

A Study on Lanyu's Creek Remediation Published in International Journal: Professor Mei-Fang Fan of NYCU Augments the International Visibility of Taiwan's Deliberative Democracy

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Ten years ago, the Taiwanese government's enforcement of creek remediation in Lanyu aroused protest from the local Tao people. The incident resurfaced and was published in an international journal thanks to the investigation of the Institute of Science, Technology, and Society of National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University. This has inspired people to reflect on the importance of environmental justice and democratic participation.

In August 2012, Typhoon Tembin severely impacted Lanyu and gave the Public Construction Commission of the Executive Yuan an opportunity to allocate tens of millions of budget for local creek remediation and reconstruction. Specifically, the Commission planned to apply ecological engineering methods to remediate creeks in Lanyu, thereby reducing the destruction of property and loss of life caused by river floods. The failure to consider Tao people's tribal habits and the island's ecology triggered resistance from local residents, who feared that the cement riverbed would damage the natural landscape and biological habitats. To save the creeks, non-governmental organizations were established one after another. The controversy eventually delayed the project for more than a year, and the constructions did not resume until after the Tao people's opinions were taken into consideration.

The controversy made people realize that flooding is an issue closely related to not only water but people. The question as to whether we should remediate or coexist with nature was also raised. Professor Mei-Fang Fan from the Institute of Science, Technology, and Society of National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University, who has long studied environmental justice and deliberative democracy, analyzed this controversy from the perspective of next generation's deliberative system, emphasizing the inclusion of communications and dialogues among various stakeholders in environmental remediation as well as the importance of combining micro and macro views in deliberative democracy. Thanks to her efforts, the study on Lanyu's creek remediation was successfully published in international journal *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*.

Professor Fan stated that her study has drawn the global community's attention to the crucial role of Taiwan's indigenous people local knowledge in environmental governance. Furthermore, cognitive, ethical, and democratic functions of civic engagement can compensate for the shortcomings of the governance system and inspire crucial reflections on sustainable governance in response to current global climate crises.

In 2012, all six Tao tribes were subject to constructions as a result of the top-down official remediation policy. In addition to the artificial changes to the creek flow direction, the constructions affected the source of irrigation water. The cement riverbed construction compromised the creek ecology, hindering the migration of planktonic larvae. Although the Commission emphasized the application of ecological engineering methods, the Tao people's dependency on creeks and land and the cultural differences were not taken into consideration. As a result, the creek remediation project has aroused much doubt.

Professor Fan indicated that the systemic approach to deliberative democracy focuses on the dynamic interaction within the system and systemic influence. The seemingly non-deliberative actions may result in cross-cultural dialogue and deliberation, allowing the stories of the tribe to be heard. The engagement and deliberation of indigenous people at multiple spatial scales promotes more dialogue and reflection between the public sphere and the decision-making sphere in the deliberative system, as well as continuous social learning.

In addition to the aforementioned research, Professor Fan's book *Deliberative Democracy in Taiwan: A Deliberative Systems Perspective* was published internationally, thereby facilitating to the export of Taiwan's democratic experience. Currently, the Institute of Science, Technology, and Society is in collaboration with the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University to host the Public Deliberation Conference on Climate and Energy in June, 2022, allowing citizens to receive adequate and balanced policy information and engage in communication, listening, trade-off, and reflection with regard to policy issues in a well-designed deliberative context. Deliberative democracy is integral to resolving the current global crises in democracy and partisan polarization, pursuing climate justice, and achieving the transition to a net zero energy system by 2050.

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