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Title
“Absent” or “Present”? Environment NGO in NIMBY Movements in China--Observation with Anti-garbage Incineration Plant Events as the Slice

Abstract

The construction of NIMBY facilities, the awakening of public rights consciousness and the increase of political openness have brought about a regional environmental protest featuring “Not in My Backyard”. As a special public goods, governance over NIMBY protests is apparently characterized by there are notable “government failure” and “market failure”. Therefore, the role played by environmental NGOs as a third party has always drawn much attention. After years of practical explorations, environmental organizations in developed countries have found effective participation strategies. What kind of role has environmental NGOs played during the evolution of Chinese NIMBY movements over the years? Judgment on the issue has been controversial all the time. Is Environment NGO “absent” or “present” in China’s NIMBY Struggle? In this study, the actions of five garbage issues NGO in the Anti-Incineration Plant Event were continuously observed and analyzed focusing on the above academic controversy, and it is deemed that this strategy can be interpreted as “absent presence”, i.e. the radical role different from environmental organizations in Western NIMBY Movement. Most of environmental NGOs in China are indeed “absent” to the organization and promotion of struggle, and they have not become the leader and mobilization force of civil environment rights, but from the prospective of the whole environmental management chain, many organizations have had significant “presence”. They have acquired “presence” through three channels, i.e. residents seeking for help, hot issues in focus and conflict implication, and expanded “presence” by means of positioning adjustment and mutual connection, successfully realizing the struggle from “breeding” to “birth”, and following the
“direct” and “indirect” paths to complete the “regurgitation feeding” of conflict governance. This discovery provides useful enlightenment for China’s treatment of NIMBY risk, solving of environmental dilemma and cultivation of social organizations. First of all, it is necessary to adjust the concept of conflict management, recognize the limitations of “considering NIMBY as it stands”, establish a more global and long-term concept of environmental risk governance, transform the maintenance of rights and stability into environmental governance and safety management, strengthen the planning of NIMBY facilities and supervision over the production of NIMBY facilities, weaken “social risks” at the end by reducing “environmental risks” at the front. Secondly, environmental NGOs should be given the opportunity to intervene in NIMBY protections through policies and legal channels, so as to ensure that NGOs and other organizations can effectively cooperate with each other in conflict management rather than fight their own battles or even get involved in a zero-sum game. Finally, the government and social organization incubators should seize the opportunity to make good use of the social energy gathered by NIMBY protests to promote the healthy development of environmental NGOs and get prepared for mitigating environmental risks.

**Keyword**

NIMBY movements; environment NGO; anti-garbage incineration plant events; waste governance