



WHY IS DECENTRALIZATION NOT ALWAYS PARTICIPATION? INSIGHTS FROM THE LANYANG RIVER MOUTH WATERBIRD WILDLIFE REFUGE

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DISRUPTION AND RENEWAL - POWER, SURVIVAL, AND DEVELOPMENT

BY ANNA MATEVOSYAN, PH.D. CANDIDATE (UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND)-;
AND DR DAU-JYE, LU, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR (NATIONAL TAIWAN UNIVERSITY)

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THE MAIN QUESTIONS AND FINDINGS TO BE DISCUSSED

The study will illustrate:

- *Are the local government up to their job of encouraging participation?*
 - *Do actor interests connect with conservation management?*
- i. Integrative powers and capacities of the county government (ICG); and recognition of different motivations
 - ii. Perception of actors of enforcement and their interest in participation
 - iii. Impact of the current policies on nature protection



OUTLINE

- Background
- Methods of study
- Results
- Summary of findings

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

- A. Decentralization provides a choice of participation (Wood & Gray, 1991), but participation also determines the outcomes (Bazaara, 2003; Tang, Tang, & Lo 2005).
- B. Increased policy responsiveness (Bardhan, 2002; Rondinelli & Cheema, 1983).
- C. Improved information flow (Agrawal & Ostrom, 1999).
- D. Improved representation (Blair, 2000).

Participation is the capacity to enforce environmental policy implementation locally (Basurto, 2013)

Partnership and deliberations as participation (Berkes, 2007)

Incentives

- Agrawal and Ostrom (1999) argue that communities would require rights in management to develop interest in sustainability of the resources.

THE LANYANG RIVER MOUTH WATERBIRD REFUGE

- IUCN Category IV - to conserve and restore species and habitats
- Established in 1996 to protect Little Tern (*Sternula albifrons*) and other migratory species
- Zoning system: core and buffer zones (Forestry Bureau, 1994), 206.16 ha
- Responsible government authorities for the purpose of the Wildlife Conservations Act:

Forestry Bureau, The Council of Agriculture

Lilan County Government (responsible for formulating and carrying out conservation plans)



FARMLANDS - IMPORTANT SHELTERS FOR BIRDS



Farmlands around the river are also important shelters for birds as tides rise in winter (Forestry Bureau, 2016). [pictures are taken in Shinnan village]

METHODS

- Fieldwork was between 2016 and 2018
- Support with building rapport was required
- Interviews were both in English and in Traditional Mandarin

- **Participants**

Special interest groups (academics, NGO staff members, governance experts); communities, private landowners, and fishers; local and central government representatives

- **Data collection**

Document reviews, interviews (face-to-face, group and email), and research conversations

- **Data analysis**

Transcribing, taking notes, coding, formulating new questions, *writing memos*, *grouping data in Atlas.ti*, and writing results.

Local powers and accountabilities (as the claimed effects of participation, see Agrawal & Gupta, 2005)

- Authority and capacity to effectively set rules implement policies; the capacity to carry out priority decisions independently; the ability to arrange democratic processes
- “To whom is the local institution accountable? Through what mechanism is the local institution accountable? Are there multiple mechanisms of accountability?” (Ribot, 2005, p.100)
- Procedures, rights and responsibilities for making priority action decisions regarding resource management and use.

CONTEXTUAL SETTINGS

- Multiple government agencies - coordination of decisions is required internally among departments and divisions and across other government agencies → Specific management programs include driftwood collection and eel camp management
- Many adjacent villages, different types of stakeholders for the county government to work with - different property rights, proximity of protection zones, and a diversity of claims to be met
- ICG work with local NGOs for environmental trainings and studies, e.g., bird surveys
- Few private agricultural lands exist within the refuge. Unclear boundaries caused by natural events generate disputes.
- Growth of local guesthouse tourism, and housing development
- Demography in the Lanyang Plain has been changing: aging population, and outmigration by the young, therefore, fewer residents engaging in fishing and farming.
- Environmental problems are **pollution, invasive species, unauthorized access by community fishers, and the setting of eel camps, unauthorized farming practices, and the amount of visitor use.**

EEL CAMPS, DRIFTWOOD AND RIVER FARMING

- Eel camps along the coast and in unauthorized locations create pollution, despite the local regulations
- Driftwood is generated from typhoon flooding – rapid maintenance by ICG and Forestry Office are required
- Farming in the river pollutes the area due to the use of chemicals and the flow of plastic and tools into the ocean.



ENFORCEMENT

- A. The problem of visitor management “some visitors enter the shore area with vehicles and destroy the nests” (S. H. Cai, interview, May 17, 2018)
- B. Community members warn ICG when they see illegal fishers entering the refuge site, but response does not follow
- C. From NGO perspective, ICG do not monitor camping activities or farming effectively: *“If someone calls the local government to do something, they do, but otherwise they do not do anything” (Wildbird Society of Nan, interview, December 12, 2016)*

“Because of culture of Taiwan, they do not apply the law immediately; compromise between the government and the community people is used (Wildbird Society of Nan, interview, December 12, 2016)

Local government’s engagement and responsiveness are explained by the lack of resources, but also by the fact of poor training of communities. They also need to respond to claims of several groups, interests of which pull in different directions.

DIFFICULTIES TO ENGAGE AND LACK OF INTEREST TO PARTICIPATE

- Big demand for information: lack of capacity to manage effectively
- The county government do not find a strong local organization to work with:

"Without a strong local organization people cannot communicate their concerns to the responsible government" (Interview with an academic, May 3, 2018).

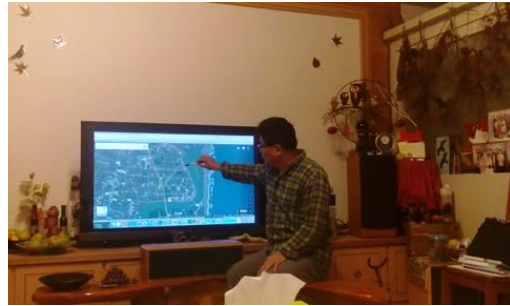
- Communities are indifferent: the connection between conservation and community needs is not established
- Communities resist the expanding conservation policies and therefore NGOs as mediators

"Conservation propaganda and coast maintenance are not useful for this community. Trainings are organized here, but the community do not know what this is about", said a community activist from Dongan (Interview with a community representative, December 2, 2016).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

- Enforcement is hampered by lack of administrative and operational factors. *Capacity of effective management* (cf. Agrawal & Ostrom, 1999; Lowry, White, & Courtney, 2005).
- Forms of communication and responses to the local feedback establish weak incentives for community interest to participate.
- But also weak democratic pressures (social capital) to advance well-articulated claims in support of sustainable use of resources are of concern.
- Without investing in platforms for deliberation, local political action for conservation would continue to be weak. Emphasis on deliberation to attain a collective agreement on both environmental and economic interests.
- Locally determined governance, adaptable to experiences and needs of local populations (Barletti et al., 2018), and to conservation policies (Tang, Tang, & Chiu, 2011).

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For questions:

amat324@aucklanduni.ac.nz

djlu@ntu.edu.tw