

Comparison of Grassroots Community Groups and Folk Environmental NGOs in China's Environmental Protests and Relevant Enlightenment:

Based on the Investigation on Two Protests against the Waste Incineration Project in Asuwei, Beijing

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Abstract—Grassroots community groups which focused on and ENGO which focused on ecological protection are the two pillars of China's environmental contention. Analysis on the “Asuwei event” started by “Aobei volunteer group” in 2009 and Led by “Natural University” in 2015, it shows that there are significant differences exist in organizational structure, protest targets, action strategies, social influence etc. Two organizations at this stage has not yet formed an organic alliance. It is necessary to promote their positive interaction in order to give support to the shape of common environmental issues, the improvement of environmental policy and the build of participation network of environmental protection.

Keywords—Grassroots community group; folk Environmental NGO; environmental contention; comparative study

I. PROBLEM INTRODUCTION

In recent years, China's ecological environmental problems not only hinder its economic development and harm public health but also are a severe challenge for social stability. According to statistics made by the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the overall quantity of petition letters, collective appeals and non-normal appeals decreases in China, but the number of environmental petition letters and mass incidents increase by 30% every year[1], and China's environmental protests rose by about 120% in 2012. The PX event in Xiamen, Fujian Province, the blood lead event in Fengxiang, Shaanxi, the protest against garbage dump in Xierqi, Beijing etc. are strong evidences of the increasingly fierce environmental protests in China. With the rising of environmental civil society, China is currently in a situation featured by the coexistence of “government-dominated governance movements, environmental group protests organized by unclear organizations and environmental protection movements organized by NGOs”[2]. Among them, grassroots community groups loose in structure and folk environmental NGOs are the

two major forces that contribute to the generation and development of the protests. The former refers to temporary groups spontaneously formed by urban or rural community residents whose living environment is infringed. At present, environmental group events are mainly conducted by grassroots community groups who carry out actions[3] relying on trust and common interests among residents. The latter refers to nongovernmental and nonprofit social organizations that commit themselves to protect natural resources and improve the biological environment, which is a new power taking an active part in environmental protection during recent years. To promote the multi-governance modern environmental management system, the new Environmental Protection Law was issued in 2014 to clearly stipulate citizens' rights and obligations to participate in environmental protection in various aspects. As the core components[4] of the Chinese environmental civil society, environmental NGOs and grassroots community groups play an important role in environmental protection. What are the characteristics of environmental protests they lead? Are there any differences? What are the advantages? Analysis of those problems helps to strengthen mutual cooperation, make the best of the both parties and establish an effective national environmental protection model.

Previous researches usually divide NGOs and grassroots community groups into independent objects while study their functions and action models in environmental protests. There are numerous research achievements about “the participation of NGOs in environmental protection movements”. Guo Bingyang (2003) makes a detailed study of a kind of “virtual public sphere” developed by Chinese environmental NGOs in recent years based on the Internet, which greatly promotes environmental protection movements; Ho, Peter (2001) emphasizes the importance of environmental protection organizations especially folk environmental protection organizations to environmental protection movements in China;

II. REVIEW ON TWO “PROTESTS AGAINST THE ASUWEI WASTE INCINERATION PROJECTS”

Zou Dongsheng et al (2016) analyze how environmental NGOs rationalize and improve the effects of environmental protests through social mobilization and advocacy alliance; Peng Xiaohua et al (2012) apply the qualitative research method to explore the media mirroring of environmental movements and its reasons with the NGO, Friends of Nature, as the case, and explain the symbiotic relationship between environmental movements and media; by describing how Greenpeace constructs the topic “Asia Pulp and Paper’s Deforestation in Yunnan” in China, Zeng Fanxu (2006) observes how NGOs construct a topic with institutional significance through prudent but flexible media strategy design, gain public access to the media during the process, change the trend of the topic, realize supervision on enterprises and the government etc. Researches with “environmental protests conducted by grassroots communities” as the theme are relatively rich as well. M. Smith et al (2008) maintain that environmental movements should be regarded as a transformation plan rather than just “objection”, which contributes to public participation and community development; He Yanling (2006) focuses on various environmental conflicts caused by the upsurge of self-interest motive and community protection consciousness, introduces reasons and features of the conflicts and puts forward principle solutions, namely establishing a neutral role of the government, opening channels for consultative dialogue and building political absorbing mechanism facing urban marginal groups; Cui Jing (2013) analyzes alliance and training of community residents in environmental conflicts and emphasizes the potential social learning function of the protests from the perspective of community governance. Generally speaking, there are few comparative researches on professional environmental NGOs and grassroots community groups[5] [6]. Johann Cummin (2004) compares different strategies of voluntary organizations and professional social groups by observing environmental movements in the USA; with the PX event in Xiamen as the case, Zhou Zhijia (2011) analyzes the generation mechanism and influencing factors of grassroots movements spontaneously organized by citizens, points out that residents’ participation in environmental movements only reflects citizenship in the superficial layer, which is mainly caused by the absence of the function of nongovernmental organizations; Ren Bingqiang (2014) makes a theoretical comparison of the two current models of environmental protests in China, namely protests promoted by environmental organizations and those driven by social groups. Most of the above researches are theoretical explanations. Comparative researches that combine specific cases especially the practice of China’s environmental protests in the current stage still remain to be further expanded and explored.

On this basis, with the 2009 protest against the Asuwei waste incineration project launched by the “Aobei Volunteer Team” and the 2015 protest against the Asuwei waste incineration project led by the environmental NGO “Nature University” as the case, the author will make a multi-dimensional comparative analysis of the two kinds of organizations. The author selects them because there is no big difference between the two similar projects in the same region in economic and social environment, political structure, cultural and ethic background, so, the analysis can be more objective and independent.

A. *The 2009 Protest against the Asuwei Waste Incineration Project Launched by Grassroots Community Groups*

In April 2007, Beijing Development and Reforming Office issued *Implementation Plan about Domestic Rubbish Disposal and Infrastructure Construction during the 11th Five-Year Plan Period in Beijing* to plan the Asuwei Area as the comprehensive garbage disposal center in the northern part of Beijing. Consisting of three parts, namely landfill, comprehensive treatment plant and incineration power plant, the center mainly disposes household garbage in Dongcheng District, Xicheng District, Chaoyang District and Changping District. In July 2009, the project started the environmental impact assessment under the circumstances of inadequate public support. The “Aobei Volunteer Team” made up by residential owners living nearby conducted a protest that lasted several months. It organized a “parade” where there were more than 50 cars and a “peaceful demonstration” which involved over a hundred people. Since the effect was not ideal, the volunteer team adjusted its strategy. After collecting and systemizing documents for more than three months, the team published the report named *Life-or-Death Choice about China’s Urban Environment--Waste Incineration Policy and Public Will*, which initiated the channel for the communication between citizens and governmental officials. In the end of that year, on “Tiger Talk”, a TV program launched by Phoenix Television, Huang Xiaoshan established “corridor diplomacy” with Wang Weiping, Chief Engineer of Beijing Municipal Commission of City Administration and Environment, thus, the research report was known by the government. In February 2010, Huang Xiaoshan was invited by Beijing Municipal Commission of City Administration and Environment to inspect garbage disposal in Japan and Macao as the representative who protests against such projects. In March, Beijing announced to suspend the project and clearly stated that it would solicit public opinion again. In June, Huang Xiaoshan raised funds to establish the “Green House” to explore waste classification treatment and the “self-circulation” path.

B. *The 2015 Protest against the Asuwei Waste Incineration Project Led by Environmental NGOs*

Five years later, the Asuwei waste incineration project was launched again all of a sudden. On July 25, 2014, the Asuwei circular economic park project released its publicity for the first time. On December 15, 2014, the project released its second publicity and held forums and expert discussion meetings among villagers living nearby. “Nature University”, the NGO that has always been concerned about waste incineration, helps residents living near Asuwei to organize the protest once again. Relevant personnel of the NGO strictly follow the legal procedures to initiate joint signature actions such as urging the government to reject the environmental assessment report, appealing to hold hearings, canceling the qualification of environmental assessment companies etc. successively on web portals to raise doubts about the decision making process of the project in inadequate civic participation, unscientific incineration scheme, fake environmental assessment report etc.

After repeated applications and negotiations, the Environment Protection Bureau in Changping District held a hearing on April 23, 2015. Personnel from “Nature University” and part of citizens participated in the hearing and voiced their opinions. However, this hearing failed to reach the expected effect either in procedure or result. On the fifth day after the hearing, this project was approved by the Beijing Environmental Protection Bureau. After that, “Nature University” helped residents to apply to the Environmental Protection Bureau and Beijing Municipal Government for an administrative review. The application was accepted but the result was still uncertain before the author wrote this paper. Related officials of “Nature University” maintain that they will not give up even though they fail and will continue instituting legal proceedings.

III. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY GROUP AND FOLK ENVIRONMENTAL NGO IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTESTS IN CHINA

A. Organizational Structure and Characteristics of Actions

Since grassroots community groups and folk environmental NGOs are different in staff composition, resources etc., they also have their own features in aspects such as structure, behavior etc., which is concretely reflected as follows:

TABLE I. COMPARISON OF GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION AND FOLK ENVIRONMENTAL NGO IN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF ACTIONS

Organizational Difference	Grassroots Community Organization	Folk Environmental NGO
Staff Composition	People from all walks of life	Hired and paid professional workers
Resources	from the inside part of the movement, scattered and inadequate	from the outside part of the movement, professional and abundant
Organizational Rationality	Inadequate institutional supply, ambiguous rights and obligations, with emotion as the support, decision making is rational as well as emotional	Complete institution, clearly stipulated rights and obligations, with professional skills as the support, rational decision making
Persistence of the Action	With unstable personnel, the group is temporary and unsustainable	With stable personnel, the organization is professional and sustainable

1) Staff Composition

The Asuwei event in 2009 was completely spontaneously organized by Aobei residents who mainly included people from all walks of life such as retired officials, scholars, enterprise employees, lawyers etc. Although they have the common goal, yet they lack relevant knowledge about garbage disposal, construction project, civic participation etc. Thus, it is easy for their protest to be simple and extreme in the form of action, which explains why the “Beiao Volunteer Team” chose to start its protest in by “walking on the street” in 2009. However, apart from being passionate for environmental protection undertaking, people working at “Nature University” are different from the common public because they are paid full-time professional workers. Thus, they have strong sense of

responsibility which enables them to continuously and steadily provide guidance for environmental protests; on the other hand, rich working experience also enables them to conduct scientific and in-depth investigation into waste incineration projects, accurately find the risk and illegal points so as to have a clear and definite purpose while carrying out environmental protests within the legal framework.

2) Resources

Comparatively speaking, environmental NGO has social resources that are more stable, professional and abundant than that of grassroots community groups. First of all, in the aspect of goods and materials resources, as a formal organization, the environmental NGO “Nature University” has stable sources of finance from the outside which can constantly support its activities of environmental protection. However, grassroots community groups like the “Aobei Volunteer Team” mainly rely on the funds raised by their internal members, which is insecure in amount, stability etc. Secondly, as for human resources, environmental NGOs are closely connected to their peers, mass media, professional elites, opinion leaders etc., thus, they can usually gain professional guidance. For example, “Nature University” has always been frequently communicating with environmental NGOs such as “National Water Guards”, “Guidance on Garbage Classification”, “Micro Hearing about Environmental Assessment” etc. and folk environmentalists like Wang ** at the Sino-Germany Renewable Energy Cooperation Center, Mao ** who is a Doctor of History at Beijing Normal University, Ma ** at Institute of Public & Environmental Affairs etc. to jointly analyze and communicate relevant information. Although grassroots community groups have diversified members, yet their corresponding social network is comparatively scattered as well. Without sufficient professionalism, they may not be able to provide effective support in environmental protests. To sum up, formal environmental protection organizations possess more advantageous resources than grassroots community groups in various aspects and thereby have more action selections.

3) Organizational Rationality

The inspection should be carried out in two aspects. First of all, we should check whether the organization possesses a formal and complete internal system. Compared with the environmental NGO “Nature University”, the “Aobei Volunteer Team” is mainly restrained by regulations orally approved by its members. There are not any written regulations to stipulate the positions, rights and liabilities of the members. Such relatively loose structure is to the disadvantage of the organization’s operation efficiency and it is also hard to control the course of events, which will easily leads to “organized irresponsibility”. On the contrary, “Nature University” has clear hierarchical structure and assignment of responsibilities to avoid the above problems. Secondly, examine whether the organization’s action pattern is rational. As a grassroots organization, the “Aobei Volunteer Team” is supported by residents’ fear and hatred towards the garbage incineration plant and their individual emotions such as dissatisfaction about the government and enterprise managers. With “safeguarding individual rights” as the single objective, it is inevitable for its decision making to be simple, short-sighted

and extreme. However, as a formally organized NGO, “Nature University” possesses personnel with rich experience in garbage disposal, professional elites proficient in environmental laws and regulations, and decision-making mechanism which is mature and complete. Therefore, in the protest in 2015, it achieved its goal by imposing pressure on the government and enterprises with technical mistakes, improper legal procedures etc. as the entry point, which is restrained but orderly.

4) Persistence of the Action

With Public opinion leaders like Huang Xiaoshan etc. as the core, the 2009 protest against the Asuwei waste incineration project successfully realized its objective to stop the project. However, after that, most residents disappeared and only Huang Xiaoshan sticks to carrying out environmental protection actions like waste volume reduction. When the project was launched again in 2015, the “Aobei Volunteer Team” that used to be fully motivated was unable to unite together and fight against it because of various reasons. In comparison, environmental NGOs like “Nature University” have always devoted themselves to ecological protection, pollution prevention and control, environmental law etc. No matter whether they succeed in the protest against the Asuwei project, they will never stop making efforts in the field of environmental protection. It proves the conclusion reached by long-term researches on social movements: Compared with unofficial movement organizations, official movement organizations can better maintain themselves. It is not only because they rely on their employees to accomplish the tasks, but also because an official organization is still able to maintain its continuity even if its leaders or the external environment change[7]. On the contrary, a movement completely organized by unofficial organization is much more short-lived[8] than those initiated by official organizations, for it is usually targeted to a specific event and it is hard to be well connected to other social problems or other regions. It is special but isolated and it lacks the basic conditions of sustainable action.

B. Protest Objective and Strategy Selection

Objective and strategy play a decisive role in the result of the protest. There are huge differences between grassroots community group and folk environmental NGO in the two aspects.

TABLE II. COMPARISON OF GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY GROUP AND FOLK ENVIRONMENTAL NGO IN PROTEST OBJECTIVE AND STRATEGY SELECTION

		Grassroots Community Group	Folk Environmental NGO
Protest Objectiv		Single objective, namely project suspension or relocation. Small space for negotiation;	Diversified objectives, accept the completion of phased objective, with relatively large negotiation space
Strategy Selection	Resource mobilization strategy	Participatory strategy, good at mobilizing human resources	Professional strategy, good at mobilizing capital
	Protest strategy	Regular means within the system and destructive means outside the system (parade, demonstration and even violent confrontation)	Regular means within the system like supervision, hearing, lawsuit etc.

1) Different Protest Objectives

Grassroots Community Group: The objective lacks malleability and has obvious antagonism and small negotiation space. In 2009, the “Aobei Volunteer Team” conducted a persistent and stubborn protest to suspend the project, but they do not care about environmental problems like whether the garbage disposal technology is scientific, whether will the incineration plant be relocated to other places etc. It indicates that as the immediate beneficiary of the protest, grassroots community groups unite to “safeguard their own environmental rights” rather than truly “protect the environment”. Although it seems to be a collective action, yet it belongs to “environmental protection behavior in the private field”[9] in essence. With project suspension or relocation as the only appeal, its limitation leads to its narrow negotiation space, which further aggravates conflict[10] between the public and the government or enterprises. However, it is undeniable that such kind of confrontation exerts huge pressure on relevant governmental sectors and it is easier to achieve the expected goal.

Environmental NGO: The objective is macroscopic and diversified, with relatively weak antagonism and large space for negotiation. Apart from criticism of specific projects, environmental NGOs like “Nature University” pay more attention to topics [6] (101) related to policies remaining to be made, for instance, “preposition of environmental assessment”, “pollution evaluation standard”, “garbage classification management”, “qualification of environmental assessment companies” etc. With “activity of environmental protection in the public field” as their duty, they are willing to accept the success of any issue in any stage. Since they are not obsessed with the single objective of project suspension, their confrontation against the project party is naturally reduced, which makes it easier for negotiation to be formed, weakens the protest pressure and goes against the realization of the core objective.

2) Different Strategy Selection

While classifying social movement organizations from the perspective of action, Diani and Donati put forward two dimensions to observe their strategies: the resource mobilization strategy and action strategy to realize political efficiency[11]. On this basis, the paper compares grassroots community group and folk environmental NGO as follows:

Resource Mobilization Strategy : Like all the other social movements, environmental protests mainly need capital and human resources. And the two types of organizations have their own advantages in the two aspects. Grassroots community groups like the “Aobei Volunteer Team” prefer to use the “participatory strategy” which keeps open in structure, regards common interest appeal and psychological foundation as the bond, takes interpersonal relationship and the Internet as the assistance to gather the public, constantly and effectively stimulates the participation enthusiasm of individuals online and offline. Nevertheless, because of inadequate professionalism and sustainability, and the strong antagonism in their actions, it is usually hard for them to gain financial support. On the contrary, folk environmental NGOs are good at applying “professional strategy”, namely reciprocally attract

the support of potential donors like the government, enterprises, foundations, media, the public etc. with stable organization and clear vision and through attractive projects and mature means to raise donations. However, the standard and strict operation of NGO will easily keep a good distance from the common public. Besides, it is also hard for their extensive and scattered protest objectives to be recognized by the public. Although they can unite with a small number of elites, yet they always face a problem, namely how to mobilize adequate human resources[12].

Protest Action Strategy. : The strategy usually adopted by grassroots community groups is to organically combine “protest according to law” and “protest per the practical situation” based on the practical situation[13]. On the one hand, when the situation alleviates or the collective action encounters setbacks, those groups try to legally safeguard their rights through reporting the situation to government sectors, applying for hearings, lawsuit etc. For instance, the “Aobei Volunteer Team” wrote the report named Life-or-Death Choice about China’s Urban Environment--Waste Incineration Policy and Public Will and forwarded it to personnel who might play an effective part like government officials, specialists, scholars, representative of the two conferences etc., which successfully starts the communication between the government and the common public[14]. On the other hand, if they cannot gain the expected response and it is necessary to impose larger pressure, they will mobilize more residents to take destructive means outside the system like parade, demonstration and even violent confrontation, communicate to the society with the help of the media power, strive for moral support from indirect stakeholders and hope to gain “justice from higher authorities”[15] by amplifying the event. When the first “walking” turned out to be not so effective, the “Aobei Volunteer Team” further persuaded owners of surrounding apartments to join the protest and organized ten thousand people to sign their names to fight against the project. Like many NGOs, “Nature University” behaved in a very restrained and rational way during the whole process of the protest against the Asuwei waste incineration project in 2015. Based on laws and regulations like the Temporary Act of Environmental Impact Assessment on Public Participation, it pointed out illegal points in the decision-making process of the project, initiated joint signatures on portal websites to stop project environment assessment, disclose the environment assessment, hold hearings, cancel the environment assessment qualification of Company Z, submitted the hearing application signed by more than 100 units and over 1000 people to Beijing Environmental Protection Bureau. After the application was approved, it organized residents to participate in the meeting and properly express their appeals. As a professional environmental protection organization, “Nature University” is very proficient in applying legal weapons. Restricted by the role positioning of environmental NGOs in China, environmental NGOs have to be affiliated to administrative units and usually will not “confront the tough with toughness”. Instead, they are more likely to choose approaches within the system such as negotiation, conciliation, lawsuit etc.

C. Protest Objective and Strategy Selection

“As a collective action to promote a certain kind of social revolution, environmental protest involves lots of people and lasts a certain period of time, which might lead to very complicated endings and consequences. Instead of evaluating the success or failure based on the appeal of the protest itself, we should broaden our horizon and evaluate it from multiple angles.”[8] Therefore, protests advocated by grassroots community groups and folk environmental NGOs must be evaluated from various aspects. Referring to the method^[16] put forward by Heijden in 1999, the research compares the effects and social influences of the protests in 2009 and 2015 in four aspects, namely procedural influence, structural influence, sensitive influence and substantial influence.

TABLE III. COMPARISON OF THE 2009 ASUWEI EVENT AND 2015 ASUWEI EVENT IN ACTION EFFECT AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE

	the 2009 Asuwei Event (initiated by grassroots community group)	the 2015 Asuwei Event (guided by folk environmental NGO)
Procedural Influence	Raise doubts about the government’s decision-making procedures but fail to effectively urge it to make corresponding adjustments	Well standardize the approval procedures of major projects
Structural Influence	Promote <i>Regulations on Household Garbage in Beijing City</i> to be issued	No significant performance;
Sensitive Influence	Gain continuous attention from the media, influence the society in environmental protection, public participation etc	Limited media exposure and insignificant social influence
Substantial Influence	Successfully suspend the project	Fail to prevent the project

1) Procedural Influence

Procedural influence refers to the achievement of an action in influencing the decision-making process of the authorities concerned. This was reflected very obviously in the protest guided by “Nature University” in 2015. From “calling off the environmental assessment and amending system flaws” to “applying for hearing on environmental protection administrative permission”, “promoting the rejection of the environmental assessment report” and “requiring the disclosure of the hearing on environmental protection administrative permission”, the whole action starts with the doubts about the project initiation procedures and calls on it to make relevant adjustments. Although the hearing did not give the public a satisfactory response, yet it has promoted decision-making of the government to be scientific and democratic to a large extent. In comparison, the protest conducted by the “Aobei Volunteer Team” focuses more on “suspension of the project”. Although it also denounced decision-making of the government, yet it is just an instrumental strategy.

2) Structural Influence

Structural influence refers to the achievements of an action in changing the political, legal or other systems of the authorities concerned. In 2009, after negotiating with government sectors for many times, the “Aobei Volunteer Team” not only prevented the waste incineration project in the end but also promoted the release[17] of Regulations on Household Garbage in Beijing City, the first local law to

standardize garbage disposal. Due to the restriction of the external environment and its own strategy selection, "Nature University" does not have significant performance in this aspect.

3) *Sensitive Influence*

Sensitive influence refers to achievements made by a movement in changing the value, cognition and attitude of the authorities concerned and the public so as to increase their sensitivity to certain problems. It relies on the media's communication of the event to a large extent. Starting with the parade of over a hundred Aobei residents, the 2009 Asuwei Event was reported by many mainstream media. "Tiger Talk" on Phoenix Television made a feature program about the Asuwei Event. After that, due to the inspection jointly conducted by officials and citizens on garbage disposal technology in Japan and the release of Regulations on Household Garbage in Beijing City, the event was published as front-page headlines by many times. There were more than 400 news reports about the event in 2009. As a consequence, environmental protection, garbage disposal, not-in-my-backyard conflict, policy participation etc. have become hot topics which have affected the public, the government, enterprises, scholars, NGOs etc. to different degrees. The protest carried out by "Nature University" in 2015 always insisted on acting within the system. Though it successfully kept the conflict within limits, yet compared with the protest six years ago, the attention it gained from the media decreased remarkably. Only a small number of media like Caixin Weekly, Interface etc. made relevant reports about this.

4) *Substantial Influence*

Substantial influence refers to achievements made by a movement in specific goals and requirements. Although the "Aobei Volunteer Team" is deficient in organizational structure, decision-making level etc. as a grassroots community group, yet it won the 2009 Asuwei movement with its protest that combines sensibility and rationality. However, since "Nature University" acted so rationally that it brought relatively small impact and threat to enterprise managers and the society. As a result, the incineration project was not suspended.

IV. CONCLUSION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

By making a comparative analysis of grassroots community groups and folk environmental NGOs in environmental protests, the paper arrives at the following conclusions and enlightenment.

First of all, in environmental protests, grassroots community groups and folk environmental NGOs have their own features and advantages in social influence. As spontaneously gathered temporary groups, grassroots community groups are deficient in organizational stability, action rationality etc., but their members share common interest appeal and emotional experience. So, it is easier for them to maintain the motivation, constantly march towards the single objective and then achieve success. Though some individual movements have promoted the improvement and reform of relevant policies, laws and regulations, yet they are isolated to each other and their influence is quite weak and

scattered. Besides, when the problem is not solved as they expected psychologically, democratic rights protection will probably evolve into violent conflicts, which is to the disadvantage of economic development and social stability[18]. In comparison, folk environmental NGOs carry out the protest legally, rationally and orderly. Meanwhile, as the subject of public welfare, NGO helps expand the topic from "safeguarding environmental rights" that simply pursues interests to "protecting the environment" which is related to the whole society. It not only urges the government to improve its decision-making model but also provides space for the public to participate in environmental protection, improves their value on the environment, guides the public to transform from "common citizens" to "ecological citizens". However, since NGOs are not good at constructing identity and shaping consensus, the breadth, depth and intensity of public participation are quite limited in environmental protests led by them. As a consequence, the protest usually lacks explosive power and impact force, which might hinder the achievement of the substantial objectives.

Secondly, there is not sufficient cooperation between grassroots community groups and folk environmental NGOs in environmental protection actions. As the two major columns in environmental movements, grassroots groups are able to rapidly gather the power of the people, keep up high morale and actively cope with the situation, while NGOs can give full play to their professional abilities to expand objectives, provide capital, train the public and plan the action for community organizations which have already been formed. It is the positive interaction and resource complementarity between expressive grassroots community groups and regular environmental NGOs that make it possible to present environmental topics and improve environmental policies, form the close participation network of environmental protection and make the Chinese environmental civil society more mature. Unfortunately, the two did not form an alliance in reality. Huang Xiaoshan, the representative of the 2009 "Aobei Volunteer Team" once said, "When we needed NGO the most during our protest against waste incineration, NGO was neither sensitive nor did it give us any professional and theoretical guidance or moral support" [19], while the fighting power of "Nature University" was quite limited in 2015 due to the scattered public power. It is not just an individual case, as pointed out by Zhang Ping et al during their analysis on environmental group events that happened in China during the past ten years, Chinese environmental protests occur frequently among grassroots communities at the level of urban residential committees and rural towns and villages. The public participation is very obvious but the organizational degree is quite low. Among them, environmental NGOs have only participated in over ten events, occupying less than 5% [3] of the total number. In movements with nation-wide influence such as the 2007 anti-PX movement in Xiamen, protests against magnetic levitation in Shanghai and Hangzhou etc., folk environmental NGOs were criticized by the public for their "collective aphasia" [20]. The author will further probe into the factors that prevent them from cooperating with each other.

Thirdly, the government should have different treatments of grassroots community groups and folk environmental NGOs who are significantly different from each other in environmental protests. The government should not only emphasize the influence of grassroots groups in safeguarding legal rights, actively provide them with effective feedbacks first time and try to nip group events in the bud but also should not ignore the positive role played by NGOs in collective movements and well communicate with them so that they can alleviate the public's anti-emotion, standardize the public's participative behavior and cultivate the public's participation ability.

Fourthly, in future researches, the academic world should focus on the isolation between grassroots community groups and folk environmental NGOs in environmental movements, analyze underlying causes and improvement strategies so that the two can learn from each other, strengthen the alliance of diversified forces so as to establish a cooperative structure of the environment civil society. That is also a problem the author will try to solve in future researches.

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