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'Recycling the past' Tzu-chi waste recycling and the cultural politics of nostalgia in Taiwan

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Citation

Dung, Y. A. (2021, September 8). *'Recycling the past': Tzu-chi waste recycling and the cultural politics of nostalgia in Taiwan*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3209240>

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Title: 'Recycling the past' : Tzu-chi waste recycling and the cultural politics of nostalgia in Taiwan

Issue Date: 2021-09-08

Chapter Six |

(Re)Making the Communities and Locality

1. Introduction

The development of Tzu-chi recycling occurred with the spread and establishment of Tzu-chi recycling communities across Taiwan starting in the early 1990s. Local commissioners and volunteers initiated rubbish collection near their living area, sorting waste materials in the spaces often lent by volunteers' acquaintances and neighbours, and selling the materials to local recycling businesses. Today, some of the larger stations, particularly the district stations or environmental parks, function as a sort of community centre for Tzu-chi volunteers to hold neighbourhood events. At several events in which I participated, the local residents learned about global warming and how to classify waste materials and re-use disposable ones from the Tzu-chi trained environmental lecturers. According to the Tzu-chi official record, in 2015, Tzu-chi's large recycling stations hosted over 45,000 visitors¹⁴² participating in environmental education-related activities.¹⁴³ In addition to the environmental events, from time to time, other Tzu-chi local community groups use Tzu-chi

¹⁴² However, not all visitors are local neighbours of the station. Out of total 863 visiting groups, more than 200 travelled from abroad.

¹⁴³ Tzu-chi Foundation, 'he lan Leiden Univ - ciji huanbao fenxiang' 荷蘭 Leiden Univ - 慈濟環保分享 (unpublished document received by personal email to author, 1 June 2016), PDF file.

recycling sites, such as study clubs or the Tzu-chi doctor club members, who give health-care counselling or check-up services to the neighbourhood residents and recycling volunteers. At those events, the volunteers take the opportunity to introduce the organisation and its environmental endeavours to their non-Tzu-chi neighbours.

In this chapter, the focus of the study shifts from *inside* the Tzu-chi recycling stations to the *outside*, from the works of object disassembly to those of material and people assembly. Throughout the chapter, I treat Tzu-chi recycling as a collection of situated local communities characterised by their daily engagements and social networks. The chapter shows that the successive emergence and development of Tzu-chi's local recycling communities is part of the broader social milieu and cultural politics in Taiwan in the 1990s and 2000s, namely, Taiwan's national localisation movement as a whole and the Tzu-chi organisation's communitisation movement in particular. Reading the development and operation of Tzu-chi recycling against this background, I ask: what role did recycling play in the process of Tzu-chi and Taiwan's localisation movement? What 'community' does Tzu-chi's local recycling network form and represent? What cultural imagination and social mechanisms support the community movement of Tzu-chi recycling?

This chapter consists of three main parts. The first provides the background contexts of the Tzu-chi and Taiwanese community-based movements and a case study of the recycling community that arose in both movements. By presenting the case of Jiaoxi Linmei community recycling, I show the pervasive role of recycling in Taiwan's localisation movements. Furthermore, the empirical illustration shows that Tzu-chi recycling has never been an isolated movement of the Buddhism-based organisation. Rather, it intersects closely with other local networks and affairs and influences community development inside and outside of Tzu-chi. In the second part of the chapter, the discussion focuses on the cultural politics of the communitisation movements, highlighting a nostalgic longing for locality which drove the movements of both Tzu-chi and Taiwan. Through a close examination of Tzu-chi recycling collection, I show that the Tzu-chi community forms its recycling network and collects rubbish through employing and restoring traditional mechanisms of social interactions. By doing so, Tzu-chi recycling realises the desired locality. The final part of the chapter, however, complicates the seemingly ideal situation of community recycling and locality-making. I continue with the case study of Jiaoxi Linmei community recycling and analyse it from the perspective of local politics. By paying attention to its later

developmental stage, I argue that the Linmei recycling community, which began in Tzu-chi recycling, represents a local faction that emerged from the localisation movement. I further reveal how local politics is complicated by the lucrative profits and political opportunities of recycling.

2. Taiwanese Localisation Movements, the 1990s-2000s

2.1 The Tzu-chi Communitisation Movement

In the 1990s, Tzu-chi's organisational structure, volunteer participants, and social tasks underwent a series of change aimed at 'localisation'. The policy ideas of 'volunteering communitisation' (志工社區化¹⁴⁴) and 'walk into communities' (走入社區¹⁴⁵) the leader Cheng-yen proposed between 1996 and 1997 were the benchmark of this organisational restructure. By then, Tzu-chi's volunteer recruitment scheme had gradually shifted from the early stage of being religion-based and personal-tie-oriented¹⁴⁶ to being community-based; in addition, the structure of the Tzu-chi laity was reorganised and became spatially categorised as the 'Four-in-One' system (Chao and Kau 1993; see Chapter Three). Since then, the volunteers' congregational affiliation is localised according to one's living area.

Moreover, the localisation movement of Tzu-chi parallels the increase of non-commissioned volunteers who come from a variety of walks of life (Chiu 2000). The social backgrounds of Tzu-chi volunteers become more diverse. This further contributes to the growth of different Tzu-chi local groups and activities; at the time of writing, there are approximately 32 kinds of local clubs and groups.¹⁴⁷ The community recycling of Tzu-chi represents one of such emerging functional tasks of Tzu-chi's communitised development. Prior to the formation of these local groups, the primary tasks of Tzu-chi commissioners were commissioner

¹⁴⁴ zhi gong she qu hua

¹⁴⁵ zou ru she qu

¹⁴⁶ In the previous, personal-tie-oriented model, volunteers were grouped according to the recruitment scheme. The Tzu-chi volunteers refer to the system as 'the hen takes along the chicks' (母雞帶小雞 muji dai xiaoji), describing how new volunteers were automatically assigned to the group of their recruiter and trainer. Chiu Ding-bin summarises that the 'hen-chick' network system was the basis of Tzu-chi's organisation structure. It reflected the religious community characteristics of Tzu-chi and functioned as an emotive mechanism as well as the principle hierarchy of Tzu-chi; from 'Cheng-yen—senior commissioner—new commissioner—backstage commissioner—member' (2000, 106-110).

¹⁴⁷ I regroup the local sub-units into four categories: administrative units for internal affairs (e.g., finance or human resources), functional units for missionary activities (e.g., recycling or media production), supporting units for institutional operations (e.g., cooking for congregations or office maintenance), and titled clubs (e.g., the youth corps or teachers' club).

recruitment, fundraising, and home visits. The new local clubs and units, often initially established by the commissioners (Chang 2008) with assistance from the religion division of the Tzu-chi headquarters, are more directed at tailoring volunteer activities to the volunteers' private interests and preferences (Chiu 2000; Lai 2002).

2.2 The National Community-Making Programme

Tzu-chi's communitisation movement, however, is not an isolated phenomenon. Rather, it resonates closely with the broader social movement of localisation (在地化¹⁴⁸), which, in Taiwan, was accompanied by political paradigm shifts. Starting in the early 1990s, a new form of governmentality was instituted, and the focus of the cultural policy shifted from 'the centre to the local' through extensive programmes of historical/cultural preservation and community-making (Lu 2002). In the 1990s and 2000s, Taiwan saw an ascending wave of place-based movements the state advanced. The first president-elect, Lee Teng-hui (李登輝), proposed the notion of Taiwan as a 'community of shared fate' (生命共同體¹⁴⁹). Imagining Taiwan as one community furthered Lee's political agenda of promoting a Taiwan-centred worldview to replace the previous China-centred one which dominated during the Cold War and the post-war authoritarian political regime of the nationalist political party KMT.

Against this background, the national 'integrated community-making programme'¹⁵⁰ (社區總體營造¹⁵¹) was launched in 1994 by the Council of Cultural Affairs. Chen Chin-nan (陳其南), a renowned anthropologist who was the chief architect of state's community-making projects as the deputy director (1994-1997) and minister (2004-2006) of Council of Cultural Affairs (CCA), argued that the government was obliged to develop people's communal sentiment and citizen consciousness, as these were necessary in terms of subjective preparedness for a *modern* nation (Chen 1990). A state official's policy book report entitled *The Trajectory of the Taiwanese Integrated Community-Making Programme* declares that the burgeoning cultural and historical works and events were 'developed out of the Taiwanese localisation movement'. 'Local

¹⁴⁸ zaidi hua

¹⁴⁹ shengming gongtong ti

¹⁵⁰ Scholars use different English terms to translate this national project. A variety of translations include 'Comprehensive Community Building' (Ho 2012), 'Integrated Community Building' (Lin, Wan-I 2015), and 'Community Total Construction Project' (Chen and Ku 2017).

¹⁵¹ shequ zongti yingzao

culture,' it continues, 'illustrates the dominant value system of the local community in the context of everyday life', and 'the possible developments of local culture(s) concern the issue of constructing a *community of shared fate*'.¹⁵²

Around the same time, the Ministry of the Interior altered its regulation of community committees. Under the new rule, every administrative neighbourhood and village was entitled and encouraged to develop its own community development association (CDA). The shift in community regulation was part of the political liberation and democratisation process to open up public gathering and civic activities at the time after a long period of political suppression. As a result, nascent NGO community organisations like CDAs, which were self-governed, operated independently, and relied on the voluntary resources of a community, began to bloom and received substantial governmental subsidies and technical support (Chen and Ku 2017). These community groups, particularly CDAs and faith-based local groups, such as Tzu-chi local communities, became the primary local service arena, a gateway to health, educational, social, and recreational resources (Chen and Chen 1998). In addition to a variety of socialisation, physical health, and well-being activities, cultural and historical events were organised at all levels, from communal to national, to celebrate local cultures and traditions. Local festivals and guided tours were developed; folklorists, local historians, and researchers were devoted to revitalising and preserving local traditions through activities such as studying old books, pictures, maps, records, buildings, crafts, and temples and collecting oral histories from locally respected elderly people (Yang 2014a).

3. A Case Study of the Jiaoxi Linmei Community

I outline the relationships among the three movements: Tzu-chi recycling as a local functional group emerged in Tzu-chi's communitisation movement, which reconciled with the national localisation development and cultural transformation of Taiwan at the time. Instead of being parallel to one another, Tzu-chi's community-based movement interacts with and influences the movement outside of Tzu-chi. Additionally, the waste work of recycling plays a key role in this interaction. The following section shows this entanglement by

¹⁵² Government of Taiwan, Ministry of Culture [Council of Cultural Affairs], *Taiwan shequ zongti yingzao de gui ji* 臺灣社區總體營造的軌跡, edited by Su Zhao-ying and Cai Jixun 蘇昭英,蔡季勳. (Taipei: Council of Cultural Affairs, 1999). Accessed 3 October 2019. <http://47go.org.tw/article/2003>.

presenting the case of community recycling in the Jiaoxi Linmei Village of Yilan County.

3.1 Linmei Community and its Recycling

In the North-eastern corner of Taiwan, the village of Linmei (林美) is situated on the hillside of Jiaoxi Township (礁溪鄉) in Yilan county. Compared to the touristic areas in the centre of Jiaoxi Township, the primary economic activities of the peripheral Linmei are agriculture-based.¹⁵³ The village is populated by scarcely 1,400 residents, 17% of which are elderly. Despite its relatively small scale and remote location, Linmei is nationally known for its community development. In addition to its frequent appearance in news reports¹⁵⁴ and governmental policy promotional materials,¹⁵⁵ the community is a regular winner of governmental community competitions. For example, in 2005, the community association won second place in a national competition held by the Ministry of the Interior for community development, and in 2007, it won first prize in the national environmental community held by the Environmental Protection Administration.

The Linmei CDA was founded in September 2001 by Mr. Pon, the village chief at the time, who was later elected the CDA's chairman of the board. As chairman, Pon appointed Mr. Liang, a Tzu-chi commissioner and recycling volunteer, as the general director of the Linmei CDA. This administrative pair lasted eight years until Pon completed his maximum chairmanship tenure in 2009, and Liang was elected chairman. Under the auspices of the Linmei CDA, a variety of community groups and activities were formed, such as the patrol team, a recreation club for

¹⁵³ Linmei CDA, 'Shequ jieshao' 社區介紹, Yilan xian jiaoxi xiang linmei shequ fazhan xiehui guanfang wangzhan 宜蘭縣礁溪鄉林美社區發展協會官方網站, Yilan xian jiaoxi xiang linmei shequ fazhan xiehui 宜蘭縣礁溪鄉林美社區發展協會, last revised October 2019, www.lm.org.tw/menudetail.php?idNo=51.

¹⁵⁴ For example: Xie, Wen-hua 謝文華, 'Jiaoxi linmei shequ ziyuan bian huangjin' 礁溪林美社區資源變黃金, *Liberty Times*, 6 July 2005; Lin, Jin-ming 林縉明, 'Jiaoxi zhongyang jinglao, yenai xue tiao maojin cao' 礁溪重陽敬老 椰奶學跳毛巾操, *United Daily News*, 30 September 2014.

¹⁵⁵ For example: Taiwan Executive Yuan Environmental Protection Administration, *Shequ huanjing jiaoyu xuexi shouce: 22 ge shequ gushi* 社區環境教育學習手冊:22 個社區故事 (Taipei: Executive Yuan Environmental Protection Administration, 2007), 145-152; Taiwan Executive Yuan Environmental Protection Administration, *Shequ haogan du 100%: huanjing zaizao 25 li* 社區好感度 100%: 環境再造 25 例 (Taipei: Executive Yuan Environmental Protection Administration, 2012), 152-159; Taiwan Cultural Affair Bureau of Yilan County, *Yilan huojiugu* 宜蘭火金姑 (Yilan City: Cultural Affair Bureau of Yilan County, 2013), 74-81.

elderly people, a cooking class for mothers, and home visiting and health service teams. Additionally, many developmental projects of the Linmei CDA are environment-related. They include several tree-planting projects, the building and maintenance of the Shi-pan (石磬) forestry trail, and training eco-tourism guides.

Among many community projects, the recycling programme perhaps counts the most successful development of and for the Linmei community, and it is also the most crucial. The Linmei community recycling team was formed in April 2002¹⁵⁶ and consisted of about 30 volunteers, mostly women; it was led by Liang's wife, Ms. Hui. For more than 10 years, the Linmei recycling volunteers convened at the square next to the community temple every Monday afternoon, sorting recyclables at the community recycling station, which was made from two purchased intermodal containers. The collected waste materials were not only sourced from Linmei Village, but from across Jiaoxi Township.

Instead of complying with a prevailing notion of recycling as a civic and/or environmental endeavour, the former CDA chairman, Pon, did not shy away from the economic aspect. In his answer to my question about the reason to undertake community recycling, Pon stated: 'With money, the community can develop; without it, it is just like a family without bread, and things will get ugly'.¹⁵⁷ Despite his bluntness, Pon was not the only the CDA associate with whom I spoke who was aware of the recycling economy. When they discussed it, some of them recalled that activities such as collecting and selling empty glass bottles and broken pans to scrap collectors were an 'old-fashioned way' to earn 'some extra cash' that they had known since their childhood.¹⁵⁸ Given the high market price for recycling in the 2000s, the high profits from the community recycling programme—for example, nearly 2.5 million NTD (60,000 euros) between 2002 and 2007¹⁵⁹—become the prime source of income for the Linmei community (Huang 2008). The Linmei CDA uses considerable funds for its social welfare projects and a variety of community activities, such as student scholarships,

¹⁵⁶ Although the Linmei recycling team was formed in 2002, it was officially registered as a sub-group of the Linmei CDA in 2014.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with the former Linmei CDA chairman, Pon (28 April 2016).

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Liang, former Linmei CDA chairman, and Hui, former recycling team leader (16 May 2016).

¹⁵⁹ Luo, Jian-wang 羅建旺, 'Huishou wu bian xianjin jiangzhu shequ xuezi' 回收物變現金 獎助社區學子, *United Daily News*, 14 October 2007.

recreational and educational tours, catering lunches and celebratory festival events for elderly people, and insurance for the forestry trail visitors.¹⁶⁰

3.2 From Tzu-chi to Township to Community

The leader of the Linmei recycling team, Ms. Hui, is also a Tzu-chi commissioner. Together with her husband, Liang, who worked as a train station attendant, the couple have engaged in Tzu-chi recycling since 1991, after they attended a session of Cheng-yen's national touring speech 'Reserving Terrestrial Pure Land', in which recycling and environmental consciousness were addressed. Since then, they have played a crucial role in initiating and developing the Tzu-chi community recycling programme in Jiaoxi Township.

In the early stage, the couple turned the warehouse of the Jiaoxi train station into a recycling station and bought a pick-up truck to visit local shops, schools, and factories, where staff was persuaded to classify (saleable) recyclables for their collection.¹⁶¹ A variety of participants from different villages of Jiaoxi Township were mobilised to join the couple's endeavour. Together, they constituted the Tzu-chi Jiaoxi recycling community network. In accordance with the state governmental policy of having registered environmental volunteering groups in different local governments, the couple formed the 'Jiaoxi Environmental Protection Volunteering Unit' (礁溪環保義工中隊¹⁶², hereafter, the township environmental unit) in 1995. The township environmental unit, which is still operational today, consisted of more than 100 volunteers divided into eight sub-units. When I first met with the Liang-Hui couple in 2016, Liang wore a vest bearing the title of the township environmental unit. He told me about its formation:

I deployed the people who volunteered in Tzu-chi recycling. All together, we formed a volunteering unit to help the Jiaoxi township office out. If cleaning is needed anywhere, like on mountains or beaches, picking up

¹⁶⁰ Shen, Hong-yu, '2016 linmei shequ jianbao' 林美社區簡報 (unpublished document received by computer file sharing, 22 May 2016), PPT file.

¹⁶¹ Lin, Ming-xian 林明賢, 'You rong chun mo mo jinxing laji huishou' 游榮春默默進行垃圾回收, *the Common Daily*, 11 August 1996; Liao, Hong-sheng 廖洪勝, 'You rong chun rongying quanguo shida huanbao yigong' 游榮春榮膺全國十大環保義工, *United Daily News*, 21 February 2003.

¹⁶² jiaoxi huanbao yigong zhong dui

rubbish, or roads and parks that need to be maintained, removing the weeds or sweeping the street, then we go to do so.¹⁶³

In other words, the Jiaoxi township environmental unit is a morph and an expansion of the Tzu-chi Jiaoxi recycling community. Moreover, one of the eight environmental sub-units of the township is the Linmei sub-unit. When the Linmei CDA was established, the Liang-Hui couple stopped their involvement and environmental cadre positions in Tzu-chi recycling, joined the community development, and turned the Linmei sub-unit of the township unit into the Linmei community recycling team. According to Huang Qiu-fen's interview records of the recycling team members of Linmei in 2007, several other cadres of Tzu-chi Jiaoxi recycling who were members of the township volunteering unit also quit their Tzu-chi engagements and 'followed them [the Liang-Hui couple] to continue the recycling work in the community' (2008, 70-74).

From the Tzu-chi local community in the early 1990s to the governmental unit in the late 1990s and to the CDA in the early 2000s, the Liang-Hui couple's shifting engagement focus is one example of Tzu-chi's role in the (non-Tzu-chi) community-making movement; it also reveals the traces of Tzu-chi recycling's pervasive 'community effect' (Chiu 2000, 135). In developing community recycling, the couple not only utilises the social resources built through their Tzu-chi recycling experience, but to an extent, they also reproduce Tzu-chi's welfare scheme: using the recycling income to support other community activities, such as elderly recreational clubs and scholarships.

The Linmei community is not the only case that exemplifies Tzu-chi's participation in the national community-making project through waste cleaning, and recycling. The Taiwanese sociologist Yang Hung-jen's (2014a) research on the community-making movement of Linbian Township (林邊鄉) in Pingtung County, for example, provides another case that shows the interconnection of community-based development, a local Tzu-chi network, and recycling activities. Similar to the Linmei community, some Tzu-chi commissioners at Linbian Township also played a role in the establishment and success of a local community association: the association for the Linbian Natural, Cultural, and Historical Preservation (林仔邊自然文史保育協會;¹⁶⁴ hereafter, the Linbian Association). According to Yang, one-fourth of the founding members of the Linbian Association were Tzu-chi commissioners. These commissioners were

¹⁶³ Interview with Liang, former Linmei CDA chairman (16 May 2016).

¹⁶⁴ Linzaibian ziran wenshi 139ayou xiehui

also members of the local Tzu-chi recycling community and teachers' club. They actively engaged in (non-Tzu-chi) community affairs; they joined traditional philanthropic and environmental activities, such as street-sweeping and creek-cleaning, that some elderly community members initiated. Later, the commissioners had the resources of Tzu-chi to develop the Linbian Association in its early stages. As Yang has discussed, the community recycling that Tzu-chi members initiated became the funding source for the association's financial costs, a developmental strategy similar to the one in the Jiaoxi Linmei community. Because of several community activities organised with the local Tzu-chi congregation, the Linbian Association began to be publicly known among local residents, and its development flourished (*ibid.*, 176-178).

In his master's dissertation, Chiu Ding-bin (2000) also discusses the development of the Tzu-chi local community in Zhongpu Township (中埔鄉), Chiayi County, where the Tzu-chi volunteers mobilised non-Tzu-chi residents and groups to participate in community recycling. Chiu has noted that, by including people from their personal social networks in the work, 'the recycling volunteers no longer see their work as *Tzu-chi's* but as their own' (*ibid.*, 138). The geographical identity and solidarity that emerged through community recycling works were a welcome result; they not only contributed to the fast, extensive spread of Tzu-chi recycling communities, but also to the communities' autonomy (*ibid.*, 136). The locality that Tzu-chi community recycling materialised, Chiu notes, made 'the volunteers likely to be independent from Tzu-chi's organisational operations' (*ibid.*, 138). This was also very much the case in Linmei.

To briefly summarise, as this section has shown, the case of the Jiaoxi Linmei Community Development Association and its recycling programme exemplifies how recycling—collecting, sorting, and selling discarded materials— as a 'recycled', old-fashioned practice contributed to Tzu-chi's social impact on society, on the one hand, and to the national project of local development and the development of locality on the other. The contribution was made possible by two aspects of recycling. One was its nature as a material exchange and its status as the result of a social network formation. The other was the result of the economic aspect of recycling, in which profits made from selling rubbish, particularly in the context of a thriving secondary material market in the 2000s, supported broader community development. The two features of recycling, to some extent, are also the keys to Tzu-chi's methods and management of recycling; and because the aim is to be 'local', this organisational 'template' could easily be shifted to a non-Tzu-chi context.

4. Modern Community-making through Nostalgic Past-remembering

In this section, the discussion focuses on cultural politics to reveal the driving force which brought forth Taiwan's localisation movement and Tzu-chi's communitisation (recycling) movement. To contextualise Taiwan's localisation movement and community-based development since the 1990s, scholars have argued that the cultural political phenomenon can be seen as a response that paralleled the global shift in valuing locality and pluralism, on the one hand, and Taiwan's local context on the other, in which a continued 'identity crisis' coincided with the call for political democratisation and 'cultural nativism' (Lu 2002; Chang 2004). In her research on the cultural politics of the localisation movement, the anthropologist Lu Hsin-yi has argued that encouraging the development of stronger local attachments in the community-making movement was, moreover, rooted in an anxiety that was widely shared among the intelligentsia at the time: the anxiety of losing traditional lifestyles and senses of cultural authenticity in a fragmented, accelerated world. She notes that this sentiment regarding cultural problems and the proposed solutions took an opposite, 'inward' turn, departing from the sentiment during the early stages of the 20th century, when it consisted of learning from others, the 'advanced civilised countries', which was regarded 'as the remedy to heal and elevate the backwardness of Taiwanese culture' (2002, 34-35).

In concurring with Lu's view, this section sheds light on the nostalgic imagination of locality and community, which undermined the localisation phenomenon. In the policy book report, *The Trajectory of the Taiwanese Integrated Community-Making Programme*, in the late 1980s and 1990s, Taiwan was described as having waning traditional and primary industries, a damaged natural ecology, and rapid urbanisation that led to a chaotic public order and worsened public hygiene.¹⁶⁵ Local residents were strangers to one another, and 'life properties and dignities were challenged as never before' by, for example, inconsiderate land use for commercial and industrial development. In the section 'The Unfolded Directions of Local Cultural Policy', the same governmental report states that the phenomenon of burgeoning local cultural and historical works and activities was nevertheless a 'response to the sense of alienation caused by rapid change and the

¹⁶⁵ Government of Taiwan, Ministry of Culture [Council of Cultural Affairs], *Taiwan shequ zongti yingzao de gui ji* 臺灣社區總體營造的軌跡, edited by Su Zhao-ying and Cai Jixun 蘇昭英, 蔡季勳. (Taipei: Council of Cultural Affairs, 1999). Accessed 3 October 2019. <http://47go.org.tw/article/2003>.

past educational system in Taiwan', which 'in turn motivated the public to engage in and consume the forgotten yet familiar things'. The report thus declares that the local cultural and historical works and activities 'developed out of the Taiwanese localisation movement, of a nostalgic remembrance of time past and a consolation in homesickness'. In other words, the advocacy of restoring traditional and local cultures originally countered the previous negative portrait of the social atmosphere in post-economic-boom Taiwan. Therefore, intellectuals and the state proposed community-based local identity as a key solution in response to the social and environmental consequences of industrial modernisation, which was welcomed by the public.

The reference points that underlay the formation of phenomenological ideas about 'homelands' and 'folklores' as well as 'community' and 'locality' were thus more historical than geographical. In studying the public narratives regarding the 1970s that were published throughout the 1990s and after, Wang Chih-ming (2007) has identified a nostalgic sentiment in the intelligentsia among scholars, writers, activists, and artists. The 1970s was remembered as an 'age of idealism', when the the KMT authoritarian regime was crumbling, and when the Communist Party of China replaced it as the charter member of the United Nation. The changing political situation and international diplomatic isolation opened up social fields for new political possibilities and compelled intellectuals, particularly those in their 20s through 40s in the 1970s, to advance ideas for social reform. The Taiwanese historian Hsiao A-chin (2005) has described this phenomenon as the emergence of a 'back-to-reality generation', when set of new political and cultural narratives was developed to criticise the predominant sojourn mentality based on a China-centred nationalist historical view. Concurring with Hsiao, Wang has proposed that political movements and quests for a localised identity in the 1990s were a continuity of the 1970s' 'unspoken' efforts of de-Sinicisation in its series of social reforms. However, Wang has observed that, in eulogising the 1970s as a period filled with idealist passions and an unpolluted living environment, the nostalgic 1990s narrative was tinged with a sense of cultural lamentation and saw the turbulence those ideals brought to the 'homeland', thus contributing to a 'commercialised and unauthentic' era of the 1990s (*ibid.*, 29). In other words, the localisation movement in the 1990s was a combination of new and old, two seemingly opposite directions in relation to the 1970s: a progress-based goal of building a modern, democratic society with a local identity, and a retrospective one of restoring traditional lifestyles and culture that was motivated by nostalgic longing.

The nostalgic sentiment and criticism of post-industrial society found among the 1990s' intelligentsia and in the policy-making arena was similar to the tone of Tzu-chi's institutional discourse to advance its communitisation movement. While Chapter Eight discusses the religious and cultural aspects of Tzu-chi's community developmental stage in detail, in short, the organisation's communitisation movement is a part of its effort of 'order reclamation.' This is exemplified by an article on Tzu-chi's official website that introduces the organisation's communitisation development. The article states that, the morally disorderly society Taiwan has become, the necessary charity works were 'spiritual instead of material'. One fundamental 'treatment' for the disorderly situation, as the opening statement on the webpage declares, was to fix and restore interpersonal relations, to 'return to old ways, restoring the warmth and affection found in traditional communities'.¹⁶⁶

In other words, for Tzu-chi, remaking an ideal local, traditional community means rebuilding social relations. In her advocacy, Cheng-yen uses the term *jue you qing* (覺有情) to describe the type of 'pure', longed-for social relationship that disappeared with pre-industrialised societies. I read the idea of *jue you qing* as 'being aware of and having *renqing*', denoting an individual's empathetic responses when confronted with various situations in daily life. In this sense, the rebuilding of social relations in Tzu-chi's view is to restore the type of social relationship which features *Gemeinschaft* one of Tönnies's dichotomous typology, which denotes a preindustrial, integrated, and small-scale community based on kinship, friendship, and neighbourhood. It is in contrast to its obverse, *Gesellschaft*, which signifies modern associations composed of impersonal, contractual, and amoral ties. To achieve locality, the Tzu-chi organisation puts tremendous efforts into localising volunteer participants and activities to form a 'reciprocal community network of amity and rescue', and it develops care and activities according to perceived local needs.¹⁶⁷ The nativist and traditional sentiment attached to its cultural criticism finds expressions in a variety of emerging community activities. This is still apparent today in the Tzu-chi tea clubs, caring and healing events of 'spreading love in the terrestrial' (愛灑人間¹⁶⁸), and the

¹⁶⁶ Tzu-chi Foundation 慈濟基金會, 'ciji shequ zhigong jianjie' 慈濟社區志工簡介, Tzu-chi official website, 21 April 2008, <https://www.tzuchi.org.tw/%E6%88%90%E7%82%BA%E5%BF%97%E5%B7%A5/%E5%BF%97%E5%B7%A5%E7%A8%AE%E9%A1%9E> (accessed 17 September 2019).

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ ai sa renjian

moral development classes for children and parents; it also appears in activities involving the elderly, such as home visits, healthcare seminars, and traditional philanthropic endeavours, such as street sweeping and recycling.

5. Tzu-chi Recycling Collections and Social Relations

Among the numerous community operations, groups, and projects that Tzu-chi develops, recycling was a paragon to realise Tzu-chi's ideas of community and yearning for locality. In his research on Tzu-chi's communitisation movement, Chiu states that recycling was perhaps the 'only part that is an actual success' in achieving broader effects in local neighbourhoods (2000, 138). This 'community effect' of Tzu-chi recycling particularly occurs through the work of waste collection. As briefly illustrated in the case of Tzu-chi Jiaoxi recycling, waste collection relies on local personal relations. By looking more closely at the waste works that take place outside of Tzu-chi recycling sites—collecting recyclable materials and getting local residents involved—the following section highlights the social mechanism which supports the formation of Tzu-chi recycling local networks and which creates the locality that Tzu-chi values in its definition of an ideal community.

5.1 Fetching Materials, Building Networks

Tzu-chi recycling sites collect their recyclables from different sources. Apart from walk-in individuals who bring some recyclables and several factories that provide specific discarded items in large amounts, the volunteers gather most of the recyclables outside the site on flat hand carts, scooters, or trucks. Once or twice a week, the volunteers—mostly male commissioners—follow their 'fetching route' in the neighbourhood in the morning and visit the designated community points to gather discarded materials. These collecting points can be someone's home, open air markets, clothing shops, commercial offices, residential complexes, or public buildings.

In most cases, the 'local suppliers' are the volunteers' personal acquaintances. The mother of the head officer of the environmental team turns the front courtyard of her house into a collecting point to gather recyclables from her neighbours and nearby local shops before giving them to the local Tzu-chi recycling station. One Tzu-chi recycling station in Taipei started placing various recycling bins in a flower market every weekend after a volunteer from the station learned of this possibility from his neighbour, who was a vendor at the market. A large clothing

chain store became a Tzu-chi recycling point when the former classmate of a relative volunteered at the Tzu-chi recycling station near the clothing store spoke to the store manager.

In addition to relying on connections via personal acquaintance, Tzu-chi volunteers sometimes develop their collecting network geographically by proactively knocking on their neighbours' doors. The volunteers bring home-made handouts with Tzu-chi's environmental narratives or couplets of Cheng-yen's 'words of still thought' (靜思語錄¹⁶⁹) to nearby shops and neighbours to advocate recycling practices and promote Tzu-chi's environmental thinking. Occasionally, the volunteers encounter potential recyclable suppliers within the neighbouring area. For example, a commissioner volunteer from a Yilan recycling station approached a bookstore and asked for permission to collect recyclable materials after finding discarded magazines piled outside.¹⁷⁰ Another such incident occurred when Tzu-chi added plastic packaging materials to its recycling list in 2008. A commissioner learned from the owners of a fruit vendor and a laundry store where she often shopped that both businesses dealt with and disposed of large amounts of plastic film. At an annual gathering of Tzu-chi recycling volunteers, the commissioner shared her experience with the crowd and encouraged the volunteers to visit fruit and laundry stores near their station. During a subsequent interview, the commissioner jokingly described herself as a 'search engine' to illustrate how she mobilised her knowledge of her living space and local social network to contribute to developing a new collection network of plastic packaging materials.¹⁷¹

The social networks that underlie Tzu-chi's collecting practices are what Fei Xiaotong has referred to as a 'differential mode of association' (差序格局¹⁷²), that is, 'a pattern which is composed of distinctive networks spreading out from each personal connection'. This means that each participant is at the centre of a unique network composed of one's particular social ties, while other people in this network also have their own network of social relations (1992, 71). An individual is usually simultaneously involved in several different groups in different contexts; for example, one might be a relative as well as an old classmate, or a

¹⁶⁹ jingsi yulu

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Tzu-chi commissioner volunteering in Dong-gong recycling station in Yilan (28 April 2016).

¹⁷¹ Interview, Tzu-chi environmental cadre volunteering in Xindian recycling station (14 July 2016).

¹⁷² chaxugeju

neighbour as well as a vendor at the flower market. The continuous, intersecting, and overlapping webs of Tzu-chi volunteers' personal and geographical relations together lead to an on-going process of local network formation.

In addition to the daytime kerbside collection, some Tzu-chi recycling stations have recently begun establishing collection schemes at designated locations¹⁷³ called 'evening environmental protection points' (夜間環保據點¹⁷⁴). Generally, on Wednesday and Sunday nights, when the municipal recycling trucks are off-duty, Tzu-chi recycling volunteers gather at designated communal spaces in the neighbourhood, such as community parks, to collect and sort materials from neighbouring households and shops. The volunteers sort the recyclables into primary categories on site. A more straightforward reason that the volunteers, particularly the commissioners with day-time jobs, participate in the evening scheme is because it offers them an additional occasion to engage in their recycling volunteering. Furthermore, within the on-average 30 to 60 minutes of collecting and sorting, recycling is no longer confined to the Tzu-chi premises, or what could be called its spatial territory, but instead takes place in open spaces. Greeting and chatting with neighbours and the families of other volunteers makes the space communal. Engaging in recycling in one's own neighbourhood offers the volunteers an opportunity to express and perform their Tzu-chi identity in front of relatives and neighbours. Such a demonstration is not limited to the individual level, but also occurs on the community level. For Tzu-chi recycling communities, the evening scheme offers an occasion to be seen by and actively interact with their neighbours so that the public, who are less aware of the organisation, can recognise their Tzu-chi neighbours' endeavours, while the volunteers can discuss proper recycling with the public. A volunteer described this recognition as a process of turning a 'faceless organisation into the hard work of someone you know'; further, the volunteer suggested, 'people tend to give things to someone they already know'.¹⁷⁵

5.2 Collecting Materials, Exchanging Renqing

¹⁷³ Xiong's (1999) research on how Tzu-chi community recycling came to be in the Keelung region in the early 1990s, however, has documented that, in the early stage, many Tzu-chi volunteers began recycling by having a designated collection point in the neighbourhood. The Tzu-chi recycling gradually switched to the kerbside collection scheme in order to avoid unsorted trash dumping and to cultivate the public's knowledge of waste classification.

¹⁷⁴ yejian huanbao judian

¹⁷⁵ Interview with a female Tzu-chi certified recycling volunteer working in the evening recycling at zhong-xing park in Taipei (8 April 2015).

In Taiwan, there are multiple conduits through which to dispose of household recyclables. In addition to regular municipal collection at designated locations, a variety of private businesses also provide collection services. Some larger recycling businesses, such as those that act as middlemen or depots, pay for recycled materials. However, these locations are usually on the outskirts of the city, and they expect a significant quantity of materials per deal. Therefore, most residents give their recyclable materials for free to municipal collections, individual recyclers, or community recycling groups such as Tzu-chi. In those cases, the material exchange of recyclable collections is not an economic transaction, and there is space for other, non-monetary mechanisms and symbolic interpretations to play a salient role. In the case of Tzu-chi recycling, a traditional mechanism of social exchange is one important factor.

When approaching their non-Tzu-chi associates to ask them to choose Tzu-chi as their chosen conduit, the volunteers not only use the 'institutional sayings', for example that Tzu-chi recycling means doing good for the environment and philanthropic endeavours, but they also address their personal involvement and experience with Tzu-chi. A commissioner from a Kaohsiung recycling station told me that, from the supplier's view, choosing Tzu-chi as the recipient of waste materials, and from the Tzu-chi volunteer's view, choosing the supplier to provide pick-up services, was mostly the result of 'having connections' (有認識¹⁷⁶).¹⁷⁷ The commissioners often use culturally specific terms to explain that for example to give the organisation recyclables is an act of *tau sann kang* (湊相共, in Taiwanese Hokkien), meaning to help out; a way of 'doing *renqing*' (做人情¹⁷⁸), that is, converting reciprocity in a social relationship into a resource; or a 'consideration of someone's *mianzi*' (看人面子¹⁷⁹), which can be understood as paying someone due respect. Additionally, the effort of introducing Tzu-chi recycling to unknown neighbours is described as an act of 'realising benevolent yuan' (結善緣¹⁸⁰), the natural affiliations between people and connections of fate.

¹⁷⁶ you renshi

¹⁷⁷ Interview with a female Tzu-chi commissioner volunteering in the Sanmin Jing Si Hall recycling station (8 November 2014).

¹⁷⁸ zuo renqing

¹⁷⁹ kan ren mian zi

¹⁸⁰ jie shan yuan



Figure 6.1 Tzu-chi evening environmental protection point in Taipei (photo by the author, 2015)

By using these culturally specific terms, which connote normative principles that regulate social interactions with others, volunteers suggest that Tzu-chi recycling collection is a process of social exchange. One primary rule of the social exchange process is the concept of *renqing*. *Renqing*, a Chinese term which denotes a kind of resource that ‘an individual can present to another person as a gift in the course of social exchange’ (Huang 1987, 956), is a well-developed concept commonly used in everyday settings. In his research on interpersonal behaviour patterns and rules of exchange in Taiwan, Hwang Kwang-kuo (1987) has argued that *renqing*, as a derivative of the reciprocity norm, is the social mechanism that individuals use to influence others when striving for desirable resources and to maintain a possible relationship. Giving someone *renqing* can mean that a giver recognises the receiver’s social position and prestige, which translates into the phrase of giving someone *mianzi*, i.e., paying respect to the receiver’s face.

Moreover, Tzu-chi volunteers’ interpretation of seeking social relationships with strangers in a community as a way of realising *yuan* (natural affinity) further demonstrates the ways in which traditional social mechanisms shape Tzu-chi recycling collection. On the one hand, the concept of *yuan* reflects a traditional Chinese view of interpersonal relationships, in which destiny plays a role when

individuals regard their ‘unexpected’ meeting as a predestined occurrence that will lead to a happy result, and they thus attempt to assimilate each other into their personal social networks. For example, when explaining how the recycling station in Taipei established a collecting point in the flower market, a volunteer described his encounter with a neighbour as destined *yuanfen* (緣分). On the other hand, individuals also actively employ such references to fate in social interactions with strangers when trying to persuade them to provide the desired resources. In this case, it is an altercasting process to transform an initially ephemeral and instrumental relationship into a longer, emotive one by first involving the potential resource allocator in the volunteer’s social network. Subsequently, the volunteer interacts with the potential resource allocator through the reciprocity norm of *renqing*.

However, it should be noted that Tzu-chi recycling volunteers do not necessarily always petition for recyclables and that the recyclable providers always take up the role of resource allocator. Providing the collection service can also be a favour when, for example, certain waste materials are unwanted in the industry because of low market prices. In 2018, one of my respondents from the recycling industry, a van recycler, contacted me to ask for Tzu-chi contacts in the hope that the Tzu-chi stations near his working area could take some recyclables, such as soft plastic or Tetra Pak packaging from the schools. The businessman could not find buyers in his own network. While inquiring, both the recycler and my Tzu-chi contact asked me how familiar I was with the other party. It was an example of a process of evaluation, i.e., assessing the type of interpersonal tie, to determine how much *renqing* should be employed and, accordingly, to what extent the resource allocation was suitable.

In short, the traditional reciprocal mechanism of social exchange underlies and fosters the social network of Tzu-chi recycling collection. The way the local network is constituted, whether as the reorganisation of existing sets of social relations or a call to form new sets of social relations, operates through individual interpersonal relationships and is grounded in the concreteness of everyday life and familiarity with the place and the people in one’s living area. Further, the constitution and operation of Tzu-chi’s local collecting networks consist of the development and management of ‘normatively defined and strictly personal relationships’ through the ‘specific prescribed ritual behaviour’ (Fei 1992, 22). In this setting, instead of waste items, which are only pollutants to be dealt with, also become symbolic resources in the course of social exchange, the cultural currency of *renqing*, and the physical threads with which open-ended webs of potential

connectivity are woven. The discarded materials both reveal and shape the social worlds of Tzu-chi recycling's local communities. Along the way, the Tzu-chi recycling community as a whole is constructed through the realisation and materialisation of its locality.

However, the social relation-driven characteristic of community recycling exposes the paradoxical nature of the community-making movement, or, to be more precise, an overlooked aspect in the idealist imagination of locality promoted in the localisation movements of both Tzu-chi and Taiwan. This lies in the pre-existing politics of the pre-existing social relations. In both Tzu-chi and the governmental advocacy to restore traditional social relations and develop community groups, the narratives seemed to imply that no or only fragmented local social relations and groups remained after rapid social changes and urbanisation. Therefore, the aim was to restore what had been 'lost'. Nonetheless, in practice, this narrative did not ring true in a countryside township like Yilan Jiaoxi, where local factions have dominated local politics for decades. The new local recycling community simply joined the game and further complicated local politics, as I illustrate in the next section.

6. Local Factions of Environmental Protection and Recycling

In 2016, when I visited the Linmei community, the situation was somewhat different from the earlier depiction. The Liang-Hui couple had ended their involvement in the Linmei CDA and the community recycling after the husband finished the tenure of the third chairmanship in 2013. The former chairman, Mr. Pon, and the new chairman, Mr. Wen, were no longer on speaking terms with the couple. Compared to 30 regular recycling volunteers years earlier, in 2016, there were fewer than eight in the community recycling team. Those eight included Wen's wife, Jia, as the team leader, Wen's sister-in-law, one of the two 'remaining' volunteers from the previous team, and Wen's brother, who was in charge of recycling collection once or twice a weekend. The annual revenue of recycling was about one-fifth of the previous income. Meanwhile, various community development projects and activities, including the forestry trail, had been halted.

Throughout the interviews that I had with different key figures of the CDA, I could sense the tension within the community, particularly between the Liang-Hui couple and both the former chairman, Pon, and the current chairman, Wen. While the Liang-Hui couple and Pon avoided the topic, Wen and Jia described several incidents to me to express their frustration with the Liang-Hui couple and their

followers—the ‘previous group of people’—as Wen and Jia sometimes referred to them. The incidents mostly revolving around two issues: the allocation of resources and benefits and a boycott of the new authority’s management.

Local factions (地方派系¹⁸¹) provide a vantage point from which to better understand the rise and ‘fall’ of the Linmei CDA and its recycling programme. This basic argument has two parts: first, Liang and Pon’s administrative effort to establish the Linmei CDA was a new ‘dyadic alliance’ (Landé 1977, xiv) *vis-à-vis* the traditional bi-factionalism that had dominated the local politics of Jiaoxi township for many decades. Second, the mobilisation of Linmei village residents into groups of community volunteers and participants largely took place through the key figures’ personal bonds of acquaintanceship. However, the management of the factional membership depended heavily on the vertical dyadic alliances of patron-clientelism.

In his seminal work on factional politics in Taiwan, the political science scholar Chen Ming-tong (1995; 1996) asserts that a faction is a set of multiple networks of personal associations of indeterminate membership established with the collective goal of appropriating and distributing the resources of public and quasi-public institutions. Since the post-war years, local factions have operated in Taiwan and exerted tremendous influence on Taiwan’s local governments and elections (Chao 1992; Bosco 1994; Braig 2016). While urbanisation, rising levels of education, and the political and economic transitions since the 1990s have decreased the influence of local factions, in some places, particularly in rural areas, local factions remain active. Jiaoxi Township is one example of this. According to Chuang’s (2010) empirical study on Jiaoxi Township factions, the bi-factionalism between the Lin Faction (林派¹⁸²) and the Wu Faction (吳派¹⁸³) has dominated and shaped Jiaoxi local politics since the 1950s. The local elections of, for example, township councilmen, farmers’ association representatives, village chiefs, and CDA chairmen are all political arenas for the two factions to compete with one another. From 1993 until 2010, 69% of the candidates for CDA chairmen in Jiaoxi Township were related to a faction, of which 44% consisted of Lin-faction-oriented candidates, and 25% were Wu-faction-oriented candidates (*ibid*, 109-112).

¹⁸¹ Difan paixi

¹⁸² in pai

¹⁸³ wu pai

In his research, Chuang classifies both Pon and Liang as Wu-faction-related CDA chairmen. However, according to my interviews with Pon and Liang, the situation was rather more complicated than this simple categorisation suggests.¹⁸⁴ First, regarding to Pon's political association, when Pon founded the Linmei CDA in 2001, he was still a member of the Lin faction; after the violent conflict between the two factions in 2003, he switched to the Wu faction.¹⁸⁵ At the time, as a Lin faction member, Pon's primary goal in establishing the Linmei CDA was not to carve out more political power for the Wu faction. Instead, it was to gain office resources, namely governmental subsidies, because of the competition Linmei village had with its neighbour, a slightly larger village, San-min, whose village chief also belonged to the Lin faction.

Secondly, with regards to Liang's political association, instead of seeing Liang as a Wu faction member, based on my fieldwork research, I propose that the Liang-Hui couple and their associated environmental volunteers represented a new local faction in Jiaoxi Township, one I refer to as the *huanbao*¹⁸⁶ faction. As different forms of associational activity, both factions and communities are guided by similar traditional principles of the interpersonal mechanisms of forming networks and balancing *renqing*.¹⁸⁷ Beginning within the Tzu-chi context and extending beyond it to the township unit, the recycling community network the Liang-Hui couple led emerged from the place-based movement and developed into a local faction when competitions over public resources ensued. The *huanbao* faction aimed to acquire two types of resources: recyclable materials and governmental resources.¹⁸⁸ It should be noted that the national recycling system was advanced only roughly until the early 2000s (see Chapter Three),

¹⁸⁴ Interviews with Mr. Pon (28 April, 6 May 2016); interviews with Liang (15, 16 May 2016).

¹⁸⁵ According to Chuang, Pon represented the Lin faction to participate in a temple representative election in 2003. However, the election ended in a group fight because of the controversial actions of a leading member of the Lin faction. Chuang notes in his research that Pon later switched to the Wu faction without giving an explicit time period and reason. In 2016, when I asked Pon about his decision to change factions, the man who had publicly announced his retirement from public affairs responded with a brief answer that there is 'no need to mention those things anymore. It's all in the past'.

¹⁸⁶ Although recycling was the primary task of the Liang-Hui couple and the township environmental unit, it was not the only one. The local group also engaged in street-sweeping, tree-planting, and public building cleaning. Therefore, I use *huanbao* to refer to the group, an abbreviation of environmental protection (*huanjing baohu*) in Chinese.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Mr. Wen (28 April 2016); Interview with Mr. Pon (28 April 2016); Interview with Jia, the current community recycling team leader of the Linmei CDA (22 May 2016).

¹⁸⁸ Interviews with Mr. Liang and Ms. Hui (15, 16 May 2016).

which further contributed to the general increase in the monetary value of recyclable materials in parallel to its booming market on a global scale. Before that, or at least when Tzu-chi, the Liang-Hui couple, and the Jiaoxi township environmental unit began their community recycling engagement in the 1990s, most discarded recyclable materials were 'valueless' and 'ubiquitous', and so the concern regarding acquiring rubbish materials was more associated with social stigmatisation towards waste works than with competition for valuable resources.¹⁸⁹ However, some recyclable materials with a historically developed secondary material market—such as waste paper, aluminium, and metal cans—were already regarded as valuable economic resources. According to a 1996 newspaper article in the *Common Daily*, valuable waste resource allocation between the *huanbao* faction and the municipal cleaning crew was already a source of conflict at the time. According to the article, a 'greedy' representative of Jiaoxi Township asked a local military base for their 'donation' of significant amounts of economically valuable discarded cardboard boxes to the *huanbao* faction instead of the township cleaning crew.¹⁹⁰

In addition to recyclable rubbish, a government-related asset formed another primary resource whose allocation transformed a local social network into a local political faction, the *huanbao* faction. In the 1990s and 2000s, while environment-related issues were a prime policy focus across the board from central to local governments, policies provided abundant resources—subsidies, facilities, awards etc.—for the public to develop relevant projects, such as environmental education, waste management, and green beautification. By virtue of their environmental endeavours, the Liang-Hui couple was publicly recognised, appearing in media reports and receiving numerous awards and opportunities for numerous 'studying trips' outside the county and abroad.¹⁹¹ The unit was equipped with various kinds of equipment and rewards.

In other words, the prime bases of the rise and success of the Linmei CDA were a dyadic alliance between the power constellations of the established cluster of Pon and an emerging one, the Liang-Hui couple. According to Landé, as the basic element of a faction, a dyadic alliance is a 'voluntary agreement between two

¹⁸⁹ Liao, Hong-sheng 廖洪勝, 'You rong chun rongying quanguo shida huanbao yigong' 游榮春榮膺全國十大環保義工, *United Daily News*, 21 February 2003.

¹⁹⁰ Lin, Ming-xian 林明賢, 'You rong chun mo mo jinxing laji huishou' 游榮春默默進行垃圾回收, *the Common Daily*, 11 August 1996.

¹⁹¹ Luo, Jian-wang 羅建旺, 'huanbao daren yourongchun xiayue fumei guanmo' 環保達人游榮春下月赴美觀摩, *United Daily News*, 23 August 2007.

individuals to exchange favours and to come to each other's aid in the time of need' (Landé 1977: xiv). With the governmental community-making project providing political opportunities and economic resources and the recycling works of the *huanbao* faction and pre-existing factional network of Pon providing social relations and economic resources, the Linmei village 'made' their community successful for more than a decade.

In addition to the politico-economic interest exchange, two other kinds of symbolic interest played a role in gluing the two parties of the Linmei CDA together. One concerned waste, and the other was related to bi-factionalism. First, both Pon and the Liang-Hui couple gained their local political power because of their engagement in waste-related movements. The tea businessman Pon began his 'unplanned' political career after his participation in the township 'garbage war', a series of local protests against the township government's unsanitary waste dumping in the mountain region near Linmei village in 1990, when a nearby landfill reached its full capacity. During the interview, Pon showed me a picture of himself sitting in front of a township waste truck to block its entry, laughing proudly about the nickname he received as a result: an environmental hoodlum (環保流氓¹⁹²). The similar background against which they rose to their positions gave Pon and the Liang-Hui couple a sense of shared identity in relation to environmental concerns and protecting their home. Their other shared ideology was the attempt to use their cross-political alliance¹⁹³ and the development of their marginalised village to transcend and overhaul the rigid tradition of Jiaoxi bi-factional conflicts between Lin and Wu factions.¹⁹⁴

Although the dyadic alliance between Pon and Liang is a horizontal relationship, factions in general are mainly built up of vertical dyadic relationships of the patron-client type (Braig 2016). In vertical dyadic relationships, the patron—the high ranking, resource-rich, or influential person—represented by both Pon and the Liang-Hui couple, trades favours in return for support and loyalty from the client. This is clearly seen in the relationships between the Linmei community (recycling) leaders and the recycling volunteers. When describing what

¹⁹² *huanbao liumang*

¹⁹³ According to Chuang (2010), although in Jiaoxi, the local factions have more direct influence on local politics and elections than the two main political parties, KMT and DDP, the Lin faction is more associated with KMT, and the Wu faction is more associated with DDP. In an interview with one professor who had conducted long-term research on the Linmei community, I was told that, in principle, Liang's political ideology is more inclined towards KMT and Pon's towards DDP.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with a university professor (28 April 2016).

motivated the villagers to volunteer for community recycling, all key figures addressed the importance of providing 'welfare' (福利¹⁹⁵) and 'feedback' (回饋¹⁹⁶) to the individuals as frequently as was necessary or possible. In the conversations, different respondents found my suggestions of environmental concerns or senses of sisterhood as the motivation for their recycling engagement rather 'naive'. The current recycling team leader, Jia, responded: 'That's not how it works in the countryside'.¹⁹⁷ Jia's suggestion is in line with the characteristics of factional membership according to Landé, who has argued that members have 'greater concern with power and spoils than with ideology or policy' (1977, xxxii). In the case of Linmei recycling, the favours given to the volunteers can be material (for example, bicycles, umbrellas, and festival gifts), opportunities to attend recreational/touring trips outside of the country, or reputational (e.g., nomination for national environmental volunteers or engaging in activities at the patrons' home), but not monetary (income or paid work positions) because of the voluntary nature of community recycling.

Regarding the favour-exchanging nature of factions, political science scholars maintain that, although the method secures factional memberships, it also turns them into precarious and contingent ones (Landé 1977; Bosco 1992; Chen 1996). Roughly between 2011 and 2012, the alliance between Liang and Pon began to fade. At the time, Pon was no longer the CDA chairman or the village chief. Meanwhile, the governmental subsidies also began to decrease, and the secondary material market deteriorated. The changing conditions imposed challenges for power and spoils and caused competition between the Liang and Pon vertical factions. After a series of factional struggles in the following years, Pon announced his retirement from community affairs, and the Liang-Hui couple and almost all previous environmental volunteers stopped their community engagements in Linmei. Some of them 'returned' to the recycling community that had existed before the Linmei CDA. When I visited in 2016, the wife, Hui, regularly volunteered at a Tzu-chi recycling site, while the husband, Liang, still organised the township unit. However, the couple was not as actively engaged as before. The *huanbao* faction, which emerged from Tzu-chi's local community and was empowered by recycling, trailed off after more than two decades of expansion and transition.

¹⁹⁵ fuli

¹⁹⁶ huikui

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Jia, the current community recycling team leader of the Linmei CDA (22 May 2016).

7. Concluding Remarks

This chapter elucidates the role of cultural meaning, social mechanisms, economic power, and the political opportunity recycling plays in a communal setting and in Taiwan's localisation movement starting in the 1990s. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, after an authoritarian political regime crumbled, leading to waves of social-political reforms, Taiwan saw community-based movements in almost all social fields. While the Taiwanese government established a related national policy of community-making, people responded with establishments of locally based associations, mobilising local social networks and organising a variety of activities. Tzu-chi community recycling is one such example that is contextualised in the Tzu-chi organisation's own communitisation movement. In this national phenomenal development, community as a geographical administrative unit and 'local place' as a conceptual idea became an indication of an authentic social lifestyle and consciousness. A nostalgic past and traditional social mechanisms became resources for building a civic, modern society that offered a cure for modern problems.

In this cultural political atmosphere, community recycling provides a landing place for the ideas intellectuals, policy-makers, and religious philanthropists imagined of a locality. The old-fashioned activity of recycling, particularly its waste collection and network constitution, is the nexus of an inextricable convergence of daily life, place, and material and social relations. Doing community recycling dialectically interacts with the local knowledge and indigenous category of 'being a person', i.e., following the traditional norms of social interaction. It informs local collective identity when the development is entangled with the idea of protecting one's living environment from waste pollution. If it is strong enough, this aspect of local recycling practice can become detached from its original setting, as with Tzu-chi in the case of Jiaoxi Township, and become a part of local affairs.

In the postscript of an influential book on Taiwan's community movement, the sociologist Yang Hung-jen's *Making Community Work: a Case Study of Linbien*, Lee Ding-zan, another Taiwanese sociologist, rhetorically describes the Taiwanese community-based movement as a work of 'mysterious engineering of life' (神秘的生命工程¹⁹⁸). Lee says that this engineering process entails a series of transitions and integrations between the seemingly binary oppositions of

¹⁹⁸ shenmi de shengming gongcheng

elite/public, discourse/practice, and public activist groups/traditional community associations, and it 'gives birth to a new life entity [as a community] with its own kinetic energy' (2014, 388-389). To a large extent, my study of Tzu-chi community recycling is aligned with Lee's observations. However, reality is not a vacuum awaiting the implementation of new ideas, practices, and relations, nor are local networks and interpersonal relationships simply a utopian image in which everyone lives harmoniously and orderly. While Yang's work on Linbian Township stopped at the phase in which a community is 'made' and people are mobilised, I use the case of the Linmei to offers a view of the longer effect of seeing how a mobilised community continues to operate and evolve with its 'kinetic energy'.

As illustrated in the last part of the chapter, on-the-ground, pre-existing social relations, and local politics, for example factional politics and patronage, work hand in hand with the traditional mechanisms of social exchange and networking. Recycling became the representative activity to materialise a community movement not only because of its capacity for supporting the local network constitution and practice of traditional social norms, nor solely because of its environmental connotations. It is also for its other 'traditionality' as a source of income and its 'newness' as a political opportunity. To continue with Lee's rhetoric, these aspects of community recycling, as seen in the case of Jiaoxi Linmei, can be likened to social and economic fuel that produced energy and powered the community development. It gave the association its financial autonomy to develop various social welfare projects accordingly, and from there, gain public recognition. The empowered, successful Linmei CDA was like a well-running engine. However, after nearly a decade of operation, the engine failed as the dyadic political alliances collapsed, subsequently slowed, and nearly stopped when the fuel, the financial resources and political opportunities, dropped significantly. Thus, recycling lost its former status of being embraced by local residents and community volunteers.

