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Queer Activism in Taiwan: An Emergent Rainbow Coalition from the Assemblage Perspective

Abstract

A social movement for sexual and gender minorities (the Movement) emerged in Taiwan around 1990s since the abolition of Martial Law in 1987. This paper, drawing from Deleuze's assemblage theory, looks at how activists negotiate and compete over constructing the discourses of sexual rights and citizenship in a context of democratic transition. Along with the 'Renaissance' of conservatism recently, which combines Confucianism and Christianity, the Movement has been thus de- and re-territorialise in response, and such a process has made a *rainbow coalition* – a larger composition of assemblage rather than simply a descriptor – observable. Gaining a greater leverage and influence on society, the coalition, based on a pursuit of self-determination and self-liberation, has inversely provided soil for a cosmopolitan identity of *Taiwanese* to grow.

Keywords: assemblage, cosmopolitanism, queer activism, rainbow coalition, Taiwan

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Introduction

This article attempts to theorise an emergent *rainbow coalition*, an assemblage deriving from a social movement for sexual and gender minorities (the Movement) involving transforming identities in Taiwan. The Movement is against any kind of abusive pastorship in deployment of sexuality (Ho, 2005; Hsu and Ning, 2014). Beyond an ‘LGBT’ ‘rights’ movement, it is that a social movement informing a larger-scale mobilisation of people and pursuing a social change, so it is more comprehensive than a rights movement. Fighting for a set of new rights for those *disqualified citizens* who share similar experiences of disenfranchisement and exploitation is inevitably included in a social movement. To avoid *labelling* the agents in this social movement is the other issue with which this article is concerned – a tension between identity politics (seeking for social inclusion) and queer radicalism (insisting on sexual liberation). In Taiwan the agendas of assimilationists and radicalists have become interwoven with each other. While the former work more on a strategy of social activism, the latter focus more on knowledge production with the aim of invalidating the stereotypes of fixed identities and normative sexuality (Ning et al., 2005). Therefore, ‘queer’ activism, when employed in this article, is distinct from the conventional understanding of the gay and lesbian rights movement. It encompasses those who are ‘undefinable’ against violence of conservatism and assimilationism (Brown, 2015). The Movement thus manifests a ‘rhizomatic’ activist network, which includes LGBT and queer activism and demonstrates the democratisation of the decision-making process therein.

Starting with Taiwan Pride as the site of observation along with interviews with activists, I would like to contour a trajectory and transformation, if any, of such a Movement from an assemblage perspective. As a step unpacking the complexities, it is important to portray the relationship between the mechanism of discourse production and the communities at issue. This article is concerned with how the Movement responds to assimilationists’ disagreement and conservatives’ contention in order to maintain its leverage and dynamics through a self-metamorphosing process – the emergence of a rainbow coalition. By saying this, the assemblage perspective allows us to account for the frictions between components. Less than degrading them as negative factors, the assemblage theory considers these empirical contradictions as producing capacities and potentialities of the whole so as to retrospectively affect the constituents. An application of the assemblage theory will then focus on ‘how connections between parts actualise certain specific, but uncountable, capacities of objects, and

how these connections change over time to create new capacities' (Knudsen and Stage, 2014: 52). To identify 'capacities', it is useful to utilise Bourdieusian synthesis of *habitus*, in the flow of social realities, to realise the 'interconvertibility' between multiple forms of capital, which can be transformed into the power of the Movement.

There are aspects of the Movement in Taiwan that the Euro-American model cannot explain, especially when it involves Confucianism and Taiwanese ambivalence towards China's one-party regime and 'Western' cultural imperialism in a post-Cold War context. To identify a cosmopolitan sense of *Taiwanese*ness owes much to the Taiwan's 'queer' existence in terms of geopolitics. However, rather than pursuing the absolute openness and hospitality, the cosmopolitanism within the *Taiwanese*ness is aroused passively as a pragmatic response to its everyday paradox in unfolding and recapping affairs of self-determination. As Skrbis and Woodward (2007: 746) draws on, such an 'ambivalence' embedded in the discourse of *ordinary cosmopolitanism* whereon Taiwanese people, from government to activists to laypersons, base their value judgments is 'a tool for negotiation of life chances in an increasingly interconnected and open world'. The rainbow coalition that corresponds to an ongoing *decolonialisation* project in postcolonial Asia becomes a value-laden carrier which may contain self-contradictory identities and ideologies.

The given context makes the assemblage approach distinct from conventional approaches to a social movement, which shed more light either on agentic and agonistic politics between civil society and government. The former captures the contingencies of constituents and moments rather than giving predicaments, focusing more on how 'mechanic' parts self-transform or even disappear from the lines of forces and subjectivation (Buchanan, 1997). The Movement is no longer just a war between ungovernable queers and the normative others but a process of democratising the 'activism' itself. For others, the crises and ruptures created by activists may seemingly de-legitimise the Movement as a whole, but there has never been a static 'whole' from an assemblage perspective. The latter regards the crises as undergoing territorialisation in response to the power relations inside and outside the sexual and gender minority community, a community of singularities. Therefore, assemblage theory is analytical in terms of the 'movement in "social movements"' (Gould, 2009: 3), behind which there are always varying extents of mixing emotionality and rationality, particularly in an open-ended society – a regime of (global) control (Deleuze, 1992; Hardt, 1998).

Based on this ontological and methodological approach, I will first identify several distinctive and interrelated constitutive agents, among some of the various ‘happenings’, to demonstrate the multiplicity of queer activism in Taiwan. Then, putting ‘Taiwan’ per se in a larger geopolitical *context* will enable me to link the emotional and rational factors of the *Taiwanese* to the Movement. Drawing on interviews and participant observations at Taiwan LGBT Pride events, I attempt to conclude – in terms of the *expressive* and *material* elements – with an ongoing coalitional politics of the Movement, which complicates and multiplies the signifier of ‘rainbow’ to converge and convert capital into power, and then capacities. Thus, I temporarily term it a *rainbow coalition* in an assemblage sense.

Multiplicity of queer activism in Taiwan

The Movement was much inspired by the women’s rights movement in the 1990s, and they were largely intermingled for decades before the former opened Pride venues in 2003. While Taiwan is often referred to as the most progressive place for sexual rights and gender equality in East Asia (Leach, 12/11/2012; Jacobs, 29/10/2014), the Movement encountered more distraction and opposition than ever when it sought to promote curriculum on sexuality in secondary education in 2011, and urged an amendment, mainly through the Taiwan Alliance to Promote Civil Partnership Rights (TAPCPR), of the Civil Code to recognise diverse formulations of ‘family’ since 2013, rather than simply same-sex marriages. The opponents – under the banner of family and childhood guardians – base their traditional values on a mixture of Christianity and Confucianism. Referred as the *Renaissance* of conservatism in this article, it began fight harshly against LGBT Pride parades in Taiwan since 2012 when the latter introduced the idea of ‘Marriage Revolution’. In 2013, Taiwan LGBT Pride coined the concept of ‘sexual refugees’ to defend the freedoms of everyone whose eroticism are degraded and tabooed, including incest, chem-sex, polyamory, BDSM and others.

Furious debate upon the comprehensive agenda for sexual revolution occurred not only between the liberationists and the conservatives but also between them and *guai-bao-bao* (good gays), who thereby felt ashamed. The latter represents a group of gay men (few are found in lesbian communities) who adhere to assimilation into the mainstream and reject alternative forms of intimate relationships. Both conservative and *guai-bao-bao* groups, who have coincidentally become a line of adversary force against the community of ‘queerer others’, have made same-sex marriage ‘the most important issue’ on agenda. The *guai-bao-bao* group, without the intention of challenging the *essence* of family, have launched initiatives against the

self-named ‘left-wing queers’, who critique the illusion of the welfarism. Inspired by a wave of propagandising a critical ‘imagination’ of *dis-family* (or, *imagine-no-family*) (Chen, 2007; Hung, 2015), more scholarly attention is given to a pragmatic approach to resource redistribution by neutralising family and democratising intimacy rather than abolishing marriage (Ho, 2015; Liu, 2015a). This idea was also reaffirmed by the TAPCPR’ Secretary General in a public conversation.

Against this background, demands for sexual ‘liberation’ – challenging the simple pursuits of legal recognition and social inclusion – constitute various fractions of queer activism, responding to any step of the Movement in de-sexualising queer minorities. By employing the assemblage theory, the ethics of researching the Movement is not to perceive it as a totality as its components were fused. From this perspective, the 2015 Pride themed with ‘Act Who You Are, Not Your Age’ is noteworthy. One of the participant organisations – People’s Democratic Front – proposed to decriminalise consensual sexual activities involved with child and youth. Again, this brewed a great storm. The Movement in Taiwan, as an assemblage co-contributed by multiple agents and diverse trajectories, experiences several times of reterritorialisation, and this was more obvious especially when there were several gay and lesbian candidates running campaigns for the parliamentary election in early 2016. An agonistic approach challenging the paternalistic pastorship over children, whether queer or not, touches the bottom line of most of ‘civilised’ liberal citizens. Such a controversy caused those who participated in elections a great difficulty in dialoguing with the voters. We can observe how the assemblage is transformed – namely, how the relationalities between components and between the interiority and exteriority of the assemblage alter, become sophisticated, and ‘compensate for the lack of co-presence’ (DeLanda, 2006: 55).

This example demonstrates the difference between Foucauldian apparatus (*dispositif*) and Deleuzian assemblage (*agencement*). The former is an arrangement constituted by countless lines of forces of, for instance, discourse, legal institution, custom, culture, any kind of knowledge, conduct of conduct, power and resistance (Deleuze, 2007). An assemblage is to the apparatus, as a metaphor, what a constellation is to an asterism. An asterism may be part of a constellation or composed of stars from multiple constellations. An apparatus is a system of relations between ‘the said as much as the unsaid’ (Foucault, 1980: 194), making a star discernible (subjectivation), within the web of affects, and the elements direct to a general area from a particular angle regardless of their actual distance. A constellation, as a metaphor

constantly utilised by Deleuze, is ‘prolongable by certain operations, which converge, and make the operations converge, upon one or several assignable traits of expression’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 406). An assemblage and its components at different levels of interaction ‘imply the breaks effected by points, just as the points imply the fluxion of the material they cause to flow or leak’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 244). Lines of flight are captured for components – based on their autonomy – to evade or produce the affects given by the assemblage’s configurations. A star in an asterism (*dispositif*) is not necessarily defined as part of the whole but ineludibly involved and effected, but if in a constellation (*agencement*), it is always ‘becoming’ the component inasmuch as it does not change in and by itself.

Take the controversy of child sex in 2015 as an example. assemblage theory would rather consider the People’s Democratic Front’s agenda an affective variable, by observing how it challenged the Movement, than an inconsiderable ‘outlier’. For a Movement inevitably engaged in the debate over ‘what counts democracy’ as well as the solidarity of the community of the governed, a *rainbow coalition* becomes observable along a trend that the divide of public and private spheres is blurred. An assemblage approach can therefore address Highleyman’s (2002: 110) dilemma regarding whether queer radicals should ‘try to steer the mainstream GLBT movement in a more progressive direction, or work with other progressive activists in groups that are not queer-identified’. Every ‘alternative’ understanding of the Movement would contribute to, rather than compete to dominate, the always-changing landscape of sexual politics. The term ‘coalition’ employed here is not a descriptor but a larger assemblage of communities that forms ‘the backbone of many social justice movements’ (DeLanda, 2006: 33) and knots singularities on a plane traversed by lines of forces within and outside the society. All the components would reinforce and acquiescently represent each other whenever they are attached, whereas they are detachable from the whole.

As an analytical approach, there are three elements of assemblage theory: *context*, *expression*, and *materiality*. That is to say, the rainbow ‘coalition’, as an assemblage of queered bodies and desires relational to other self-determination and social justice movements that produces the capacity to affect and be affected, is composed of micro- and mesoscales of sexuality-assemblages involving human/nonhuman and animate/inanimate relations in a non-retrospective wave of globalisation (see Fox and Alldred, 2013). Taking the Movement as an example, the ‘coalition’ is in itself creative and reflexive, desiring to respond to and intervene in whatever suppresses its existence and sustainability. Deriving from the entanglement of the

assimilationists and radicalists, the governing and the governed, and the conservatives and liberationists, the Movement is without a specific end, at least as yet.

Geo-historical context of queer politics

Although the contextual element was not made explicit in DeLanda's (2006: 95) synthesis, a *context* is, as implied by quoting Giddens (1986: 118), where 'the properties of settings are employed in a chronic way by agents in the constitution of encounters across space and time', or where 'the physical mobility of agents' trajectories is arrested or curtailed for the duration of encounters or social occasions'. That is to say, an exploration for the contextual basis requires an understanding of Taiwan's queer politics with a historical and geopolitical mapping. In history, Taiwan had never experienced anti-homosexuality law until the authoritarian Chiang Kai-shek's regime enacted the law of indecency, which prohibits the wearing of inappropriate outfits ascribed to one's gender roles (Damm, 2005). Even at the time of Japanese military occupation, there was no institution against male homosexuality. In fact, Japan's traditional perception of homoeroticism was similar to that of pre-modern China – namely, an expression and extension of one's social power (McLelland and Suganuma, 2009), but gender inequality had however made society turn a blind eye to female eroticism.

Since 2000, when the Taiwanese elected the first non-KMT president (the Kuomintang used to run the one-party regime and imposed martial law from 1949 to 1987), the Taiwanese have keenly embraced human rights and multiculturalism based on the principle of self-determination. *Taiwanese*ness has been constitutively manifested by yearnings for democratisation and liberation from any kind of domination in the name of transitional justice. Usually taken as a carrier of Western epistemology in Southeast Asia, Taiwan stands out as a symbol of the first country of democratic transition. Simultaneously, it undertakes a role of mediating between super powers due to its cultural affinity with China, modern influence from Japan and political friendship with US. As a point of converging forces, its de facto independence has made the ROC (Republic of China, Taiwan) government by all means seek international support with an allied stance with other neoliberal democracies to counter China's de jure status and political oppression. This invests an emotion of anti-totalitarianism into *Taiwanese*ness and provokes Taiwanese ambivalence towards Confucian style of nationalism and communitarianism.

However, such an ambivalent attitude towards China does not prevent the Movement from influencing relevant campaigns in China, especially when sexuality and gender studies become diversely prospered there (Kong, 2016). An intercommunicative dialogue of translocality and reciprocity promotes many aspects of lay politics compared to the official realm that has transcended the post-Cold War framework. It has even been contended that, by acknowledging the fluidity and multiplicity of individual identities, a queer ‘unification’ of both Chinas may arguably happen among sexual pervert and gender variant people earlier in light of a hybridity of a shared experience of alienation and exploitation and the idealistic *queer nation* (Liu, 2015b). Meanwhile, the conservatives appeal to a mixture of Confucianism and Christianity, which urges a stable positioning of sexual norms and gender roles. Their supporters consist more of the elders, the middle class and indigenous peoples, who underwent ‘modernisation’ from Dutch and Spanish missionaries in the 17th century and later from the Protestants who retreated with the ROC government from Mainland China after the Chinese Civil War in 1950s.

Beyond its cultural roots in Confucian Asia, a homo/heterosexual dichotomy was *created* by the ‘modern West’, so it is controversial to assert that homoeroticism is morally forbidden when eroticisms in classical Confucianism are taken as fundamental human desires. In fact, different dynasties and different time periods within a given dynasty treated homoeroticism differently in the Han-centric history (Hinsch, 1990). In Taiwan the ‘mysteries of sexuality’ have been challenged even more since the martial law period (Lim, 2008). All of the peoples living in Taiwan underwent a journey of democratisation, regardless of where they were from; they sought subjectivity in national/cultural *selves* in the aftermath of the Chinese Civil War. Chen (2010), in *Asia as method*, beholds an anxiety shared by Taiwanese, who stand in between the legacies of the Japanese occupation, the KMT’s totalitarianism and cultural imperialism from the ‘West’ in the 20th century. Despite the government’s attempt to reproduce sinicisation and nationalism (Chen, 1994), people look for unique identities of *Taiwanese*, which is prone to the unspeakable ‘subaltern’ and invisible ‘subjugated’ in history.

In the vein of social movements in East Asia, a distinction between civil society and state power is too simplistic as it ignores the truth that the former is sometimes subordinated to the state and mostly comprises the elites (Chen, 2010). LGBT and queer activists play a crucial role not just in the Movement but in the returns of knowledge from below – ‘the reappearance of what people know at a local level, of these disqualified knowledges, that made the critique possible’ (Foucault, 2003:8). An insight into the Movement requires a contour of the ‘postcolonial

encounter, pushing beyond the sterile dualism of cultural relativism vs. universalism towards a critical engagement with the processes of both culture and the universal' (Mitoma, 2008:13-14). Factors from both within the society and from the outside world are identified, especially the rise of the Taiwan independence movement and the relationship with China in the post-Cold War era. The former, which constructs a fictive ethnicity, plays a determinate role in neutralising sexual deviance, as queer Marxism developed as a historical response to the authoritarianism in modern Taiwan (Liu, 2015b).

Reflexive expression of cosmopolitanism

Within the capital-nation-state context of the neoliberal sociality, DeLanda (2006) considers that the parameters of the assemblage components contain one axis from the material to the expressive role and that the others are defined by the process of territorialisation/de-territorialisation as the first articulation of the components – in terms of the stability of homogeneity – and then by the process of coding/decoding – in terms of the rigidity of the rules regarding social encounters. It is certain that the clearer the boundaries are, the better defined the assemblage is. If Taiwan ever stands as a lighthouse for sexual and gender diversity in East Asia, this should not just be because of its large scale Pride parade, the intensity of its street struggles or its legal pessimism that contingently protects sexual and gender minorities due to its colonial legacy. I argue, instead, that a prospect for a rainbow coalition is to reassure a realm that represents people's 'body, desire, the unconscious, identity' (Melucci, 1980: 223) fuelling socio-political practices against all sorts of arbitrariness and oppression.

In this light, some would compare Taiwan to Hong Kong and Singapore because they once officially claimed to have a Confucian heritage but face commonly the fact that conservatism itself is a blend of a prudish brand of Confucian teaching and an evangelical style of Christian morality. Also, they share similar ambivalence towards the rise of China. These societies have however shown considerably different attitudes towards the Movement, although they all are unavoidably affected by the global fashion of LGBT activism. It may be true that 'the convergence of human rights discourses and sexual orientation struggles has produced a plethora of social movements and organisations concerned with gender and sexual minority oppression and discrimination' (Offord, 2013: 338), since a global epistemic system of human rights has gained much potential to voice human suffering. However, there are nonetheless difficulties in copying the Euro-American experiences to transform erotic politics in Asia due to an intension between *Western* rights discourses and *Asian* cultural diversities.

The question here is that how *Taiwanese*ness is produced from this context, where the rainbow coalition is formed as a countering force transcending the myths of nation-state and demanding the universalistic cohort to be more cautious when exporting ‘new rights’. Is there, as Plummer (2015) claimed, a cosmopolitan version of sexualities, and if so, how is it relevant to Taiwan? Enshrined in Taoist ethics – another influential philosophy in Confucian Asia which congratulates personal fullness to achieve social order, a cosmopolitan belief accommodates homosexuality by seeking common virtues amongst differences (Crompton, 2006: 221) between the Occidental and Oriental and between the heterocisnormative and *Others*. This sheds lights on global ethics, in which a justice system was legitimately founded after the World Wars (Langlois, 2007; Santos, 2007; Delanty, 2014) and echoes what *Taiwanese*ness pursues. The emotional and material factors of being-queer/Taiwanese construct a desire for an *imagined cosmopolitanism* to consolidate the bonds between fragile and vulnerable members within the society beyond ‘a utopian world of universal love and mutual understanding’ (Bao, 2012: 102). Thus, a reflexive and constant expression of cosmopolitanism intends to address the cultural essentialism in Confucian Asia and to legitimate an argument that those, amongst multiple ideologies, contributing to the resurgence of conservatism should not prevent respecting *prima facie* diversity.

The cosmopolitan version of *Taiwanese*ness, as a heuristic and strategic device, is similar to Donnelly’s (2007) justification of the relative universality of human rights. Cultural relativists against queer existence can be problematic if they ignore the translocal intelligibility from an oversimplified perspective of historicity. Nevertheless, under a conventional conception of rights which provides that one is conferred with citizenship by social links between fellow citizens, the state’s paternalistic role as the protector of liberty and wellbeing has largely legitimised governments’ power to determine one’s eligibility for freedoms. This also presents a distinct power relation between the qualified and the disqualified by law, and hence the Movement self-manifests as an open-ended project between competing approaches to achieving social inclusion. That is, queer citizens *ought* to be equally entitled to fundamental freedoms that a state promises to its entire people. However, many minority members are neither fully excluded nor fully included but are living on the margins (Phelan, 2001), where homosexuality and other non-normative eroticisms such as sadomasochism and polyamory are *made* a threat to social stability.

Therefore, beyond normalisation, an eager of redefining ‘citizenship’ is provoked to welcome varieties and democratise intimacies (Giddens, 1993). All of this, predicating the reproduction of social exclusion about another power relation between the qualified and disqualified, matters (Bell and Binnie, 2000: 110), if the construction of sexual and gender identities cannot avoid that ‘new persecution of the peripheral sexualities entailed an incorporation of perversions and a new specification of individuals’ (Foucault, 1978: 42). But, what should be secured in determining the properties of citizenship? Marriage, for example, is one social institution that queer activists wish to liberate from, if no inequality exists in the legal benefits derived from the monopoly enterprise of heteronormativity. People’s expectations for the marriage equality campaign vary greatly in Taiwan from abolitionism to institutionalism. A conundrum exists between an aspiration of equality and the awareness of law’s crowding-out effect, which involves a threshold for qualifying the rights- holders. That is why some activists tend to pursue a more realistic version of cosmopolitanism in legitimising self-determination rather than an *a priori* one.

Territorialisation via social encounters

Observation of the Movement cannot overlook the subjective and objective implications – affects and actions *in situ*, especially those between different civil society organisations and between them and the general public. An understanding is needed regarding how activists see each other, their oppressors and the society and how they reach ‘acquiescence’, through what I thence name a *rainbow coalition*. The Movement, pioneered by queer theorists and sexual liberationists, had played an almost monopolising role in knowledge production and representation of sexual and gender minorities across society until the Pride 2012, which propagandised a revolutionary version of marriage equality proposal. In November 2013, immediately after the Pride, which had advocated ‘Seeing Homosexuality 2.0 – Companion for *Sexual Sufferers*’, the conservatives rallied a protest demonstration, showing recalcitrance against any legal reform. This was almost the first time to introduce sexual subcultures to the general public, but it provoked many gay men’s embarrassment despite the significance of expressing such diversity from street corners to mass media. Many assimilationist/neoliberalist organisations were thereafter formed and claim to be distinct from the ‘radicalists’, as a sequel to the ideological divergence between both comrades of queer politics.

In light of ‘pride’ as an abstract identity of minority members, the discussion upon normalisation raises questions about *whether a process from being the socially excluded to the*

socially excluding is ethically justifiable. Instead of an attempt to develop a total politics within a single focus, what makes the Movement intriguing and provocative from an assemblage perspective is its internal contradictions between the participants and the groups of people they represent. Having witnessed arguments between organisations and individuals, both insiders and outsiders of the Movement have cast doubt on the ‘solidarity’, as if required, but ‘what is and makes “solidarity”?’ becomes my question to my informants. Drawing on a long-term observation, I decided to approach those who frequently led discussions on social media platforms and offered perspectives – in order to facilitate, script, stage and perform in managing emergent contingencies and tensions (see Benford and Hunt, 1992). Therefore, the questions posed to them are around (1) how they prioritise an ‘agenda’ to forecast and foster a social/legal change, (2) how they circumvent, influence and interpret the conflicts to which they draw attention, and (3) their attitudes towards the general public and conservative groups.

Undeniably the *insider* identity made it easier for me to access the network, information, and insights to contextualise a ‘within-case analysis’, but such an *insider* identity also exposed me to ‘clashes’ between versions of ‘stories’. This highlights the importance of self-reflexivity within the research when interpreting the information. This is where, methodologically, affective politics enter into the relationship between *myself* and the informants, when balancing ‘transparency and acceptance of power, conflicts, and dissensus as contributing to the objectivity of interview research, in line with a dialectical conception of knowledge as developed through contradictions’ (Kvale, 2006: 489). A synthesis of their *beliefs* however enables me to claim an emergent ‘coalition’ deriving from an ultimate compromise between multiple agents and players. Within a manifold scenario of the Movement, a feminist activist gave an emotional speech at Pride 2013, in which she stated that ‘everyone is queer; everyone suffers, even we heterosexuals,’ so ‘all forms of oppression are intolerant in whatever names’. People who are raced, gendered, disabled and sexualised are classed in a stratified society, so they stand up and fight from below out of a faith for freedom.

‘They [*guai-bao-bao*] didn’t stand out against the conservative ideologies’, said one senior volunteer of the Taiwan Tongzhi Hotline Association (TTHA) sarcastically, ‘but they are now against the fellows belonging to them’. The TTHA, the first legally registered organisation for LGBT and queer population, was established to provide community support within a politically sensitive context in 1998. Notably as a coding/decoding process, in Taiwan and many other sinophone places, *tongzhi* indicates an inclusive representation of not just homoeroticism but

all genderqueers. Rather than homosexual or gay, which denotes pathological and moral abnormalities, *tongzhi* has a positive reference in Mandarin language (Chou, 2000); however, the boundary between *tongzhi* in Chinese and LGBT in English is arguably blurred and less meaningful along the globalisation of queer politics. With the TTHA's encouragement, the DbQueer (an organisation for disabled queers) was launched afterwards. One of its originators stated, 'people become oppressors if they refuse to see others like me – a disabled gay man'.

While doubts are cast on whether society welcomes only the docile bodies, 'as a social movement takes step by step, I think making things simpler is better than complicating it,' said the spokesperson of the GayRightsTW. The GayRightsTW was one of the organisations initiated in 2013 around the Pride day, advocating to *mainstream* same-sex relationships. 'People think we are too rebellious,' echoed one citizen journalist, who tacitly disagreed with the idea of sexual refugees, 'it is undeniable that homophobic people hate us more when we talk about sex, drugs and fetishes'. He furthered, 'it's like we are all *irresponsible* perverts, living without social norms'. 'I have to admit that I didn't understand what they [the radicalists] fear until I got myself involved in "the politics of ignorance"', responded the GayRightsTW's spokesperson to queer activists' critiques. He continued, 'look at the society we live in; how can we ask all comrades to be radical when some of them dare not even come out?'

Reemphasising that the radicalists are too idealistic, a member of Taiwan LGBT Family Rights Advocacy stated, 'we are just *practical*. Without question, we appreciate the legacy of their bravery and persistence, so the haters are the only enemy'. This has somehow answered the question of whether the conflict between both comrades is ideological or strategical. At the risk of overgeneralisation, I consider the relationship between these seem-to-be-dissenting groups as *frenemies* – that is, not thoroughly contradictory in ideologies if a mutual understanding can be reached but apparently different in their chosen strategies. Despite several triumphs of the Movement both in Taiwan and globally, the fact that de facto exclusion of those who are perceivably 'queerer' continues must be recognised and remedied. 'Although the poll results show that our society got friendlier (see Chien, 6/8/2013), I don't think it's true; most people are just indifferent,' said the GayRightsTW's spokesperson, 'so what we need to do is to grasp people's attention in a more effective way'. He actually shared identical concerns with the organisers of DbQueer and the Taiwan Gender Queer Rights Advocacy Alliance, who concurrently stated, 'people may be mistaken in thinking that we are simply one step away

from winning the war’, but for the next step ‘our target is not the cureless homo/transphobia but the cold-eyed general public’.

Actualisation of resistance by a coalition

In addition to making rights-based claims on the state, at the moment it is *the public* that becomes the Movement’s focus. In terms of strategical considerations, the organisations of social inclusion agendas work enthusiastically on lobbying in parliaments of central and municipal governments, propagating the correlation between human rights and anti-domination via traditional and new media, and notably looking for political and entrepreneurial support in order to promote *rainbow* power and market. Meanwhile, the more liberationist/radical ones focus on educational programmes, community empowerment, counselling services and academic dialogues, in which they attempt to bridge the knowledge class and grassroots. From the Movement to a larger rainbow coalition, activists impliedly prevent strategical contentions before the public and converged at various points (nodes) of the network. An emergent concept of *caihong-gongmin* (rainbow citizens), for instance, was coined and frequently applied by the Lobby Alliance for LGBT Human Rights and others. The Movement extends and strengthens its collaboration with other social justice movements for environmental protection, anti-nuclear, disability rights (including the new ‘Hand Angel’ project (*shou-tianshi*) for sexual rights of the severely disabled), the *Sunflower Student Movement* in March 2014 against an undemocratic ratification of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement, and recently the *Anti-Textbook Revision Movement* in July 2015 against a ‘China-centric’ historical view. The latter two are regarded to manifest the *Taiwaneseness* by resorting to civil disobedience against the legacy of authoritarianism.

Allying with all the underprivileged in society to counter the powerful and involving social transformation of everydayness, a rainbow coalition emerges, although it experiences several times of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. The coalition is related to the *Taiwaneseness* as mentioned above from sociocultural and geopolitical perspectives, representing ‘ambivalence’ at various levels in contentious politics. The coalition is not a totality, in which its components are merged and its constituents maintain the autonomy to detach from it and attach to another. In terms of the Movement’s ‘relations of exteriority’ (DeLanda, 2006: 11; see also Deleuze, 1991), a composing part of the ‘coalition’ ceases to exist as what it originally was when it detaches from the coalition, since ‘being this particular part is one of its constitutive properties’ (DeLanda 2006: 9). That is, first, the whole of the

coalition cannot be reduced to one of its parts, not even the Movement and the Movement's participants. Secondly, parts within the coalition need to interact with each other to bring about properties rather than organic totalities of seamlessness. Thirdly, the coalition includes the dynamism beyond the original Movement.

As for the descriptor of 'rainbow', it becomes symbolic for individuals who wish to emancipate from any kind of domination since the rainbow flag was first introduced by the Taiwan LGBT Pride Community in 2007. Its meaning has been localised, calling for legitimising all the queer existences, so as to the ambivalent *Taiwanese*ness in world politics. The other reason is more straightforward. Non-*elite* queers and agents outside the Movement prefer 'rainbow' over others for its implication of a milder approach to everyday struggles. The rainbow coalition, embodying and reforming new social movements, is localised, issue-centred and democratic, representing minorities' interests and not necessarily requiring agreed ideologies or ultimate goals. To signify 'self-determination', *rainbowing* is also an attempt to deconstruct and problematise its ambivalent stance in a particular geo-historical context, so the emergence of such an assemblage is likely a proper response to Snow's (2004: 19) call to 'broaden our conceptualization of social movements beyond contentious politics' with alternative venues.

There are features of the properties that the coalition particularly has. First, it affirms differences, rather than similitudes, in humanity. Second, it considers that self-liberation is equally important as institutional democratisation. Third, it is displayed in civil politics that can be slow but effective. Last but not least, its all-in-one package accounts for diverse social problems to negotiate a greater space and exchange social capital in opposition to the right-wing conservatives. If we view the whole of the assemblage in a stratified society from the *habitus* perspective (Bourdieu, 1984; 1987), it can thus be considered as a collection of components' affects and actions – the capacities – in a competition with its counterpart, the conservatives. By saying this, I also find that people's perceptions of so-conceptualised *Taiwanese*ness become necessary in evaluating the symbolic capital of the Movement. Notably, the social drive for a new social movement normally comes from the new middle class (Offe, 1985), consisting of those of higher education and a specific cultural identity (Eder, 1993), which in turns invest greatly in the Movement.

Along with the rise of a leftist ideology against the domination from capitalism and nationalism (of both Chinese Unification and Taiwanese Independence discourses), queer activists would face the challenges from Karatani's (2007) capital-nation-state trinity. Since the conservatives

are composed mainly of the older generation and bourgeoisies, it is perceivable that the Movement focuses more on the younger and the disadvantaged, but other parts of the rainbow coalition also convey the discourse of sexual liberty and gender equality to their own audience. Through a process of de-territorialising the post-Cold War context left by two Chinas (ROC and PRC), *Taiwanese* attends more to the interiority of the society, which was and has been heavily influenced by ‘the neoliberal ideology that expands the distance between dominating and dominated class’ (Fuchs, 2003: 406). Interconvertible forms of capital thus determine dialectically the legitimacy and capacity of the Movement, which has raised people’s ‘readiness to find what surrounds us strange and odd’ owing to ‘a lack of respect for the traditional hierarchies of what is important and fundamental’ (Foucault, 2013: 328). As a larger assemblage converging the contribution of time and labour, the coalition undertakes a cosmopolitan approach to social transformation that is not merely metaphoric but symbolic of *Taiwanese* against the arbitrary, hegemonic and oppressive. The subjectivity of every rainbow citizen can be achieved by ‘the habitual grouping of ideas through relations of contiguity, their habitual comparison through relations of resemblance, and the habitual pairing of causes and effects by their perceived constant conjunction’ that ‘turns a loose collection of individuals into a whole with emergent properties’ (DeLanda 2006: 48).

The hybridisation of social movements has provided ‘a reservoir of variable exchange relationships by consciously investing in social relations’ (Edwards and Kane, 2014: 215), so the popularity becomes crucial in empowering the Movement. Through a process transforming capital into power, there are a leverage (influence) and an ideological (discourse) effect. As different points of converging resistance, the former stems from the repertoire of knowledge and practice within institutions, and the latter spreads through sporadic conflicts and networks outside institutions. The leverage aims to balance with the opposing negotiators by resorting to better represent, yet unintendedly to generalise, people’s lived experiences that highlights the interrelatedness between the interiority and exteriority of the Movement. An assemblage of sexuality-assemblages – comprised sexual bodies and relations – that constituted the original whole of the Movement and now extends to other social movements is directed to challenge many cultural hegemonies and social hierarchies. Such a collaboration, translating the awareness of suppression/oppression into senses of inequalities and injustices, thus invokes mobilisation much more efficiently than ever.

Conclusion

Although relevant studies in Taiwan are influenced by the Euro-American schools of critical thoughts, there is a trend to enter a post-Cold War perspective to deconstruct the anxiety of *being* Taiwanese. There seems to be a definite contradiction between tradition (primarily based on the Confucianism) and modernity (equivalent to Western progressivism for many Taiwanese), engendering ontological and epistemological ‘disconcertment’ (see Law and Lin, 2010). This article however bases its argument for *Taiwanese*ness upon a cosmopolitan approach – beyond the unification/independence and left/right-wing dichotomies rooted in Taiwanese social activism – to accounting cultural identity and human rights through a case study of the emerging rainbow coalition. Queer activists share much similar ideas with postmodernists, so that the coalition, as a collection of *capitals* and a reterritorialisation of an *assemblage*, pursues shared interests oriented by the principles of passions and reorganises tactics induced by the principles of association (Deleuze, 1991: 98). Gender, sexuality and many other ‘categorised’ properties of an individual component, deriving from the everydayness (Brickell, 2006), are hence accounted in order to de-hierarchise the society and actualise a synthesis of resistances.

That is to say, the coalition extends the imaginary *selves* and social ties binding upon them and draws on a multiplicity of the perceived-justices within an emancipation project coded by the ideal of self-determination. In short, the rainbow coalition has the potential to facilitate a thorough social change rather than legal reform and to settle the paradox between identity politics and queer utopias by including the ‘unknown and anonymous other’ (Derrida, 2001: 25). A social movement for becoming-cosmopolitan requires the genuine equality based on both self-liberation and self-determination by taking into account of sociocultural and geo-historical variables instead of a simplistic reliance on the rights discourses within a legalistic framework. Beyond the frailties of both the principles of formal equality and those of legalism, the assemblage theory insists on analysing the ‘capacities’ of plural agents and their encounters from a kaleidoscopic lens. The Movement’s de- and re-territorialisation thus can be seen as a result of confrontations between the radicalists and the assimilationists and between queer community and the general public.

In terms of strategies and tactics, the coalition accentuates an approach from below that indicates a horizontal collaboration between other social initiatives and a vertical mobilisation from everyday struggles and reframes the Movement’s scope. Beyond a local essentialism/universal homogenisation dichotomy, cultures from within or outside of a society

have been mutually interacting and co-contributing to transforming the global epistemological landscape. This justifies a contextual element to be analysed with dual dimensions – beyond and within the society. Competing with the *Renaissance* of conservatism, the Movement has been adaptively transformed into a larger coalition, producing its leverage and ideological powers. If such an assemblage serves the Movement from strategic cooperation to capital accumulation, we may further expect the *Taiwanese*ness to be a starting point of developing a cosmopolitan culture, considering its ambivalences between nationalism and imperialism, capitalism and socialism, and globalism and localism. Rather than any prophecy, the Movement (including queer activism) in Taiwan, locating in between ‘the world we have won’ (Weeks, 2007) and ‘the end of the homosexual’ (Altman, 2013), has just turned a new page in this decade.

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