GSAPS  THE SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS
UNDERSTANDING THE RISE OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA
A Study to Chinese Urban Conservation Movement

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The dissertation will study the rising urban conservation movement in contemporary China. The urban conservation movement is the result of drastic social-spatial transition in Chinese urbanization since the late 1990s. During the rapid urbanization local governments in China have launched the so-called “reconstruction of the old city” campaign in historic cities and towns, the conservation movement, devoting to conserving the old city, is the response and resistance of the society to the campaign.

The reconstruction campaign is so controversial because it imposes serious damage on cultural heritage and traditional community, and induces violation to citizen rights. What are the causes of the movement? How it organizes, mobilizes and struggles? Which achievements has the movement obtained?

With the questions, the dissertation will explore how the Chinese public effectively bargains with the state with the form of social movement.

In the dissertation, I seek to answer this research question: Why the urban conservation movement effectively influences policy process? The hypothesis is: the effect of the movement would depend on three factors: 1) rising discontents and widening political opportunity provides the movement with the sustained IMPETUS; 2) by participation of “neo-gentry”, the movement shapes a solidary COALITION in the mobilization; 3) the movement adopts a series of resourceful struggle STRATEGY. If the movement satisfied the three conditions, the movement is more possible to succeed in influencing public policy.

All the three factors relate to the important role of “neo-gentry”, the buffer and bridge of the state and the society in China. The sustained impetus incorporates the value and responsibility of the neo-gentry. The resource mobilization depends greatly on the function of neo-gentry. Struggle strategy needs the direct and indirect participation of neo-gentry. Without the participation of neo-gentry, the movement could not achieve so many significant consequences, from setting policy agenda, to revising institution on urban governance.

The framework of the dissertation will be arranged as follows. In Chapter One, I make the overview of existing studies and introduce the hypothesis, and methodology.

In Chapter Two, I will discuss the cause of conservation movement. The policy distortion of urban renovation in market era since the 1990s meets the rising civil rights awareness, creating sustained discontents of the society. The society’s encourace of public participation provides the widening political opportunity. Therefore the sustained impetus of social movement exists.

In Chapter Three, I will discuss the mobilization and organization of the movement. With the solidary coalition of residents, volunteer and neo-gentry, the movement shapes the strong social network in mobilization. It is the network rather the social organizations plays the core role in mobilization. The key person connecting the residents, volunteers and neo-gentry effectively leads and coordinates the movement.

In Chapter Four, we can find by which struggle strategy the conservation movement could effective bargains with the state. Five important approaches of min-gao-guan approach, neican approach, media supervision approach, shangshu approach and ti’an approach showed the significant function of neo-gentry as the bridge of the state and the society.

In Chapter Five, the topic is which consequences the conservation movement achieves. In the short-term struggle of conservation campaign, the movement succeeds in setting policy agenda every time and sometimes even the policy outcome. In the long-term struggle, the movement succeeds in shaping the political preference of the government and revising institutions of urban planning and legislation. All the progress of agenda-setting, preference-shaping, institution-revising, indicates the rising element of civil society and the gradual reform of Chinese politics.

In Chapter Six, I will conclude the conservation movement. Through the observation of the new social movement, we could find the new changes of state-society relations in China and the significant mechanism of neo-gentry. At last, I discuss the political implication of the rise of the movement that there would be a trend to build the “negotiable governance” in the future.

Content of the dissertation is as follows:

Chapter One  Introduction
1. Research Questions
2. Literature Review
3. Hypothesis, Methodology and Framework

Chapter Two  Cause of Conservation Movement
1. The Politics of Urban Conservation
2. Policy Distortion of Urban Renovation in Market Era
3. Civil Rights Awareness and Rising Discontents
4. The Widening Political Opportunity

Chapter Three  Organization and Mobilization of Conservation Movement
1. Participants and Coalition
2. Function of Social Organizations
3. Social Network and Mobilization

Chapter Four  Strategy of Conservation Movement
1. Repertoire and Strategy
2. Min-Gao-Guan Approach
3. Neican Approach and Media Supervision Approach
4. Shangshu Approach and Ti’an Approach

Chapter Five  Consequences of Conservation Movement
1. Short-term Outcomes of Conservation Movement
2. Conservation Movement and Agenda-setting
3. Long-term Consequences of the Conservation

Chapter Six  Conclusion
1. Social Movement as the Institutional Participation Form
2. Changes of State-Society Relations and Neo-gentry
3. Implication: Towards the “Negotiable Governance” in China?

Bibliography