

NGOs at a Crossroad: Hybridization and the Third Sector in Taiwan

In Taiwan, nonprofit organizations increasingly are delivering public services that were previously undertaken by the government through contracts and outsourcing, and special “quasi-autonomous non-governmental (quango) organizations” have emerged. Meanwhile, there is an increasing trend of for-profit companies to carry out social missions and enhance their corporate social responsibility, and “social enterprise” has emerged as a new form of organization. At the community level, informal self-help groups and active community actors play key roles in resolving conflicts and encouraging community development within neighborhoods, and there is the formation of a “community anchor organization”. The frequent interaction and interdependency that exists between the government, market, community, and third sector have shifted the nature of their boundaries and suggests that the role for the third sector is changing. The purpose of this talk is to discuss the growing and increasingly significant role of these hybrid organizations, namely “quango organization,” “social enterprise,” and “community anchor organization,” in Taiwan’s third sector. Because the function of the third sector is not only limited to service provision, but also plays a role in policy advocacy and value creation, losing its autonomy from the state, injecting profit-driven strategies, and becoming informal and spontaneous might lead to major problems in social policy implementation, governance, and legitimacy of the third sector. By examining three specific cases, the major characteristics of hybrid organizations will be highlighted and the nature of change in the third sector will be discussed. Policy and governance mechanisms of hybrid organizations will be discussed at the end.