

## **POLICY DEBATE AND DECISION-MAKING ON LARGE DAM IN SOUTH KOREA AND THE UNITED STATES**

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This study discusses two canceled dam projects, Youngwol Dam in South Korea and Two Forks Dam in Colorado of the United States, to understand the outcomes of the new paradigm at work at the project level. It also identifies who the policy actors were, what the policy strategies were, and how the water policies evolved in both countries. Both of them illustrate how the new paradigm applies to regional water projects because they became victims of environmental opposition in the new paradigm. While the cases have no apparent close relationships and they occurred in different decades, they offer interesting comparisons.

The two proposed projects were basically struggles between a water development coalition and an environmental protection coalition on regional water conflicts. They brought about fierce debates on large dam and finally became emblematic events (Hajer 1995, 265) in each country because they embraced a wide-range of environmental, social, and political issues rather than construction of dams themselves. Huge anti-dam oppositions scrapped them at the cost of nearly ten years for decision-makings and enormous financial resources for feasibility studies respectively.

The two projects had a number of similarities and differences. Each needed nearly ten years to reach final decision-making after announcement of dam construction and enormous of financial resources for feasibility study. Despite water developers' intentions to meet utilitarian needs, they were faced with widespread environmental oppositions. The decision-makings on the two projects appear at first glance to be made under formal institutional frameworks, but in actuality, they relied significantly on decisions of the two important political actors: the President Kim Dae-Jung of South Korea and the federal EPA administrator William Reilly of the United States.

The Youngwol case was actually a battle between the government (MOCT) and a civil society (mainly environmental groups) while the Two Forks case was between the regional water agency (DWB) and the federal government agency (EPA). The environmentalists were important but not leading policy actors in the Two Forks policy process.

Both cases show that the official announcement of dam construction was followed by the period of indifference, the period of hot social issue, and the period of policy change. Those lines of policy making were combinations of a long period of stability and a short period of drastic change as argued by Baumgartner and Jones (1993). But the Youngwol case saw dominant powerful rushes of environmental groups against the government, thus the actual decision was a non-procedural decision made by the presidential opinion regarding the upcoming general election. On the other hand, the Two Forks case was an incremental procedural decision made by step-by-step institutional process since the early 1980s.

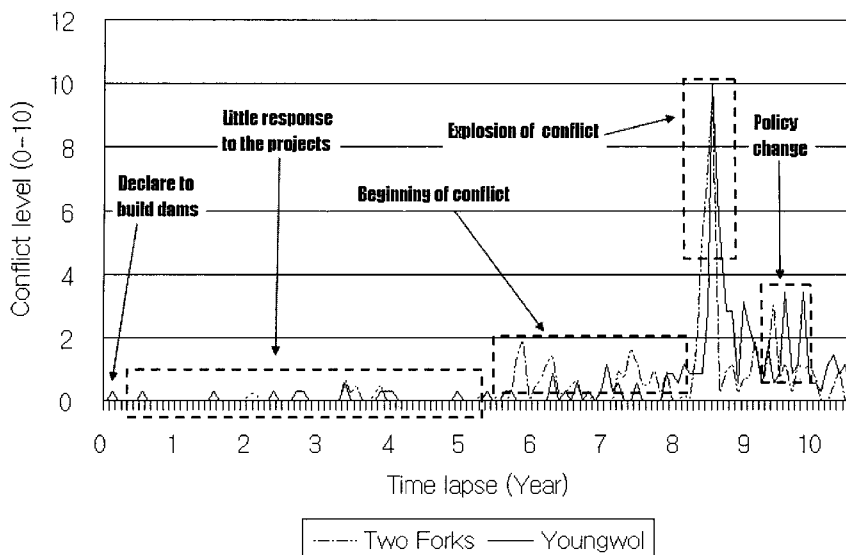


Fig. 1 Conflict levels on the Youngwol and the Two Forks projects<sup>1</sup>

The Korean society began to learn negotiation and cooperation approaches to solve the water conflict by establishing the Joint Task Force Team on Youngwol project in 1999. The team is recognized as a new conflict resolution method in South Korea because a diverse of stakeholder interests voluntarily participated in decision-making process and discussed water issues directly. Even though they resulted in futile fruits in each country, they illustrate the images of the new paradigm that significantly affected in formulating regional water policies in South Korea and the United States.

**Keywords:** Large dam; Water policy; Water conflict; Policy actor; Policy strategy; Policy process; Youngwol Dam; Two Forks Dam; South Korea; United States

#### REFERENCES

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<sup>1</sup> The two data sets are collected by monthly basis. The two maximum numbers of the newspaper articles are set at the highest conflict level 10.