

# Queer activism in Taiwan: An emergent rainbow coalition from the assemblage perspective

The Sociological Review

1–17

© The Author(s) 2017

Reprints and permissions:

sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/0038026116681441

journals.sagepub.com/home/sor



**Po-Han Lee**

University of Sussex, UK

## Abstract

A social movement for sexual and gender minorities (the Movement) emerged in Taiwan around the 1990s after the abolition of martial law in 1987. This article, drawing on 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. With the recent 'Renaissance' of conservatism, which combines Confucianism and Christianity, the Movement has been thus de- and reterritorialised in response, and such a process has brought to the fore a *rainbow coalition* – a larger composition of assemblage rather than simply a descriptor. Gaining greater leverage and influence on society, the coalition, based on the pursuit of self-determination and self-liberation, has inversely provided soil for a cosmopolitan identity of *Taiwanese*ness to grow.

## Keywords

assemblage, cosmopolitanism, queer activism, rainbow coalition, Taiwan

## 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 of sexuality (Ho, 2005; Hsu & Ning, 2014). Beyond an 'LGBT' 'rights' movement, it is a social movement informing a larger-scale mobilisation of people and pursuing social change; so it is more comprehensive than a rights movement. Fighting for a set of new rights for *disqualified citizens* who share similar experiences of disenfranchisement and exploitation is inevitably included in a social movement. To avoid *labelling* the

---

## Corresponding author:

Po-Han Lee, School of Law, Politics and Sociology, Freeman Building, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9QE, UK.

Email: pl236@sussex.ac.uk

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, Ding, & Ho, 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’ in the face of the 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 draw the contours of a trajectory and transformation, if any, of such a Movement from an assemblage perspective. As a step in 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’ hostility in order to maintain its leverage and dynamics through a self-metamorphosing process – the emergence of a rainbow coalition. In saying this, the assemblage perspective allows us to account for the frictions between components. Far from reducing them to negative factors, the assemblage theory considers these empirical contradictions as producing capacities and potentialities of the whole so as to concomitantly 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 & Stage, 2014, p. 52). To identify ‘capacities’, it is useful to employ the 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 these involve Confucianism and Taiwanese ambivalence towards China’s one-party regime and ‘Western’ cultural imperialism in a post-Cold War context. Identifying a cosmopolitan sense of *Taiwanese*ness owes much to Taiwan’s ‘queer’ existence in terms of geopolitics. However, rather than pursuing absolute openness, the cosmopolitanism within *Taiwanese*ness is evoked passively as a pragmatic response to its everyday paradox in pursuing or repudiating affairs of self-determination. As Skrbis and Woodward (2007, p. 746) note, such an ‘ambivalence’ embedded in the discourse of *ordinary cosmopolitanism* whereon Taiwanese people, from government to activists to laypersons, base their value judgements 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 given 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 delegitimise 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 analyses the ‘movement in “social movements” ’ (Gould, 2009, p. 3), behind which there are always varying extents of a mixture of emotionality and rationality, particularly in an open-ended society of 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 *Taiwanese*ness to the Movement. Drawing on interviews and participant observations at Taiwan LGBT Pride events, I attempt to describe – in terms of the *expressive* and *material* elements – an ongoing coalitional politics of the Movement, which complicates and multiplies the signifier ‘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 (Jacobs, 2014; Leach, 2012), the Movement encountered more opposition than ever when it sought to promote a 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’ in 2013, rather than simply same-sex marriages. Its opponents – under the banner of the guardians of family and childhood – base their traditional values on a mixture of Christianity and Confucianism. Referred to as the *Renaissance* of conservatism in this article, it began in 2012 to fight forcefully against LGBT Pride parades in Taiwan when the latter introduced the idea of the ‘Marriage Revolution’. In 2013, Taiwan LGBT Pride coined the concept of ‘sexual refugees’ to defend the freedoms of everyone whose eroticism is degraded and tabooed, including incest, chem-sex, polyamory, BDSM and others.

Furious debate on this 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 felt humiliated by the Movement’s ideas. 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 together become an adversarial line of force against the

community of 'queerer others', have made same-sex marriage 'the most important issue' on the 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 welfarism. Alongside a wave of propagandising a critical 'imagination' of *dis-family* (or, *imagine-no-family*) (Chen, 2007; Hung, 2015), which proposes to radically abolish marriage institutions, scholars have been thus inspired to advocate neutralising 'family' and democratising intimacy with a focus on resource redistribution rather than the abolition of 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 factions of queer activism and respond to any effort attempting to desexualise queer minorities. By employing the assemblage theory, the ethics of researching the Movement is not to perceive it as a totality as if its components were fused. From this perspective, the 2015 Pride theme of 'Act Who You Are, Not Your Age' is noteworthy. One of the participant organisations – the People's Democratic Front – proposed the decriminalisation of consensual sexual activities involving children and youth. Again, this whipped up a great storm. The Movement in Taiwan, as an assemblage co-contributed by multiple agents and diverse trajectories, has experienced several instances of reterritorialisation, and this was especially obvious when several gay and lesbian candidates ran campaigns for the parliamentary elections in early 2016. An agonistic approach challenging the paternalistic pastorship over children, whether queer or not, hits the bottom line for most 'civilised' liberal citizens. Such a controversy made it very difficult for those who participated in the elections to have dialogue with the voters. We can observe here 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, p. 55).

This example demonstrates the difference between the Foucauldian apparatus (*dispositif*) and the 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, how one acts on one's actions, 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, p. 194), making a star discernible (subjectivation), within the web of affects, and presenting all stars as in a general area of the sky 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 & Guattari, 1987, p. 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 & Guattari, 1983, p. 244). Therefore, there are lines of flight for components – based on their autonomy – to evade the affects produced by the configurations and reconfigurations of assemblage. 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 surrounding child sex in 2015 as an example. Assemblage theory would consider the People’s Democratic Front’s agenda an affective variable, by observing how it challenged the Movement, rather than an insignificant ‘outlier’. For a Movement inevitably engaged in the debate over ‘what counts as democracy’ as well as the solidarity of the community of the governed, a *rainbow coalition* becomes observable along a trend where the divide between public and private spheres is blurred. An assemblage approach can therefore address Highleyman’s (2002, p. 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 ever-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, p. 33) and ties together singularities on a plane traversed by lines of forces within and outside the society. All the components will 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 produce the capacity to affect and be affected, is composed of micro- and meso-scales of sexuality-assemblages involving human/nonhuman and animate/inanimate relations in an irreversible wave of globalisation (see Fox & 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, p. 95) synthesis, a *context* is, as implied by Giddens (1986, p. 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 of the contextual basis requires an understanding of Taiwan’s queer politics through a historical and geopolitical mapping. Through its history, Taiwan had never experienced anti-homosexuality legislation until the authoritarian Chiang Kai-shek regime enacted the law of indecency, which prohibited the wearing of inappropriate outfits with regard to one’s gender role (Damm, 2005). Even during 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 & 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 was a 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 manifested by yearnings for democratisation and liberation from any kind of domination in the name of transitional justice. Usually taken as a bearer of Western epistemology in Southeast Asia, Taiwan stands out as a symbol of the first country of democratic transition. Simultaneously, it undertakes the role of mediating between superpowers due to its cultural affinity with China, modern influence from Japan and political friendship with the US. As a node of converging forces, its de facto independence has made the ROC (Republic of China, Taiwan) government by every means seek international support through alliances 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 engenders Taiwanese ambivalence towards the 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 as sexuality and gender studies are diversely flourishing there (Kong, 2016). An intercommunicative dialogue of trans-locality 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 be imminent among sexual pervert and gender variant people in light of a hybridity of 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 older people, the middle class and indigenous peoples, who underwent 'modernisation' at the hands of Dutch and Spanish missionaries in the 17th century and later by the Protestants who retreated with the ROC government from Mainland China after the Chinese Civil War in the 1950s.

Disregarding 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 period of martial law (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 the book *Asia as method*, beholds a shared anxiety among the 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 seek out the unique identities of *Taiwanese*ness, which attend more 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 return 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, p. 8). An insight into the Movement requires a delineation 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, pp. 13–14). Factors both from within the society and from the outside world can be 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 authoritarianism in modern Taiwan (Liu, 2015b).

### **Reflexive expression of cosmopolitanism**

Within the capital–nation–state context of neoliberal sociality, DeLanda (2006) considers several parameters of the assemblage components, including an axis from the material to the expressive role. The other parameters are defined first by the process of territorialisation and deterritorialisation as the initial articulation of the components (in terms of the stability of homogeneity), and then by the coding/decoding process (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 beacon 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 the lacunas in the law that contingently protect 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, p. 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 commonly face 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 are all 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, p. 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 a latent tension between *Western* rights discourses and *Asian* cultural diversities.

The question here is how *Taiwanese*ness is produced from this context, where the rainbow coalition is formed as a counter-force transcending the myths of nation-state and

demanding the supporters of universalising human rights standards 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 extols personal fulfilment to achieve social order – a cosmopolitan belief accommodates homosexuality by seeking common virtues among differences (Crompton, 2006, p. 221) between the Occidental and Oriental and between the heterocisnormative and *Others*. This resonates with global ethics, in which a justice system was legitimately enshrined after the World Wars (Delanty, 2014; de Sousa Santos, 2007; Langlois, 2007) and echoes what *Taiwanese* 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, p. 102). Thus, a reflexive and constant expression of cosmopolitanism aims to address the cultural essentialism in Confucian Asia and to legitimate an argument that those, among multiple ideologies, contributing to the resurgence of conservatism should not prevent respect for *prima facie* diversity.

The cosmopolitan version of *Taiwanese*, 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 self-contradictory 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 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 the 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 eagerness to redefine 'citizenship' is invoked that welcomes variety and democratises intimacies (Giddens, 1993). All of this, predicating the reproduction of social exclusion around another power relation between the qualified and disqualified, matters (Bell & Binnie, 2000, p. 110). In history, the construction of sexual and gender identities normally derives from the fact of persecution which accordingly 'entailed an *incorporation of perversions* and a *new specification of individuals*' (Foucault, 1978, p. 42, emphasis in original). 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, but the social and legal inequalities derived from the heteronormative definition of family provoke an urgent need for marriage equality campaign. People's expectations of the marriage equality campaign vary greatly in Taiwan, from abolitionism to institutionalism. A conundrum exists between an aspiration for equality and the awareness of law's crowding-out effect, which entails a threshold for qualifying those who can bear rights. 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 ignore the subjective and objective implications – the 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 which 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 Pride 2012, which propagandised a revolutionary version of the marriage equality proposal. In November 2013, immediately after Pride, which had rallied under the theme ‘Seeing Homosexuality 2.0 – Companion for *Sexual Sufferers*’, the conservatives organised a protest rally, showing recalcitrance against any legal reform. This was almost the first instance of introducing 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 the two sets of comrades of queer politics.

In light of ‘pride’ as an abstract identity of minority members, the discussion on 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. My having witnessed arguments between organisations and individuals, both insiders and outsiders of the Movement, has cast doubt on its ‘solidarity’, if such is required; but ‘what is and makes “solidarity”?’ becomes my question to my informants. After a lengthy period of participant observation, I decided to approach those who frequently led discussions and offered various perspectives on social media platforms, and who are also the ones who facilitate, script, stage and perform in managing emergent contingencies and tensions (see Benford & Hunt, 1992). Therefore, the questions posed to them are around (1) how they prioritise an ‘agenda’ to formulate 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, an *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,

p. 489). A synthesis of their *beliefs* however enables me to claim an emergent ‘coalition’ deriving from an ultimate compromise between multiple agents and players. Among the many scenarios 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 up against the conservative ideologies’, said one senior volunteer of the Taiwan Tongzhi Hotline Association (TTHA) sarcastically, ‘but the people who have been discriminated against like themselves.’ The TTHA, the first legally registered organisation for the LGBT and queer populations, 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 the Mandarin language (Chou, 2000); however, the boundary between *tongzhi* in Chinese and LGBT in English is arguably blurred and less meaningful alongside 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’.

It is arguable to produce a hierarchical effect within the Movement, but ‘I think making things simpler is better than complicating it as a social movement progresses step by step’, 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 continued, ‘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 went on, however, ‘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?’

Emphasising that the radicalists are too idealistic, a member of the 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 the comrades is ideological or strategic. At the risk of overgeneralisation, I consider the relationship between these apparently 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 the several triumphs of the Movement both in Taiwan and globally, the de facto exclusion of those who are perceivably ‘queerer’ must continue to be recognised and remedied. ‘Although the poll results show that our society got friendlier [see Chien, 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 strategic considerations, the organisations of social inclusion work enthusiastically at lobbying 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 the pink market. Meanwhile, the more liberationist/radical participants 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 implicitly avoid any contention before the public and converge at various points (nodes) of the network. The 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, such as those 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’ view of history. The latter two movements are seen to manifest *Taiwanese*ness by resorting to civil disobedience against the legacy of authoritarianism.

Allying with all the underprivileged in society to counter the powerful, and involving the social transformation of everydayness, a rainbow coalition emerges, although it experiences several instances of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. The coalition is related to the *Taiwanese*ness as mentioned above from socio-cultural and geopolitical perspectives, representing ‘ambivalence’ at various levels in contentious politics. The coalition is not a totality, in which its components are merged; its constituents maintain the autonomy to detach themselves from it and attach to another. In terms of the Movement’s ‘relations of exteriority’ (DeLanda, 2006, p. 11; see also Deleuze, 1991), a compositional 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, p. 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. Second, parts within the coalition need to interact with each other to bring about the capabilities to affect and be affected rather than organic totalities of seamlessness. Third, the coalition entails a dynamism beyond the original Movement.

As for the descriptor of ‘rainbow’, it becomes symbolic for individuals who wish to emancipate themselves 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 legitimisation of all queer existences, as well as 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, p. 19) call to ‘broaden our conceptualization of social movements beyond contentious politics’ through alternative venues.

There are features particular to the coalition. First, it affirms differences, rather than similitudes, in humanity. Second, it considers that self-liberation is equally important as institutional democratisation. Third, it embeds its affects into 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. In 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 with higher education and a specific cultural identity (Eder, 1993). These in turn invest greatly in the Movement.

Along with the rise of a leftist ideology against the domination of capitalism and nationalism (of both Chinese Unification and Taiwanese Independence discourses), queer activists face the challenge of Karatani’s (2007) capital–nation–state trinity. Since the conservatives are composed mainly of the older generation and bourgeoisie, it is perceivable that the Movement focuses more on the younger and the disadvantaged, but other parts of the rainbow coalition also communicate the discourse of sexual liberty and gender equality to their own particular audiences. Through a process of deterritorialising the post-Cold War context left by the two Chinas (ROC and PRC), *Taiwanese*ness 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, p. 406). Interconvertible forms of capital thus determine dialectically the legitimacy and capacity of the Movement, which has increased people’s ‘readiness to find what surrounds us strange and odd’ due to ‘a lack of respect for the traditional hierarchies of what is important and fundamental’ (Foucault, 2013, p. 328). As a larger assemblage amassing contributions of time and labour, the coalition undertakes a cosmopolitan approach to social transformation that is not merely metaphorical but symbolic of *Taiwanese*ness 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, p. 48).

The hybridisation of social movements has provided 'a reservoir of variable exchange relationships by consciously investing in social relations' (Edwards & Kane, 2014, p. 215), so its popularity becomes crucial in empowering the Movement. Through a process that transforms capital into power, there is 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. Leverage aims to find a balance with the conservatives by better representing, yet unintentionally generalising, people's lived experiences, which highlights the interrelatedness between the interiority and exteriority of the Movement. An assemblage of sexuality-assemblages – comprising sexual bodies and relations – that constituted the original whole of the Movement and now extends to other social movements is directed to challenge cultural hegemonies and social hierarchies. Such a collaboration, translating the awareness of suppression/oppression into a sense of inequalities and injustices, thus invokes mobilisation far more efficiently than ever.

## Conclusion

Although relevant studies in Taiwan are influenced by the Euro-American schools of critical thought, there is a trend to enter a post-Cold War perspective to deconstruct the anxiety of *being* Taiwanese. There seems to be a decided contradiction between tradition (primarily based on Confucianism) and modernity (equivalent to Western progressivism for many Taiwanese), engendering ontological and epistemological 'disconcertment' (see Law & 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 cultural identity and human rights through a case study of the emerging rainbow coalition. Queer activists share many similar ideas with postmodernists, so that the coalition, as a collection of *capitals* and a reterritorialisation of an *assemblage*, pursues shared interests oriented around the principles of passions and reorganises tactics inspired by the principles of association (Deleuze, 1991, p. 98). Gender, sexuality and many other 'categorised' properties of an individual component, deriving from the everydayness (Brickell, 2006), are hence accounted for 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 multiple understandings of social justice 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, p. 25). A social movement for becoming-cosmopolitan requires a genuine equality based on both self-liberation and self-determination by taking into account socio-cultural and geo-historical variables instead of a simplistic reliance on the rights discourses within a legalistic framework. Beyond the frailties of the principles of formal equality and those of legalism, the assemblage

theory insists on analysing the ‘capacities’ of plural agents and their encounters through a kaleidoscopic lens. The Movement’s de- and reterritorialisation thus can be seen as a result of confrontations between the radicalists and the assimilationists and between the 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 dichotomy of local essentialism/universal homogenisation, cultures from within or outside a society have been mutually interacting and co-contributing to transforming the global epistemological landscape. This indicates that the contextualisation of social activism for the analysis requires both 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 *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, located 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.

### Acknowledgements

The earlier drafts were presented, among others, at the Ngender Conference 2015 (University of Sussex) and the 2016 Conference of the Sexuality Studies Association (University of Calgary). I am grateful to the participants for their feedback. Moreover, I would like to express special thanks to the members of Sussex Rights and Justice Research Centre, who commented on this work at a research workshop, and also gratitude to Mr. Tianyang Zhou and Mr. Ying-Chao Kao for their inspirations during our discussions.

### Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

### References

- Altman, D. (2013). *The end of the homosexual?* St Lucia, Australia: University of Queensland Press.
- Bao, H. (2012). Queering/querying cosmopolitanism: Queer spaces in Shanghai. *Culture Unbound*, 4, 97–120.
- Bell, D., & Binnie, J. (2000). *The sexual citizen: Queer politics and beyond*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Benford, R. D., & Hunt, S. A. (1992). Dramaturgy and social movements: The social construction and communication of power. *Sociological Inquiry*, 62, 36–55.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. London, UK: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Bourdieu, P. (1987). What makes a social class? On the theoretical and practical existence of groups. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 32, 1–17.

- Brickell, C. (2006). The sociological construction of gender and sexuality. *The Sociological Review*, 54, 87–113.
- Brown, G. (2015). Queer movement. In D. Paternotte & M. Tremblay (Eds.), *The Ashgate research companion to lesbian and gay activism* (pp. 73–86). Farnham, UK: Routledge.
- Buchanan, I. (1997). The problem of the body in Deleuze and Guattari, or, what can a body do? *Body and Society*, 3, 73–91.
- Chen, H.-W. (2007). The analysis of the thought on abolishing family and marriage in China in the early 20th century. *Journal of Leader University*, 5, 114–128.
- Chen, K.-H. (1994). The imperialist eye: The cultural imaginary of a sub-empire and a nation-state. *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies*, 17, 149–222.
- Chen, K.-H. (2010). *Asia as method: Toward deimperialization*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Chien, C.-C. (2013, August 6). A critical decade, a critical quarter: Release of same-sex marriage poll results. TAPCPR.
- Chou, W.-S. (2000). *Tongzhi: Politics of same-sex eroticism in Chinese societies*. Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press.
- Crompton, L. (2006). *Homosexuality and civilization*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Damm, J. (2005). Same sex desire and society in Taiwan, 1970–1987. *The China Quarterly*, 181, 67–81.
- DeLanda, M. (2006). *A new philosophy of society: Assemblage theory and social complexity*. London, UK: Continuum.
- Delanty, G. (2014). Not all is lost in translation: World varieties of cosmopolitanism. *Cultural Sociology*, 8, 374–391.
- Deleuze, G. (1991). *Empiricism and subjectivity: An essay on Hume's theory of human nature*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G. (1992). Postscript on the societies of control. *October*, 59, 3–7.
- Deleuze, G. (2007). What is dispositif? In D. Lapoujade (Ed.), *Two regimes of madness: Texts and interviews, 1975–1995* (pp. 338–348). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1983). *Anti-Œdipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Derrida, J. (2001). *On cosmopolitanism and forgiveness*. London, UK: Routledge.
- de Sousa Santos, B. (2007). Human rights as an emancipatory script? Cultural and political conditions. In B. de Sousa Santos (Ed.), *Another knowledge is possible: Beyond northern epistemologies* (pp. 3–40). London, UK: Verso.
- Donnelly, J. (2007). The relative universality of human rights. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 29, 281–306.
- Eder, K. (1993). *The new politics of class: Social movements and cultural dynamics in advanced societies*. London, UK: Sage.
- Edwards, B., & Kane, M. (2014). Resource mobilization theory and social and political movements. In H.-A. van der Heijden (Ed.), *Handbook of political citizenship and social movements* (pp. 205–232). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality. Volume 1: An introduction*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1980). The confession of the flesh. In C. Gordon (Ed.), *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972–1977* (pp. 194–228). New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (2003). *Society must be defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976*. New York, NY: Picador.

- Foucault, M. (2013). The masked philosopher. In L. D. Kritzman (Ed.), *Politics, philosophy, culture: Interviews and other writings, 1977–1984* (pp. 323–330). London, UK: Routledge.
- Fox, N. J., & Alldred, P. (2013). The sexuality-assemblage: Desire, affect, anti-humanism. *The Sociological Review*, 61, 769–789.
- Fuchs, C. (2003). Some implications of Pierre Bourdieu's works for a theory of social self organization. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 6, 387–408.
- Giddens, A. (1986). *The constitution of society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Giddens, A. (1993). *The transformation of intimacy: Sexuality, love and eroticism in modern societies*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Gould, D. B. (2009). *Moving politics: Emotion and Act Up's fight against AIDS*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Hardt, M. (1998). The withering of civil society. In E. Kaufman & K. J. Heller (Eds.), *Deleuze and Guattari: New mappings in politics, philosophy, and culture* (pp. 23–39). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Highlyman, L. (2002). Radical queers or queer radicals? Queer activism and the global justice movement. In B. Shepard & R. Hayduk (Eds.), *From Act Up to the WTO: Urban protest and community building in the era of globalization* (pp. 106–120). London, UK: Verso.
- Hinsch, B. (1990). *Passions of the cut sleeve: The male homosexual tradition in China*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ho, J. C.-J. (2005). From anti-trafficking to social discipline: The pastoral project of Taiwan's child-protection NGOs. *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies*, 59, 1–42.
- Ho, S.-Y. (2015). Destruction without re-construction: Some comments on anti-family left-leaning queer discourses in Taiwan. *Applied Ethics Review*, 58, 69–99.
- Hsu, Y.-F., & Ning, Y.-B. (2014). The constitutional rights of sexual minorities: An argument about Taiwan Rail public sex event. *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies*, 95, 249–262.
- Hung, L. (2015). Exclusion and compensation: Analysing same-sex marriage propaganda and relative power struggles within Taiwan gender politics. *Applied Ethics Review*, 58: 175–205.
- Jacobs, A. (2014, October 29). For Asia's gays, Taiwan stands out as beacon. *The New York Times*.
- Karatani, K. (2007). *Toward the world republic*. Taipei, Taiwan: The Commercial Press.
- Knudsen, B. T., & Stage, C. (2014). *Global media, biopolitics, and affect: Politicizing bodily vulnerability*. London: Routledge.
- Kong, T. S. K. (2016). The sexual in Chinese sociology: Homosexuality studies in contemporary China. *The Sociological Review*, 64, 495–514.
- Kvale, S. (2006). Dominance through interviews and dialogues. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12, 480–500.
- Langlois, A. J. (2007). Human rights and cosmopolitan liberalism. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 10, 29–45.
- Law, J., & Lin, W.-Y. (2010). Cultivating disconcertment. *The Sociological Review*, 58(S2), 135–153.
- Leach, A. (2012, November 12). Why is Taiwan the best place to be gay in Asia? *Gay Star News*.
- Lim, S. H. (2008). How to be queer in Taiwan: Translation, appropriation, and the construction of a queer identity. In F. Martin, P. A. Jackson, M. McLelland M, et al. (Eds.), *AsiaPacifiQueer: Rethinking genders and sexualities* (pp. 235–250). Champaign: University of Illinois Press.
- Liu, P. (2015a). *Queer Marxism in two Chinas*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Liu, W. (2015b). The queer paranoia of homonormativity and reparative reading of Taiwanese LGBT movement. *Applied Ethics Review*, 58, 101–128.
- McLelland, M., & Sukanuma, K. (2009). Sexual minorities and human rights in Japan: An historical perspective. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 13, 329–343.
- Melucci, A. (1980). The new social movements: A theoretical approach. *Social Science Information*, 19, 199–226.

- Mitoma, G. (2008). Human rights and cultural studies: A case for centrality. *Cultural Critique, 1*, 1–17.
- Ning, Y.-B., Ding, N., & Ho, J. C.-J. (2005). *Introduction to politics of sexuality: Lectures on sex rights movement in Taiwan*. Taoyuan, Taiwan: National Central University Center for the Study of Sexualities.
- Offe, C. (1985). New social movements: Challenging the boundaries of institutional politics. *Social Research, 52*, 817–868.
- Offord, B. (2013). Queer activist intersections in Southeast Asia: Human rights and cultural studies. *Asian Studies Review, 37*, 335–349.
- Phelan, S. (2001). *Sexual strangers: Gays, lesbians, and dilemmas of citizenship*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Plummer, K. (2015). *Cosmopolitan sexualities: Hope and the humanist imagination*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Skrbis, Z., & Woodward, I. (2007). The ambivalence of ordinary cosmopolitanism: Investigating the limits of cosmopolitan openness. *The Sociological Review, 55*, 730–747.
- Snow, D. (2004). Social movements as challenges to authority: Resistance to an emerging conceptual hegemony. *Research in Social Movements, Conflict, and Change, 25*, 3–25.
- Weeks, J. (2007). *The world we have won: The remaking of erotic and intimate life*. New York, NY: Routledge.