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***TOURISM PLANNING FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE?
TERRITORIALITY AND RESISTANCE IN A TRUKU VILLAGE IN EAST
TAIWAN***

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Introduction

Debates of political ecology are helpful to probe political interests of the state, especially on issues of natural resource management. Vandergeest and Peluso (1995) argue that modern states usually exert strategy of territorialisation to manipulate people and govern resources. Geographer Sack's definition of territoriality notes that it is the endeavour 'to influence, affect, or control objects, people, and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area' (Sack, 1983, p.56). The establishment of protected areas is a typical example of state territorialisation to restrain access to resources. Ribot and Peluso (2003) consider access as 'the ability' of gaining profits from resources so that power relations under resource access can be examined. Power is a vital concept to understand access and control of resources in political ecology. Treatises such as political processes of interactions among various players and struggles within community linking to resource access are widely explored (Bryant and Bailey, 1997; Wilshusen, 2003). The lens of political ecology provides insights into political purpose of policy implementation by governmental agencies.

This study aims to interpret the failure of development planning for indigenous people in the context of community conservation by examining a Truku case in east Taiwan. Specific explorations contain the evolution of this development plan, political acts of the local

government and responses of the locals to the planning implementation. In methodology, two field trips (October 2011 to March 2012, and September 2014) were conducted for data collection in Taiwan. Using qualitative methods containing semi-structure interviews, document collection, and participatory observation, I interviewed officials in the local government, and leaders and villagers of different camps in this village, collected official documents, a planner of scenic area, flyers of protester, news reports and videos, observed meetings. All data were analysed in line with various themes and reframe according to interpretations and theories.

Contexts of community conservation and the Truku case

Community conservation strategy has been a popular way of development in indigenous regions in Taiwan for two decades because of its financial potential in eco-tourism. It does not merely consider conservation but concerns the local economic development to coincide with needs of the locals. These bottom-up conservation initiatives replace top-down management. The local community rather than state agents carry out conservation project. Eco-tourism is often regarded as a non-consumptive approach to development. Main players of this participatory conservation plans at local level consist of local governmental agencies, the local community and travel agencies.

There are about 1500 residents in the village. National forests occupy the majority of territory of this village. Truku people regard forests as their ancestral domain. Traditional exploitations of natural resources such as hunting practices by local Truku villagers are generally prohibited in keeping with conservation legislation. However, some regulations have been gradually amended to accommodate indigenous peoples' rights. Younger generations usually work in urban areas and many older people stay in the village with the young children. Some residents in the village depend on agriculture while others work as casual labourers in adjacent areas. Because this village is in the restricted mountain areas, visitors are required to apply for entry permits in advance.

Evolution of combined conservation and development projects

The evolution of the conservation and development planning can be categorised into three stages:

- (1) The conservation intervention stage (1997-2004): Hualien County Government persuaded the village to carry out community conservation initiative by taking advantage of a dominant elected village head and making several trips to other indigenous communities which were involved in the tourism. Community conservation project was approved by the above government in 2003. This rural village in indigenous regions was sponsored by central and local government not just for conservation efforts but for development needs such as building a visitor centre and making tourist trails. At this stage, the county government authorities manipulated the process. The local leaders acted on behalf of the villagers to interact with the local state agents. A new industrial association was established to handle tourism development. More attention was paid to development preparation rather than to the conservation effort (Jhuang and Tai, 2009).
- (2) The tourism development stage (2005-2010): Before the end of conservation project a pilot scheme of tourism began to co-operate with external travel agencies in January 2005. On one hand, internal power play resulted in the village head failing to be elected and necessitated major reform of core leadership team of the local industrial association. A female local elected representative held the reins. The industrial group could not afford the running costs of the visitor centre and returned its control to the township office. There was no regulation or provision for the locals to charge tourists. These travel agencies used their employees rather than the locals as tour guides. Meetings between the industrial association and travel agencies could not break such a deadlock. Local participation in tourism was extremely low mainly due to lack of capital. On the other hand, the local state agencies and the core team of the industrial association decided to promote a 'Natural and Cultural Ecology Scenic Area (NCESA)' in this village being the first one in Taiwan. The township office dealt with planning matters while the county government accounted for regulations. At this stage, external travel agencies dominated tourism in this village. Tourism interests were not evenly distributed among primary players. The local governmental agencies were ready to accept the creation of a new scenic area.
- (3) The resistance stage (2011-2014): The township office proposed a conservation project in 2011 but was refused by the majority of villagers due to their mistrust. Public hearings of NCESA in the village were protested against because of worry of restraints of livelihood and access to natural resources. A new officially recognised 'tribal meeting' group had led the persisting protests since 2012. A petition to the county head was tactfully refused

on the excuse of the absence of county head. The tribal meeting group promoted claims in the village to call for more participants to resist to the unfair acts of the state agents. The group found that visitor number exceeded the official saturation levels. The environment was polluted as the result of being overrun by tourists and travel buses. Tourism also caused inconvenience to villagers on the narrow mountain roads. A negotiation conference organised by an indigenous legislator in February 2013 suggested that the planning of NCESA should be suspended due to lack of consensus among villagers. The local government later declared that the plan had been suspended. Nevertheless, problems relating to tourist numbers and conflicts of interest (external travel agencies versus local groups) remained, the group mobilised resistance against tourism in 2014 to claim they are the masters of the village by traditional means of firing shotgun and making smoke signals to symbolise communications with the ancestral spirits.

Territorialisation of the state and resistance of indigenous people

Why was the expert-oriented and benevolently-motivated development planning of the state agents rejected by the local indigenous residents? Why did it elicit overt resistance? Scott's analysis (1998) when examining how social engineering fails may provide hints. One necessary factor is the prevailing faith in the progress of science and technology among the elite and the other is the state's power to impose its plan on society. Namely the firm belief in modern progress of science and technology enhances the confidence to improve social condition and such a faith possibly conceals the political motive of officials. Authoritarian power then fearlessly performs policy which results in potential social disaster. The ideological problem comes from over-confident justification of scientific advancement. Coercive power of the state in practice reveals hegemony of the state. Accordingly, the resistance of such a policy by civil society may be a way to avoid social disaster. Scott stresses the value of practical knowledge and insights that can be seen as a solution to such a potential policy tragedy. Development planning policies of state agents could be seen as a sugar-coated poison. They may look attractive from the point of view of achieving local development. However, political interests are possibly under the planning table. Once these are revealed and social impacts happen, collective action of resistance can be mobilised by the local residents.

The examination of this Truku case has showed how tourism as a development intervention in the rural indigenous regions resulted in significant controversies. Tourism is closely associated with capital. Promotion of tourism development in indigenous areas can easily cause dominance of well-funded external travel agencies. Such an extrinsic domination generated serious local unemployment in tourism and ignorance of the local culture. Suffering from pollution, inconvenience and uneven distribution of interests, the locals expressed their claims by various forms of resistance. Moreover, new legislation about NECSA enhanced control of the public sector in areas such as land use, tour guide management and distribution of tour guide income. Local participation was also neglected when the development planning was implemented. These induced resentment of the locals and overt resistances were mobilised. Development planning in rural indigenous regions that relies on local participation and less manipulation by the state agents may strengthen trust and be conducive to implementation of policy.

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