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著者(英)	Ya-Chung Chuang
journal or publication title	Senri Ethnological Studies
volume	91
page range	63-78
year	2015-07-31
URL	http://doi.org/10.15021/00002340

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1. Introduction

Students of the anthropology of social movements have lately emphasized the importance of knowledge-production, or of what Casas-Cortes, Osterwell, and Powell have called “knowledge-practice” (2008; 2013), as a feature of direct action. These three authors, based in North Carolina, but working on transnationally significant movements, argue for the recognition of movements as “processes through which knowledge is generated, modified and mobilized” (2008: 17). They suggest that this recognition has important methodological implications, requiring that “we shift the mode of engagement in our research, blurring established social scientific boundaries and promoting a more relational-symmetrical approach” (2008: 17).

By introducing knowledge-practice as a central aspect of social movements, Casas-Cortes, Osterwell, and Powell argue for a different kind of anthropology engaged with social movements. Unlike previous social movement theories that have put mobilization and organization first, this new approach attempts to locate social agency in an uncharted territory, where knowledge-production is more of a collaborative, relational endeavor than the thinking enterprise of a solitary subject. This collaborative knowledge practice has sought to deepen the identity politics that characterized the new social movements (NSMs) from the 1980s through the 1990s in Western Europe and North America. Through the daily remaking of meaning, NSMs aimed to integrate various types of resistance in the processes of the reproduction of social relations and cultural patterns (Touraine 1988). Further deepening this cultural insurgency, the knowledge practice of the new millennium activism involves “things we are more classically trained to define as knowledge, such as practices that engage and run parallel to the knowledge of scientists or policy experts” (Casas-Cortes, Osterwell, and Powell 2013: 201). Knowledge-practice, as these three young scholars argue, creates a new border space wherein various spheres of cognitive activities collide and engage with each other.

Recognizing the presence of this complex high-level weaving within direct actions opens up a new direction for the ethnography of social movements. Social movements as producers of profound knowledge have become anthropology’s latest allies when addressing the issue of cultural and social transformations, as Alain Touraine devoted himself decades

ago to a transformative sociology tightly allied with the new social movements that were then on the rise (Touraine 1988).

In this paper I analyze examples of social action in Taiwan associated with a notion of urbanism, by which I mean, in Andy Merrifield's terms, a social and political experience "bound, shaped, and defined" by a profoundly dynamic and imperceptible process of what is called "urbanization" (Merrifield 2002: 9). This paper introduces the development of a new form of urbanism that took root in Taiwan in the early 1990s, in which residents in Taiwanese cities have been experiencing transformation on an overwhelming scale. In response, the past two decades have witnessed a trend of local mobilization—a continued call for attention of place among urban neighborhoods. In the course of this spate of social action, various "communities" have been claimed and remade.

This paper offers two case studies that demonstrate how place-based social activism has responded to this urban transformation and contested to theorize it. New urbanism, as I argue here, represents one of the results of this contest. It created a realm in which local residents (counteracting greater forces) sought to have their say in an analytical and systematic way, in what Saskia Sassen (1991) has called a process of global city formation. I shall first address one particular manifestation of this new urbanism, a politics of space and place in which the trajectories of a revitalized collective yearning for a sense of community crossed with a newly intensified global division of labor. Second, I propose a way of seeing new urbanism as "an ethics for the contemporary," to borrow Paul Rabinow's term (Rabinow 2003). This ethics for the contemporary relates to a pervasive demand for what I call "the care of place." I look into Rabinow's examination of Foucault's idea of the care of self, and use his interpretation to analyze this demand for a sense of place among Taiwanese neighborhoods, where new life-forms have been experimented with and put to the test on a daily basis.

2. New Urbanism as a Politics of Space and Place

Before proceeding to the details of the cases I shall examine, I will first illustrate the way in which Taiwanese new urbanism can be seen as a politics of space and place—that is, a socio-political process in which new spatial technology and discourse have repowered a wave of urbanization since the turn of the new millennium. This must be distinguished from the previous post-war urban expansion for industrialization, as the battle this time around has been over the issue of place.

The closing decade of the last millennium witnessed a discursive transformation of urban life in Taiwan. Taipei, taking the lead in this as the nation's capital, began to morph into a land of imagination. Varying imagined city lifestyles were proposed by different political and social forces and earnestly anticipated by Taipei residents. Among these anticipations, the newly motivated interest in *Taipei xin guxiang* (Taipei, my new hometown) grabbed the most attention and has to be understood as the result of a new cultural invention intended to create "places" in a city that nobody called home (Chuang 2013: 182).

This search for a sense of place in cities, which took place in the context of Taiwan's post-martial-law democracy and development, played a dual role. On the one hand, this

trend of place-making was intercepted by a “global city” initiative that began to garner public awareness at almost the same time. The sociologist Jenn-hwan Wang (2004) has examined Taipei’s bid to become a global city that originated in the early 1990s. Fueled by neoliberalist economic power, this global city initiative embraced the collective yearning for place and transformed it, in tune with the new culture of consumption. The process of this invention of place further encountered a new global/local economic situation that was also targeting locality. In this process of transformation, the community became a part of the global form: city streets and alleys became targets of global capital and were turned into different variations on an urban commerce-oriented theme park, just as Michael Sorkins (1992) observed taking place in US cities years ago.

Geographers Jou, Hansen, and Wu see this new Asian urbanism as a recent manifestation of neoliberal capitalist restructuring, arguing that this new cultural-economic force has focused on land acquisition (2012). They use David Harvey’s idea of accumulation by dispossession to explain this phenomenon. For them, Harvey’s idea renews Marx’s historical notion of so-called primitive accumulation. Harvey argues that “all the features of primitive accumulation that Marx mentions have remained powerfully present within capitalism’s historical geography up until now” (Jou et al. 2012: 153). Primitive accumulation thus remains an ongoing process. Jou et al. perceive Taipei as an excellent example of this modern “primitive” accumulation. The land becomes once again the latest theme of the urban legend, reactivating growth and development. Over the past two decades, assorted large-scale urban development projects have turned the city into a playground for private developers to seize areas of public land and to convert them into high-end commercial and residential zones.

In contrast to Jou, Hansen, and Wu, who only examine public land acquisition in metropolitan areas, in this paper I shall investigate both the city and the countryside. My investigation shows that the initiative in Taipei has had a widespread influence across the island. These new spatial technologies have profoundly altered the meaning of the land by objectifying and commodifying it to an extent not seen before. The neoliberalist brand of new urbanism has enabled these geographically located objects to be linked in a way that no longer necessitates fixation on considerations of locality. Indeed, the separation of land and locality is perhaps the most essential aspect of this wave of urbanization. The land as an object simply serves as a component for spatial appropriation, stripped of meanings, traditions, and memories.

However, against this for-profit mechanism aimed to valorize and commodify locality, the search for place also brought about islandwide “communitarian” skepticism of the global city campaign. This skepticism sparked off many experimental forces of resistance, evoking multiple senses of place. Actions in the communities of my case studies will illustrate how these multiplicities and possibilities for fighting back are made possible by the redefinition of intimacy between a place and its dwellers.

3. The Care of Place

It is becoming a truism that place, as it is, is not a given but a result both of human

involvement and of politico-economic interferences. As Doreen Massey writes, place is understood “as open, as woven together out of ongoing stories, as moment within power-geometries, as a particular constellation within the wide topographies of space, as in process, as unfinished business” (Massey 2005: 131). However, within this social constructivist conceptualization, there is one aspect of place that receives little consideration: How does place as “unfinished business” go on to develop into a state of being which is beneficial to itself? During my fieldwork, I was often challenged by my interviewees to define how they should evaluate whether or not the proposals for community rebuilding were good—and good for whom? In what ways? Would my research improve the neighborhood? As an anthropologist facing these questions, I was mostly left dumbfounded and tiptoed around the issues.

This ethical question, however, remains an important part of my inquiry into the issue of place. I understand that scholars have engaged intensively with the question of justice and equity of spatial politics. Just to name a few, Castells (1983), Massey (1994), Zukin (1991), and Harvey (1988), as well as Lefevre (1996), all write about the moral politics and economy of geography, disclosing the games of power implicated in the production of space in modern times. However, little attention has been paid to the question of the conversion of place—that is to say, the chance that place may have a certain nature and a life span and expectancy was not explored. What should be done to take care of a place in order to make it grow in a good (*hou*) and right (*dui*) condition and direction?

This perspective that takes ethics into consideration distinguishes the development of place from the politics of space. In other words, instead of being a restricted spatial setting, place is spirited, characterized, and growing. I don't mean to personify place here, but rather suggest that place with a mounting character suggests the existence of a special concrete relationship with human beings. As Edward Casey (1997) says, this relationship was long overlooked, disappearing from intellectual interventions after Aristotle. For better or worse, it returns by way of a “narrow defile”: “Place is rediscovered by means of body,” notes Casey (1997: 203). This linkage between place and body, according to Casey, re-surfaced in modern philosophy when Kant proposed an alternative route—a return to “the concrete basis of mental representations” (1997: 203). Body also serves as a middle point in Yi-fu Tuan's classic view of the dialectics of space and place (Tuan 1977).

A phenomenological perspective inspired by Heidegger proves more fruitful for our project of constructing an ethics of place. Place as the concrete basis for ontology was further explored in Heidegger's theory of *Dasein*. Casey argues that “Heidegger identifies the truly existential character of being-in in terms of *Dasein*'s proclivity for inhabiting and dwelling” (1997: 245). Dwelling, a key concept in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, is, as geographer E. Relph also indicates, “the essence of existence, the very manner by which men and women are on the earth, and involves an openness to and acceptance of the earth, the sky, the gods and our mortality” (Relph 1976: 17–18). In short, being has to be somewhere in the world. Place is therefore elevated as essential for human existence: Place has always been a part of us.

From my point of view, Paul Rabinow's reading (Rabinow 2003) of Foucault's pursuit of the care of the self in Greek thought (Foucault 2005), puts the finishing touches to the

project of place-care as ethics, albeit via a slight detour. Comparing the modern technologies of the self, Foucault finds that in the Greco-Roman world, care of oneself was both ethically and ontologically primary: “Care of the self is knowledge of the self but also knowledge of a number of rules of acceptable conduct or of principles that are both truths and prescriptions. To take care of the self is to equip oneself with these truths: This is where ethics is linked to the game of truth” (Foucault 2005: 285). Although Foucault is reserved in using his finding of this aspect of Greek way towards oneself as a modern allegory and as an alternative to modernity, Rabinow brings this idea of the ethics of ontology all the way down to the contemporary, arguing that “the challenging of bringing logos and ethos into the right relationship was, and is, the challenge confronting anthropos” (Rabinow 2003: 11).

In the face of this challenge, Rabinow, inspired by Foucault, points out that the discipline’s new mission is to “reflect on how it might be possible to transfigure elements of the equipment of modern method into a form of modern meditation, and to bring the benefits and effects of that transformation to bear on inquiry” (Rabinow 2003: 12). What he has in mind regarding the equipment of modern method is actually a spatial politics of sociality. In his *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Rabinow 1995), he traces the formation of urban planning in the early twentieth century as a modern apparatus, gradually assembled and put into practice. This modern apparatus combined the elements (spatial, social, psychological, architectural, hygienic, etc.) that wound up contributing to shaping an individual life: “New social technologies had been invented to oblige individuals to have these rational aids ready at hand on all occasions” (Rabinow 2003: 12). Shadowed by these technologies, the call for their transformation into a form of modern meditation, for Rabinow, evokes an anthropology of the contemporary world in its actuality—a search for norms and forms of the emergent (Rabinow et al. 2008).

In the remainder of this paper, I shall present two examples of place-care in the shadow of these modern technologies. In the conclusion, I will put them in the context of an ethico-cognitive activism in search of alternative life norms and forms.

4. Mothers in the Hood

In Yongkang, Taipei, where I have been doing my research on neighborhood reconstruction since the mid-1990s, a form of group dynamism took place in the summer of 1995 after a petition movement that, in trying to save the neighborhood park, had disturbed the quiet life of the neighborhood. The neighborhood turned into a hotbed of improvisation and invention.

I have elsewhere discussed how college students, professionals, shop owners, developers, and politicians came up with plans that were intended to save the park and regenerate the neighborhood (Chuang 2013: 149–156), and have emphasized a gendered cause. When Chen Hsin-yi, the leading female college student in the movement, alluded to her endangered childhood memories of the park, a then unheard-of but fresh and stirring impetus for action, local mothers followed her lead. The precedent Chen set was indeed contagious. The urban landscape of the park and streets became a channel of compassion, and the local mothers

literally sensed the birth of a community.

Nevertheless, although housewives played a major role in the movement, the representation of these local mothers remained sketchy at best. Unlike the professionals, with their proposals for a community total construction (as place-making), or the shop owners, with their campaigns for the expansion of local commerce (as street-branding), the mothers were without any form of grand project. All they had were their caring hearts, as embodied in their everyday deeds and words.

This section mainly addresses a cluster of the small-scale actions taken by local mothers that were intended to cope with the spatial and societal shake-up that was a result of the extended urban reconstruction. I shall focus on two mothers, Anyi and Fushao, who used to work together as executive committee members of the Yongkang Community Development Association (YCDA). However, conflicting views and different approaches lead these two female heads of the YCDA into a long fight with the local office *li* that extended into the new millennium. In particular, I shall draw on these two woman leaders' approaches towards place. Yongkang's metamorphosis into an important commercial district within the metropolitan area had attracted local attention, with different, often conflicting, interpretations. However, I believe that in these conflicting understandings, we can observe a unified search for a good local life. The conflicts raised questions about the values attached to place in a time of crisis, and the ways in which place should be cared for in a conjuncture of rapid changes.

Fushao's campaign for the position of local chief, though supported mainly by YCDA mothers, brought to light voices from those from various backgrounds who used the streets and those who had been observing local events. When I interviewed Fushao years afterward,



Figure 1 Nightlife and local commerce

she told me that the campaign in 1998 was mind-opening for her. She was introduced to different local actors who had a stake in the issue. The local controversy often revealed different and multiple layers of place. For instance, Fushao mentioned that she encountered many voters who complained about YCDA's anti-commercial sentiment, as embodied by their proposed construction of a particular sidewalk. The proposed sidewalk was seen by shop owners as the embodiment of this form of sentiment, which threatened local business. This accusation, which may at first sound rather peculiar, has to be understood within the context of a culture where people go shopping in their vehicles, in a city without sidewalks. Shops in small and narrow streets and alleys tended to use the roadside as temporary parking space for their shoppers. Thus the roadsides became docks not only for loading and unloading trucks, but also for incoming vehicles carrying potential customers. The sidewalk proposal was mathematically at odds with this "roadside" culture, because Yongkang Street like many streets in the area was only eight meters wide. The construction of a sidewalk would make it impossible for vehicles to stop temporarily. This mathematical problem constituted a fatal obstacle to YCDA's dream of a walkable neighborhood. The incompatibility between dreams and numbers led to local conflict at the turn of the century. Streets were measured, and the figures were calculated and debated in the neighborhood meetings.

I suggest that sisterhood politics had much to do with the changing local situation caused by the new urban political economy that was beginning to emerge at the turn of the century. The YCDA mothers were inclined to regard Fushao's disloyalty as an inevitable result of the rising political-economic power threatening the neighborhood's hard-earned relative autonomy. As addressed above, Yongkang was targeted by global/local venture capital looking for quick profits in the process of spatial commodification.

Fushao, however, felt misunderstood. To her mind, the newly allied shop owners were themselves victims. Fushao once explained to me that the allegation that she had sold the Association out was meaningless. During her campaign, she listened to many local struggling shop owners who had been experiencing the early shockwave of the new economy. As a mother within a large extended family who was used to responding to everyone's needs, Fushao felt obliged to sort out this crisis, which she thought YCDA was dangerously oblivious to. In time, the anti-sidewalk episode grouped the shop owners under the burgeoning leadership of Fushao's *li* (as an office and a place). In February 2000, a new community development association named Yongfu (YFCDA) was formally established and quickly turned into a strategic center for the emerging local politico-economic alliance.

As a result, the YCDA was sidetracked. Anyi, its new head, told me that the YCDA's membership had been fast eroded after the Association's final large street festival in the summer of 1999, perhaps because the long fight had forced some of the mothers who were involved to step back, and also because Fushao had charmed others over to her side. Anyi only managed to hold onto a small circle of younger mothers of her age, but, as she said, YCDA 2.0 was now more like an operational unit, which had mostly relinquished its presence in the streets and alleys. From my point of view, despite the apparent opposition, Fushao's alliance and Anyi's unit represented two complementary place-caring forces acting against the new millennium's prerogatives. Fushao's coalition-making helped to create an alter-space in which the mid-1990s' dream was able to recuperate, somewhat ironically, amid large-

scale power restructuring in the neighborhood. Anyi's unit, facing an alienated crowd, began upon a journey of selling Yongkang's aspiration islandwide, arriving home with only a travel saga and a renewed understanding of locality to show for its efforts.

Fushao primarily initiated a war of position, in Gramsci's sense, on a neighborhood scale. She restructured the *li* office, which originally was connected to heavyweight politicians' clientele networks on the metropolitan level. Her campaign had received help from a citywide reform alliance that was created in order to bring to an end this notorious exchange relationship. After being sworn in, she appointed an all-women team from different spatial units, called *lin*, lying within the *li*. This team of sixteen women became a set of extended arms and eyes for Fushao. One day, I was invited along to one of the group's regular meetings. Fushao called at the last minute, saying she would not be able to come. Hearing this, two team members immediately took over in her place, cogently taking care of the urgent matters and making decisions, a phenomenon quite unique at this level of administrative procedure. After observing this, I understood that Fushao and these two mothers together formed a three-person strong leadership. They had been long-term allies in YCDA back in the mid-1990s and went over to the YFCDA together. The other mothers had been recruited for different reasons, with many having personal relationships with Fushao and her husband's locally influential family. Through my daily walk with the patrol squad *xunshoudui*, a neighborhood watch team for offering assistance to local people, I further understood that these mothers were enthusiastic participants in public affairs. The enthusiasm was carefully maintained through different outings, dinners, and parties. Fushao had managed to rent an underground studio in which these mothers and the *xunshoudui* volunteers could casually chat, play ping-pong, and sing karaoke together. The enthusiasm also spread by means of a series of arrangements. For one thing, residents from the same *lin* were assigned to the same patrol unit so that the weekly walking mission would help foster a neighborly bond.

Fushao also worked closely with the shop owners. Fushao's *li* and the YFCDA formed the new power coalition in the community, replacing the YCDA. The takeover from the YCDA since 1995 was not only about mobilization, but also a matter of a cultural revolution that had been taking place across neighborhood borders. In past work, I have addressed the emerging new shopping culture around the turn of the century by demonstrating how the act of walking embodied the changing forms and norms of city life (Chunag 2013: 175–198). This new culture was all about place—the consumption of place. No sooner had the new power coalition taken shape than the shop owners felt mixed feelings when encountering the waves of this consumption culture. As part of the *li* meetings, YFCDA gatherings, and *xunshoudui* walks, I listened to these businesspeople's concerns and worries. There were some success stories, too. The most dramatic was perhaps the “mango shaved ice” mania, which legendarily originated from a local ice cream shop on Yongkang Street. Sitting in the *xunshoudui* office, the owner told me of how he experimented with the tropical fruit mango and invented the flavor just as the business was about to close. The sudden success overwhelmed him and the rest of the street. For years around the turn of the century, people waited in line for hours just to taste it.

Leaving aside a few anecdotes of success such as this one, I heard many shop owners voice anxiety towards the uncertain changing situation, with messages of trouble that Fushao



Figure 2 Campaigning for neighborhood leadership

must have also received. I discussed with them these troubles, which included rising rent, escalating competition from chain stores, and customers' increasing appetite for consumption. Keeping pace with this shifting economic landscape put huge pressure upon the local shop owners. Fushao's coalition-making project was therefore intended for participating owners to provide each other with mutual help amid this crisis. Beginning in 2000, the coalition's initial purpose of information exchange developed to incorporate also strategic calculation, thanks to which the YFCDA successfully received a substantial amount of public funding from the city government. The municipal policy to transform Yongkang into a special commercial area (*shangqian*) officially started, supported by this grassroots mobilization.

Anyi, by comparison, was surrounded by only a handful of young mothers. While Fushao worked on the task of local re-networking, Anyi turned to an artistic search for local life. As neighborhood links dissolved, she turned the community association into a mobile designer's studio. Anyi took training classes from the city government and became an officially registered neighborhood designer. Her social skills and talent for design soon drew the media's attention, as well as offer of cooperation from local artists, and city government subsidies for a series of artistic re-creations of local cultural festivities. Despite her adversaries' resentful mockery, Anyi and her friends indeed succeeded in branding the neighborhood citywide, and eventually nationally.

Her fame took Anyi to neighborhoods nationwide in an era of community reconstruction supported and funded by different levels and branches of the government. She traveled to

the countryside, suburbs, and even offshore islands, where she tested her special design skills and styles, until events at home turned her back around.

Fushao's alliance grew divided in the early 2000s. A local opponent, Yongge, arose and challenged Fushao's leadership, successfully attracting and mobilizing a group of supporters who somehow felt neglected under Fushao's new locality operation. Anyi was summoned, as Yongge needed a street designer for a project whose success would be his ticket to a higher position.

Anyi's return came at a time when the new central political power promised more resources for local reconstruction. She made use of her recent experiences of working with professionals and officials in different places, and her knowledge of how dispersing resources could be located, mobilized, and used locally—most importantly, in the name of innovative ideas for community life. She helped set up a community group for the “aesthetics of life,” incorporating professionals and local enthusiasts who later became Yongge's campaign's major consultants. Anyi's influence swept back into the region like a gust of wind, caressing the local landscape, which was now loaded with fluid meanings. Yongge, who actually had a history of opposing the community association's plan of local reconstruction, now became the guardian angel of the street's sidewalks. Local knowledge of place-care was now a prerequisite for the formation of a political power base.

5. Jades in the Rough

My second case study is the recent farmers' protests that took place in Hsinchu, Taiwan, in response to a situation whereby the the material and symbolic form of the land is being forced to change. Like neighborhood politics, the transformative process in Hsinchu has involved a series of political and societal reforms, which also began at the turn of the new century. Toward the end of the first decade of the new century, this trend of spatial transformation reached its peak when the new president, Ma Ying-jiou, laid out his new policy of “three metropolitan centers.” This grand plan made it possible for city boundaries to become flexible. This flexibility characterizes what I here call spatial revolution.

Hsinchu, the subject of my case study, is located directly outside the boundary of the northern metropolitan area centered around Taipei. This geographical ambiguity places Hsinchu in an awkward position regarding its local developmental strategy. However, Hsinchu has been well-known, both locally and globally since the late 1980s for its science park, where the manufacturing of computer chips and electronic products has geopolitical significance. Although the decision to build a science park in Hsinchu was coincidental, the industrial significance of this puts Hsinchu in an especially meaningful place in the context of Taiwan's economic development. In the late 1990s, the ambitious local government set up a bid to make the city into a so-called “science and technology” city and began to implement a large-scale land-grabbing project to develop its urban area, with help from the central government.

This new project involves central and local governments, developers, businesspeople, and universities, which together came up with a new urban “ecological development” plan boasting of respect for culture, nature, and humanity by revitalizing areas of land in a new



Figure 3 Rural-urban fringe

form of global city formation. The project management brings together the political and economic sectors, thereby enabling the formation of an unprecedentedly powerful developmental alliance.

This newly-formed politico-economic force works on absorbing farms on the urban fringes and converting them into town foundations. Their plan has been nicknamed *puyu* (unpolished jade), for its connotations of potentiality and preciousness. This reconstruction plan brings about an alteration of the meaning of the land. A new composite term, *puyutien* (unpolished jade-like ricefield), has since evolved. Although rice fields as they exist now are depicted as symbols of backwardness and stasis, they will soon turn into lands of opportunity and of potentiality. This symbolic maneuvering creates an advantage for the speculation on the value of the land, and hence promotes the hand-changing of these agricultural lands. This manipulation of meaning has been further sugar-coated by varying governmental, industrial, and scholarly reports that continue to publicize the necessity of turning these ricefields into residential and commercial areas for a prosperous future, which, ironically in this case, must and will be based on serious preservation of the beauty of local culture.

This politics of meaning is supported by a new mechanism of incorporating the farmers into the group of stakeholders. Legal deregulation at the turn of the new millennium made it possible for the local government to systematically rezone agricultural farms into urban land and to employ new administrative methods to finance the rezoning. Many advocates

of this wave of urbanization in Taiwan argue that these methods have created a process of dispossession without victims. Farmers will be permitted to keep pieces of land constituting up to 30–40 percent of the size of their original plot, and the anticipated market value will far exceed that of their former farmland. The local government will sell part of the rest of the land to developers and the industrial sector for the development of industrial, commercial, and residential districts. The profits will then finance the planning and building of public facilities, including roads, schools, fire and police departments, water and gas supply and management systems, etc.

This alleged win-win situation makes farmers' actions in Hsinchu problematic in terms of the question of mobilization. The farmers are actually divided over the project of rezoning. In terms of the official report, only 20 percent of the farmers in this agricultural area on the edge of one of Hsinchu's major urban centers disagree with the rezoning project. However, an informal investigation conducted by the Puyu Self-Help Association, a group initiated by those farmers opposing the project, shows that at least half of the farmers who originally live and farm in this area disagree. The division of the community had made it quite difficult to bring opposing residents to speak and stand up, because of the pressure from their neighbors.

The success of the self-help organization, which has attracted the attention of the public, is worth further investigation. I have worked with several of my graduate students on this issue in numerous localities in the region. My team's study shows that a multi-



Figure 4 Farm tourism in suburban Hsinchu

dimensional framework of explanation is required to understand these actions' dynamics. First of all, a cultural turn in the past several years toward small-scale and family farming has generated a friendly public who are more willing to listen. This cultural reevaluation has mainly to do with the representation of national agriculture as endangered through an increasingly globalized food industry. The long-ignored rural legacy suddenly attracted public attention in the context of this national crisis. The emerging sympathetic and interactive public has stimulated and inspired local farmers to narrate and tell their stories. Thanks to student groups primarily organized by the Taiwan Rural Front (TRF), a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting and promoting rural legacy, there have been various publications on the subject, spurring on the creation of a public forum in which the life stories of farmers and their land are circulated and received. In turn, this accomplishment has made possible a collective of farmer-activists, who have gained confidence and inspiration through this process of storytelling.

Moreover, this storytelling project has brought forth a wide array of participants to join the ranks of modern farmers. Some join only for experiential tours, while others turn into more serious professionals trying to make a living out of farming. In my case study, another non-profit organization, the Society of Wildness, has taken part and organized its members and the general public in this area into a troop of urban "sharecroppers." Independent individuals are learning and investing time and effort in the quest to become full-time experts, testing what they call natural farming skills likely imported from Japan in an attempt to offer an alternative to the conventional and often intensive farming technology still widely used by local farmers.

Second, the changing senses of place brought about by the diversification of farmers' identities are implicating new cognitive and affective configurations relating to the environment, community, circles of families/friends/strangers, space, and particularly region. It is this which has meant this wave of agricultural controversy has gone beyond simple nostalgia for land and rural lifeways. Farmers opposing rezoning have immersed themselves in an extended fight against a well-coordinated and officially-supported capitalist force as noted above and at the same time are under pressure to come up with challenging, innovative, and practical strategies for both "place-based" and "regionalist" countermeasures. This dialectics of place and region has brought activists together across localities and even nations. In this case, the farmer-activists have worked with their counterparts in neighboring counties who have found themselves trapped in similar situations and have discovered that a regional "conspiracy" is currently occurring with the aim of grabbing away people's land. They have also allied themselves with the TRF to invite sympathetic international NGOs, such as La Via Campesina, to visit their villages, engage in dialogue, and show solidarity.

Third, the farmers in my case study use different approaches to calculate benefits, risks, and fairness from those employed by neoclassical economics. Different concepts of future, generation, and life have been employed to deliver outcomes to the calculations that are not subordinate to the management of a money economy. As stated above, a symbolic war has been waged by growth-oriented groups to create their version of urbanism in order to woo the local farmers into supporting the rezoning, which, they argue, would generate exponential cash compensation through land transformation, speculation, and realization in

the market. However, this neoclassical model of commodity and maximum interest actually overlooks various forms of family responsibility as it occurs within the Taiwanese context, as shown in this case and elsewhere. This responsibility of taking care of family members, which sometimes traverses genealogical, geographic, and generational boundaries, is rooted in the land, whose fixed location on the earth represents a promise of aid that any family members can count on and seek out in times of uncertainty.

In short, farmers' actions in Taiwan have to be understood in terms of a new consumption-oriented urbanism which is laying siege to the countryside. However, it is also this same urban culture that gives farmers leverage to counteract this wave of spatial consumerism and to reclaim their ways of life.

6. Social Movements as Ethics

Recent attention given to ontology and ethics in anthropology provides inspiration for a concluding remark here. As Evens (2008: 3) says, "one object of embracing reality as essentially uncertain and ambiguous is to re-emphasize the human condition as a condition of discretion and responsibility, and thereby to refocus and revitalize ethics as the (foundationless) foundation of social existence." In other words, reality is an outcome of imaginary processes, and humans in considering the needs of others "affect" the formation of it. The care of place illustrated above represents a collective effort of taking actions and making choices leading toward a social life of human-environment continuity in the long battle against contingent external events. This effort helps to produce systematic knowledge of the conjuncture of reality, and an ethics that leads to its annihilation and recombination.

The care of place, an approach employed by the housewives and farmers I worked with, epitomizes this transformation of ethics. The mothers and farmers in the above examples have been involved in these ethico-cognitive processes, seeking to insert new ingredients into the discourse of new urbanism that has been hijacked by certain populations of people. New urbanism, originally pioneering the expansion of capital, metamorphoses into a philosophy of place. These knowledge-practices concerned with place dispute urbanity and locality, and re-represent urban life with experimental meanings of place.

In essence Rabinow discovers an anthropology of the contemporary in the realm of genomics (Rabinow 2008), the burgeoning biotech life sciences—a new candidate in his search for new norms and forms which, he assumes, Foucault tries to locate in the ancient Greek care of the self. Instead, I have found an everyday version of experimentation on new life forms in the practice of place-care. In Casey's reassessment, as stated above, place is, from the very beginning, not merely a containing surface, but something indispensable for human existence: "both politics and ethics go back to Greek words that signify place: *polis* and *ethea*, 'city-state' and 'habitats', respectively" (Casey 1997: xiv). In other words, the care of the self somehow implies the necessity of the care of place. Although Foucault argues that the care of the self is ethical in itself, he also elucidates that the concern for oneself implies complex relationships with others, because such care enables one to occupy his rightful position in the city, the community, or interpersonal relationships.

The care of place is, in other words, primarily a concern with positioned human bonds

that are nevertheless capable of travelling across time and space. As the “care” of the self is described by Foucault “as a set of exercises that prepared one for a lifelong battle against external events” (Rabinow 2003: 9), the care of place is seen here as a set of exercises in a communal meditation that prepare a collectivity of individuals for an enduring battle against external events. The care of place is essentially a requirement for collective action of the contemporary and is becoming of more and more urgent importance in this era of global brutality (Sassen 2014).

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