in altogether to put pressure from outside.

Transnational networks link NGOs in developed countries with others in developing countries. This frame would work most effectively when there are friendly relationship between states to cooperate with each other. More importantly, there should be civil society with certain level of political freedom. If a NGO in a developed country intended to make a transnational network to persuade the government in a developing country, it is best to work closely with the civil society in that target country while dealing with both governments. When the state refuses to hear from its domestic civil society, NGOs seek outside support through the transnational network to bring pressure on their state. Keck and Sikkink called this the "boomerang" pattern of pressure for a policy change (Keck and Sikkink 1999, p.93). The existence and growth of civil society is the premise of transnational network to be efficient and successful.

Relationship between the two Koreas has been tricky, not been an ordinary state-to-state relationship but a special "temporary" relation since the armistice in 1953. It has been complicated with overlapping issues from security crises to humanitarian aids. Due to the lingering Cold War context in Northeast Asia, it is still the governments as the main actors to decide any issue. Even commercial and cultural exchanges were considered within the strategic approach on security and politics. North

Korea, in particular, has been emphasizing the security concern as the top and absolute priority in all policies and campaigns. This government-oriented frame was the most prominent in North-South Korea relations.

Civil society has been in conflict with government in process of democratization and still sensitive in some aspects, but South Korean government also recognized the role of NGOs and other civil society groups in many area the government could not approach easily. Their role on the issues such as human rights and humanitarian aids has strengthened rapidly in South Korea, deeply connected with transnational networks including UN organizations and other transnational NGOs (Cho and Park 2000, pp.139-140). It was expected that these NGOs would take a greater role to accelerate exchanges and cooperation in parallel with North-South government relations.

Whereas the civil society rapidly grew in South Korea, North Korea has not yet shown any positive sign of growing civil society. South Korean NGOs sought to make network with North Korean actors, but they could only work with government agencies and local administrative bodies. Due to the lack of society-level partners, the NGOs could not fully enjoy the effect of transnational network in the Korean Peninsula. Without civil society partners in the North, NGOs had to deal with governments to push forward their agenda, with turned out to be not an easy task. NGOs pursued direct contacts with government officials, conferences, media campaigns, and sometimes street-level demonstrations. The success of their efforts depended largely on the political relationship between governments (Richardson 2008, p.170). Lacking society-level partnership, the civil society could not continue their projects on certain issues when the political situation deteriorated.

With this unbalanced frame of network, South Korean civil society groups often found themselves dependent on governments. Government agencies were selective on NGOs to allow access, discuss agenda, or support their activities. Government often invite some selected NGOs into policy-making process, who are easy to collude with, and exclude the voice of loud and militant groups who are difficult to control (Batliwala 2002, p.398). Even in domestic policy-making process of South Korea, government agencies and staffs became selective on NGO participations. They recognized the importance of NGO participation, particularly at the initial stages of agenda-setting. The role of policy evaluation, monitoring and feedback after the policy implementation was also positively valued. While the government officials happily cooperated with NGOs for meetings, conferences, discussions or petitions, they strongly opposed street demonstrations or aggressive campaigns (Yun 2008, pp.595-596). South Korean NGOs also have weaknesses from shortages of professional know-how, financial resources and human resources.

Growth of South Korean Civil Society on the Issue of North-South Relations

Inter-Korean Cooperation and Exchange from the 1990s

Civil society in South Korea started its rapid growth around the year 1987. There were nationwide demonstrations demanding direct presidential election, and Chun Doo-hwan government was forced to agree and allow much higher level of political freedom. The first generation of civil society groups in South Korea around this time defined themselves as “liberal” groups to pursue certain “liberation” of people from authoritarian regime, which had been branded as pro-North “leftist” by conservative groups. The democratization was the liberalization of politics and society, and it led to sudden increase in the number of NGOs and various kinds of civil society groups through 1990s (Richardson, 2008: 166-167). This new phase of South Korea soon met the end of the Cold War with the demise

of the Soviet Union. The situation in North Korea suddenly became an issue of public discussion in South Korean society, which dragged attention of many NGOs and civil society activists.

Governmental level exchanges between North and South Korea existed before the end of the Cold War. The first cultural exchange happened in 1985 when the first separated family visit took place with exchange of performance teams. It was the first civilian visits organized by both governments that the performance teams from Seoul and Pyongyang visited each other's city for two days each. North and South governments continued to have high-level officials meetings in the early 1990s, and they often agreed to exchange art performances to promote the reconciliation and mutual understanding. At this stage, many civilian exchange events were held outside the Peninsula – Japan, China, Russia, and USA, based on supports of diaspora communities (O 2000, p.115). From the mid-1990s, however, they could not expand the relations due to the first nuclear crisis and deteriorated political relations.

When North and South Korea started their “exchange and cooperation” projects in the early 1990s, the programs were strictly under the control of governments within the boundary of official agreements. North Korea approached this exchanges as a new strategic opportunity toward South Korea under the political guidance of the Party (the Workers' Party of Korea). Lee (2004) analyzed socio-cultural exchanges in this stage that North Korea utilized the events to support their political position on international negotiations. For example, exchange programs on women were focused on the theme of “comfort women,” which North Korea wanted to emphasize with the purpose of strategic use in North Korea-Japan normalization negotiations. They were also active to participate in women's peace movements, which turned to be useful in negotiations on nuclear crisis, such as the inspection request of international society (Lee 2004, pp.7-8). Civil society participation was minimal. North Korea invited only small number of South Korean civil activists who were preferred by North, and they could only meet North Korean government officials during short visits for events. There was few opportunity for both North and South Korean people to see each other.

While the government-led exchange and cooperation programs came to a halt with the first nuclear crisis, North Korea was struck with serious draught and famine. North Korean government made an official request to the international community for humanitarian aid in 1995. Many humanitarian NGOs in South initiated nationwide aid campaigns. These NGOs cooperated with religious groups to advocate the need of humanitarian aids and development assistance to North Korea. According to Moon (2014), the number of humanitarian NGOs increased rapidly from 91 in 1995 to 112 in 1997. Among these humanitarian NGOs, the Uriminjok-seoro-dopgi-undong (Korean Sharing Movement, KSM) and Joeun Beot-deul (Good Friends) later took highly influential role as leading humanitarian organization toward North Korea (Moon 2014, p.70). The growing number and capacity of South Korean civil society provided fertile ground for these new NGOs to actively participate in the North-South exchange and cooperation, mostly regarding humanitarian aids in mid and late 1990s.

As the famine in North Korea gradually passed from the late 1990s, the policy agenda toward North Korea started to change and diversified. The humanitarian aids, however, continued to be the biggest part of NGO activities in the 2000s (Cho and Park 2000, p.147). After the first North-South summit in June 2000, the two governments revived large-scale exchange visits between civil society groups. Civil society organizations of farmers, women, and students were allowed to visit the North to hold joint events under various titles in their fields. These events were often held in collaboration with newly launched tourism to Mt. Geumgang or Mt. Baekdu. Joint cultural and sport events were also planned, for example to invite North Korean sport players and cheering squad to the international events in South Korea. These were civil society joint events planned and worked out by civilian groups and associations, but strongly supported and supervised by governments. The government agencies

financially backed the events, and were actively covered by news media. Many exchange visits to the North were not free of charge. South Korean groups brought “financial compensation” to continue the visits and dialogue in regular basis (Lee 2004, pp.10-11). Later this habit of financial compensation was criticized by conservative groups as unnecessary payment to support the North Korean regime.

By the early 2000s, increased number of humanitarian NGOs were conducting their aid campaigns and projects toward North Korea using various resources and methods of each. They realized the necessity of an umbrella association to harmonize the aid programs, which resulted in the foundation of Daebuk-jiwon Mingan-danche Hyeopuihoe (the Korea NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea, KNCCN) in 2001. Humanitarian NGOs focused more on continuous relationship with the North and quick transfer of assistance to resolve the famine and extreme poverty. Unlike other international organizations, they did not put much emphasis on conditions such as monitoring or evaluation. They knew that these conditions of humanitarian principles would make the relations difficult and the process protracted. South Korean humanitarian NGOs tend to understand the position of North Korea while trying to keep neutral on political issues. It was necessary for them to respect North Korean pride and emphasize positive image of North (Lee 2004, pp.63-65). In South Korea, this tendency of humanitarian NGOs were perceived as too friendly with North Korea, while the general public gradually became more worried with security and political tensions.

The North Korean nuclear crisis restarted from 2002, and the security and political relations rapidly deteriorated with more missile and nuclear tests in North Korea. After North Korea rejected to have government-level dialogue with the South from 2004, civilian groups also experienced growing difficulties to visit and cooperate with the North. Even cultural exchanges actually stopped since 2008 with several conflicts and conservative turn of South Korean administration. There were some attempts to revive cultural relations with some contact regarding sports competitions, such as organizing one team to participate Asian Games or Olympics. Sports cooperation has been one effective initiative to revive friendships, but these attempts were not successful in recent years (Lee 2015, pp.25-27). With endless spirals of nuclear threat and political conflicts, NGOs are only possible to continue their agenda in domestic society and politics in South Korea and to expand transnational networks in international society. Although they cannot pursue any activities with North Korean partners directly, the NGOs and other civil society groups on North-South relations are still working on campaigns and networks to prepare future situation changes.

Focus of Civil Society Groups in South Korea

South Korean NGO activities were naturally regarded as a pillar of South Korean government policy toward North Korea, to help and change North Korean society in a long-term perspective. Until the mid-2000s, the majority of this government-supported organizations were humanitarian NGOs to provide aids to the North and conduct the exchange and cooperation programs. Kim Dae-Jung administration (1998-2003) pushed forward the engagement policy toward North Korea, which allowed humanitarian NGOs more space to expand their activities. Some NGOs cooperated with international humanitarian organizations to conduct campaigns in more active ways, for example to provide assistance to the North Korean refugee who came across the North Korea-China border. In many cases these actions violated Chinese law which might risk South Korea-China relations (Cho and Park 2000, p.138). With strong support from progressive administrations, humanitarian NGOs could expand their aids toward North Korea to contribute to a peaceful unification in a long-term perspective.

Many humanitarian NGOs had close cooperation with, or even founded by, the religious groups. Christian, Buddhist, and other religious groups had common goal with humanitarian NGOs to provide assistance to North Korea. It was firstly to practice the religious love for all people, and to prepare for missionary works when there come the unification. Whether related with religious groups or not, the official purpose of humanitarian NGOs were largely same: to relieve North Korean people from extreme poverty and expand North-South exchange and cooperation. For this purpose, they argue that the humanitarian aids should be separated from political dynamics in the Korean Peninsula, to keep exchange and cooperation and prepare peaceful unification in the future (Kang 2016, p.1). Categorized as the “unification NGOs”, these NGOs have established their role to share sufferings of North Korean people and promote mutual understandings between two Koreas.

While the humanitarian NGOs were engaged in assistance to North Korea, human rights NGOs also became increasingly active from the late 1990s. It was widely known that the human rights problem in North Korea was serious, and the people started to see the situation in the North and hear stories from refugees. Human rights NGOs rapidly enlarged critical voices disclosing human right violations in North Korea. These organizations included Amnesty International Korea, Bukhan-ingwon-simin-yeonhap (Citizens’ Alliance for North Korean Human Rights, NKHR), and Bukhan-Minjuhwa Network (Network for North Korean Democracy and Human Rights, NKnet). These NGOs were not many in number as humanitarian NGOs and were not much active until the late 1990s. During 1996 and 1998 when the famine reached its peak, they also focused on food aids to resolve the issue of survival. Later in the 2000s, however, these NGOs, for example NKHR, started to put priority on human rights issues such as political prisons with strong alliance with international NGOs (Moon 2014, p.72). Growing number of North Korean refugees provided astonishing stories and proofs of human right abuse, and this trend overlapped with deteriorating security relations with the second nuclear crisis.

The focus of NGO activities on North-South Korea relations so far categorized in two. Humanitarian NGOs continued to focus on aid and development cooperation to help North Korean people. Human rights NGOs concentrated more on basic and political rights of North Korean people and tried to put pressure on North Korean government through transnational networks. Though working in quite different directions, all these NGOs were depending on the increasing information and knowledge on North Korea. North Korean people has not been seen throughout the Cold War era, but now South Koreans came to see and hear about North Korea thanks to wider access and contacts. Civil society could learn about North Korea after they started food aid programs, and found various aspects of the regime and society. NGOs and civil society groups chose to focus on certain aspects to set up their agenda on North Korea, either on economic difficulties or human right abuses, and pushed campaigns forward in both domestic and international society to get support for certain policies toward North Korea.

In South Korea since the mid-2000s, the divided structure between NGOs became clear with growing capacity of both groups. Humanitarian NGOs tried to expand people-to-people engagement with North Korea, and human rights NGOs to put pressure on North Korean government to stop human rights violations. By working separately to pursue the different goals, the NGO influence on policies frequently changed its direction, in many cases offset their effects and limited only with short-lived outcomes. Many NGO activists preferred not to reveal their work in public nor to be associated with apparent political pressure, which made them even more difficult to communicate and cooperate with each other. In case of humanitarian NGOs, it was not to hurt their connections with North Korea in the hope it would eventually make the relations strong as before (Yeo, 2017: 332). The problem

not just stayed with the fact the NGOs are divided in their top priority agenda and activities. NGO activities became one of borderlines of the so called “South-South conflict,” which in turn made their influence on policies even more limited, if not disturbing, by attracting unnecessarily heated debates from either conservative or progressive groups.

The Role and Influence of Civil Society on the Cooperation and Exchange Policies

The Lack of Civil Society in North Korea

South Korean NGOs and civil society groups could not expect any civilian partnership with North Korean social groups due to the lack of civil society in North Korea. They had to deal only with North Korean government agencies to hold any event, project, or aid program. There was already a problem of contact points with North Korea from the mid-1990s. Until the early 2000s, the civil society groups in South Korea contacted individually to the North Korean agencies to hold an event. To hold a cultural exchange program, for example, South Korean management companies used their private connections with North Korean agency and asked South Korean government support afterwards. North Korea had a monopolized mechanism and hierarchy to take care of exchanges with South Korea. All the North Korean agencies and officials were under the control of Party's United Front Department (O 2000, p.115). These agencies took the form of civilian organizations, but still were governmental agencies following direct orders from the Party.

From the perspective of South Korean government, it was a problem not to have a control tower over the NGOs and associations who were making contacts separately with North Korea. There were negative side effects of this freedom that the events were often overlapped, mismanaged or failed to make progress. There were competition between civil organizations for more exchanges with the North, which resulted in excessive waste of time and money. Having North Korea as its partner, South Korea felt necessity to manage the actors in a similarly organized mechanism (O 2000, p.119). Each NGO also had difficulties to deal with North Korea. They tried to understand the special situation of the North and accepted the top-down control of government to continue their connection without making troubles. They hoped to improve the procedure gradually based on mutual trust by giving material assistance. This was the main reason why many NGOs did not put many conditions about statistics, survey, or monitoring in their aid programs.

North Korean agencies who dealt with South Korean actors were the National Reconciliation Council (NRC), Korean Asia-Pacific Peace Committee (KAPPC), National Economic Cooperation Federation, and religious associations. When North Korean government moved the focus of economic assistance from humanitarian aids to development cooperation, most of NGOs working on economic programs had to change their contact points to the agencies under National Economic Cooperation Federation (Lee 2004, pp.53-55). While South Korean NGOs hoped to expand their connections to reach local communities to provide help, North Korean agencies focused more on strategic use of these projects to mobilize resources for certain fields of core projects the Party put priority on.

Due to the deterioration of relations with nuclear crisis and missile programs, many international NGOs left North Korea. Economic sanctions and international campaigns on human right issues also made the exchange and cooperation project hard to proceed. It was not only because of the security crisis and sanctions, but also due to the little improvement of North Korea's attitude as an assistance recipient country. International society requested North Korea to keep the humanitarian principles

to allow direct access to local communities, monitoring, and verification of aid delivery, all of which North Korean government did not respond positively. Global humanitarian NGOs such as Oxfam, Doctors Without Borders, and CARE left North Korea in the early 2000s due to these reasons (Yeo 2017, pp.327-328). South Korean NGOs remained to continue aid programs as long as possible by not asking strictly about these humanitarian principles. This tendency did not turn out to be positive for sustainable relations. It was hard to expect any change from North Korean government in a short time, and they also could not avoid the deteriorated political relations much longer.

Along the expansion of aid and exchange programs, South Korean NGOs tried to meet more North Korean people directly in various regions and fields. It was to initiate and support gradual change toward economic and social reform and opening, and help North Korean civil society to emerge in the future. If they could have civil society counterpart in North Korea, so called the second track partnership, it would create much effective and sustainable environment for the NGOs. It was, however, in a way natural for North Korea not to allow any direct access or delivery of aids from foreign and South Korean NGOs to its people. There were many previous cases to see how dangerous it is to allow direct contacts and inflow of outside information for the regime security. As much as South Korean government and civil organizations expected gradual opening and change of North Korean society, North Korean government was determined to keep its people away from the outside world. Although the socialist planned economy was destroyed during the famine, the political control over the population has been still strong not to see any political or social disturbance, let alone the growth of civil society networks.

Unofficial markets spread throughout North Korea recently, but this trend had no spillover effect to political fields. The markets in North Korea has become the most important part of economic life of people, and they have new conceptual thinking about market economy. This new perception is, however, disconnected with any political thoughts toward political freedom or liberal democracy. Having no former experience of civil society or networks like former Eastern Germany, North Korean society has little possibility to link this economic change into political pressure on the regime (Heo 2005, pp.15-18). Under this structure, South Korean NGOs had no choice but to deal with North Korean government agencies to continue their work in North Korea.

Dealing with the government agencies in the North, the NGOs also had to carry out their projects in close consultation with South Korean government not to make troubles in government level relations or international cooperation. In result, the exchange and cooperation projects with North Korea became almost nonexistent after 2008, due to security and political conflicts. It was hard to find sustainable network among South Korean NGOs even before 2008 to continue their relations and projects with North Korea in a long-term perspective. The problems such as the overlapping events, mismanagement or miscommunication with government departments continued to confuse the public with the effect of these North-South cooperation projects. The changing political situation of South Korea aggravated the situation, intertwined with the so-called "South-South Split" (Kim and Jung 2008, pp.179-181). The civil society groups tried to expand the projects to the fields of cultural cooperation. By the end of 2000s, however, the society-level exchange with North Korea remained with only a number of humanitarian aid programs by small number of transnational NGOs.

The Split of South Korean Civil Society on North Korea Issues

Intertwined with government changes and security concerns, there came a clear split between the progressive and conservative groups in South Korean civil society. The groups who defined themselves either progressive or conservative separately pursued their agenda by seeking cooperation with

different government bodies, international NGOs or transnational networks. The split on the issue of North-South relations became critical with the debates on "Sunshine Policy" during the two progressive administrations from 1998 to 2008. Progressive groups supported the Sunshine Policy as the most reasonable policy to pave the road to a peaceful unification. Conservative groups criticized that Sunshine Policy was pouring money to the North Korean regime in the name of economic aid without condition to make sure about their use.

Most South Korean people knew the fact that there had been huge amount of humanitarian aid through both government and NGOs into North Korea. The exchange and cooperation projects, however, had not widely recognized by the general public about the progress and effects. North Korea seemed not to be motivated by the humanitarian aid or development cooperation to change any of economic or political doctrine. To many South Koreans, North Korean regime not only remained same, but became more dangerous with nuclear crisis. It was difficult to make a consensus in South Korea whether to continue the economic support to North Korea (Kim and Seong 2011, p.14). The political and social division was still clear with the vivid memory of Korean War. The nuclear issue aggravated the chasm between progressives and conservatives to be impossible to agree on any policy regarding North-South relationship. By the mid-2000s, the unification issue and the exchange and cooperation projects became the borderline of this "South-South Split" in South Korea. Due to the endless debate between two sides, the policies on North-South relations could not be decided and applied effectively (Kim and Jung 2008, p.185).

The split between progressives and conservatives has been accelerated in parallel with other social conflicts such as generational differences. The ideological left-right division worsened the split, and political parties amplified the conflict as their election strategies. The sharp division on the policy toward North Korea resulted in ideologically separated support to NGOs, which again divided the NGOs to be defined as either progressive or conservative toward North Korea-related issues. Those NGOs who enjoyed governmental support under the Sunshine Policy to provide humanitarian aid were defined as progressive ones on the left. They were represented by the Korea NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea (KNCCN) which had almost all of humanitarian NGOs as its members. Other NGOs who concentrated more on the human rights situation of North Korea were defined as conservative ones. They tend to take a critical and hardline opinions toward North Korean regime, and were supported by conservative groups on the right. By 2007, it became clear that there was a division in South Korean civil society and between NGOs about North Korea issues.

This South-South Split has also been a serious issue within religious groups. Religious organizations have been leading groups to help North Korea during the famine. Korean Christian churches took large part in humanitarian aids, either by directly providing aids or supporting humanitarian NGOs. While they continued humanitarian aids toward poverty-stricken regions, the split between conservative and progressive groups appeared in each religious community. North Korea also has its own Christian association, Joseon (Korean) Christian Federation (KCF), under the guidance of the Party. The KCF mainly dealt with the National Christian Council (NCC) of South Korea from 1986. Conservative groups and churches, however, did not recognize the KCF as a proper partner, nor agreed with the approach of NCC. The Christian Council of Korea (CCK) took different path to initiate campaigns to help North Korean refugees, prepare plans for missionary works including the reconstruction of former churches in North Korea (Kim et al. 2003, pp.25-27). While the NCC and progressive churches focused on reconciliation and sustainable relationship, the CCK and conservative churches focused more on refugee protection, networks for evangelical missions and reconstruction of churches. For North Korea, both progressive and conservative churches were necessary during the

famine. After the famine, the official contact with the KCF and unofficial missionary-related efforts took different paths (Huh 2015, pp.7-11). The NCC and progressive groups inclined more on official relations with the KCF, while the CCK and conservative groups focused more on refugees and secret missions in cooperation with human rights organizations.

Social polarization and disagreements became clear by the end of 2000s, especially when the 2007 North-South summit took place. Roh Moo-Hyun government managed to have the summit with Kim Jong-Il in Pyongyang, which was harshly criticized by conservative groups, while openly welcomed by progressive groups. For conservative groups, the summit was nothing but a political performance of Roh government to create a favorable environment in the presidential election which was in the same year (Richardson 2008, p.172). Humanitarian NGOs advocated the economic cooperation along with progressive groups. They supported the Sunshine Policy to engage North Korea in a long-term perspective. Conservative groups did not find any meaningful change in North Korea and wanted to put priority on national security of South Korea. Conservative civil society groups and human rights NGOs intensified campaigns on the human rights abuse in North Korea.

Increased number of North Korean refugees in South Korea also started their campaigns, mostly on behalf of conservative groups. They worked with human rights NGOs as the victims of human right violations in North Korea. Some North Korean defectors and refugees established human rights NGOs themselves to promote campaigns in Korea and abroad. NGOs such as Bukhan-ingwon-tal-buk-cheongnyeon-yeonhap (Young Defectors' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights) and Seong-gongjeogin-Tongireul-Mandeureo-ganeun-Saramdeul (People for Successful Corean Reunification, PSCORE) were established by North Korean refugees from the mid-2000s. They provided detailed information of human rights violations to the larger human rights NGOs such as the Citizens' Alliance to increase public awareness (Moon 2014, pp.79-80). Their stories were also effective to attract attention from international society, particularly in the United States to achieve certain declarations and human rights acts on North Korea. It was a meaningful progress for the conservatives and human rights NGOs, but a blow to the progressives and humanitarian NGOs.

Human rights NGOs and conservative groups often made conflicts with humanitarian NGOs and progressive groups regarding their campaigns. One of the most favored campaigns of conservative groups and NGOs toward North Korea is to deliver leaflets, for example the balloon program by the North Korean refugees' NGOs. The balloon program was to deliver short pieces of information and leaflets using balloons to fly and burst in North Korean sky. Many people criticized this balloon program not to be cost-effective to promote any change in North Korea, while it was openly disliked by the North Korean government (Lankov 2011, p.27). Humanitarian NGOs still pushed South Korean government to allow contacts and visits to North Korea to continue relationship and projects. South Korean government has declared intensified sanction against North Korea and strictly controlled humanitarian NGOs from providing aides. The KNCCN tried to cooperate with transnational organizations such as the Red Cross to continue aid projects (Kang 2016, p.3). They often criticized the balloon program and other campaigns of conservative groups which made North Korean unhappy and even more difficult for them to continue relationship with the North.

There have been various attempts to overcome this social split by some civil society groups and organizations. Medical and healthcare organizations, for example, have expanded their activities in North Korea to provide medical facilities and technical cooperation and detached their activities from ideological debates. In most cases, it is not easy to keep distance from social split when any professional group initiates a project toward North Korea. Many professional groups and NGOs have already been involved in the split and experienced internal conflicts (Kim and Jung 2008, pp.187-

193). The government relations between North and South deteriorated with the nuclear crisis without any positive sign to expect reconciliation and cooperation in a short term. The society-level NGO activities toward North Korea also came to a halt, only with domestic debates and conflicts within South Korea following divided agendas of the conservatives and progressives.

Effects on Policies toward North Korean Society

As part of civil society in South Korea, the NGOs pursue campaigns and policy suggestions to make effective input in the policy making process. The split among the society between the conservatives and progressives took the North-South relations as the key issue to divide groups and organizations on each side. This growing gap in South-South conflict made the NGOs and other groups hard to make cooperation on North Korea-related projects. Their influence on the government policy making also have been divided by taking separated channels and methods to make inputs. The role of civil society in inter-Korean relations, in result, became complicated, limited, and sometimes even harmful for effective and sustainable policies toward North Korea.

Moon (2012) took the examples of Korea Sharing Movement (KSM) and Good Friends in the 1990s and 2000s to show their influence on the policy makings of South Korean governments during those years. They indeed contributed to the agenda-setting of government and promoted the expansion of food aids to North Korea. The level of NGO influence changed between governments, but they could promote public opinion by utilizing newly emerging networks in civil society without facing conservative backlash until early 2000s. During the most serious years of North Korean famine in late 1990s, these humanitarian NGOs could successfully push forward their agenda to help North Korea despite their weak budget and organization. Throughout these years the NGOs could also increase their professional knowledge and capacity, for example establishing the KNCCN as an umbrella association to efficiently cooperate with South Korean government (Moon 2012, pp. 42-45). The NGOs continued aid programs even when the government relations deteriorated with security or political concerns. Their continuous efforts of food aids made it possible for South Korea to stay on the engagement policy even with the nuclear crisis in the early 2000s.

These humanitarian NGOs became influential actors on policies toward North Korea during late 1990s. They had wide networks to promote humanitarian campaigns and aid programs. Before the presidential election in 1997, these NGOs even held a public debate session between presidential candidates to hear how important they considered the humanitarian aid in their policy agenda. In 1999, the Kim Dae-Jung administration officially allowed humanitarian NGOs to engage directly with North Korea without much government intervention beforehand (Moon 2014, p.71). When North and South Korea had summit in 2000, South Korean government prepared meeting agenda in which process the humanitarian NGOs could participate through various channels. The channels for policy suggestions were organizations like KNCCN or government agencies such as the advisory committee of Ministry of Unification (Moon 2012, p.48). They could emphasize the necessity of continuous humanitarian aids with policy ideas in detail.

The abrupt deterioration of security situation stagnated the humanitarian NGO activities. Although they recognized the seriousness of nuclear problem, these NGOs argued it is still important to continue civilian contacts and relations with North Korea. The KNCCN continuously requested government to allow access to North Korean people, and to institutionalize humanitarian aids to North Korea separately from political circumstances (Kang 2016, p.4). From mid-2000s, however, split between conservatives and progressives deepened, and the gap between humanitarian NGOs and human rights NGOs also became clear and wide. Policy influence of humanitarian NGOs rapidly

decreased as North Korea launched several missile and nuclear tests. There were strong criticisms and sanctions from conservative administration in South Korea and the U.S.-led international society.

With the deepening seriousness of security threat from North Korea, human rights NGOs conducted many campaigns, conferences, and other programs to increase the public awareness of human right abuses by the North Korean regime on its people. Political prison and refugee issues were popular topics throughout wide transnational networks. While the human right agenda was widely supported by conservative groups and human right NGOs, humanitarian NGOs had to endure hard times regarding budgets and managements. Supported by progressive groups in civil society, humanitarian NGOs criticized conservative turn of policies and remained to pursue their agenda to continue civilian relations with North Korea. The South-South conflict between North Korea-related NGOs and civil society groups became even more serious, intertwined with administration change and international relations.

Although the humanitarian and human rights NGOs are facing each other on the borderline of social split between conservative and progressive groups, it is still true that both groups of NGOs contributed much to promote the North-South relations as the key issue in Korean society. They achieved the social consensus that it is now important to take the role of civil society and NGOs seriously in the policy making process on North-South relations. For the unification of Korean Peninsula in future, the government came to recognize the role of NGOs to support any kind of preparation. Both groups of NGOs continuously provide agenda and topics for debate in society which help the people in domestic and international society to aware, understand, and make certain consensus on North Korea-related issues.

Conclusion: Potential of Civil Society in the North-South Relations

The NGO influence on government policies depends largely on the security and political relations in and around the Korean Peninsula. The political stance of North and South Korean government have been the most important factor. NGOs could make campaigns and programs through domestic or transnational networks, but the problem was whether these activities would be echoed at inter-governmental level. The positions and capacity of NGOs, however, became also an important factor to put some influence and pressure on policy decisions of governments. The growing capability of civil society is a positive development for the future of North-South Korea relations.

South Korean NGOs continuously tried to expand their influence over both South and North Korean governments. They needed to figure out networks in North Korea, both in society and government level, while working also closely with South Korean government. The networking remained quite limited with North Korea, that the NGOs found themselves to remain not having any society-level partner and only shallow and limited connections with North Korean government agencies. The NGOs also needed wide support from South Korean society, for stronger influence on the government policies based on social consensus. But the different goals and campaigns of NGOs toward North Korea became one of major issues of the South-South conflict between conservative and progressives. The conservative-progressive division and conflicts in society automatically linked the different directions of NGO campaigns between humanitarian and human rights NGOs with long-time split of opinions on policy toward North Korea.

Despite the lack of partner in the North and the social split in the South, the NGOs still contributed to ignite public opinions on North-South relations and to prepare future unification. Their efforts in varied directions helped the government and society to have more intense debates on the issue.

With different goal which they put more value, the NGOs continued their own agenda even when the political situation changed and the support from the government declined. During the high times of friendly North-South relations in the early 2000s, human rights NGOs conducted campaigns to increase awareness of human right abuses in North Korea while humanitarian NGOs were in close cooperation with the government. When the political relations deteriorated, the humanitarian NGOs still pushed forward the aid and cooperation with North Korea in difficult environments while human rights NGOs could gain bigger voice to emphasize serious human rights violation in the North.

By keeping their agenda and stance even in official silence of government, the NGOs can help the society to keep balance on its opinions and to offset extreme tendencies. Whenever the political relationship improved, the civilian actors would become even more important actors to expand and institutionalize the relations to make it sustainable in the long-term perspective. As civilian actors, the NGOs would continue to serve as a buffer between North and South Korean government, and help to keep the economic and cultural relations sustainable despite fluctuations of security and political circumstances.

Considering the future unification of Korean Peninsula, the role of NGOs and civil society groups become more important. Experts foresee that civil society will have a major role in the process of unification beside the governments in the North and South. They can help to reduce political tensions, and easily engage with North Korean people for cooperation (Richardson 2008, p.175). As they continue their efforts in North Korea, it would eventually help North Korean civil society to emerge. Former communist countries revived their civil society largely through both official and unofficial channels. Official channel was the government-supported exchanges which introduced increasingly more information and ideas from outside. Unofficial channel was the information dissemination campaigns by civil society and NGOs which secretly delivered the truth from outside (Lankov 2011, p.20). South Korean civil groups and NGOs can take roles in both channels, bringing the information and idea to gradually change the North Korean society.

Case of German unification also suggests significant role of civil society, with emphasis on the separation of societal exchanges from political dynamics. Cultural exchanges had been de-coupled from political relations between East and West Germany, and it was the key to continue and expand the society-level exchanges from 1949 to 1990 despite political conflicts (Lee 2014, p.63). It is more than clear that North Korea seriously wants a supportive international environment for economic development, of course for the sake of its regime. When the security crisis could be resolved, it would be also beneficial for both Koreas to separate the society-level exchanges from politics as possible, to allow North Korea to be engaged in regional and international cooperation. Economic and cultural relations with South Korea would be a double-edged sword for North Korean regime. Integration of North Korea into bilateral and multilateral cooperation will also push the regime to make improvements on other concerns such as human rights (Frank 2009, pp.171-173). The NGOs and civil society groups can again contribute to this process, and eventually would bring significant improvements in politics and society in the whole Korean Peninsula.

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