

# Urban Politics and Spatial Development: the emergence of participatory planning in Taipei

by Liling Huang

## **Introduction**

The modern urban planning of the Euro-American context was born as a tool of the states to balance the private and public interests under capitalism. Although planners often claim the tool they obtain is scientific and neutral, critics remind us that the value-free model of planning is nothing but a myth. Indeed, planning is always a contested arena and full of political conflicts, as its history demonstrates (for example, see Hall 1988).

Since the issue of economic restructuring has been well addressed in the previous chapters (see Hsu, Chou and Ching, this volume), this chapter, by taking the practice of urban planning as an example, draws attention to the changing politics and its institutional results in Taipei. The changing dynamics of urban planning will be explored by referring to the three themes observed from the new politics in globalization discourse. First, the highly interventionist states have weakened, if not hollowed out. Instead, a model of governance of 'partnership' rises among states,

capital and the third sector. In this new model, central states on the one hand, have to deliberate its regulatory power; on the other hand, tend to play cultural politics, to rebuild its legitimacy. Second, in the ever-changing political landscape of globalization, it is the local state, rather than the national state, to better address citizens' diversified needs in the rapid urban changes brought by the global process. Third, urban planning, a political tool of local governments to maneuver the relationship between governments and citizens by delivering urban services and infrastructure, brings forth urban struggles (Ohmai, 1995; Castells, 1997; Borja and Castells, 1997). And obviously, conventional top-down process of planning no longer works, while various forms of 'grassroots participatory' or 'collaborative' models (Innes and Booher, 2003; Innes, 1995) were continuously explored to meet the local needs.

In light of these perspectives, the urban politics and the shift of planning model of Taipei in the global era will be examined. Global forces, orchestrated with the domestic dynamics brought on by the democratization process, will be checked to provide an explanation. This chapter firstly traces back past decades to see how the central government in different historical stages intervened in Taipei's urban planning. Details would be given on how the distorted approach of planning led to the failure of infrastructure provision, and how the exclusive planning process deprived the people

the possibilities of creating urban identity. After the great transformation of urban politics in the late 1980s was explained, the new collaborative planning model brought by the local government, NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations), and communities would be examined. To illustrate the process, the case of Yong Kang Community will be provided, with a stress on the citizen values emerged from the cultural and intellectual interaction in a global milieu as well as from the domestic democratization. A reflection about the achievement and the limitation of the model of participatory planning concludes this chapter.

### **Inter/national Settings, Development Policy and Urban Planning**

Before entering the analysis of urban planning in Taipei, I have to start with a brief introduction of planning in Taiwan. It is because, on the one hand, urban planning in Taipei had been highly controlled by the central government and therefore it would be impossible to discuss Taipei's urban development without relating to intervention of central state. On the other, the planning practice in Taiwan has some traits which make it very different from its western counterparts.

What first characterizes the planning in Taiwan is the huge gap between planning

ideas and its implementation. Although this phenomenon could be usual for everywhere in the world, what happens in Taiwan is definitely a very dramatic one. John Friedman (1998) argued that while planning ideas diffuse relatively freely, its implementation is highly place-bounded, being intervened by the particular political culture of each society. For Taiwan, where the planning process has been constantly interrupted by the highly conflicted international politics, rapidly changing economy, and rampant domestic political culture, this perspective is especially insightful.

#### *Planning ideas introduced by international politics*

In terms of planning ideas, Taiwan didn't lag much behind the western countries. The modern planning system was introduced into Taiwan as early as the 1930s by the colonial government with imposing modern planning framework of master plan and land-use zoning. In the 1950s, by the planning bureaucrats of Kuomintang (KMT) government, the western concept of 'garden city' was further brought into satellite cities of Taipei. Later on, in the 1970s, the mechanisms of regional and comprehensive planning were incorporated into the planning system in Taiwan. As far as the development of planning ideas and techniques were concerned, Taiwan received the intellectual influence of modern planning in western world. However, if we delve into

the planning results, we will find another story. Most of those planning ideology went nowhere.

*Planning realities influenced by interaction of international and domestic politics*

The modern planning in Taiwan can be dated back to the Japanese period of time. With a hidden agenda of developing Taiwan as a showcase colony of Japan to justify the Japan's invasion into the south Asian countries, the colonial government released the first 'Urban Planning Ordinance of Taiwan' in 1936. Incorporating total 78 ordinances and 286 sub-ordinances, it stipulated the finance source, enforcing authority and regulating power of urban planning system, such as zoning regulation, building control and land plotting. Standards for infrastructures provision such as systems of roads and urban parks were clearly stated in the plans. Following those regulations, Japanese colonial government finished urban plans for 72 cities and towns by WWII.

Unfortunately, the first modern urban plans for cities in Taiwan died early. The breakout of WWII allowed no chance for those plans, which were civil engineering oriented to incarnate the imperial power of Japanese government, to be fully carried

out. Most cities only finished part of the urban constructions before Taiwan was returned back to Mainland China in 1945. Later, the retreat of KMT government in 1949, announced a new era for planning. It was time for the heroic role of planning in the Japanese period to recede.

In the 1950s, the early aftermath of KMT's retreat, a number of factors led to the uncertainty of planning. Over one million of political refugee with the KMT government to Taiwan had already exceeded the accommodation limits of those main cities. This situation rendered growth control, the kernel of urban planning, a tough task. Besides, the original planning goals of consolidating urban infrastructures set by the Japanese government also shifted. Instead, due to the threat of "liberation" by the Chinese Communist Party across the strait, evacuation or military defense served the top goal of urban administration. Besides, as 85% of the national budget was spent on defense (Gold, 1986) for striking back shortly to the mainland China, little manpower and budget could be allocated to long term plans. In contrast, a governmental mentality of short term response prevailed for urban development.

The setting of planning altered again in the early 1960s. As the KMT realized that recovering China became more and more unpractical, it started to seek other national

goals as its source of legitimacy. Taking advantage of geopolitics in US hegemony, Taiwan joined the new international division of labor, and pursued economic development aggressively. The year of 1963 firstly saw the yields of exported goods outweighed those of imported goods. In the later three decades, by enforcing a series of Economic Development Plans, the KMT state successfully produced an economic miracle with an average of annual 10% GNP growth, and economic growth gained its status as a social hegemony.

Definitely, this miracle came with a price, which is the planning efficacy. From 1960s on, the government continuously cut tax to encourage private investment in consecutive economic plans. Although those measures successfully boosted Taiwan's economy, it shrank the government revenue, dwindled public investment, and finally led to the under-investment in infrastructure provision. As statistics shows, in 1970s the public expenditure comprised 18.3% of the GNP, while in 1988 it reached as low as 14.8%. This in return resulted in a general infrastructure shortage in Taiwan.

Moreover, if we closely check the limited provision of infrastructures in Taiwan, we find that roads and schools, as they were more connected to the needs of economic production, transportation and labor, were placed higher priority, while public housing, parking lot, community centers and parks were lagged far behind, in spite they were

important for bettering people's social life. The phenomena reflected the particular development model of Taiwan.<sup>1</sup> In this framework, people's needs for social services and recreation were severely neglected.

In fact, the planning failure in Taiwan had its institutional root. Under the developmental model, planning was deliberately marginalized and neglected by the state. Most clearly, none of the contents of national, regional and urban plans were mandatory, with an exception of the zoning regulation in urban plans. Therefore, those three levels of plans have neither independent finance nor *de facto* regulatory power, and whether they would be carried out or not highly depended on the national government. This is one of the critical mechanisms for the developmental state to maintain its centralized power.

As discussed above, in planning field, the central state enjoyed high domination over the local states. Although the Constitution asserted the autonomy of the local government, there were no clear items stating the contents of 'autonomy.' Actually, by claiming the special administration in war-time, the central government remained the

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<sup>1</sup> In contrast to Hong Kong and Singapore, where the states intervened in social reproduction by providing large-scale of public housing, the state of Taiwan boosted the capitalist development mainly through establishing transportation systems and advancing education of nationals. Public housing only comprises about 3% of total housing stock in Taiwan, and would make 8%, if adding up the housing for exclusive groups, such as the teachers and military personnel. It is extremely low, comparing with Hong Kong and Singapore, where over 45% of their population live in public housing.

controller of the personnel and finance of local states. Besides, the central state was also an authoritarian state, as it forestalled people's participation in public affairs as well as in planning. Originally, the KMT government in Taiwan didn't practice general elections for parliament. This could be attributed to the Feb 28 incident in 1947.<sup>2</sup> A martial law was imposed in Taiwan shortly after that event. In the later decades, Taiwan didn't practice general election in the parliament. Meanwhile, strict policy was taken to suppress political dissidents.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, it also widely initiated surrogate social groups to manipulate the process of public opinions. People's participation in public affairs was a social taboo, and the western idea of civil society found nowhere to take roots in Taiwan. Similarly in planning, by classifying urban plan as confidential administration, all decision making process of development plans excluded the participation of general public, or even the directly affected residents. It was because Urban Planning Ordinance did not require public hearings or collecting public opinions. Its only procedure related to conduct 'citizen participation' was the posting of plan for one month. However, this process was more formal rather than informant.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> On February 28, 1947, a cigarette vendor was interrogated, beaten and shot by the KMT policemen on the street of Taipei. This event, which reflected the high tension between the government and local society, finally went out of control and triggered island wide civil uprising. KMT quashed this event with military force. More than 20,000 of people, most of whom were social elites, were killed in the massacre.

<sup>3</sup> Under the martial law, hundreds of dissidents were put into execution or incarceration; and ordinary people were deprived of major civil rights, including rights of initiating autonomous social groups, political parties or political gathering for expressing political opinions.

<sup>4</sup> The government usually played tricks with it. For example, it published the details of a plan in an unpopular newspaper. Therefore, the government would not violate the regulation of the ordinance about 'publicizing' the plan, nor this action would release the plan too widely as incurred oppositional opinion (See Yu, 1994).

Even if the citizens managed to voice and to send their opinions to the planning board, their opinions would not be well reviewed, let alone overturn planning decision, because the planning board was notorious for being manipulated by the administrative officials, councilors and developers (Yu, 1994; Selya, 1995).

From above, we could see that the gap between the planning ideas and the planning practice rooted from the international dependency of politics, economics and knowledge. Most ideas were transplantation without adequate adapt to fit local cities. In addition, the ever-changing politics in Taiwan, deeply embedded in the geo-politics and international economy, further undermined the vision of long term urban plans. Therefore, in this model, the planning skills and ideology transplanted from the west was only a mask for the planning reality. In fact, there rested very little autonomy at the hands of planning bureaucrats, and what overarching in planning was urban politics played by the center state which was authoritarian, centralized and developmental.

### **Urban Planning in Taipei and Its Emerging Crisis before the Late 1980s**

Since the Japanese colonial period, Taipei has been the most populated city as well as the military, political and economic center in Taiwan. From the urban planning

practice in Taipei, the planning approach discussed above is evident.

In 1932 the Japanese colonial government completed the Master Plan. It aimed to build Taipei as a model city for its imperialist cities in the Asia. To serve the goal, modern concepts of planning principles, such as ten-percent of lands reserved for public facilities, were incorporated in the plan. With it, grid-iron pattern of roads replaced the original streetscape based on Feng-sui principles. Taipei was divided into 52 neighborhoods, separating the colonizers and the colonized. 17 urban parks were also planned to enhance the public health. Needless to say, most urban parks were located in the Japanese residential area.

After KMT government retreated to Taiwan and claimed to strike back China shortly, it claimed Taiwan as a ‘bastion of freedom and national revival,’ and appointed Taipei as ‘the provisional capital city at wartime.’ For planning, it had following impacts. First, the dramatic population growth turned the earlier urban plan ineffective. Worse still, in order to build Taipei as a fortress city, urban development at that time focused mostly on rapid construction of military infrastructures, such as roads, bridges and sheltering caves (Zeng, 1994). The development of other urban infrastructure was suspended or even sacrificed. For example, many of the reserved

land for urban parks was allocated to serve as military camps or temporary shelters for immigrants.

In the era of economic taking-off, Taipei functioned as a 'magnet for investment and immigrants' for the nation (Drakakis-Smith, 1992). It was not only a key industrial city but also the headquarters for domestic and international corporations. In other word, Taipei was a node city for Taiwan to connect with the world market (Hsu, this volume). Thus, the central government aggressively invested on transportation system and other construction to promote the economic development of the City.

To fulfill Taipei's function, rational growth management was not applied in Taipei's planning. Instead, *Laissez-Faire* was the mode for Taipei's growth. Between the 1960s and the 1980s, the economic development in Taiwan brought millions of rural migrants to Taipei city. Despite Taipei's comprehensive plan was amended once as an attempt to catch up with the rapid migration, population growth could not be controlled. As statistic showed, the population of Taipei was 0.97 million in 1962, and increased to 1.9 million in 1972, an average annual growth rate of 6.04%. By 1990 Taipei's population reached at 2.72 million, its historical peak (Taipei municipal government, 1998). Totally, in only four decades, Taipei's population has grown by

nine times.

### *Public spaces and public buildings*

Following the rapid growth of population was the shortage of urban infrastructure. As shown early, this was a general phenomenon in Taiwan and it was mainly resulted from the fiscal system, which insisted on low tax rate thus leading to insufficient public revenue. Given these difficulties, only 53.9% of the land reserved for public facilities had been completely developed in Taipei by 1978 (Tang, 1993). Furthermore, the limited public investment inevitably led to a distorted selection in infrastructure provision, which also reviewed the development state ideology for urban development. As Table.1 shows, a huge gap lies between the municipal investment on road and the other items. While in the municipal budget, road development took between 67% and 86% of infrastructure investment, in sharp contrast, park development only had a share of 0.7% to 1.5%. Road was given top priority, because it not only facilitates industrial production but also is necessary for f real estate development. Park development was delayed or neglected because both the central government and local government considered it to be a ‘waste’ of land resources.

Table1. Percentage of budgets for public infrastructure, 1968-1977

Fiscal Year	Road	School	Market	Parks	Parking lot	Total
1968	85.89	13.21	N.A.	0.90	N.A.	100.00
1971	67.65	32.22	0.06	0.07	N.A.	100.00
1974	71.86	24.76	0.09	0.09	2.30	100.00
1977	76.21	17.70	1.39	1.53	3.17	100.00

Source: He, 1979

As a result, the planning bureaucrats continuously converted the reserved park-lands into other production land-uses, such as road and commercial or industrial development. Documents showed that by 1990, a total of 261 tracts for parks and green-fields were rezoned to roads, residential areas and parking lots (Hong, 1992).<sup>5</sup> Consequently in 1984, the area of parks and green fields per capita in Taipei was only 1.97 square meters. The same standard was set as 8 square meters in the Japanese colonial period and 6 square meters in the amendment of Master Plan in 1956. Comparing with other cities in the world, the standard was 12.2 square meters for Paris, 13.0 for Seoul, and 23.9 for Vancouver in the same year (Hong, 1992.). The shortage of park in Taipei was an undeniable planning failure.

The failure of planning could also be unveiled from the cultural form of public buildings. Most public buildings in Taipei shared common features: with a Chinese Northern Palace style to demonstrate the omnipresent power of the state and the orthodoxy of the KMT government. Just to name a few, National History and Art Museum (1956), the Municipal Stadium (1956), the National Science Hall (1959), and the imposing complex of Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall (1980) are in the genre. In term of cultural form, not only vernacular style was eschewed by the official styles, there was also a lack of architectural expression of the users and the diverse values of the citizens.

The poor planning performance was not un-noticed by the citizens. However, as the central government was located in Taipei, the state was especially vigilant in maintaining social and political stability in the capital city. To facilitate the state's directly command over Taipei City, the central government designated the city the status of special municipality in 1967. Meanwhile, the Major of Taipei was no longer selected by election, but by the designation from the central government. This proved to be effectively in neutralizing the political criticism by the independent candidates in election.

## **Toward a New Paradigm of Planning**

From discussion above, Taipei was a city short of urban infrastructure, local autonomy, open decision-making process and diverse values of citizens. However, around the late 1980s, urban politics in Taipei underwent great transformation, and the conventional way of planning was challenged. Two dynamics frames the changing landscapes of urban politics in Taipei. The first is the weakening power of national state in face of the global economic change and the rise of the middle class. The second is the emergence of the Non-Government Organization (NGO) and the re-introduction of election.

### *Political changes: the weakening national state and the rise of the middle class*

Since the mid-1980s, the authoritarian national state, which was steering Taiwan into a developmental state, met with multiple crises. The first formidable one came from the dynamic of global economy. In the 1980s China quickly rose to be the new 'world factory' and replaced the old role of Asian Four Tigers as the manufactory sites. Many Taiwanese firms started to move across the strait to seek for cheaper labor, land

and lax environmental regulation. Global economy and not the national state led in economic transformation, as discussed in Part I of this book.

At the same time, there was a rising demand for democracy from the citizens. Observers argued that the emergence of new politics could be attributed to the growth of middle class, a social transformation generated by these decades of KMT's economic development, combined with Confucian's aspiration for high education achievement. In 1962, one year before the milestone of economic taking off, Taiwan's per capita GNP was only US\$ 162. Three decades of economic development later this figure was US\$ 10,210 in 1992. The changing economic structure has generated a new middle class of skilled labors, professionals and managers in the service sectors, replacing the old middle class in the public sectors, such as military, civil servants, and teachers. Researcher estimated that by the late 1980s, middle class occupied around 20% to 30% of the total population in Taiwan (Xiao, et. al., 1989) .

While middle class generally tends to possess diversified social values, the new middle class in Taiwan shared the same social political concerns in the late 1980s. They were very sensitive to the social and political inequality, and played a leading role in advocating for political transformation. According to the polls of 'Common'

magazine in November 1988, 94% middle class reported that they valued democratization more than the improvement of individual life (Xiao, et. al., 1989).

The political forces of the new middle class pushed the KMT government to lift Martial Law, and abolished the prohibition of organizing political parties. The parliament began to practice general election. Therefore, from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, Taiwan saw a break from the former limited electoral democracy in previous decades. In 1994, the mayoral election of Taipei city was restored after nearly 30 year of suspension. At the same year, the first election for Provincial Governor took place. In 1996, the general election was expanded further to the presidential election. Political competition was brought on by elections and new political parties—mainly by Democratic Progress Party (DPP). The KMT no longer held absolute control over the government as well as civil society.

These major social and political movements were not entirely instigated by the middle class but an alliance of various social groups. They brought the central government with a series of social issues. According to Xiao, in the 1980s there were 18 kinds of social movements emerged, including consumer's movement, environmental conservation movement, feminist movement, and so on (Xiao, 1989).

Those social mobilizations were unprecedented in scale and variety. These movements finally pushed the national government to lift Martial Law in 1987. This marked a watershed in the process of democratization in Taiwan. The prohibition of organizing political parties and political gathering, and holding public protests during the previous decades was finally abolished.

### **Political Pluralism: the emergence of the NGOs and the re-introduction of election in Taipei**

#### *NGOs*

Political re-structuring in the national state in the late 1980s can be similarly applied to explain the historical transformation in Taipei. Here two emerging phenomena are to be examined. One is the rise of citizen groups and community organizations. The other is the political competition, brought on by the new opposition parties and later peaked in the restored mayoral election in 1994.

After the lift of martial law in 1987 the rights of public participation was restored,

and self-organizing was the first step. Unlike the affiliated associations of the KMT party state in previous times, most social organizations arisen in late 1980s and the early 1990s had their autonomy and independent of the state. These were the first genuine NGOs in Taiwan, founded by active citizens. By encouraging public participation, they aimed to monitor and influence the policy making process. In Taipei, the social and political center of Taiwan, the rise of autonomous NGOs was especially visible. According to the statistics, the number of registered social associations in Taipei was 1,010 in 1987, and rapidly increased to 3,333 by 1995, more than triple in eight years (Taipei municipal government, 1998). Aside from registered NGOs, there were also many informal community-based networks flourishing. While some of them were instigated by the invasion of improper development into communities, some were dedicated to preserving local culture in the face of rapid urban change.

The members of these formal and informal civil groups came from a wide range of social sectors, such as intellectuals, professionals, housewives, active students, and so on. A kind of middle class culture was shared among members, usually expressed as concerns for the values of life and living environment, and not merely economic development. And they were very vocal. These organized citizens were ready to collectively challenge what the government's action on their city and communities.

Their high alert made the arbitrary process of urban planning no longer free from citizen intervention.<sup>6</sup>

These active citizens were well versed with the strategies of self-organizing and social mobilization. They were also skillful at negotiation with the government. When putting pressure on the local government, gentle measures, such as public hearing, press conference, petition, lobbying and negotiation as well as the more militant actions, such as public rallies or boycott campaign. Their actions not only embarrassed the bureaucrats, but also exposed to the public repeatedly the inefficacy, unresponsiveness and favoritism of the government. Indeed, these urban mobilizations shattered the stability of the KMT administration in Taipei, especially later on when it had to compete with the opposition parties in the election.

### *Mayoral Election*

Because of the grassroots demand for democracy, the seat of Taipei mayor was reopened in 1994. Certainly, the election campaign was a critical moment for the

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<sup>6</sup> Many actions targeted at local government's plan of locating the undesirable facilities, such as electricity transfer stations, garbage processing fields, and gas stations. Some communities close to hillsides mobilized against the government's plan to change the conservation land into development land. These planning decisions were usually only made by the staff of planning departments, without properly informing or consulting residents.

KMT administration in Taipei. KMT's local government in Taipei could no longer count on the backing from the national state. As votes started to talk, at this particular juncture, planning politics shifted again.

Chen Shui-bian, candidate from the main opposition political party the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), had been a legislator well known for his sharp monitoring of the KMT regime. Different from other candidates,<sup>7</sup> he deliberately avoided splitting issues and thus prepared a platform which embraced the shared values of the new middle class. He pledged to bring citizens better urban environment and quality of life. Here he proved himself was sensitive to citizens' needs and aware of the role of planning. To distinguish his approach with those of the KMT regime, he unveiled principles of 'citizen participation', 'no more big constructions, but small improvement of the urban space' and 'preserving historical memory' for urban management and planning. Those tactics successfully gained the grassroots supports, and the mayoral election campaign in 1994 turned out to be a coalition of the grassroots and the opposition political forces against the long established KMT in Taipei.

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<sup>7</sup> Besides Chen, there were two other candidates. One is Huang from the KMT, and Zhao from the New Party. But neither addressed the urban planning issues as Chen.

Finally, Chen won the election by a narrow margin. During his tenure, he deliberately built a new ruling style. Actually he did not follow his own principle announced earlier as ‘no big construction, but small improvement’. Instead, he acted more like a follower of ‘making big things’. For example, he tried to ally with developers to speed up the development of the new financial district, a city project named ‘Taipei Manhattan’, as Jou discusses in another chapter in this book. But he did aggressively build up new social consent throughout by revamping mechanisms of urban planning. Here the most symbolic measure was the so called ‘Space Liberation.’ In the city, some buildings and spaces were exclusively reserved for the KMT party, such as those former residential palaces of Chang Kai-shek and Taipei mayors. He opened them to the public and increased the supply of public facilities. Aside from these individual cases, a series of experiments were initiated to involve the grassroots in neighborhood planning and historical preservation. By doing so, Chen conducted the first important reorientation of urban planning of Taipei from 1994 to 1998. In the next mayor election in 1998, Ma Ying-jiu (Ma Ying-jeou) won the seat back for KMT. Ma followed the same approach of participatory planning and brought in more mechanisms for the system. This process would be fully elaborated below.

### **Planning Model under Restructuring**

From the mid-1990s on, through the administration of Chen and Ma, a new system of participatory planning gradually took shape.

As early as in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when KMT still ruled in Taipei, some planning professors and students were already involved in community development by taking an advocacy planning approach, speaking out for the grassroots and mediating between the government and communities. After Chen took the mayoralty in Taipei, the relationship among of the government, planners and communities began to restructure. It was a trial and error experimental process.

In 1995, the government held the first urban design competition and invited community-professional groups to present their ideas for improving the physical environment of neighborhoods. 26 proposals were given awards. This event gave approval to that collaborative network between communities, professional groups and university planning departments as a legitimate planning process.

In 1996 the Bureau of Urban Development Bureau (Bureau afterward) of Taipei municipal government initiated a program, the 'Neighborhood Improvement Plan'

(Neighborhood Plan afterward), which served as the first attempt of the government to institutionalize community design through collaborative planning.<sup>8</sup> By the Neighborhood Plan, Taipei municipal government would provide the budgets for communities, assisted by professionals, to propose plans for improving community spaces through a participatory process. Who are those professionals? Because planning professionals in the private sectors were reserved about this new approach, it was no accident that most of the professionals working with the Neighborhood Plan academics in architecture or planning from universities. They had stretched the concept and practice of community planning from the experiences in the western society and were ready and eager to put them into local practice.

According to the Neighborhood Plan, after plans were completed and submitted, those considered by the Bureau to be feasible would start construction in the follow year. This new method had considerable impact on community planning and revamped Taipei government's ways of delivering infrastructure and social service at neighborhood level. In the past, constructions were decided by the bureaucrats and political negotiation between the government and the councilors, which often didn't involve the public at all. In contrast, the Neighborhood Plan created an interface for the

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<sup>8</sup> According to Neighborhood Plan, neighborhood design would be open to civic groups and community organizations. Once the proposal passed the review by scholars and professionals, Bureau would provide each case subsidy around \$ 10,000 to \$20,000 US dollars.

activists, professionals and community residents to work together, brainstorming, visioning and controlling the possible future living environment.

Accordingly, from 1996 to 2000, a total of 200 proposals were submitted to the Neighborhood Plan. Among them, 106 projects passed the competition and received subsidies for conducting participatory design. And by 2001, 35 projects were completed its construction. In terms of planning function, most were for upgrading neighborhood parks and pedestrian routes. Some communities aimed to remodel vacant public buildings to accommodate community activities.<sup>9</sup> These projects reflect and serve the neighborhood's needs in public facilities and urban amenities.

In the beginning years of Neighborhood Plan, there was a shortage of expertise for community design. By 1999, the Bureau incorporated a mechanism called 'Community Planner System' into the process of collaborative planning. This policy aimed at recruiting professionals for neighborhood design, and expanded the program considerably.

According to the Community Planner System, the tasks of community planners

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<sup>9</sup> In Taipei, there are around 64% of the urban lands belonging to the government. Because of the dispersed ownerships by different institutes and different levels of governments, many public land and buildings are poorly managed, even remained vacant. Therefore, community residents started to list and check out the public premises in the community, and push the local government to negotiate with the public institutes to release the right of land use and management to the community.

include: establishing community studio for contacting with local residents, providing consultation services to communities for facilitating Neighborhood Plan, and distributing planning information to residents. Supposedly, each local office would provide services to every ten to twelve thousands of people and reach out citywide. In Community Planner System, Taipei municipal government provides the incentives, including both entitlement and consultant fee, to professionals who committed to serve as community planners. Thereby, a number of planners and architects from the private sectors were incorporated into the new planning system. In order to coordinate Community Planning System at a district level,<sup>10</sup> the municipal government started a new scheme called 'Community Planning Center' in 2001. According to the scheme, Community Planning Center was either run by NGOs interested in community affairs or planning related departments in universities.

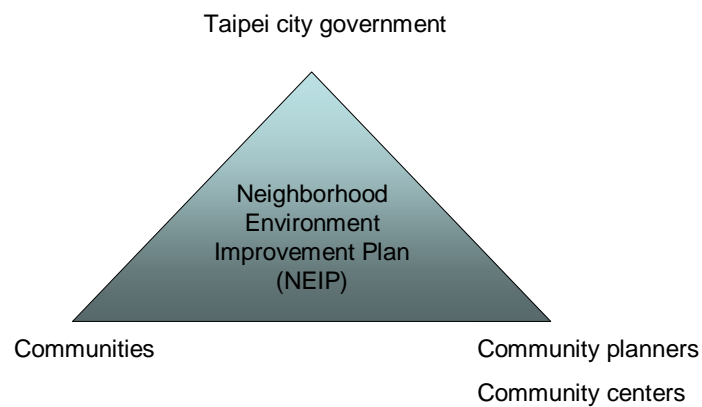
Figure 1 indicates, throughout these mechanisms of integrating community, professionals and organizations in community design, Taipei municipal government has created a collaborative framework to transform the antagonistic relationship between the state and society. Although from time to time, sporadic and minor conflicts still occurred, this new approach, which is highly symbolic, certainly has functioned

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<sup>10</sup> Totally, there are 12 districts in Taipei. The population of every district in average is 215,000.

well in the face of vocal citizens.

Figure1.The structure of collaborative planning in Taipei



After years of practice, some limitations of this system gradually showed up.

First, the ‘participatory process’ does not give equal access to various social groups. In fact, although the poor communities have more urgent needs for resource for Neighborhood Plan, most Neighborhood Plan grants went to the prestigious communities with residents of high education and income, who possess higher social capital and has better knowledge of the participatory discourse and process (OURs, 1999). As a result, the new participatory approach tends to reproduce the social inequality in the city.

Second, communities, even the middle-class communities, find that they do not have equal footing with the government to form a 'partnership.' Although the Neighborhood Plan system invites citizen participation, the institutional support from government is not enough. The administrative red tapes often override and frustrate the participatory design. For example, the pace of Neighborhood Plan projects has to closely follow the timeline of governmental fiscal year rather than the tempo of building up community consensus. Besides, the lack of coordination among government sectors in vertical and horizontal negotiations often leads to the delay or even disapproval for construction, and undermines the effects of participatory design (OURs, 2000).

Third, it becomes clear that community participation is no panacea to all urban problems. While the community planners and resident networks focus on neighborhood planning, the planning issues at the city level are left out. Now activists have to reshape social attentions and create new visions for planning at a large level.

By the following case of Yong Kang community, we would have a clearer picture

on how the participatory process works in the context of the new urban politics.

### **Participatory planning in Yong Kang ( ) Community**

Located at the south-eastern part of Taipei city, Yong Kang neighborhood is a community of mixed residential and commercial land-uses. For decades, this neighborhood has had a rich sense of urbanity, due to its particular geographic and historic backgrounds. In the Japanese colonial era, Yong Kang neighborhood was for the exclusive residence of Japanese officials. Therefore, it is no wonder that in the 1930s, the largest urban park in Taipei, the No.7 Park, or later named Da An ( ) urban park after its completion, was planned to be developed here for maintaining living quality. After the KMT retreated to Taiwan, the former Japanese residences were turned over to the KMT officials. Later on, churches, schools, and universities were set up one after the other, giving the area a milieu of decent residency. In the 1980s, when the middle class of Taipei grew ripe, gourmet restaurants and craft-shops opened continuously. These new consumption activities reshaped this area into a cultural consumption hub for all urban citizens and visitors from abroad, and wear away the original sense of neighborhood of Yong Kang community.

In the early 1990s, urban growth in Taipei brought strong impact to the Yong Kang neighborhood. Geographically, Yong Kang community is close to the city center and only about 200 meters away from the Da An Park. Across from the Da An Forest Park, the Weekend Flower and Jade Markets, which form a popular spot for citizens and visitors. This visitor attraction rendered Yong-Kang neighborhood vulnerable to urban growth. Especially in the weekend, traffic jam often occurs around and within the community. To alleviate the traffic problem, in July 1995, the municipal government decided to develop a road through this neighborhood.

This government move under the new DPP city government proved to be an ill-considered decision. First, this development project needed to cut through Yong Kang Park, a 0.4 acre small park east of Da An Park, but it serves as the open space in its surrounding neighborhood since the 1960s. According to the plan, about two third of the Yong-Kang park would be demolished and transformed into road surface. At the same time, about 50 trees would have to be moved away. Second, city government didn't properly inform or consult with the residents in Yong Kang community. This news was announced abruptly but semi-openly. A university woman living in this neighborhood found the news from the posters on the trees just weeks before the bulldozer was arriving. After talking to her neighbors, she was convinced that the road

development was a poor idea she then decided to launch a community action. Within one week, she successfully mobilized her daily network by finding a group called 'Friends of Yong Kang Park ', which was comprised mainly of young people and housewives in the community. Several strategies were adopted by the 'Friends of Yong Kang Park.' First, they held on a public hearing in the community, well explained this event, and totally collected signatures of more than 300 community residents for issuing an emergency appeal to the government. Then they kept close contacts with the press a called for public supports. At the same time, in order to build up wide local support, 'Friends of Yong Kang Park' also held community fairs in the park for children, parents and shopkeepers in the community. Third, they sought for the supports from other activists and NGOs, such as Organization of Urban Reformers (founded by advocate planners, Awakening (a NGO by feminists) and the Alliance of Home Makers (a NGO organized by female environmentalist, most members were housewives). These organizations were invited to lead the community discussion on what kind of community environment would be desirable. Once the project became a public issue, media was interested to report these community actions. The project and community dissident were widely circulated and the issue of Yong Kang Park received wide spread citizen attention. To be responsive, the officials from both the Planning and Construction Bureaus arrived at the community to re-evaluate the project. As a

result, the government promised to halt the construction. The whole process of stopping the project was swift, and it took less than one month since the university woman decided to take action.

This solution quickly relieved the tension between the government and the local community. For the rest of the dissenting communities in Taipei, the community action and the government's response was taken as the new norm of interaction between government and community under the DPP urban regime. Recognizing the negative effects of this episode and to appease the community, the municipal government actively encouraged Yong Kang community to join the Neighborhood Plan and conduct a participatory design on the park.

Two teams, one included academics from the Architecture Department of Chun Yuan University, and the other from the National Taiwan University came to assist the Yong Kang residents on park design. The team from Chun-Yuan University, pioneers of promoting urban design, adopted an approach of United States in the 1970s which aim to preserve the community equilibrium in the process of urban development. The team from National Taiwan University had long focused on the issue of community mobilization, and the academic department had a strong commitment to the advocacy

planning introduced in the 1960s and 70s in the United States. The intellectual forces and working methods introduced by those planning approaches empowered Yong Kang community and gave substance to this new planning method. A new social experiment was set off.

The participatory design was dynamics and it involved issues of physical space and social identity. Because there was no community center in Yong Kang community, the first issues of the park design was how to provide a space for community events. This turned out to be the first controversial issue because the statue of Chiang Kai-Shek occupied the center of the park for the past decades, and residents had divided opinions over how to deal with the statue in order to make room for the center. Some thought the statue was already a part of the collective memory and does not offend their political ideals, while the other considered the statue an offending to their belief. After negotiation mediated by the professionals, a compromise was reached. The statue was moved to the fringe of the park, and a performance stage was replaced in the center of the park to support community activities.

Additional features were included in the participatory design process, as participation often makes suggestion for improvement. For example, the wall of park

was torn down to be replaced by a bush fence to provide visual and sound barrier. Yet a section of the wall, decorated by mosaic, was built. It was to link residents' memory to the past, because the original wall was built in the 1960s with mosaic. Later it was torn down and replaced with standardized design. Other improvements included: a side gate was built to enhance accessibility; the steel benches was replaced by wood ones to be more user friendly. A corner in the park was reserved for ecological experiment. In this corner, fallen leaves would be collected into compost as fertilizer for the park. In addition to these ecological features, this park design incorporates the community's action to save trees.

The park improvement project is by no means an entirely rosy story. Even the residents with middle class background found the government difficult to collaborate with. The community members complained mostly on the inefficiency of the government. Endless red tape often wore off their enthusiasm. For example, in order to change the design of the drainage lids, they had to get the approval from almost a dozen of sections from various bureaus in the government. Each step was so tedious that some participants considered as a punishment of participation.

Within the community, there were other groups holding complains. Obviously,

the participatory process was inclined to incorporate the opinions of the most vocal residents. Some of the disadvantaged groups, such as vendors around the park and the homeless people who used the park as a shelter were excluded from the process. Although some members of the Friends of Yong Kang Park tried to involve those disadvantaged people, most participants didn't consider them entitled to share decision making.

The community politics turned out to be more complicated than the initiators of park design envisaged. As Yong Kang community enjoyed being a recognized 'successful community' and received budgets for a number of improvements from the government, the community leadership started splitting. The most radical members dropped out as they refused to compromise, leaving the battle to the more conciliatory. Apart from the regular community activities, commercial community fairs were often held on in this park. Suspiciously, the current community leader is using the park to increase her social and political capital, and possibly, material gains. Community activities tend to follow the existing formula, rather than serve as an instrumental for social improvement.

The action of upgrading Yong Kang Park inevitably led to gentrification. After the

community action on saving trees and the park design became an urban legend, a number of fashionable restaurants opened around the parks to take the advantage of its popularity. This brought the second wave of restaurant boom in this area in recent decades. Consequently, the properties of this community now keep soaring. Property raise is welcomed by the landowners but costly to the tenants. Traffic has grown busier, even to the extent of endangering children on school route. Continuous community actions cannot and had not been initiated.

## **Conclusion**

In the context of the political forces functioning both at the global and local level, this paper attempts to develop an argument of the shift in Taipei's urban planning of different stages of economic development. The era from the late 1980s to the mid 1990s is identified as the watershed for a radical change. Prior to it, Taipei's planning had a long tradition of transplanting planning ideology from the western world, and highly dominated by the centralized, authoritarian and developmental state. This approach of planning was not able to respond to urban reality and citizens' needs, but to serve the national goals of economic development and political stability. .

The accelerated global process in the late 1980s brought on a new political landscape for the change in planning practice. The global economy weakened the controlling power of central state, thus released a democratization tide which shook the strong central authority. At this juncture, the political party competition over the 1994 mayoral election in Taipei prompted a new local agenda, community participatory planning, which democratized the planning practice. The meaning of this policy initiative can be interpreted in its political significance. It was the first governmental attempt to institutionalize participatory planning by conceding its power and . It was also the first time that community activist and planners became the protagonists to strategically combine the civil society and technology, and apply western practice in the production of community actions and social service, reducing the state into a supportive role.

While it may still be too earlier to make general comments on the achievements of the participatory planning at community level, some temporary conclusions can be drawn from the pioneering case of Yong Kang park project. The participatory planning in Taipei is predominately a middle-class project. While it was dedicated to mobilize community power, create better public environment and build up new citizen identities, after years of experience, it gradually turned into a formalized and routine practice, and

losing its innovation and capacity as the critical force for transforming and improving society. It is time to further reflect both the limited political evolution and social objective in citizen participation in the current urban context of Taipei.

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