

The transformation of consumer movements through democratization and the development of civil society in Taiwan

I-Liang Wahn

Center for China Studies, National Chengchi University, Wen Shan District, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC

Keywords

Consumer movement, democratization, civil society, market society.

Correspondence

I-Liang Wahn, National Chengchi University,
Wen Shan District, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC.
E-mail: iwahn@nccu.edu.tw

doi: 10.1111/ijcs.12226

Abstract

Using the transformation of the Taiwanese consumer movement as a case study, this article examines how the development of civil society shapes different relationships between consumer organizations and other social movements. The article analyzes the influence of democratization in the 1990s on consumer attempts to seek policy protection and how following Taiwan's embracing of market deregulation in the 2000s consumers turned towards the promotion of ethical practices. The case highlights how the consumer organizations' emergence, their policy contentions and co-operation with women's, student and environmental movements developed alongside the fermentation of social movement organization, their institutionalization and diversification. The article argues that by relating the consumer to other socioeconomic groups, the consumer movement developed more critical perspectives and formed alliances to take more effective action in addressing market conditions and their social consequences.

Introduction: consumer movement and civil society

In recent years, Taiwan has witnessed the emergence of ethical consumer movements led by Homemaker Co-operatives and a cluster of Fair Trade shops. These promote alternative consumption practices and encourage consumer support for a variety of socioeconomic issues as the organizations work with women's, student, farmer, environment and urban reform movements. However, the most celebrated consumer organization in Taiwan, the Consumer Foundation established in 1980, has focused on delivering consumer education and has maintained a distance from other social movements. This article set out to discuss how different consumer organizations in Taiwan developed diverse relationships with other social movements.

Lang and Gabriel (2005) classify four visible waves of consumer movements in Western societies from co-operative, Value for Money, Naderism to Alternative Consumers. The shift in the form that the consumer movement takes in terms of a transformation of the idea of the citizen consumer is often analysed from the perspective of social change. Hilton (2009) analyses how consumer protection movements around the world have been shaped by distinctive political developments at the national level. Maclachlan's (2002) Japanese case study and Glickman's (2009) research in the US illustrate how democratization is crucial in enabling the consumer to exercise political power and demand policy protection. Recent works on consumer movements have focused on diverse forms of the ethical

consumer (Harrison *et al.*, 2005; Littler, 2009; Lewis and Potter, 2011). Micheletti *et al.* (2012) highlight the means through which ethical consumption has become an innovative type of political action as citizen consumers place public interest in mind when evaluating and selecting both products and services and in their consumption practices.

What is missing in the literature is an analysis of the relationship between the consumer movement and other social movements and especially how the transformation of consumer movements is shaped by civil society development. As a young democracy that witnessed the expansion of social movements from a limited presence to strong growth and the emergence of consumer protection and ethical consumer organizations, Taiwan offers an interesting case to examine how the development of civil society shaped the consumer movement (Pei, 2004). Rather than analysing specific consumer organizations as cases, this article treats the transformation of consumer movements in Taiwan as a whole as its case study. This illustrates how the consumer movement developed from working on consumer protection to promoting ethical consumption and how civil society development helped the consumer movement to form co-operative relationships with other social movements.

Using a case study design, this research scrutinizes consumer organization publications and relevant news reports as data that facilitates an understanding of the work of consumer organizations and the relationships between the consumer movement and other social movements. The article also utilizes literature on social movements in Taiwan (Ho and Lin, 2011; Shu, 2011)

to situate consumer movements in the broader context of the development of civil society. In so doing, the article establishes links between three concepts: democratization and social change, the consumers' organization, the idea of the citizen consumer and its co-operation with other social movements. The empirical data are ordered to capture the conceptual shifts in ideas of the citizen consumer and to grasp how consumer organizations initially worked alone but later developed different relationships with other social movements.

Adopting a historical approach, this research argues that the consumer movement in Taiwan developed around two critical junctures: democratization in the 1990s when social movements started to grow; and in the 2000s when Taiwan joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) and experienced political regime change. A three-stage change can be recognized in the history of Taiwan's consumer movements. The first stage is the creation of a consumer protection organization in an authoritarian context; the second is the policy contention made by the 'Snails without Shells League' in the context of democratization; and the third is the emergence of the ethical consumer working with different social movements in the context of market deregulation.

Consumer protection and affordable housing amidst democratization

This section discusses the emergence of the Consumer Foundation and the 'Snails without Shells League' in Taiwan from the 1980s to the 1990s. It shows how democratization enabled intellectuals to organize consumers and how they utilized new political opportunities to advocate policy change. The section argues that while opportunities existed, a reliance on experts to guide vulnerable shoppers limited the effective co-operation of consumer organizations with other social movements.

In 1979,¹ a batch of cheap cooking oil was found to be contaminated with the inedible chemicals polychlorinated biphenyls and polychlorinated dibenzofurans when students and teachers in a secondary school reported serious skin problems after eating in the school cafeteria.² What is now referred to as the PCB scandal became a catalyst for consumer movements as people contrasted the lack of consumer protection to the state's active industrial policies.³ The state began its 'Ten Major Construction Projects' amidst the first oil shock and then built the Hsinchiu Scientific Industrial Park during the second shock. These were two policies that would prove significant with regard to Taiwan's successful industrial development.

In the same year that the PCB scandal broke, the infamous 'Formosa Incident' involving a group of dissidents jailed for starting a magazine to advocate democracy occurred (*Formosa* being the historical name of Taiwan). Since 1949, the ruling Kuo

Ming Tang party (Nationalist Party, KMT) prohibited social movements and Ho (2010) has characterized the 1980 to 1987 period as the 'fermentation' of social activism as dissatisfaction of authoritarian rule grew amongst the people. Hsiao (2011) also describes the 'unprecedented emergence of social movements' which 'marked the golden decade. Not only rooted a civil society demanding autonomy and against domination but they also facilitated political democratization' in this period.

Despite the difficulty in organizing public issues and for publishing, intellectuals added their voice to the growing concerns of consumers by writing newspaper editorials and contributing to magazines throughout the early 1980s.⁴ For example, Hsiao Hsin-Huang, a sociology professor, wrote numerous articles calling for consumer organization. Wen Chun-I, also a sociology professor, complained that the 'consumer cannot eat and waits for death'. Another sociologist, Peng Huai-Zhen, celebrated the '[a]wakening consumer magazines' launched at the time. Not only professors but also editors of two major newspapers also took up the cause. He Fan, of the *United News*, urged consumers to 'rise and defend yourself', whilst the *China Times'* Yang Nai-Fan called directly for a 'consumers' movement'.

A central theme in these writings was that in a transition towards a commercial society, there is a need for a new relationship between consumers and the expanding industries on the one hand, and a new relationship between civil society and the state on the other (Hsiao, 1984). The intellectuals wished to create an organization that would perform the public services of product inspection and product warning. Subsequently, Chai sun-lin, a statistics professor, and Lee Shen-yi, a prominent lawyer, established the 'Consumer Foundation Chinese Taipei' (hereafter 'Consumer Foundation'). The Consumer Foundation displayed a sense of pride at being the first citizens' organization for social movements in Taiwan with the founder Chai acknowledging that consumer protection was a relatively less sensitive matter for the authoritarian government.

One particular event can illustrate how the Consumer Foundation adopted a specific strategy to cope with authoritarian political context. In the first year of its formation, the Consumer Foundation disclosed that most prawns sold at market contained high amounts of fluorescence and following the disclosure prawn sales plummeted with the media subsequently interrogating the role of the state.⁵ Embarrassed, the state threatened to prosecute

⁴See the collection of these essays: *Consumer Movement in Taiwan: Theory and Practice* (1981) ed. by H.H. Huang. Also see his later (1987) reflection and analysis in *Beyond Money: Retrospects and Prospects of Taiwan's Consumers Movement* (in Chinese), Taipei: Jiou-Da Books. It is quite possible that intellectuals had no other options in the authoritarian context of the time. It is also interesting to contrast their public criticism with those calling for democracy. It was dangerous to write about political reform but those writing about consumer problems were tolerated by the state maybe because they posed a rather non-political threat to the KMT government. The Consumer Foundation, its emergence and the way it mobilized consumers had a very particular historical background.

⁵This is an important case for both consumer organizations and the state. The public debated whether consumer organizations should carry out market investigations and publish test results. They also debated why the state was not carrying out these works but left people to protect themselves through 'public service'. The debate is not just about

¹This scandal was recently memorized by an association of victims and launched a web site: <http://surviving1979.blogspot.co.uk/p/about04.html>

²This is because the same kind of contamination occurred in Japan a decade previously in 1968. This time difference says much about how the state in Taiwan is less sensitive and unprepared for consumer problems.

³See Yang N.F. (1981) Movement to protect consumers. In *Consumer Movement in Taiwan: theory and practice* (ed. by Y.P. Hsiao Hsin Huang, Cheng & J. Le. Times Culture Publishing Co. Taipei.

Table 1 Early educational works by Consumer Foundation

Year	Campaign activities
1982	Recruited more than 60 volunteers, especially housewives, primary and secondary school teachers, to make the younger generation aware consumers
1983	Set up consumer education programs in universities and held campus events Ran columns in newspaper and TV programmes Helped local governments run seminar series Set up 'Consumer Classrooms' in primary schools and organized campus fairs
1984	Ran five sessions of the 'Little Consumer Life Camp' for children
1986	Ran 'differentiated consumer education' workshops, targeting teenagers, children, women and firms across different regions The 'Little Consumer Life Camp' moved to the central regions of Taiwan Published the <i>Consumer Brochure for Children</i> for parents and teachers Ran the 'Teachers' Workshop on Consumer Life' for secondary school teachers

the Consumer Foundation for instigating public panic and ordered that the state alone could publish consumer-related information. The experience stimulated the Consumer Foundation to enlist groups of experts on food, medicine, automobiles and other products to provide guidance for consumers in making purchase choices. Such consumer education would not then be seen as instigating public panic. In a book celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Consumer Foundation, many staff wrote of how 'the Foundation put experts at the center of its works' and that this helped the organization to earn public trust. The Foundations' early work is summarized in Table 1 below⁶:

After martial law was lifted in 1987, Taiwan saw an upsurge of social movements (Hsiao, 1997; Ho, 2010). With the introduction of freedom of civic association, strong social dissatisfaction erupted in protests as farmer, worker, environmental, women's and human rights movements took to the streets to demand political reform. In this context, consumer organizations also took advantage of the new political opportunity to question the state's role in the consumer market and explored the synergy of the citizen consumer (Trentmann, 2011).

Home ownership is a strong cultural requirement for young Taiwanese on the path to independence. Young urban professionals were, however, disappointed to see that despite their hard work house prices went sky high. A primary school teacher, Lee Hsing-Chang discussed his struggle to buy a house with colleagues and formed a self-help group, called the 'Snails

the respective roles of consumer organization and the state but also about the relation between consumers and the state, whether they are competitive or co-operative on market issues. This debate shaped the development of consumer politics in Taiwan.

⁶See its history record between 1980 and 1985: <http://www.consumers.org.tw/unit422.aspx?id=99> Here, I only choose their work on organizing or mobilizing consumers leaving out other efforts.

without Shells League' (Lu, 1992). After the group received media attention, many academics from the Graduate Institute of Building and Planning at the National Taiwan University joined the league with students and young professionals following suit. However, these housing experts did not take up leadership or organize educational programs as had been the case with the Consumer Foundation. Instead, the League focused on bottom-up protest. A short summary⁷ of the work it carried out between 1989 and 1990 follows (Table 2).

Furthermore, the League criticized those tax and land policies that had helped real estate capitalists manipulate the housing market (Hsiao and Liu, 1997). Table 3 shows a list of the League's confrontations with government ministries in their demands for policy change. As its name vividly conveys, the League fights for 'snails without shells', with 'snail' referring to ordinary people; this conceptualization of consumers helped it mobilize young urban residents facing similar difficulties. A poll conducted by *United News* found that 80% of the public were aware and 60% supported occupying actions carried out by the League.

Political action by consumers' reflected a change in the structure of Taiwanese civil society in the mid-1990s. Ho (2010) characterizes the early to mid-1990s as a period of social movements' institutionalization with social protests becoming a normalized part of civil society. Hsiao (1997), based on the 1991 and 1992 general social surveys, finds that the Consumer Foundation and the League were highly effective in mass mobilization and were also the most familiar social movements enjoying 73% and 58% of support respectively. Utilizing such popularity, the Consumer Foundation lobbied more reform-minded KMT politicians and politicians from the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) for consumer protection legislation. The League also actively endorsed candidates that supported land policy reforms. As pro-consumer politicians performed especially well in local elections in the early 1990s, the KMT government passed the Consumer Protection Law in 1994.⁸

With the new law in place, consumers' mass mobilization faded as consumer organizations started to use the new law to help consumers (Juang, 1997). The Consumer Foundation formed a legal team to help consumers,⁹ while continuing to conduct comparative tests on products and issue product

⁷The list was obtained and edited from: No-Home Owner Movement timeline (無住屋運動大事記1989-1990) from The Handbook for the formation of the No-Home Owner Solidarity Alliance 「中華民國無住屋者團結組織成立大會大會手冊」 See: <http://bbs.nsysu.edu.tw/txtVersion/treasure/tmm/M.915390111.A/M.931778036.A/M.935130818.A/M.935350037.A.html>

⁸The timing is curious. That year also saw the first and very competitive mayoral elections in two main cities and a nationwide governor election. Maybe the state was again under electoral pressure to appear responsive to livelihood issues. For example, the National Health Insurance Act was also passed in that year.

⁹The Consumer Foundation had lawyers to advise consumers and after the protection law passed it expanded and regularized the advice service by having lawyer in their offices and branches on all weekdays from 8 am to 5 pm. In addition, the formation of a legal team also took advantage of the new law to bring consumer disputes to court. It then made the cases into teaching lessons and campaign material.

Table 2 Consumer mobilization works by the 'Snails without Shells League'

Year	Campaign activities
1989	<p>Lee Hsin-Chang's first public debate with a real estate businessman on a forum organized by <i>Capital Morning Post</i>. He then debated again with two urban planning professors as well as another major real estate businessman on the Chinese Television System</p> <p>Distributed the 'No-shell Snail Declaration' in Taipei's city centre and train station</p> <p>Visited major political parties (KMT, DPP, Workers Party and Labour Party), urging them not to nominate a candidate involved in real estate speculation</p> <p>Mobilized 50 000 people to occupy Zhong Shao East Road overnight.</p> <p>Occupied the headquarters of a major insurance company in protest at their aggressive investment in real estate.</p> <p>Held a wedding ceremony for a hundred couples without home ownership in CKS Square.</p> <p>Sent a wood snail artwork by a prominent artist to the Premier who refused it.</p> <p>Published 'Our Suggestion on Housing Policy' as well as an 'Open Letter to the premier' and held a football match in front of the executive building to mock their kicking responsibilities around.</p> <p>Announced a list of parliamentary election candidates who either supported or opposed capitalist exploitation in the real estate sector.</p>
1990	Organized a 'return to Zhong Shao East Road' demonstration to protest the lack of progress in policy reform

warnings.¹⁰ Meanwhile, in 1990, the 'Snails without a Shell League' split into two organizations with academics and experts forming the 'Organization of Urban Reforms' (OURs¹¹) to advocate urban policy reform, whilst a 'Tsuei Ma Ma' renting service centre was created (in memory of a member, Ms. Tsuei, who had died of cancer). The service centre provided rent information and assisted tenants in negotiating with landlords.¹² The idea behind this split was that experts should focus on policy reform whilst the centre would help consumers to rent more suitable property until policy solution could be achieved.

The Consumer Foundation and the 'Snail without a Shell League' continued to hold the idea that problems of food safety and unaffordable housing were the result of irresponsible and exploitative producers bolstered by the inadequate state regulation of consumer markets (Hsieh and Scammon, 1993). Both consumer organizations worked with experts to advice consumers on how to select and use products and services in a shrewder way. While democratization allowed consumers to organize, different types of activists adopted somewhat different strategies, with intellectuals in the Consumer Foundation focused on consumer education but urban young people in the 'Snails without a Shell League' organized protests.

¹⁰See the Consumer Foundation's history summary between 1990 and 1995: <http://www.consumers.org.tw/unit422.aspx?id=101> In these summaries, one can easily notice how the Consumer Foundation focused mainly on market investigation, comparative tests and public warning. Following the passing of Consumer Protection Law and the creation of Consumer Protection Commission in 1995, the Consumer Foundation claimed it will in the future focus on monitoring government effort in implementing the law. This suggested a watchdog role to maintain what they had achieved, rather than demanding for more. This may also have had to do with their financial crisis beginning in the mid-90s. It relies on magazine publication and donation as main funding sources. As it achieved legislation or because it no longer attempted policy contention, funding seems to have gradually reduced.

¹¹See the official web site of OURs (Organization for Urban Reforms): <http://www.ours.org.tw/>

¹²TMM established a database for rent information in different areas and a list of trustworthy landlords. It uses the database to guide tenants in searching for houses and negotiating contracts and matching services. It also offers legal advice and assistance in finding representation.

We can link these strategies to the type of consumer activists and the specific idea of the citizen consumer they developed to cope with social change. Public intellectuals developed the idea that consumers need to be organized. This idea proposed a social solution to consumer problems with the Foundation resorting to education to change individual consumer behaviour. Experts in the League took a step further and introduced the idea of consumer rights that would encourage consumers to organize collective action. The effect was that consumers were seen as in need of help and guidance.

However, the idea of consumers as vulnerable shoppers was not associated with the idea of citizens as active agents. As consumer organizations mainly played the role of consumer advisors, consumers were not given the opportunity to think reflexively about how the consumer market existed as part of broader political economic institutions that also affected other socioeconomic groups. Hence, despite the emergence of a variety of social movements, there was a lack of co-operation between them. As a consequence, the Consumer Foundation and the 'Snails without a Shell League' did not co-operate with one another. In summary, activists seized the political opportunity stemming from democratization, yet these consumer organizations worked alone with consumers merely present as dispersed citizens with limited impact (Couldry, 2004).

Ethical consumers and market deregulation

This section turns to a discussion of the emergence of ethical consumer movements represented by the Homemaker Co-operatives and the Fair Trade Association. It highlights how in a new political economic context, these new consumer organizations worked in a very different way to the Consumer Foundation and the 'Snails without a Shell League' as consumers were encouraged to support other social movements, particularly environmental movements. It is argued that the disappointment resulting from the state's embracing of trade liberalization and the strong growth of a variety of social movements facilitated this relationship and a transformed understanding of the citizen consumer.

The year 2000 was a turning point for Taiwanese civil society as the opposition DPP won the presidential election and ended half a century of KMT rule. While social movements

Table 3 Actions for policy reform by the league

Year date	Campaign activities
1989	Visited the Ministry of Education to discuss student accommodation issues Visited the Ministry of Finance to discuss housing tax and regulating estate investment Participated in a Ministry of Interior meeting on rent regulation Visited the Construction and Planning Agency on public housing Visited the Council for Economic Planning and Development
1990	Formed a 'parliamentary committee on housing and urban reform' Attended three days of the 'National Conference on Land Reform' Visited the Council of Labor Affairs on workers' housing issues

had been partners of the DPP in challenging the authoritarian KMT, Ho (2010) identifies this to be a period of disappointment as social activists were soon disillusioned as the DPP compromised many ideals on social welfare they once upheld. In addition, Taiwan joined the WTO in 2002, making it increasingly difficult for consumers to seek policy intervention in consumer markets (Phillion, 2010). In this new political economic context, the new ethical consumer movement problematized consumer choice in the market and ethics in civil society (Malpass *et al.*, 2007; Barnett *et al.*, 2011).

A Homemakers Co-operative (the Co-op) was formed in 2001 by a group of housewives from the Homemaker Union. The Union had been formed by a group of women in 1987 after the lifting of martial law and worked on community building and anti-pollution actions. One of its members, Wong Siou-Ling met activists from the Japanese 'Seikatsu Club Co-op' at an international meeting of women's groups in 1992 and in the following year organized around 100 families from the Union to buy rice and grapes directly from farmers they trusted.

With 4000 founding members,¹³ the Homemaker Co-operatives' membership went on to reach 20 000 in 2006 and there are now more than 40 000.¹⁴ The Co-op sells items traditionally bought by wives and mothers for family consumption and set up strict stand-

¹³Chen La-hung created a 'Kangaroo Mothers' study group' in the 1980s in Taipei. The study group allows housewives in the same community to help each other in their daily work. They have a 'time banking' scheme that allows housewives to take care of elderly in each other's family and a cooking club. This self-organizing for mutual support through daily practice can be seen in the works of the Homemakers Co-op. See the Women's Study Groups issue 24 article 'Self help library: From Kangaroo Mothers to studying everywhere (自助事圖書館: 從袋鼠媽媽到書香處處)': <http://forum.yam.org.tw/bongchhi/old/light/light22-2.htm> and the report 'Unusual mothers-Chen and her women's groups (不安於室的媽咪 陳來紅和女人組織)' by Panorama Magazine: http://www.taiwan-panorama.com/show_issue.php?id=200189008078c.txt&table=0&h1=%E5%8F%B0%E7%81%A3%E5%AF%AB%E7%9C%9F&h2=%E7%A4%BE%E5%8D%80

¹⁴See statistics from its website introduction page: http://www.huuccoop.tw/about.asp?infor_no=0013

Table 4 Homemaker Co-op partnerships with farmers

Year	Activities
2002	First general meeting with producers First 'Giving love to farmers' festival
2003	Establishment of an 'emergency fund for producers'
2008	First 'no GM food farm zone' declared Self-classification of vegetables in response to new organic law implementation
2009	Activities to support farmers suffering typhoon damage

ards for products to be healthy, environmentally friendly and locally produced.¹⁵ The Co-op catalogue contains mostly organic foods; including rice, meat, fruit, vegetables and dairy products. Later daily necessities such as soap, shampoo, toilet paper, cotton clothing and gardening equipment were included. The Co-op also offers a small refund for packaging recycling with the latter sent back to suppliers for reuse.

The Co-op claims that it is not just a consumer movement but also a broader social movement for women, the environment and sustainable agriculture. The Co-op stresses the negative impact of increasing free trade on consumer health, local farmers and environment and aims to organize consumers to address these problems. The Co-op teaches consumers how to cook and use the products it sells in order to build a healthier family lifestyle and further encourages consumers to buy domestically produced products. By placing regular and collective orders, the Co-op can cut out middlemen to increase domestic small producers' income and uses the power associated with such larger orders to guide producers to produce more environmentally friendly goods.

What the Co-op attempted initially was to establish co-operation among consumers as well as between consumers and domestic producers, particularly farmers. To facilitate mutual support and understanding between consumers and producers, every year, the Co-op organizes two 'facing farmer-friends' meetings, in which members meet with rice growers. There is also an annual meeting with manufacturers, and a further two meetings with fruit growers. In such meetings, Co-op members and suppliers learn how co-operatives have changed both sides of the exchange by setting standards for the products. The Co-op also invites experts to teach planting techniques to producers and product knowledge to consumers. See Table 4 below for similar programs:

Branch	Member number	unit	station
Taipei North branch	9875	39	11
Taipei South branch	11 831	122	8
Hsinchou branch	7302	83	5
Taichung branch	9586	62	9
Tainan branch	7744	36	9
Total	46 338	342	42

Updated 12-31-2012

¹⁵They developed principles of product selection: domestic product first, no pesticide residue, trusted and clear source of ingredients and other testing requirements for soil, water and preservation. See: <http://www.huuccoop.tw/item1.asp>

Table 5 Homemaker Co-op political actions

Year	Activities
2007	Campaigns against legalization of Ractopamine in meats
2010	Public petitioning for a referendum on banning US beef imports
2011	Mass demonstration of housewives in alliance with farmers
	Anti-nuclear campaign following earthquake in Japan
	Campaign against an industrial park development project in Houlong

Members of the Co-op are also encouraged to think and act beyond issues of consumption and consumer markets. In 2006, the Co-op implemented a 'regional operation plan'¹⁶ which encouraged and awarded regional branches autonomy to engage in social activism. The Co-op leaders explained that local branches should support the causes that local people were fighting for, be they environmental or agricultural problems and through local engagement the Co-op also hoped to recruit new members. In recent years, the Co-op began working with various social movements on a variety of issues (See Table 5). It has also been a close ally to other environmental groups and has worked with the Consumer Foundation on raising concerns about increasing import.

The Co-op's support for other social movements can be understood from a must-read book for its members and the resulting self-identity members developed. In 1993, the founder, Wong, translated a book *I Among Others* by Katsumi Yokota, an influential activist in the Japanese Seikatsu Club movement. Co-op members identified themselves as 'livelihood persons', a term translated from Seikatsusha in Japanese. The identity stresses that housewives' work as homemakers can affect the livelihood of those involved in producing what they consume. Thus, the Co-op emphasizes consumers' care for others, beginning with housewives and mothers caring for family members' health and extending the notion of care to community, farmers' living conditions and the environment (Chang, 2008). It is the realization that consumers are among others – literally that they are one amongst diverse identities – that made the livelihood person simultaneously a housewife, a consumer, a society member and a global citizen. This 'livelihood person' identity, thus, facilitated the Co-op's co-operation with other social movements.

In the late 2000s, the emphasis on practice and caring for others was further advanced by Oko Green, a business focused on selling fair trade coffee.¹⁷ Oko Green's story was frequently reported in newspapers and magazines as an example of how young generations can create their own business using innovative products to seek social change. The founder Hsu Wenyen, an environmentalist and Green Party candidate for parliament in 2007, learned about fair trade while studying for a Master's

¹⁶<http://www.hucc-coop.tw/green.asp?id=000000014&type=0003>

¹⁷Coffee is chosen because of its popularity and market growth potential in Taiwan. Although social enterprise is not new in Taiwan, it has become popular in recent years. For example, in 2011 a 'Social Enterprise Insights' <http://www.seinsights.asia/about> was formed and of which Oko Green is a member. This is a platform for social enterprises to share and discuss challenges in their work.

degree in the UK in 2003. After a failed bid for office, he and his partner, Yu Wanju, founded Oko Green as a new approach to facilitate social change.

Hsu and Yu claimed that 'we are selling coffee to sell the idea of fair trade'. They actively contacted universities and secondary schools giving lectures in which they spoke to students about the movement and the practice of producing coffee. In a number of interviews Hsu proudly claimed that he delivered about 100 lectures annually. Customers are also regularly invited to the shop to watch documentaries about food, agriculture, poverty and the environment. There are workshops or study groups for customers to discuss what they have learned about fair trade, as well as making better coffee.

Building on this good relationship with the students, Oko Green worked with the Student Union at the National Taiwan University and organized a 'My Fair December'¹⁸ campaign on campus in 2008. They also worked with students in Fu Jen Catholic University to organize a 'Fair & Justice Union'¹⁹ campaign to promote fair trade shops on campus. Besides promotion among the student body, Oko Green actively supports student movements. It set up coffee stands at the sites of the 'Wild Strawberry' protests (against Assembly Law), a campaign against the demolition of Losheng Sanatorium, and a march against global warming.²⁰ Selling coffee to protesting students has allowed Oko Green to claim that it has become the brand associated to student movements.²¹

In 2011, Oko Green, together with a group of new fair trade shops that followed its example, formed the Fair Trade Taiwan Association²² as a networking platform to promote fair trade goods. The Association organizes workshops, seminars and publicity events to showcase fair trade movements from around the world. It advocates the sense of 'Must Be Fair' in which consumers are part of the global trade system and consumers' ethical practices can aid farmers and workers exploited by the system. Like the Co-op, Oko Green and its partners offer consumers alternative products and associated practices. However,

¹⁸See the Student Union of the School of Social Science blog for event announcement: <http://ntusssa.pixnet.net/blog/post/23703296-%5B%E6%B4%BB%E5%8B%95%E5%85%AC%E5%91%8A%5D-my-fair-december-%E7%B3%BB%E5%88%97%E6%B4%BB%E5%8B%95>

Also see Oko Green report 'Fair Trade is seeding (公平貿易種子, 發芽ing)': <http://www.okogreen.com.tw/blog/?tag=%e5%8f%b0%e5%a4%a7%e7%a4%be%e7%a7%91%e9%99%a2%e5%ad%b8%e7%94%9f%e6%9c%83>

¹⁹United News report 'Small actions to support small farmers ethical shops in FJU (用行動挺小農 輔大師生設「公義商店」)': http://mag.udn.com/mag/campus/storypage.jsp?f_ART_ID=389311

²⁰These are the most prominent cases of social activism and movement in Taiwan in the past 5 years and are marked by significant student body participation. See the column article 'From wild lily to wild berry: 20 years of antimonopoly' by Lin GinTung (野百合到野草莓 反壟斷20載(林靖瑩)) on *Apple Daily*: <http://www.appledaily.com.tw/appledaily/article/headline/20121231/34740670/>

²¹See *Frontier* (a newsletter devoted to women's issue) 283 issue's report 'Oko Green a business for promoting fair trade (生態綠做生意同時推動公平貿易)': <http://forum.yam.org.tw/bongchhi/old/light/light281-3.htm>

²²This is summarized and explained in a webpage 'Yearly action': http://fairtrade.org.tw/?page_id=440

in contrast to housewives caring for family members and reaching out to community and society, fair trade consumers stress the moral aspect of consumption (Micheletti, 2008).

On its web site, Oko Green lists its social movement partners, including: the Green Party, Environmental Information Centre, Green Formosa Front and OURs (a Snails without Shells League spin-off). Oko Green has also, posted articles to support the doubling of the minimum wage on its blog²³ and has used the shop to hold meetings supporting striking workers²⁴ and the indigenous people's movement.²⁵ In 2009, the Morakot Typhoon caused the worst flooding in 50 years and destroyed much of farmers' hard work in southern Taiwan. In response, Hsu and Yu led a group of NGOs and businesses in founding another organization called 'Good Green'²⁶ as a selling platform. The platform allows end-consumers to order directly from farmers at fixed prices, to help farmers' income and provide some stability in demand. Furthermore, following Hsu, Yu also became parliamentary candidate for the Green Party in 2011.

Through these works, the fair trade movement in Taiwan encourages consumers to care about global society and to buy a distinct 'brand' of products to support farmers in developing countries. Consumers are also guided to reflect on the negative consequences of market deregulation in Taiwan and explore their ability to facilitate change through individual action in the market as well as collective action in civil society. This means that it takes a step further than the work of the Co-op as consumers are situated more generally in market and society rather than being conceived as members of family and community. Thus, the fair trade movement became a contributor and supporter of both international and local social movements (Clarke *et al.*,).

As in the previous period, social change shaped both the Co-op and Oko Green as both serve to highlight how market deregulation generated unhealthy products, exploited farmers and harmed the environment after Taiwan joined the WTO. Yet the new political regime's embracing of free market principles meant that there was limited opportunity to change state policy and regulate consumer markets like the Consumer Foundation and the 'Snails without a Shell League' did in the previous period. Thus, new consumer organizations emphasized consumers' market and social power (Arnould, 2007). Consequently, Oko Green and the Co-op placed the consumer in wider social networks and the consumer movement became an important ally and supporter of other social movements.

²³See Oko Green's blog post 'Minimum wage should raise 100% (時薪基本工資應當調漲一倍)': <http://www.okogreen.com.tw/blog/?p=2345>

²⁴For example, Cooloud announced a film screening and a red and green seminar about stories of fair trade coffee and workers strike in Huanya (《2008台灣勞動影像映演與對話-紅綠加映場》環亞罷工紀錄片來到生態綠咖啡-咖啡豆裡公平的故事 & 工人抗爭的生命故事): <http://www.cooloud.org.tw/node/22496>

²⁵For example, Oko Green posted a blog article 'When indigenous people meet fair trade: Oko Green working in the Ali mountains (公平貿易與台灣原住民相遇首部曲:生態綠阿里山工作去!)': <http://www.okogreen.com.tw/blog/?p=144>

²⁶The reason for establishment and the mechanism of Good Green's work are explained on its web site: <http://goodgreen.tw/about/>

Both the Co-op and Oko Green have established stronger relationships in Taiwanese civil society which have made them more successful than earlier consumer protection organizations. The Co-op and fair trade movement leaders have backgrounds in other social movements. This has broadened their perspective on consumption and the market which in turn has allowed them to relate consumers to other socioeconomic struggles. By linking consumption to the mechanisms of consumer markets, they have co-operated with student, women, worker, farmer and environmentalist movements. In addition, social enterprise has become new form of consumer-organizing in which thinking of social movements in terms of business has meant that they are less troubled by financial constraints and where the selling of a specific brand of products made it easier to reach out to the public.

Unlike the earlier intellectuals and experts, the limited political opportunity in this period has led activists in these new consumer organizations to act more like entrepreneurs. They have created new types of consumer organization selling alternative products and organize campaigns to promote novel ideas about the role of the citizen consumer. The effect of entrepreneurs' innovative methods and new organizational forms of the Co-op and fair trade shops has been that consumers are not only changing their behaviour but also viewing themselves as members of a distinct community as well as civil society more generally. This they achieve through sharing and building networks among different socioeconomic groups.

Civil society and the changing citizen consumer

The diverse consumer organizations discussed in the previous two sections can be viewed together to illustrate the transformation of the consumer movement in Taiwan. The transformation from advocating consumer protection to promoting ethical consumption reveals a change in the idea of the citizen consumer, from vulnerable shopper, active protestor, to caring housewife and environmentalist. Table 6 connects different consumer organizations to social changes in terms of the development of civil society, on the one hand, and to the changes in the relationships between consumer movement and other social movements, on the other. This section argues that a vibrant civil society is a pivotal condition through which the consumer movement must move to become more critical and effective (Schudson, 2007).

If we look at the transformation of the consumer movement indicated by the second row of Table 6, we can see that the rise and fall of political opportunities are crucial for the emergence of different organizations and their strategies. Democratization presented an opportunity for citizens to reorganize political society and consumers began to think about the role of the state in consumer markets. Once Taiwan became a WTO member, the works of the Homemaker Co-operatives and Fair Trade shops represent how consumers were confronted with the question of how to correct the problems of market freedom through social action rather than policy reform. This is a consideration of the role of consumers in civil society.

Although it is important to recognize the influences of political opportunity, it is equally critical to understand how

Table 6 Taiwan consumer movement change

Civil society development	Consumer organization	Relation to other movements
Fermentation (1980–1986)	Consumer Foundation	Supporting pro-consumer politicians
Upsurge after lifting Marshal Law (1987–1993)	Snails without a Shell League	Supporting pro-consumer politicians
Institutionalization (1994–1999)	Tsuei MaMa renting service centre	With urban reformers
Incorporation (2000–2008)	Homemaker Co-operative	Environmental, women and farmer movements
Resurgence (2008~)	Oko Green Fair trade shops and Association	Green Party; Student movement

consumer movements were situated in civil society. The first row of Table 6 highlights the parallel between consumer movement transformation and social movements' fermentation, institutionalization and disappointment such as Ho has described. The third row of Table 6 shows the relationships of consumer movement has with other social movements or political party. The Consumer Foundation worked with experts but avoided political parties and other social activism. With growing social movements the 'Snails without a Shell League' and Consumer Foundation worked with academics and politicians. With social movements becoming more established, the homemakers and the fair trade entrepreneurs began to support and work with other social movements.

Here, the role of activists in organizing specific types of the citizen consumer is important. Rather than the emergence of the ethical consumer leading to the emergence of an ethical consumer movement, it was specific activists who started to introduce the idea and promote the practices of ethical consumption. Activists were also helped by their networks with, and experiences of, participating in women's, environmental and agricultural movements. These movements served as allies that provided the opportunity, presented in the form of networks and resources, for activists to devise different strategies and reconceptualize the citizen consumer.

As new consumer organizations became supporters of women's, student, worker, farmer and environmental movements, the citizen consumer is associated with different socioeconomic groups. The stronger civil society that developed a variety of active social movements critical of the effect of markets on different aspects of society enabled consumer organizations to form alliances and go beyond seeking expert guidance and market regulation. A broader perspective was then achieved by exploring the multiple ways in which consumption can influence consumer markets and how the consumer can act beyond making choices in the marketplace to take co-ordinated actions to pursue the 'good' society (Soper, 2007), including the well-being of future generations and distant others (O'Neill, 2008).

Conclusion

Table 6 specifically highlights the transformation of consumer movement in Taiwan in terms of how consumers are related to other socioeconomic groups. Consumer movements represent an effort to situate the citizen consumer in both the market and civil society (Kozinets and Handelman, 2004) and so different consumer organizations in Taiwan in different social contexts have explored how consumer markets affect food quality, living costs, affordable housing, family health, the livelihood of farmers and workers and the impact on the environment. The transformation

is as much as shaped by social change as by the changes in ideas and actions conditioned by the development of civil society. The contrast between consumer protection organizations in the 1990s and the new ethical consumer organizations of the 2000s shows how a stronger relationship between consumer movements and other social movements will provide crucial resources and a broader perspective for the citizen consumer. When the consumer movement supports and is supported by other social movements it can develop a more critical view of consumers and address consumer markets from different aspects.

Generally speaking, the effect of social change on consumer behaviour is mediated by different type of organizations and consumer activists. Public intellectuals, experts and entrepreneurs have responded to the rise and fall of political opportunities for organizing consumers and utilized distinctive social opportunity to pursue consumers' collective action. The growing connection between consumer movements and other social movements is the effect of different consumer activists developing new ideas about the citizen consumer to make effective use of social change. The idea of the citizen consumer has gradually extended from vulnerable shopper to ethical citizen facilitating organizations that are able to change different aspects of consumer behaviour.

This case study demonstrates the insights that can be gained by examining the strategic relationship between consumer movements and other social movements. Such analysis invites broader questions of how the consumer is related to different socioeconomic groups such as farmers, workers, producers and families and communities who participate in consumer markets in multiple ways and how the consumer can work with them to realize broader consumer interests in the name of the public good rather than a narrow consumer interest centered on gaining good products and services. Such analysis connects researches on varied conceptualizations of citizen consumers that reflect social change in the way the consumer movement is situated within civil society. This article suggests that such a perspective assists the analysis of how the consumer organizations actively transform the way specific conditions of consumer markets generate particular consequences for society.

References

- Arnould, E.J. (2007) Should consumer citizens escape the market? *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, **611**, 96–111.
- Barnett, C., Cloke, P., Clarke, N. & Malpass, A. (2011) The ethical problematization of 'the consumer'. In *Globalizing Responsibility: The Political Rationalities of Ethical Consumption*, pp. 27–60. Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford.

- Chang, C.-Y. (2008) *Mom's Revolution and Consumption of Justice: Exploring Taiwan Green-Consumerism Movement in Web Age*. Paper presented at Digital Genesis annual conference. [WWW document]. URL https://www.google.com.tw/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCEQFjAAahUKEwi8tKzolz_PGAhXKHJQKHSr_CmU&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.cyberangel.org.tw%2Ftw%2Fresearch%2Fdigital-genesis-conference%2F2008%3Fdownload%3D212%3Amom-s-revolution-and-consumption-of-justice-exploring-taiwan-green-consumerism-movement-in-web-age&ei=XeGxVfyRF8q50ASq_quoBg&usq=AFQjCNH73d14zO39u4JB2DVG66nvcJZauQ&sig=2=tjQB YD1jrTQsDWwutEKuA. Accessed July 24, 2015.
- Clarke, N., Barnett, C., Cloke, P. & Malpass, A. Globalising the consumer: doing politics in an ethical register. *Political Geography*, **26**, 231–249.
- Couldry, N. (2004) The productive 'consumer' and the dispersed 'citizen'. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, **7**, 21–32.
- Glickman, Lawrence B. (2009) *Buying power: A history of consumer activism in America*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Harrison, B., Newholm, T. & Shaw, D. (2005) Introduction. In *The Ethical Consumer*, pp. 1–8. Sage, London.
- Hilton, M. (2009) *Prosperity for All: Consumer Activism in an Era of Globalisation*. Cornell University Press, New York.
- Ho, Ming-sho (2010) 'Understanding the trajectory of Social Movements in Taiwan (1980–2010)', *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, **39**, 3–22.
- Ho, M.-s. & Lin, H. (eds) (2011) *The Age of Social Movement: Two Decades of Activism in Taiwan* (社會運動的年代: 晚近20年的台灣行動主義). Socio Publishing, Taipei.
- Hsiao, H.-H.M. (1984) Consumer problem and movement (消費者問題與運動). In *Taiwan's Social Problems* (台灣的社會問題, 73年版) (ed. by K.-S. Yang & C.-j. Yeh), pp. 217–248. Liwen Publisher, Taipei.
- Hsiao, H.-H.M. (1997) Social movements and civil society in taiwan: a typological analysis of social movements and public acceptance. *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*, **11**, 7–26.
- Hsiao, H.-H.M. (2011) Social movements in Taiwan: a typological analysis. In *East Asian Social Movements: Power, Protest, and Change in a dynamic Region* (ed. by J. Broadbent & V. Brockman), pp. 237–254. Springer, New York.
- Hsiao, H.-H.M. & Liu, H. (1997) Land-housing problems and the limits of the non-homeowner's movement in Taiwan. *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology*, **29**, 42–65.
- Hsieh, Y. & Scammon, D. (1993) Cultural and economic antecedents to evolving consumer concerns in Taiwan. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, **16**, 61–78.
- Juang, C.T. (1997) The Taiwan Consumer protection law: attempt to protect consumers proves ineffective. *Pacific Rim Law and Policy Journal*, **6**, 219–243.
- Kozinets, R.V. & Handelman, J.M. (2004) Adversaries of consumption: consumer movements, activism, and ideology. *Journal of Consumer Research*, **31**, 691–704.
- Lang, T. & Gabriel, Y. (2005) A brief history of consumer activism. In *The Ethical Consumer* (ed. by B. Harrison, T. Newholm & D. Shaw), pp. 39–54, Chapter 3. Sage, London.
- Lewis, T. & Potter, E. (2011) Introducing ethical consumption. In *Ethical Consumption: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 3–23, Chapter 1. Routledge, New York.
- Littler, J. (2009) Introduction. In *Radical Consumption: Shopping for Change in Contemporary Culture*, pp. 1–5. Open University Press, London.
- Lu, B.-Y. (1992) *Movement Organizing and Organizing for Movement: Resource creation and transformation in the No Home Owner Movement* (運動組織與組織運動—無住屋運動之資源創造與轉化), Master Dissertation, Graduate Institute of Building and Planning, National Taiwan University.
- Maclachlan, P. (2002) *Consumer Politics in Postwar Japan: The Institutional Boundaries of Citizen Activism*. Columbia University Press, New York.
- Malpass, A., Barnett, C., Clarke, N. & Cloke, P. (2007) Problematizing choice: responsible consumers and skeptical citizens. In *Governance, Consumers, and Citizens: Agency and Resistance in Contemporary Politics* (ed. by Mark Bevir & Frank Trentmann), pp. 231–256, Chapter 10. Palgrave, Macmillan: New York.
- Micheletti, M. (2008) The moral force of consumption and capitalism: anti-slavery and anti-sweatshop. In *Citizenship and Consumption* (ed. by Kate Soper & Frank Trentmann), pp. 121–136, Chapter 8. Palgrave, Macmillan: New York.
- Micheletti, M., Dietlind, S. & Daniel, B. (2012) Habits of sustainable citizenship: the example of political consumerism. In *The Habits of Consumption: The Example of Political Consumerism* (ed. by A. Warde & D. Southerton), pp. 141–163. Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, Helsinki.
- O'Neill, J. (2008) Sustainability, well-being, and consumption: the limits of hedonistic approaches. In *Citizenship and Consumption* (ed. by Kate Soper & Frank Trentmann), pp. 172–190, Chapter 11. Palgrave, Macmillan: New York.
- Pei Y.L. (2004) *Preliminary Observations on Taiwan Consumer Society Formation 1994–2004*. Paper presented at Annual Taiwan Sociology Association Conference. [WWW document]. URL <http://www.scu.edu.tw/society/faculty/peipaper2.pdf>. Accessed on July 25, 2015.
- Phillion, Stephen (2010) 'The Impact of Social Movements on Taiwan's Democracy', *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, **39**, 149–163.
- Schudson, M. (2007) Citizens, consumers, and the good society. *ANNALS AAPSS*, **611**, 236–249.
- Shu, W. (2011) Historical examination of social movement researches in Taiwan. In *The Age of Social Movement: Two Decades of Activism in Taiwan* (ed. by M.-s. Ho & H. Lin), pp. 449–519, Chapter 12. Socio Publishing, Taipei.
- Soper, K. (2007) Rethinking the 'good life': the citizenship dimension of consumer disaffection with consumerism. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, **7**, 205–229.