


Making an Opportunity: Strategic Bipartisanship in Taiwan's Environmental Movement

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Ming-sho Ho¹

Abstract

The debate over “political opportunity structure” has been a central issue in the contemporary social movement study. This article seeks to move beyond the structure/agency dispute by looking at how social movements make an opportunity by transforming an initially unfavorable political structure. I analyze Taiwan’s environmentalism, particularly the anti-Kuokuang Petrochemical Park movement (2005–2011) and the post-Fukushima antinuclear movement (2011–2014), to understand the process in which hostile or indifferent political elites were converted into a pro-environmental stand. I use the term *strategic bipartisanship* to identify the effort to build the nexus to mainstream parties while maintaining the façade of neutrality, which was made possible because of the dissolution of the previously tight movement-party nexus that allowed activists to leverage party competition to their own advantage.

Keywords

political opportunity structure, strategy, party-movement nexus, strategic bipartisanship

Political Opportunity Structure and Social Movement

Social movements attempt to make history, but, as Karl Marx wryly pointed out, they are able to do so only under “circumstances existing already, given, and transmitted from the past.” For the past three decades, students of social movements have used the concept of “political opportunity structure” (POS) to understand how a plethora of circumstantial factors give rise to protest behaviors. Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow (2007:49) define POS as “features of regimes and institutions that facilitate or inhibit a political actor’s collective action to changes in those features.” Researchers following this theoretical tradition argue that the expansion of the POS encourages movement participation whereas its closing brings about its decline. This discovery is confirmed in a number of classical studies that trace the development of a social movement longitudinally (McAdam 1982; Meyer 1990; Tarrow 1989) or compare similar social movements cross-sectionally (Kitschelt 1986; Kriesi et al. 1995).

By focusing on the opportunities generated as political institutions change, POS theory grants a privileged position to the state (Tarrow 1996; Tilly 1997). As the commanding heights of a modern polity, the state is seen as “simultaneously target, sponsor, and antagonist for social

¹National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan

Corresponding Author:

Ming-sho Ho, Department of Sociology, National Taiwan University, No. 1, Roosevelt Rd. Sec. 4, Taipei 10617, Taiwan.
Email: mingshoho@gmail.com

movements” (Jenkins and Klandermans 1995:3). Central to the study of POS is a focus on the state-movement interaction, which structures the dynamics of movement emergence and trajectory.

Classical POS studies in the 1980s and the 1990s primarily dealt with the cause of movement mobilization, less with its outcome. The relative neglect on the consequence question seemed to be related to the conceptual difficulties of defining movement success, which could always be measured according to different criteria (Giugni 1999:xx–xxi). Later scholars began to apply the POS perspective to the movement outcome (McCammon et al. 2001; Redding and Viterna 1999).

POS and Its Criticisms

The past decade has witnessed a lively and evolving debate on POS’s analytical utility. The POS critics have maintained this model suffers from a “structural bias” by failing to recognize that it is inherently the agent’s subjective capacity to perceive and seize “opportunity” (Goodwin and Jasper 1999; Jasper 2004). “Structural” opportunities are patently different from “subjectively perceived” ones (Kurzman 1996). Many studies disconfirm the pro-movement effect of POS expansion; there is radical indeterminacy between POS and movement dynamics (Goodwin 2001; Rucht 1996). More recently, it is being argued that the term “opportunity structure” is an oxymoron because there is no opportunity without subjective assessment (Jasper 2012). These criticisms are gaining ground as more and more students of social movements decide to abandon the term POS altogether for the conceptual alternatives, such as “relational field” (Goldstone 2004), “political context” (Amenta and Halfmann 2012), and the “political reform model” (Amenta, Caren, and Stobaugh 2012), which all share a commitment to a less rigid and less deterministic framework that allows more space for agency.

Extending the POS perspective to the question of movement outcome shows the weakness of its structural bias. In explaining movement emergence, it is more or less justified to treat the POS as *ex ante* variables because of their prior existence to and influence on protest mobilization; however, such an assumption becomes less tenable when dealing with movement consequence because the outcome is inevitably a joint product between movement strategy and the authorities’ response. Kenneth T. Andrews (2004) contends that activists choose different strategies according to the immediate political conditions, but it is their building of movement infrastructure that accounts for the durable impacts. Edwin Amenta, Bruce G. Carruthers, and Yvonne Zylan (1992; Edwin Amenta, Drew Halfmann, and Michael P. Young, 1999) also maintain that movement outcome is not directly predictable from the *ex ante* POS because it is necessarily “politically mediated” after the launch of movement mobilization.

There are scholars who continue the POS research tradition by refining and reformulating its theoretical and methodological premises. Sweeping generalizations about POS and movement give way to a more moderate theorization of the mechanism and process (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001; Tilly 2003). As Tilly and Tarrow (2007:29) concede, previous study is akin to physics or engineering in seeking for covariation among variables “without saying much about the causal chains in between the inputs and the outputs.” More rigorous empirical tests demonstrate the need for conceptual specification of how POS works, whom POS affects, and what POS explains (Meyer and Minkoff 2004).

Political Structure and Movement Strategy

This article contends a principled and selective use of the two perspectives sheds light on some hitherto neglected dimensions of movement politics. It is possible to acknowledge the resourcefulness of activists without denying the preexisting constraining political conditions that confront them. Specifying a causal relation helps to understand why a certain strategy is adopted and how

it interacts with the existing conditions. To avoid further complication, I use the term *political structure* rather than the already overloaded *POS*.

This article focuses on the theoretical question of how movement activism changes unfavorable political structures in the pursuit of its goals. The POS researchers have long stressed the accompanying need to understand how movements “make opportunity” in addition to the conventional emphasis on “seizing opportunity” (McAdam 1996:35–37; Tarrow 1994:96–99). Yet, relatively few works have been devoted to this topic.¹ The critics complain about the narrow conceptualization of POS as a prediction variable and concomitantly the biased view of “opportunistic protestors” (Goodwin 2012). As an alternative, the “political context model” proposed in Hanspeter Kriesi (2004) identifies an “interaction context” that mediates the “configuration of political actors” and the “structures.” Using the insight from the political context model, this article analyzes how social movements actually make an opportunity, rather than seizing an existing one.

The Research Case

This article analyzes the environmental movement in Taiwan, a recently democratized country, where the fierce political rivalry between the Kuomintang [*Guomindang*]² (KMT) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has resulted in two peaceful power turnovers in 2000 and 2008, which have shaped the dynamics of movement politics. In particular, I look at the case of the movement against the Kuokuang [*Guoguang*] Petrochemical Park (KP) from 2005 to 2011, arguably the most significant environmentalists’ victory in Taiwan’s recent history. The KP started with bipartisan endorsement, and yet the environmentalists managed to defy the political headwind in changing the two major parties’ stances, thus terminating the ecologically controversial project involving land reclamation and heavy industrialization. The KP opponents practiced what I call “strategic bipartisanship” in wooing support from both parties under the name of political neutrality. Strategic bipartisanship came with a carefully maintained distinction between the movement’s public image and its hidden political maneuver. Movement activists presented a nonpartisan façade and simultaneously utilized personal connections, respectively approaching both incumbent and opposition leaders in private. In so doing, party competition became the leverage for activists to pressure politicians. I will point out that strategic bipartisanship emerged as a viable tactic only under the particular political circumstances.

Method and Data

The research data come from journalistic reports and my field observations in Tach’eng [*Dacheng*] Township and Fangyüan [*Fangyuan*] Township in Changhua [*Zhanghua*] County of central Taiwan, where the KP was planned (see Figure 1). From 2011 to 2013, I conducted 39 interviews with 47 persons. My sample comprised 24 movement activists, 6 local residents, and 17 local politicians. I used purposive sampling in selecting movement activists as most of them belonged to different nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); for the local interviewees, I applied the method of snowballing via their personal networks. As my interviewees differed in their background and involvement in the KP dispute, I used unstructured questionnaires to collect data. I will use pseudonyms in referring to my interviewees and minimize the use of direct quotations to streamline my narrative. Strategic issues are mostly internal to the movement camp, and hence, my interpretation emphasizes the unpublished sources of data. As my sample of interviewed movement activists comprised those major NGOs, both locally and nationally oriented, which played the leading role in this environmental dispute, I am confident my qualitative data are adequate to reconstruct the strategic dimension of the anti-KP movement.



Figure 1. The proposed sites of KP.
 Note. KP = Kuokuang Petrochemical Park.

Understanding that a single-case research design has limited power in generalization, I position my study as a preliminary attempt to explore a particular way to make opportunity via strategic bipartisanship. Before bringing in Taiwan's case, I will begin with a theoretical discussion on the interaction between movement activism and political parties.

Transforming the Movement-party Nexus

Political parties dominate the central arena of democratic polities, and yet, they are absent from the four POS dimensions mentioned in Doug McAdam (1996:27) or the six POS properties identified by Tilly and Tarrow (2007:57). Arguably, one might as well apply the notions "elite alignment" and "influential allies" to understand the movement-party nexus, but they remain insufficiently institution-focused to capture the reciprocal complexity of this relation.

A number of classical POS studies showed how party politics influenced movement dynamic. The best known example is how the razor-thin majority of the Kennedy-Johnson administration

facilitated the civil rights mobilization as the former came to rely on the growing votes of African Americans (McAdam 1982:156–63). Analyzing the Italian new left protests in the late 1960s, Sidney Tarrow (1989:53–57) found the experiment of a center-left coalition government (1963–1964) crucial. Although the unprecedented incorporation of Socialists brought about a number of changes, it also vividly showed the limits of institutional reforms, thus sowing the seeds of discontent that exploded into street protests subsequently. David S. Meyer (1990) showed how permeability of American party institutions entrapped the Nuclear Freeze movement of the 1980s. By becoming one wing within the Democratic Party, the movement forewent the broader agenda for change, demobilized its constituencies, and committed “movement organizations to the continued courting of monied supporters who would fund the efforts” (Meyer 1990:246). These observations remained scattered and unsystematized. More important, they were framed within the conceptual straightjacket that viewed the political structure merely as a prediction variable.

The lack of attention to the movement-party nexus in the U.S. context originated in part from the fact that party organizations were anomalously underdeveloped and open to social movements. Consequently, both left-wing and right-wing movements tended to mobilize within two main parties, instead of outside (Amenta et al. 2010:292; Burstein, Einwohner, and Hollander 1995:289–90; Schwartz 2006:96–97). The European experience, on the contrary, revealed more diverse modes of the movement-party nexus. When out of power, left-wing parties might initiate a protest movement on their own (Koopmans 1995:86–87); if in power, their conservative turn often resulted in radicalization of social movements (della Porta and Rucht 1995:269). European environmental movements practiced a richer repertoire of relationship vis-à-vis political parties. They could build an alliance with a party, form a new party, or maintain a nonpartisan stance (Dalton 1994).

The minimal attention on the movement-party interaction is partly the result of decline of sociological interest on political parties in the 1970s and the 1980s—a critical period when the POS theory emerged. Consequently, the so-called “sociological approach” has been narrowly identified with the one-dimensional formulation of “parties as expressions of social groups.” What remains unexplored is the multifarious interaction of parties and social forces, which used to be of pivotal concern in the classical sociology of Karl Marx and Max Weber (Mudge and Chen 2014). Similarly, POS theorists recently admitted that they failed to conceptualize the reciprocal relation between movements and elections systematically (McAdam and Tarrow 2010).

It follows that we cannot simply assume party politics as the ordinary, albeit shifting, terrain upon which extraordinary and episodic movement activism emerges and subsides. The relationship between political parties and movement activism is definitely more complicated; “they often cross each others’ paths and they may form alliances that can affect their respective destinies” (Maguire 1995:199). Jack A. Goldstone (2003:8) argues both activities exemplify the democratic principle of citizen participation, which explains why partisan activities and protest mobilization are often complementary, overlapping, and interpenetrated.

Modern democracies award political positions based on the results of electoral competition, which makes it impossible for movements to obtain the institutional power directly unless they are reorganized into parties in the first place. Most of the time, movements mobilize to influence parties, in government or in opposition, to have their demands realized. It follows that the existing party system is another political structure, which movements confront and sometimes have to change on their route to success. The “standard POS model,” as Edwin Amenta, Neal Caren, and James E. Stobaugh (2012:1075) maintain, would have predicted that a left-wing party’s hegemony encourages left-wing movements whereas a right-wing party in power produces the opposite effect. Contrary to such simplified expectations, there are scholarly works that present a more nuanced party-movement nexus. J. Craig Jenkins, David Jacobs, and Jon Agnone (2003:293)

demonstrate that the reelection-seeking Republican presidents before 1964 actually induced civil rights mobilization even though they tended to be more conservative. The Cold War pressured the conservative incumbents to take a pro-civil rights stance, which then encouraged African American protests. Likewise, Japan's traditionally pro-business Liberal Democrats initiated a number of environmental legislations in the early 1970s. According to Linda Brewster Stearns and Paul D. Almeida (2004:492), the specter of the growing Communists' votes and their involvement in the antipollution protests convinced the conservatives to adopt pro-environmental policies.

Thus, far from a fixed political structure that determines the movement outcome, an unfavorable movement-party nexus can be changed through movement activism. The questions now are how activists manage to change politicians' preferences and under what circumstances they are made to concede against their expressed ideology and the interest of their constituencies.

Taiwan's Environmentalism (1980–2000): The Forging of a Movement-party Nexus

Taiwan's rapid postwar development brought about prosperity as well as pollution, which fueled environmental protests since the late 1970s (Grano 2015; Hsiao 1999). The popular demand for a better quality of living emerged in a hostile political context, as the KMT had practiced iron-fist control since the martial-law regime was installed in 1949. The KMT originally justified its authoritarian rule in the name of the anticommunist crusade to retake mainland China, but subsequently, its legitimacy came to rely more on economic management in fostering growth and sponsoring private industries. With Chinese nationalism on the wane, the KMT's ideological stance drifted to pro-business developmentalism.

Taiwan's political opposition first evolved around a few charismatic politicians who won local elections on anti-KMT platforms. The nationwide organization and victories in the 1977 election emboldened them to make a more assertive campaign to build an opposition party, which was outlawed under the martial-law rule. The Formosa Magazine Incident of 1979, in which opposition leaders were arrested and court-martialed, frustrated this attempt until 1986, when the DPP was formally organized and forced the KMT to tolerate its existence. From the very beginning, the DPP was a catchall party that catered to all those who were dissatisfied with the KMT (Rigger 2001:11). With the exception of Taiwanese nationalism, which remained a taboo until the 1990s, Taiwan's opposition on the whole practiced political liberalism, with its demands often couched in terms of the check-and-balance system, human rights, and democracy. Yet, as a political challenger, the opposition found it difficult not to notice the rise of environmental discontent and the fact that many pollution-emitting factories were operated by pro-KMT businesspersons or by the government. The early 1980s witnessed some sporadic attempts to explore the emerging political market of environmentalism. There was an abundance of reports on radioactive threat and pollution in the opposition's journals, and some activists were involved in certain local protests. However, their uninvited participation was often not welcome because the victims suspected their motives. In the anti-Dupont movement in Lukang [*Lugang*] (1986–1987), the clumsy attempt of a DPP candidate to harvest political gains from the nationally well-known incident actually created local resentment (Reardon-Anderson 1992:58–61).

The lifting of martial law in July 1987 brought Taiwan's movement-party nexus to a new stage. The KMT government established the Environmental Protection Administration (EPA) in the same year in the hope that reinforced regulation could contain the explosion of environmental grievances. The clear sign of political liberalization, however, emboldened pollution victims to launch more aggressive actions to expand their protest repertoires, such as street demonstrations and factory barricading. They also overcame political skepticism by becoming more willing to collaborate with politicians. There was obviously reciprocal influence between the grassroots environmentalism and

the DPP. Taiwan's political opposition moved to adopt a more salient pro-environmental program. The founding party charter in 1986 pledged to end Taiwan's nuclear energy program and to place environmental protection before economic development (Ho 2003:694).

A partisan alliance emerged with the founding of the Taiwan Environmental Protection Union (TEPU) four months after the termination of martial law. The TEPU, once Taiwan's most powerful environmental NGO, was actually a tripartite collaboration among college professors, DPP politicians, and community activists. Intellectuals led the TEPU's national headquarters, whereas its local branches expanded with the help of the DPP politicians who provided financial, human, and organizational resources. In this period, many future politicians began their apprenticeship by organizing and leading local antipollution protests.

A strong environmentalism-DPP nexus was forged at the critical juncture of political liberalization. This link was tightened between 1990 and 1992 as the KMT government attempted to repress escalating environmental protests that the incumbents and business saw as excessive (Ho and Su 2008:2409). Then the DPP openly announced its pro-independence stance and was threatened with dissolution. Shared victimhood bred solidarity.

The mid-1990s saw gradual cooling-down in the environmentalism-DPP nexus, as the opposition consolidated its place in Taiwan's political landscape, and was poised to assume the national leadership. A centrist turn crept in, and the DPP politicians began to distance themselves from unruly protests and began a rapprochement with the largely pro-KMT business community. The DPP's decision to embrace mainstream values certainly disappointed its environmental ally, which resulted in the founding of the Green Party in 1996. Nevertheless, partly because of the repeated electoral failures of the Green Party and partly because of the KMT's increasing reliance on pro-development local factions for vote mobilization, the DPP remained the only viable option of political coalition until the historical regime change in 2000.

Taiwan's Environmentalism (2000–2008): The Dissolution of a Movement-party Nexus

The DPP's coming to power initially raised hopes among the environmentalists. Chen Shui-bian [*Zhen Shuibian*] campaigned on a reform platform and won the endorsement from many environmentalists. Nevertheless, the hastened and ill-advised decision to terminate the construction of a controversial nuclear power plant four months after the power turnover precipitated a political crisis as the KMT, now in opposition, threatened to launch an impeachment campaign. The DPP decided to rescind its antinuclear position for political reconciliation; as a result, antinuclear activists had the feeling of being "sacrificed" for political stability (Shih 2012:303). The opposition-controlled parliament was able to stultify the pro-environment initiatives from the DPP government. Finally, a severe economic downturn also constrained the DPP government's policy options. After a brief period of initial confusion, the DPP in power drifted to a more pro-developmental stance, by reasserting the priority of economic growth over environmental protection (Arrigo and Puleston 2006).

The KP case in question epitomized the DPP's new orientation. In opposition, the DPP politicians were involved in many protests against petrochemical expansion; once in power, the DPP came to accept the economic necessity of developing the nation's naphtha-cracking capacity to prevent downstream firms from migrating to China. In 2005, the government approved the KP project, a public-and-private joint investment, which initially chose the coastal area in T'aihsi [*Taixi*] Township of Yünlin [*Yunlin*] County as the construction site (see Figure 1), where environmentalists worried about the ecological cost of land reclamation. They were angered by the decision to delay the scheduled reduction of carbon emissions to promote the KP. The DPP government could not have chosen a more inauspicious period to announce the KP plan, coming just around the time when the Kyoto

Protocol went effective. On Earth Day 2005, when President Chen attended the Summit of Environmental NGOs, his keynote speech was interrupted by environmentalists' rowdy protests. One of the symptomatic protest slogans was "the DPP has become another KMT!"

In 2008, Kuokuang abandoned Yünlin and chose Changhua as their new investment site. The relocation decision was in part made possible by Wong Chin-chu [*Weng Jinzhu*], a DPP politician who served as Changhua County Magistrate from 2002 to 2005. Wong was among the founding members of the Changhua County TEPU (CCTEPU) in 1988.³ However, in her tenure, she tried to develop the estuary wetland of Tach'eng Township into an industrial zone, attracting the investment from heavy industries. Wong's plan won the backing of the central government, but it was not materialized before she lost her reelection in 2005. Wong's drift from an environmental activist to a pro-development local executive was not atypical among the DPP elites. As expected, the CCTEPU took a harsh view on Wong's about-face and launched a cast-an-invalid-ballot campaign in the 2009 county magistrate election to boycott the candidates from the two major parties, which partially contributed to Wong's failed bid for a political comeback. Because the KMT politicians traditionally maintained a distant, if not hostile, relationship with environmentalists who were generally perceived to be pro-DPP, they could afford to ignore these criticisms. The DPP, in contrast, appeared more vulnerable to the denunciation coming from environmentalists. It was, therefore, safe to assume that the CCTEPU's campaign harmed Wong and helped her KMT rival indirectly.

Although some environmentalists were disillusioned by the DPP's pro-development drift, there were others who chose to follow a more collaborative approach. During the DPP government (2000–2008), many policymaking channels were opened to accommodate participation by movement activists. Prominent leaders in Taiwan's environmental movement were even appointed to lead the EPA. Thus, there were environmentalists who reasoned that it was better to work within the available institutions rather than to risk an open confrontation, the TEPU being a noticeable case here. Although there were several rounds of heated internal debate, the TEPU opted not to criticize the DPP in public. Such a conciliatory attitude should not be mistaken for co-optation because there was evidence that such insider tactics generated some positive results. Here again, the KP was an illustrative case. Even with the support of the DPP officials, Kuokuang's Yünlin project was mired in the EPA's environmental impact assessment procedure as the reviewers adopted strict standards in handling the KP case. In March 2008, the EPA reviewers decided that a second-stage review was necessary, and Kuokuang immediately abandoned Yünlin for Changhua. Why did the EPA reviewers not grant permission to Kuokuang's Yünlin project? The EPA at that time was headed by a former TEPU president, and he appointed several activists into the board of reviewers (Tu and Peng 2008:120). It was largely due to their insistence that this controversial case was put under a microscopic scrutiny.

By the time the DPP was voted out of office in March 2008, the movement-party nexus had undergone a tremendous sea change. Mutual solidarity was obviously shattered and replaced by disappointment, distrust, and disorientation. Even within the environmentalists, there emerged a visible split. The fundamentalist wing, such as the CCTEPU, practiced a noncooperation approach toward the DPP even with the understanding that the KMT might stand to gain windfall advantages, whereas the realists, the TEPU for example, adopted self-limiting tactics to make the best use of institutional avenues due to the fear that a KMT comeback might annul the reform achievements gained during the DPP's tenure.

The Evolution of the Anti-KP Movement

The Initially Unfavorable Political Structure

When Ma Ying-jeou [*Ma Yingjiu*] was inaugurated as the president in May 2008, governmental approval of KP's Changhua project was widely seen as a matter of time. In his electoral

campaign, Ma stressed his platform for economic renewal. Their eight years in opposition did not alter the KMT's deep-seated development-first outlook and its entrenched ties with the business community. The new KP project, which originally planned to invest US\$32 billion in building a mega-complex of oil-refining, naphtha-cracking, petrochemical, and harbor facilities on 2,200 hectares of reclaimed tidal wetland, appeared to be a vital boost to the sluggish economy. In Taiwan's clamorous arena of party politics, the KP enjoyed the rare benefit of bipartisan support. The outgoing DPP had been instrumental in making possible this public-and-private venture, whereas one of the first few acts of the new KMT government was to invite the KP's private holders for an official dinner. The KMT Changhua magistrate considered it a personal achievement that he had wooed the KP to his hometown and vowed to support it by all means. Prior to the emergence of local opposition, the KMT local factions had mobilized their followers for a series of pro-KP campaigns. The Tach'eng Township Office claimed its survey showed 98 percent of the residents held a positive attitude. All these indicated the hostile political structure that confronted the KP opponents in 2008. Thus, it was really unforeseeable that three years later, Ma would have to hold a press conference to cancel the KP project. The following sections will show that the bifurcated environmentalists practiced what I call strategic bipartisanship and succeeded in reversing a political structure originally adverse to their interests.⁴

The Failure to Obtain Political Support

In early 2008, as the rumor that the KP was coming to Tach'eng was circulating, local KMT politicians mobilized with campaigns to welcome the investment. They portrayed the KP project as a golden chance for their impoverished and backward hometown. However, there were different opinions among the DPP grassroots supporters. Tunglun [*Donglun*] (a pseudonym), a former village head and a DPP veteran, was worried about the negative environment consequences. Based on his intimate knowledge of local politics, he suspected the KMT leaders (county councilors, township mayors, and village heads) had already secured lucrative outsourcing deals. At first, he used his personal connections to approach the DPP leaders in the hope that they could voice a different opinion. He was frustrated in that the DPP candidate in the legislative election of January 2008 also jumped onto the pro-KP bandwagon to appease the local political leaders, who are mostly of KMT membership. Later, Tunglun sought to use his personal ties to Wong Chin-chu, with whom he had volunteered as the local campaign officer several times. The magistrate election in December 2009 could have been an opportunity for Wong to assume the leadership of the opposition movement because the KMT incumbent had used the KP issue to boost his reelection bid. However, Wong decided not to take sides, and her official answer was that the KP should be decided by a local referendum.

Being the most influential DPP politician in Changhua, Wong was not only approached by Tunglun, but also by the CCTEPU activists who even suggested a way for Wong to take the anti-KP stance without appearing inconsistent. As the Kyoto Protocol had come into effect and global warming was an increasingly fashionable topic, Wong could have used this argument to justify her change from a previously pro-development stance. Apparently, Wong's calculated decision to muddle through this dispute angered the CCTEPU, as was evidenced by the latter's cast-an-invalid-ballot campaign.

Frustrated in their attempts to utilize the DPP connection, Tunglun and the CCTEPU activists had to try different strategies. Tunglun sought to set up a Tach'eng protest organization, but his compatriots were too afraid to offend the predominantly pro-KP township mayors and village heads. The CCTEPU activists decided to circumvent local politics by enlisting the support from national-level, environmental NGOs.

The Emergence of Local Opposition

In 2010, the situation took a favorable turn. As KP shifted the planned location slightly northward to include both Tach'eng and Fangyüan, a local opposition movement emerged. Although both were seaside townships, Tach'eng was primarily agricultural whereas fishing and aquaculture constituted the main sources of livelihood in Fangyüan. Fangyüan residents were not only more vulnerable to a wetland reclamation project but also more experienced in environmental protests. As early as 1996, Fangyüan residents staged a successful movement to stop a pulp factory in their community. Thus, local fishermen and oystermen immediately launched a self-help organization to fight for their livelihoods in February 2010.

The rise of local opposition helped to change the public perception of the KP project, as the CCTEPU worked to highlight the potential ecological damage for the nonlocal audience. While Fangyüan people fought for their subsistence, the CCTEPU activists knew that national NGOs and the urban middle class would be more likely to give their support for the preservation of wetlands and endangered species. The KP project happened to be situated along the migratory route of Indo-Pacific Humpbacked Dolphins (*sousa chinensis*), which were recently categorized by the International Union for Conservation of Nature as "near threatened." Thus, these adorable dolphins became the most frequently used symbol to preserve the tidal land and the coastal area.

The Participation of Outsider Supporters

In April 2010, several NGOs launched a public trust campaign to collect citizens' signatures to buy the planned KP site from the government. As the area in question was state property at the time, conservationists were also legally entitled to purchase the ownership just like the developer. A novel experiment in Taiwan's environmental movement that traditionally called for state efforts but not private initiatives, the campaign turned out to be a successful tactic to get outsiders involved. Saving the dolphins through private donations became a powerful rallying weapon as more than 80,000 citizens had signed the pledge in less than a year. An interviewed activist reported that the majority of them came from the Taipei metropolitan area and chances were they had never been to Tach'eng or Fangyüan. Thus, although the ideal of a privately operated ecological sanctuary was not realized in the end, the campaign itself worked as a powerful mobilizing mechanism for a broader audience.

Around the time when the public trust campaign got started, a group of writers and artists began to voice their opposition to the KP. Laoshih [*Laoshi*] (a pseudonym), a Changhua native poet with a long established national reputation, played an instrumental role here. He was able to persuade a number of renowned writers and artists to join a press conference in June 2010 to express their concern. Subsequently, there were a number of poems, essays, and songs composed to eulogize the ecological value of the threatened tidal wetland. In August, more than 1,000 college professors endorsed an anti-KP statement, and shortly thereafter, 300 medical doctors also initiated a similar attempt. The involvement of these middle-class professionals boosted the morale of the anti-KP movement. In October, college students took part, and the nationwide campus mobilizations began.

Activating the Nexus with the DPP

By the summer of 2010, the DPP leaders had noticed the growing anti-KP sentiment. There was a heated debate over whether or not to oppose the KP in the Central Standing Committee, which failed to reach a clear conclusion. In September, Wong Chin-chu jumped on the opposition bandwagon by mobilizing her supporters in a series of protests. Finally, Su Tseng-chang [*Su Zhenchang*] and Tsai Ing-wen [*Cai Yingwen*], two DPP heavyweight contenders in the presidential primary

(scheduled for April 2011), announced their opposition. Su and Tsai were premier and vice-premier respectively when the DPP government first promoted the KP in 2005. Now seeing the rising wave of anti-KP movement, they had to apologize for their past “mistakes” and shifted to the pro-environmental side.

As the DPP gravitated toward an unambiguous anti-KP position, environmentalists obtained the political support that they attempted but failed to obtain over the previous two years; however, there were worries about the new partisan hue, as environmentalists were afraid that the DPP’s endorsement might scare away the KMT supporters. Consequently, they adopted some counterbalancing acts to present a nonpartisan public image. The term “citizens’ movement” (*gongmin yungdong*) was increasingly used by environmentalists to stress their above-party attitude. In a number of protest events, they demanded the DPP participants not to carry their banners or flags to avoid “political” connotations, and DPP politicians were seldom allowed to take the podium in mass rallies.

Activating the Nexus with the KMT

The environmentalists sought to persuade KMT officials to embrace the anti-KP cause in the hope that another nexus could restore the political equilibrium before an unstoppable slide toward the DPP. Laoshih used his literary connections to mobilize traditionally pro-KMT writers to publicize their opposition while CCTEPU activists arranged private meetings with the KMT cabinet ministers and lawmakers. During these closed-door meetings, the anti-KP activists emphasized that Taiwan’s environmentalism was not necessarily pro-DPP and the involvement of KMT politicians would help to avoid public perception of partisanship. Although the KP opponents were vocal in their criticism of local KMT politicians, they were careful not to lay blame on Ma Ying-jeou out of strategic consideration. The conciliatory attitude toward the KMT appeared to bear fruit, as the presidential office initiated contact with the environmentalists. On March 30, eight representatives entered the presidential house to present their case, and unexpectedly Ma Ying-jeou arrived personally for a long talk. Based on this mutual trust and rapport, Ma decided to attend an anti-KP mass banquet in Fangyüan on April 3 and took an ecotour of the wetland the next day. On April 22, Ma announced the termination of the KP project and ordered a feasibility study to preserve wetland, thus ending the seven-year dispute with the environmentalists and emerging as the victor.

Why did the KMT government end up abandoning the KP project? The drastic denouement certainly surprised many observers. A CCTEPU activist reasoned that it was the popular support for the anti-KP movement that forced the KMT incumbents to change their mind. An unannounced government poll in early 2011 showed that 51 percent opposed KP, and only 26 percent favored it (Tsai 2012:7). True, the sympathy for environmentalists was important, but we should not overlook that Ma’s about-face came at a critical moment when his reelection challenge was just nine months away, and it was made all the more important by the fact that central Taiwan was the electoral battleground for the north-based KMT and the south-based DPP. Hence, Ma could not afford further fermentation of anti-KP sentiment in a competitive region that might have compromised his reelection bid. Once Ma’s DPP rivals had taken up the anti-KP stance, his political space for maneuvering was considerably narrowed as it was no longer possible for him to keep distance from the growing dispute. Either Ma confronted his challenger by continuing to support the KP, or he could join the foray for the increasingly louder pro-environmental voters. He took the latter course and made efforts to take some personal credit for the success of this wetland conservation.

The dramatic reversal of the KMT government’s attitude originated from a well-calculated political motive. By the spring of 2011, it has become more advantageous to support the anti-KP movement rather than to confront it. Because the DPP shifted to the opposition camp only after

the movement became solidly mainstream, it became practically impossible for the KMT incumbents to characterize the anti-KP movement as an opposition's ploy or the DPP as antidevelopment, as they used to do before the power turnover in 2000. Once the KMT government decided to sponsor the movement, careful efforts were made to reserve the credit for Ma's personal intervention. The presidential press conference on April 22 was perfectly timed, immediately after the EPA's environmental impact assessment review meeting ended without an unequivocal decision on the KP project so that Ma could appear to have made a resolute executive decision when professional scientists appeared to fail to reach a conclusion. Moreover, the KMT government did not forget to minimize the damage caused by the policy reversal. In the presidential conference, officials promised to earmark a special budget to boost the economy of Tach'eng Township and to establish a national wetland scenery area to promote tourism. Clearly, these gestures aimed to mollify the local KMT politicians who had long eyed the business opportunities of the KP project.

Discussion: Strategic Bipartisanship in Practice

Strategic bipartisanship meant the self-conscious effort to establish and use movement-party nexus while maintaining an above-politics public image. Activists did not see bipartisanship as an inherent virtue. My interviews with them revealed that most leading activists were staunch DPP supporters (Laoshih and Tunglun) with a significant minority of environmental fundamentalists who tended to vote for the Green Party (the CCTEPU). As an interviewed CCTEPU activist put it,

I tried to avoid the partisan mobilization because it would degenerate into a KMT-DPP rivalry. Both the KMT and the DPP were involved in the decision-making for the KP project; as a result, both would claim it was not their responsibility. That was the reason why I defined this protest as a citizens' environmental movement.⁵

As Laoshih revealed, there was a deep-seated rift between the literary writers who supported the KMT and those who favored the DPP. He admitted using his established status to reach some KMT-leaning writers who had personal access to the president in order to "spread the anti-KP message."⁶

Presenting a bipartisan profile was an instrument to make use of the interparty competition regardless of one's party preference. Strategic bipartisanship contained both the public performance to present a neutral image and the private contacts with political leaders. Making a delicate balancing effort to avoid partisan hues was not enough; it also needed to build trust with the politicians.⁷ Strategic bipartisanship involved a two-step operation; first, they obtained the opposition party's endorsement, and then they leveraged it to change the ruling party. As long as activists could garner sufficient popular support, such a tactic could play the game of party rivalry to their advantage. Taiwan's environmental movement did not passively wait for a favorable shift in the political structure. Rather, politicians both in government and in opposition acted opportunistically as their political calculus dictated.

Strategic bipartisanship brought the anti-KP movement to its success, arguably a milestone victory of Taiwan's recent environmentalism. Nevertheless, it did not originate from a preconceived plan among activists, but gradually emerged with the evolving situation. Before 2010, DPP politicians did not become the movement's ally despite the best efforts of the activists. Nor could this strategy have been effective without the demonstrable support from local victims, middle-class professionals, and students. The DPP hesitated for more than two years before its conversion to the anti-KP cause, which in turn triggered an outbidding act from the ruling KMT. Originally shunned by the two main parties, the anti-KP movement ended up being lionized by

both. In short, strategic bipartisanship succeeded in transforming the political structure as much as it was one of the available tactics allowed by the existing circumstances.

As seen in early 2008, a deterministic POS perspective would have predicted little chance of success for the anti-KP movement. The cause did not enjoy elite sponsorship, and elite dissension on this issue was nonexistent. Yet three years later, the movement ended up victorious because of their endorsement. Taiwan's environmentalism demonstrates that it is erroneous to see the political structure solely as a prediction variable that determines movement outcome. There are times when movement activism is able to convert foes into friends, thereby increasing the likelihood of its success.

Although there is a growing trend of POS theory to treat parties and movements as normal actors in modern democracies, their mutual interaction remains little studied. I use the term *movement-party nexus* to emphasize the ongoing reciprocal transformation. In Taiwan, the temporal coincidence of the founding of the opposition party and the rise of grassroots antipollution protests in the mid-1980s pushed the then nascent DPP into a pro-environmental stance. This legacy structured the subsequent evolution of environmentalism until 2000, when the DPP finally became the ruling party. In 2008, when the KMT came back to power, a historical moment emerged for activists to construct a new movement-party nexus. This time, environmentalists were not only successful in converting the DPP to a pro-environmental stance, but also forced the pro-business KMT to accept their demands.

Previously a competitive election is usually seen as an opportunity for movement activism as the incumbent elites appear particularly vulnerable. The KP case showed that the coming of an election per se did not empower protestors. The DPP politicians remained impervious to the anti-KP cause in the 2008 legislative election and the 2009 magistrate election, despite the intensive lobbying by activists. Only after the movement gained sufficient momentum would the DPP's 2011 presidential primary push the conversion on its contending elites. Similarly, Ma Ying-jeou might have opted to ignore the KP dispute even with his upcoming challenge of reelection as long as his DPP rival remained noncommittal. All of these observations suggest that a given political structure facilitates or constrains activism only through their mutual interaction, in which movement strategy plays a critical, but not always decisive, role.

A corollary of structural determinism is the opportunistic view of social movements. Taiwan's case indicates that politicians both of liberal and conservative parties are more likely to flip-flop than movement activists. So long as a social movement can gain visible strength and leverage party competition, politicians' given attitude can be changed even at their cost of appearing inconsistent.

Finally, strategic bipartisanship continued as the dominant approach among Taiwan's environmentalists after the conclusion of the KP dispute. One month before Ma Ying-jeou formally abandoned the KP project, Japan's Fukushima Incident took place, which triggered a new wave of antinuclear protests in Taiwan. Because Ma's government remained pronuclear, the initial response of the DPP was to harness the resurgence of antinuclear sentiment to its political advantage by mobilizing their supporters for mass rally. However, the DPP's awkward attempt drew criticisms for its opportunism, particularly when the post-Fukushima movement was led by nominally nonpartisan NGOs that maintained equal arm's-length relationship with two main parties, rather than by the DPP-leaning TEPU, which led the pre-2000 antinuclear movement. The DPP's failed attempt to obtain the movement leadership enabled the environmentalists to present the recent antinuclear activism as a "citizens' movement," similar to the anti-KP movement. More important, the bipartisan turn of Taiwan's antinuclear movement has won the endorsement by a number of KMT leading figures, including some presumed successors to Ma Ying-jeou. That these KMT aspirants abandoned their traditional pronuclear stand in clear defiance against Ma's leadership became a critical leverage for the antinuclear camp (Ho 2014). Consequently, when Lin Yi-hsiung [*Lin Yixiong*], an ex-DPP chairperson, staged a hunger-strike protest in April 2014,

which triggered a nine-day wave of frenzied street protests, Ma Ying-jeou faced a mounting pressure to stop the construction of the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant (FNPP), pressure both from the streets and from within the KMT. In the end, it was after an emergency meeting of the KMT top leaders that the government decided to mothball the nearly finished nuclear reactors. The dramatic rebirth of Taiwan's antinuclear movement and its consequential victory in the FNPP case demonstrated the abiding robustness of strategic bipartisanship in more recent years.

Conclusion

Social movements fascinate sociological researchers because of their potential to generate social changes. To make history, movement activists often have to defy the existing rules of the inherited circumstances, rather than simply waiting for the opportunities to emerge by themselves. This article looks at how social movements can transform a manifestly unfavorable political structure before realizing their goals. I frame my research on Taiwan's environmentalism as an intervention into the ongoing debate on the POS theory. The critics are right in the sense that classical POS study is overtly structuralist, leaving too little room for agency. Opportunity is not something that exists in and by itself without subjective evaluation and capacity. The conceptual use of opportunity structure risks reifying social relations into immutable substance.

However, the proposed alternative to focus on movement strategy and agency only appears too tentative and amorphous to be viable successors. What is obscured in these conceptualizations is that there are political structures that confront and constrain movement activists, at least initially. Presumably, a pure strategic model of social movements might have unduly emphasized the resourcefulness and creativity of activists if the external constraints were not taken seriously. After all, movement strategizing is essentially making a difficult choice from the limited set of options allowed by the existing circumstances. Political structures matter because they call forth the activists' adaptive response and their strategic choice, as well as the ensuring interaction with the incumbents jointly shape the movement outcome.

The POS defenders make significant contributions in specifying the mechanism and identifying the sequence of how POS actually affects movement dynamics. In so doing, they enrich our understanding of how political institutions structure social protests. There is an implied self-criticism of the classical deterministic model. Yet, in spite of the acknowledged importance of investigating how social movements make opportunity, little attention is devoted to analyzing the reciprocal change between political structures and movement activism. POS study, classical or revised, continues to see political structures merely as a prediction variable, thus giving rise to a biased picture of opportunistic movements. There are valuable insights to be gained from the contending approaches for a more solid understanding of the dialectic of political structures and movement activism.

Until recently, the POS debate has been primarily focused on the ongoing social activism in contemporary Western societies, with an occasional glance to the great revolutions in the third world. This article contends the students of political structures and social movements can learn something from a case study on Taiwan's environmentalism, and moreover, the discussion here offers several insights on local movement politics. First, Taiwan's young and vibrant democracy allows movement activists to experiment with novel strategies. Political incumbents, both the DPP and the KMT, are seldom so secured in their position that they can afford to neglect their rivals' response to social protest. Strategic bipartisanship is precisely a bet on the delicate balance of contending political camps. Second, environmental protection as well as other social movement issues seldom emerge as the chief social cleavage in the contemporary political landscape in Taiwan. More often than not, the independence-versus-unification conflict undergirds the ongoing DPP-KMT competition, particularly with the hegemonic rise of China and closer economic integration. In a sense, social movement gains the space for flexible maneuver because it

is less costly for the main political parties to retract their previous commitment on the issues commonly seen as secondary. Last, although the left-and-right ideological divide is less prominent in Taiwan's politics, the two main parties are relatively strong organizations capable of disciplining dissidents and maintaining internal coherence. They are not the "permeable political parties" that invite movement mobilization from within, such as the American Republicans and Democrats (Halfmann 2011:144–153). Therefore, Taiwan's movement-party nexus is closer to the European pattern where movement activists exert their political influences outside of the mainstream parties. Further investigation can focus on the subsequent evolution of movement-party nexus after the consecutive milestone triumphs in the KP and the nuclear politics. Will the hitherto victorious, strategic bipartisanship evolve into an aggressive campaign for movement parties? Are movement activists becoming more self-confident so that they are no longer content with influencing the power holders indirectly? Whether a Europe-style left-libertarian movement party is viable in Taiwan's context remains to be observed.

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Notes

1. For instance, in the third edition of the now canonical *Power in Movement*, Sidney Tarrow (2010:12, 29, 167) maintained opportunities can be created by activists. The examples mentioned in the book were still restricted to the protest cycle in which an earlier arising movement "created" opportunity for the latecomers.
2. A note on the romanization of Chinese characters. This article mentions a number of person and place names in Taiwan, where the Wade-Giles system is more commonly used alongside other systems, whereas the pinyin system developed in China has become internationally dominant. Here, I try to balance the need for greater accessibility and the truthfulness to the local usage. I use the spellings self-chosen by the persons (e.g., Ma Ying-jeou) and conventional place names (e.g., Taipei), and apply the Wade-Giles rule to less well-known places (e.g., Changhua). Their pinyins are put in the brackets immediately after the first appearance.
3. Although the Changhua County Taiwan Environmental Protection Union (CCTEPU) was first established as a branch of the federally structured Taiwan Environmental Protection Union (TEPU), it later gained autonomy and operated without supervision from the center.
4. Taiwan's environmentalists began to resist the Kuokuang Petrochemical Park (KP) plan as soon as the project was unfurled in 2005. However, before it was relocated to Changhua in 2008, there were few mass protest activities. Environmentalists used the official occasions such as the Environmental Protection Administration (EPA) review session to express their opposition without mobilizing local residents. Hence, this article analyzes the post-2008 anti-KP movement only.
5. Interview with the vice-president of CCTEPU, May 14, 2011.
6. Interview with Laoshi, May 16, 2011.
7. Taiwan's women's movement offers a contrasting example of movement-party nexus. Yun Fan (2003) analyzed its development from "politics without parties" in the 1980s to "politics with parties" in the 1990s, as more and more women activists began to stand as election candidates or serve as appointed officials. Hui-chen Weng and Dafydd Fell (2006:161) concurred on this observation and further attributed the relative decline of gender politics after 2000 to the partisan shift of the women's movement. Compared with Taiwan's environmental movement, feminists' partisan turn occurred later (in the 1990s rather than in the 1980s) and was much less intensive and more evenly distributed (because

a few feminists even chose to work with the Kuomintang Party [KMT]). On the surface, the environmentalists' bipartisan strategy after 2008 resembled feminists' earlier nonpartisan approach with the exception that the former represented a self-conscious remedial effort to avoid the pitfall of closer identification with a political party.

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Author Biography

Ming-sho Ho is professor in the Department of Sociology, National Taiwan University. He researches environmental and labor issues in Taiwan. His recent publications include *Working Class Formation in Taiwan: Fractured Solidarity in State-owned Enterprises, 1945–2012* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan).