

Environmental Governance in Taiwan (1950-2000): An Analytical Study in the Light of Ecological Modernization and Eco State Theory

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ABSTRACT

In research of contemporary environmental politics, both theories of ecological modernization and ecological states argue that the 'state' is the fundamental mechanism dealing with environmental crises. In the light of such argument, this paper analyzes the characteristics of environmental governance in Taiwan from 1950 to 2000.

This paper suggests that the policy-making history of environmental governance in Taiwan can be divided into two periods: the state-dominant period (1950-1979) and the multiple-forces period (1980-2000). During both periods, the focus was on people's well-being and social welfare with great emphasis on production models. However, the contents of environmental governance implemented were marred by weak sustainability and contradictions.

In conclusion, this paper proposes that the government of Taiwan did initiate ecological modernization. In other words, it had launched environmental reforms even before the grassroots movement took off, much like the situation in Western industrial countries. During the second half of the 20th century, Taiwan responded only passively to ecological challenges, lacking an active or comprehensive approach; and thus has far to go before it can fulfill the role of an ecologically sustainable state.

Keywords: Ecological Modernization, Ecological State (eco state), Environmental Crisis, Environmental Governance, Sustainable Development